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## **Self and (m)other in Patrick White's fiction : an object relations approach**

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# **SELF AND (M)OTHER IN PATRICK WHITE'S FICTION:**

## **AN OBJECT RELATIONS APPROACH**

BY

**Mary Cleopatra Lloyd da Silva**

A Thesis Submitted in Fulfilment of the

Requirements for the Award of

Doctor of Philosophy

at the Faculty of Arts, Department of English,

Edith Cowan University

Date of Submission: August 24, 1995.

## DEDICATION

To my family:

To Lino for seeing me through the highs and lows

To Len and Linda for their faith in me

To Lonnie for his moral support

To Liz for being there

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis offers a new interpretation of Patrick White's novels, using Object Relations psychology. Object Relations psychology differs from Freudian psychology in that it shifts the focus of attention from notions of the Oedipal conflict and repression to issues of nurturing and relationships. This study charts the development of the Whitean protagonist across a selection of novels. The focus of my thesis is White's developing protagonist, and no attempt is made to offer a psychological profile of Patrick White himself. The thesis first surveys a representative sampling of existing critical material. It then defines the theoretical framework of the study and, finally, it applies this framework to the novels.

The novels chosen represent various stages in White's writing career. The main themes in these novels are seen as analogous to phases in an Object Relations model of development. Accordingly The Aunt's Story, which is from the early stage of White's career, is analysed in terms of the earliest phase of development, that of separation of the self from the mother. Voss is from the central stage, and is viewed in terms of the splitting and reintegration which arise out of this necessary separation. Riders in the Chariot, also from the middle stage, is viewed in terms of the Oedipal conflict, which signals the next phase of development. And finally, The Twyborn Affair, which is from the later stage of

White's career, explores notions of gender and identity. The four novels are viewed as complementary parts of a whole which represents White's writing career, enabling us to trace the development of the protagonist within the context of White's *oeuvre*.

The ubiquitous divisions in White's fiction cited by critics take on deeper meaning from an Object Relations perspective of splitting and reintegration, revealing a consistency in the protagonists' motivations and attitudes.

Object Relations theories have not been previously applied to White's fiction. This fresh approach yields valuable insight into his work. It offers a new, if poignant, vision of White's protagonist, one which takes into account various successive phases of a life-long relationship of the self with the (m)other.

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## **DECLARATION**

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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I would also like to acknowledge the helpful advice of Dr. Ilan Buchman on Object Relations theories.

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# **SELF AND (M)OTHER IN PATRICK WHITE'S FICTION: AN OBJECT RELATIONS APPROACH**

## **I INTRODUCTION**

Patrick White's fiction has provoked a spate of varying critical responses over the past few decades from many parts of the world, including from the United States of America, Canada, Europe, South Africa, India and Australia. Most of the criticism of the early years was in the form of a general introduction, or an exploration of thematic concerns. And even as recently as 1993, Mark Williams offers an overview of White's fiction in an introductory vein.

The seventies and eighties brought several book-length studies of various specific aspects of White's work, ranging from analysis of grammatical structures as in Hilary Heltay's examination of the use of definite and indefinite articles (1983), Mary-Ann Berg's discussion of aspects of time and ageing (1983), and Rodney Edgecombe's analysis of style and vision in the work (1989), to name a few. Ann McCulloch took a philosophical approach and linked Nietzsche with White's fiction (1983), and Karin Hansson applied Schopenhauer, Blake and Jung to the work (1984). The majority of the critics agree that there are numerous paradoxes and dichotomies in White's work.

Some of these polarities such as life and death, joy and suffering, love and hate are explored by Peter Beatson, in The Eye in the Mandala (1977). Beatson extrapolates the mythic and religious patterns which underlie White's

artistic universe, arguing that "White's main focus is on the dilemma of the Word made Flesh" (1977: 2). His explication advances in Jungian and religious terms of "redemption", "grace", "rebirth" and "reincarnation".

Laurence Steven in Dissociation and Wholeness in Patrick White's Fiction (1989), discusses dichotomies of mind and body, spirit and flesh, individual and society, permanence and flux, abstract and concrete, deformity and health, and so on in White's work. Steven contends that by locating wholeness "beyond the world we live in", White overtly devalues human life. Steven's work reveals a tendency to equate White, the man, with White, the author, when he writes that "White largely misses the fulfilment, though not permanence, human life can offer". He argues that "Patrick White is a man dissociated", who strives for the ideal of surety and permanence, while knowing that the contingent temporal realm we inhabit will ultimately and inevitably undermine his striving (1989: 1-20). The dualism he explicates is one of idealism and despair.

Carolyn Bliss, in Patrick White's Fiction: The Paradox of Fortunate Failure (1986), outlines the shape and course of "redemptive" failure as theme and technique in White's work. She links White's concept of failure to his Australian heritage and sense of place. She posits that in his novels the major characters such as the Parkers in The Tree of Man (1961) fail to love sufficiently

or to express their love in positive action, and others such as Mary Hare and Mordecai Himmelfarb in Riders in the Chariot (1964) fail to save family members from injury or death. Bliss argues that in White's fiction "the character's experience of moral and spiritual failure is prerequisite for his understanding of the moral/spiritual universe which White believes obtains" (1986: 6-12). She extends the notion of failure to White, the author, who she sees as "caught in his own philosophical double bind and thus must himself undergo a certain necessary failure", which she suggests is reflected in his ironic perspective on his protagonists and himself as creator of a fictional universe (1986: 12).

However, the perceived "failure" is not limited to the failure of White's medium to adequately convey his message, nor to the moral and spiritual failure of the characters, as Bliss opines. It is argued that what Bliss calls "failure" may be seen, perhaps more fruitfully, in terms of the protagonists' on-going struggle for successful individuation during the evolution of White's *oeuvre*. What is more, this struggle may be seen in more positive terms as becoming more successful in succeeding novels.

Most of the criticism on White, introductory and otherwise, has been Formalist or religious-philosophical, although David Tacey's is psychoanalytic. The Formalist view of literature as a construct of purely linguistic elements and

its concern with literary devices, based on detailed inquiry into literary technique, has made a major contribution to appreciation of White's fiction. However, the Formalist tendency to exclude other considerations often tends to be limiting and oversimplifying.

Despite the plethora and variety of criticism of White's fiction, there is very little in the way of psychoanalytical approach to the work. Notable among these is David Tacey's study, Patrick White: Fiction and the Unconscious (1988), which is based exclusively on Jungian archetypal depth criticism. Tacey's application of in-depth archetypal criteria tends to be reductive, placing repetitive emphasis on the *puer aeternus* and the Mother Goddess of the *vagina dentata*. Tacey himself acknowledges that the "intellectual community encounters fundamental problems in coming to terms with Jung, which is why he has been relegated to the margins and sometimes held there by force" (1988: xxii).

Tacey unabashedly equates the study of the characters with the analysis of the author himself. His work is riddled with evaluations and opinions of White's psyche. Some examples are:

There is a morbid, dark streak in White's character, a preference for entrapment in the unconscious above creative dialogue between upper and lower worlds. White is a pioneer who, like Theseus in Greek mythology, journeyed into the lower realm and grew fast to the rocks. He escaped the bondage of the super-ego and social convention only to fall into a new, stranger, less tangible form of psychological imprisonment. (1988: xvii)

It seems that a masculine part of White's psyche is urging him to move on from where he has been caught ever since The Living and the Dead, when Elyot made his fatal descent to the maternal source. (1988: 121)

In contrast to Tacey's approach, my study will not embark on the precarious task of psychoanalysing White, the man, but will concentrate instead on his protagonists. It will offer a psychological explanation for the splitting and reintegration of characters so prevalent in White's fiction.

Psychoanalytic literary criticism may take the form of analysing the author, the reader or the text. Formalist critics argue that the fictional work is autonomous and that the life of the author is not relevant to his work. This, of course, has become somewhat problematic in White's case, because White himself, in his later years, has come out with autobiographical material, such as Flaws in the Glass, in which he clearly states that his fiction is a means of "introducing to a disbelieving audience the cast of contradictory characters of which I am composed" (1983: 29). Similarly, in his critically acclaimed authorised biography, David Marr links characters and incidents in White's fiction to people and events in his life. The paedophilic encounter between the Rev. Calderon and Alf Dubbo in Riders in the Chariot which is said to be based on a similar encounter between a school headmaster and the young Patrick White, is a case in point (Marr 1991: 58, 662). While this kind of link may be

appropriate at a biographical level, it is not essential for, and may in fact appear rather intrusive, in literary criticism.

At a conference on Literature and Psychiatry (April 1994), Dr. Ron Spielman observed that exploration of auto/biographical material may gratify the literary critic's "epistemophilic needs in 'understanding' the lives of others"; but may also "merely gratify our voyeurism!"

My position is that analysis of the writer's life has little relevance in examination of the work and may, as Spielman suggests, be intrusive and border on mere voyeurism. Therefore, my thesis will focus on textual and character analysis. White's biographical material, if and when it is discussed, will be treated simply as further texts. The aim of my thesis is not to psychoanalyse Patrick White, but to draw on psychological theories as aids to comprehending the complexity of his work in each novel and in all the novels as a collected whole.<sup>1</sup>

As Ilan Buchman (1985) observes, the term "psychoanalysis" refers to a theory of personality structure, and application of this theory to other branches of knowledge. Buchman argues that Freud himself applied his method of investigation to a wide spectrum of psychic phenomena and often drew on literary texts as illustration and inspiration for his theories. Some of his major psychoanalytic concepts are based on fictional or mythological characters such



as Lady Macbeth, Oedipus and Narcissus, or poetic metaphors such as "oceanic feeling" (Buchman 1985: 39). However, Freud's attempt at psychoanalysing authors such as Dostoevsky through his work sparked off a lasting controversy among literary critics.

Elizabeth Wright points out that the limitations of psychoanalytic character-analysis are similar to the limitations of literary character-analysis (1984: 46). Nevertheless, as Soshana Felman observes:

since psychoanalytical theory and the literary text mutually inform - and displace - each other; since the very position of the interpreter - of the analyst - turns out to be not *outside*, but *inside* the text, there is no longer a clear-cut opposition or a well-defined border between literature and psychoanalysis ... the methodological stake is...rather, of their *interimplication* in each other. (1980: 145)

This thesis offers a psychoanalytic reading of Patrick White's fiction, drawing mainly on Object Relations theories. A basic tenet of Object Relations is that because it is so intense and because it is the emerging self's primal relationship, the mother-child relationship becomes the prototype of all subsequent relationships. Accordingly, my study will examine the protagonists' relationships with their (m)others as they affect notions of identity, sexuality and spirituality. However, unlike some of the other studies cited, my thesis will argue that during the course of White's fiction his protagonists make significant progress towards integrating various conflicting aspects of personality, and towards achieving some measure of fulfilment. It will trace the different phases

in the evolution of White's protagonists across the body of his work using an Object Relations model of development.

It is useful at the outset to define the term "Object Relations" What does the term "Object Relations" mean? What "Objects" are being referred to? Otto Kernberg explains that the word "object" in Object Relations theory should more appropriately be "human object"<sup>2</sup> "since it reflects the traditional use of this term for relations with others. These relations may be internal or external, fantasised or real, but they essentially center round interactions with other human beings" (1976: 58).

As Sheldon Cashdan explains, within this theory, psychological development "is thought to evolve out of human interaction rather than as a result of biologically derived tensions" (1988: 3). Object Relations psychology differs from Freudian psychology in that it shifts the focus of attention from notions of pansexuality, the Oedipus complex and castration anxieties to issues of nurturing and relationships, concentrating on a mother-child dyad instead of a father-mother-child triad.

My thesis also demonstrates that there is a synergistic interplay between art and Object Relations. In Object Relations Therapy, Cashdan argues that because of their ability to tap into symbolic processes, fairy tales - both children's versions and those designed for adults - constitute an important means

by which human beings address conflicts of an Object Relational nature. He holds that an "important Object Relations dynamic - splitting" - enriches our understanding of fairy tales and that fairy tales, in turn, "can be used in therapy to gain insight into representational processes which might otherwise prove inaccessible" (1988: 165).

In a letter to Ingmar Björkstén White writes that he draws heavily on "dream material". This "dream material" is similar to what Melanie Klein describes as "phantasy" which is an integral part of splitting in Object Relations. He quotes White: "I also rely to a great extent on what you refer to as 'dream material'. By this time I find myself often wondering whether something has actually happened, whether I have dreamt it, whether it is an incident from one of those waking dreams, or perhaps some incident from one of my books" (in Marr 1994: 408-409). Since Patrick White often writes in a non-realist or symbolic mode which is the communication modality of Object Relations, and because dichotomies and divisions, splitting and reintegration are central to his work, Object Relations concepts of phantasy, splitting, and ultimate reintegration are particularly useful in analysing his fiction.

While this thesis will rely mainly on Object Relations theories in examining White's methods of characterisation and the development of his protagonists, it will also draw on other theories where appropriate, in order to

better analyse the psycho-social significance of representations of gender, race and class.

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It is a critical axiom that dualities, dichotomies and divisions inhere in the themes and structures of White's fiction. But nowhere are these divisions more apparent than in characterisation. Often in White's fiction, "whole" characters appear to represent single concepts or aspects of personality and the conflict which ensues between them may be perceived as intra-psychic, rather than inter-psychic. This synecdochic representation of character is the result of doubling and/or splitting.

The concept of the double in literature is clearly articulated by Sigmund Freud in his classic essay, "The Uncanny", in which he analyses E. T. A. Hoffman's short story, "The Sandman". Freud explains that in this story, the father image is divided into the "good" father who is Nathaniel's own father, and the "bad" father, the lawyer Coppelius, who used to visit the real father. Coppelius, the 'bad' father, threatens to harm the boy by throwing red-hot coals in his eyes, and Nathaniel's real or 'good' father saves him. Nathaniel also

identifies Coppelius with the feared Sand-Man of childhood lore. Years later Nathaniel meets an itinerant optician, Coppola, which revives his childhood anxieties about the Sand-Man. Citing Oedipus's blinding of himself as a parallel, Freud's analysis stresses that Nathaniel's anxiety connected with the eyes and his fears of blindness are substitutes for the dread of castration. Freud argues that the Sand-Man, Coppelius, Coppola and Nathaniel's real father, are all versions of the father image, or doubles of each other. In Freud's words, "there is a doubling, dividing and interchanging of the self" (SE XVII: 234). Freud goes on to state that the double also reveals narcissism and is a means of self criticism and censorship. He cites Otto Rank's (1914) study in which the "immortal soul" is seen as the first "double" of the body (1955: 234).

Robert Rogers, in his seminal study, The Double in Literature (1970), posits that "when an author wishes to depict mental conflict within a single mind, a most natural way for him to dramatise it is to represent that mind by two or more characters". As Rogers goes on to explain, whereas a philosopher might speak of conflict between body and spirit, a "literary artist is more likely to conjure up representative characters: a Sancho Panza and Don Quixote" (1970: 29-30). This concept has relevance to White's fiction because his characters often represent conflicting aspects of personality rather than "whole" personalities.

Doubling may be both explicit and implicit. A good example of explicit doubling occurs in Dostoevsky's novel, *The Double*, in which the clerk, Golyadkin, encounters his alter ego, also named Golyadkin, who appears to be his mirror image in many respects. On the other hand, as Rogers explains, when doubling is implicit, the reader may sense this division, but it is not mentioned by the author, and the characters themselves may not exhibit direct awareness of it. Using the analogy of levels of expression in dreams he argues that in this form of doubling "the fragmentation is *latent* rather than *manifest*" (1970: 4). In *The Aunt's Story*, for instance, since each of the women performs different roles, they may be perceived as doubles of each other. However, this is not recognized by the characters themselves, nor does the author explicitly direct the reader to regard these characters as doubles of each other. The doubling in this novel is therefore implicit rather than explicit.

Doubling is instinctual or drive oriented, and may reflect repressions as well as wish-fulfilment. As Rogers explains:

Dynamically considered, the appearance of an alternating personality can be understood in terms of drives which have been repressed and impulses which have been defended against. (1970: 92)

For example, Pearl Brawne in *The Aunt's Story*, expresses the sexuality which Theodora represses. Thus Pearl serves as Theodora's double. Rogers calls this kind of doubling "subject doubling" which represents "conflicting drives,

orientations or attitudes without respect to their relationship to other people" (1970: 5). Fragmentation of self is not necessarily limited to duality, but may include multiplicity. Fanny, in The Aunt's Story, who represents acquisitive, bourgeois womanhood, may also be seen as Theodora's double.

While doubling and splitting may appear to have similar effects and affects, these processes have different psychological origins. The concept of doubling is useful for its relevance to repressions, the uncanny, or the return of the repressed. Splitting, on the other hand, is relational, and is a concept elaborated by Melanie Klein, a contemporary of Freud's, and a leading proponent of Object Relations psychology. She discovered that children devoted more energy to constructing their interpersonal worlds than to trying to control erotic or libidinal impulses.

Cashdan observes that a basic tenet of Object Relations theory in general, is that the core of selfhood is inextricably tied to the infant's first and most fundamental object relationship - the relationship with the mother" (1988: 5). The mother-child relationship lays the foundation for the construction of the child's inner world:

Because it is so intense, and because it subsumes so many of the infant's interactions with the world, the mother-child relationship forms the prototype of all subsequent relationships. (Cashdan 1988: 5)

Klein and other Object Relations theorists generally use the word "mother" in their discussions. But for purposes of this study, and because of the assumption that the mother-child relationship is the matrix of all other relationships, "(m)other" may be used to designate broader interactions. However, in order to relate to the (m)other, the infant must first differentiate the self from the (m)other.

Margaret Mahler speaks to this issue in her theory of Separation and Individuation. While Mahler's work originated out of Freudian principles, she developed his theories further. She explains that

the biological birth of the human infant and the psychological birth of the individual are not coincident in time. The former is a dramatic and readily observable, well circumscribed event; the latter, a slowly unfolding intrapsychic process. (1972: 333)

Mahler cites three phases in psychological development: the autistic phase, the symbiotic phase and the separation-individuation phase. During the earliest phase, which is the autistic phase, the infant operates in a closed system and is unaware of the mother in an interpersonal sense. "This phase is referred to as objectless, with only fleeting states of alert mental activity" (in Edward, Ruskin and Turrini 1991: 331). In the next, symbiotic phase, the infant experiences the mother as part of itself, and she is not yet experienced as an autonomous presence. "Symbiosis refers to a fused mother-self experience where the 'I' is not differentiated from the 'not-I'" (Mahler in Edward, Ruskin and Turrini 1991:



347). Cashdan indicates that in the third phase, the separation-individuation phase, there is a major conflict between the longing for autonomy versus the urge to stay fused with the (m)other, and the degree to which children resolve this conflict influences the extent to which they can go through life without pathological consequences (1988: 13). As Cashdan explains:

Separation-individuation, in short, comprises two complementary but distinct development processes. Separation is the process by which the child emerges from the symbiotic fusion that characterizes the early relationship with the mother. It begins with a process of perceptual discrimination and culminates in an act of cognitive incorporation (libidinal object constancy). Individuation, on the other hand, is marked by concrete achievements, such as locomotion, language usage, and other activities that indicate the ability to function autonomously. (1988: 16)

Mahler's theory is that "Object Relations" develop on the basis of and *pari passu* with differentiation from the normal mother-infant dual unity (1972: 333). She explains that "'growing up' entails a gradual growing away from the normal state of human symbiosis, of 'oneness' with the mother". She argues that consciousness of the self as discrete and separate and "absorption without awareness" of the self are the two polarities between which the developing ego moves (1972: 333). According to Mahler, separation and individuation make possible a child's achievement of separate functioning with minimal threats of object loss, and provide a source of pleasure in functioning independently. However, in situations of traumatic separation, normal individuation is not accomplished successfully (1968: 2). Mahler calls the process of separation and

individuation, "hatching". Phyllis Edelson briefly summarises the steps in this process when she writes that: "the human infant moves from an initial phase of differentiation from the mother through periods of practising at separation from her, to independence, rapprochement with her, and finally, to a consolidation of identity" (1985: 230). Mahler's theory provides a valuable base for understanding the protagonist's struggle towards individuation, such as, for instance, Theodora's in The Aunt's Story.

According to Melanie Klein and others, splitting arises out of separation of the self from the (m)other. Splitting is a defence mechanism used by the developing infant to cope with separation from the (m)other and as an aid to conceptualising its world and relationships. It is not limited to sexual drives and originates early in the infant's development, during the nursing stage and before the acquisition of language. Because this process occurs before the acquisition of linguistic ability, the child conceptualises its world and relationships by means of imagos and "phantasy".

Klein writes of the initial splitting of the mother, and particularly the breast, into "good" (the source of gratification), and "bad" (as it deprives or frustrates). The growing infant internalises or "introjects"<sup>3</sup> aspects of the (m)other, its first and most significant "object". The nurturing (m)other is internalised as "good" and the withholding or frustrating (m)other is internalised

as "bad". Simultaneously, the child splits itself into "good" and "bad". The "good" mother is loved by the "good" child and the "bad" mother is sadistically attacked in phantasy, by the "bad" child by means of oral aggression (Klein 1975: 1-23). Every (m)other is inevitably experienced as both "good" and "bad", but, if the (m)other is especially withholding or frustrating, the internalised bad object will become intolerably threatening and the infant will attempt to project its badness outwards (Hanna Segal 1988: 3-5). Such defensive splitting can cause paranoia and feelings of persecution (due to projection of the split-off bad object) and excessive idealisation of self and object images (as a protection against persecution by the bad object). Klein calls this first phases the paranoid-schizoid position.

The second phase is called the depressive position, when the infant recognises the (m)other as a whole object and relates to this whole object. As Hanna Segal explains, in this position: "[He] begins to see that his good and bad experiences do not proceed from a good and a bad breast or mother, but from the same mother who is the source of good and bad alike" (1988: 68). Correspondingly, as integration of the good and bad object progresses, the infant realises that it is the same person, himself or herself, who loves or hates the same person or object, the (m)other. Because of this realisation, the infant experiences a sense of guilt at injuring the good object, and attempts to make

reparation. This desire for reparation has implications for the artistic process. According to Hanna Segal, the pain of mourning experienced in the depressive position triggers the urge to restore the loved internal and external objects, and forms the basis of creativity and sublimation (1988: 75).

Even though these positions may be considered to be phases of development, Klein insists on calling them "positions" to emphasise the fact that these are not merely passing stages and that they may recur through life:

The depressive position never fully supersedes the paranoid-schizoid position; the integration achieved is never complete and defences against the depressive conflict bring about regression to paranoid-schizoid phenomena, so that the individual at all times may oscillate between the two. (H. Segal 1988: ix)

Klein theorises that the internal world, or what Janice Doane and Devon Hodges call the "psychic terrain" (1992: 8) of the nursing infant or young child before the acquisition of language is comprised of "objects", "imagos" and "representations" which she calls "phantasies" and which describe the child's complex unconscious life. These "phantasies" are the result of simultaneous introjection and projection of inner and outer worlds, of self and object images, in other words, of self and (m)other. Thus "objects both construct the subject and are constructed by it" (Doane and Hodges 1992: 13).

Because of its predominantly Kleinian orientation, and in the interests of uniformity, from now on the term "phantasy" will be used throughout this study,

rather than the conventional "fantasy", except when making a direct quotation from or reference to other theorists who use the latter term.

Separation-Individuation and Splitting and Reintegration are pre-Oedipal stages of psychological development and form the cornerstones of Object Relations psychology. Furthermore, they represent a shift in focus from Freud's Oedipal complex to pre-Oedipal concerns and from analysis of repression and/or gratification of psycho-sexual drives to analysis of human interrelations and the construction of representational worlds. As Cashdan points out, this also shifts the emphasis from the father to the mother in psychological development, and involves a significant conceptual reorientation: "issues of intimacy, and nurturance, for example, begin to overshadow issues of power and control" (1988: 24). While separation issues are predominant in early childhood, Mahler writes that as with any intrapsychic process, "this one reverberates throughout the life cycle. It is never finished; it can always become reactivated; new phases of the life cycle witness new derivatives of the earliest process still at work" (1972: 333). Consequently, according to Mahler:

One could regard the entire life cycle as constituting a more or less successful process of distancing from and introjection of the lost symbiotic mother, an eternal longing for the actual or fantasised 'ideal state of self', with the latter standing for a symbiotic fusion with the 'all good' symbiotic mother, who was at one time part of the self in a blissful state of well-being. (1972: 228)

Otto Kernberg, a contemporary and leading Object Relations psychologist who is influenced by Melanie Klein, writes that splitting is first due to the developing ego's lack of integrative capacity. Both Klein and Kernberg hypothesise that splitting is a defensive function used to separate the "good" object from the dangerous "bad" object. According to Kernberg, the early ego must accomplish two essential tasks: it must differentiate self-images from object images and it must integrate libidinally and aggressively determined self and object images which are split in the process of separating the self from the (m)other (1975: 25-27). My thesis explores these processes in the development of the Whitean protagonist.

Heinz Kohut, another Object Relations psychologist, in his study The Analysis of the Self, also stresses the importance of the child's earliest relationship, usually with the mother. He argues that the development of a cohesive and secure identity is dependent upon the appropriate functioning of the mother-child relationship. Because of the child's early experience of the mother as part of the self, he refers to her as a "self-object" (xxii). In the earliest developmental stage, the parental self-object needs to provide "mirroring" and idealising functions. The child needs to feel acknowledged and confirmed, reflected so to speak, by the "approving gleam in the mother's eye" (1971: 116). Failure in this regard leads to impaired self-esteem and pathological narcissism.

Other versions of these psychological processes are offered by Jacques Lacan and Julia Kristeva: Lacan's mirror stage offers another concept of the double. Anika Lemaire offers a succinct description of Lacan's mirror stage:

the mirror stage is the advent of coenaesthetic subjectivity preceded by the feeling that one's own body is in pieces. The reflection of the body is, then, salutary in that it is unitary and localized in time and space. But the mirror stage is also the stage of alienating narcissistic identification (primary identification); the subject *is* his own double more than he is himself. (1977: 81)

Kristeva's theory of Abjection also defines the struggle for separation of the self from the (m)other, but at a point even earlier than that of severance from symbiotic union. As Joan Kirkby points out, Kristevan abjection is related to the logic of separation. It is the "attempt of a subject who is not yet a subject to separate itself from the mother whom it is not yet able to see as an object" (forthcoming). Kristeva's description of the abject demonstrates ambiguity or the impossibility of clear-cut borders:

Abjection preserves what existed in the archaism of pre-objectal relationship, in the immemorial violence with which a body becomes separated from another body in order to be - maintaining that night in which the outline of the signified thing vanishes and where only the imponderable effect is carried out. (In Roudiez 1982: 9-10)

Having briefly outlined various psychoanalytic theories, it should be noted that there will unavoidably be some areas of overlap in these concepts, since virtually all psychoanalytic theories have their origins in Freud's concepts.

Subsequent theories are variations to, departures from and/or refinements of his original concepts.

The Object Relations perspective offered is not intended to totally preclude references to Freudian theories. Freudian theories of the Oedipus complex, repression and castration anxiety, for example, complement the Object Relations arguments.

While it is possible to analyse White's entire corpus of work with any one psychoanalytic theory, such as, for instance, Splitting and Reintegration, the approach I have outlined provides greater flexibility of analysis and helps to avoid reductiveness. Furthermore, particular theories have special relevance for certain phases of development and for the selected novels. Not all theories offer totally convincing explanations for all psychological situations. For instance, however persuasive Klein's theories may be about the infant's pre-verbal inner world of "phantasy", her argument that the Oedipal struggle is subsumed and consequently redefined in terms of depressive anxiety and the attempt to restore the mother as a whole object is more useful for discussing the artistic process than for the resolution of the Oedipus complex in terms of character development. Klein's concept of reparation is particularly useful as it relates to the artistic process. The work of art may indeed be perceived as sublimation and symbolic reparation. On the other hand, Freud's theory of the Oedipus complex,



castration anxiety and repression are more convincing than Klein's in terms of that particular phase of character development and hence more applicable to certain novels such as, for instance, Riders in the Chariot. It is advantageous, therefore, to perceive the theories employed as complementary rather than exclusive. This allows us to release psychoanalytic literary criticism from the confines of libido theory, and the risk of reductiveness, without dispensing with sexuality altogether. Despite the occasional borrowing from other theories, the main focus of my study will be on Object Relations, that is to say, on the relationship of the self with the (m)other.

There are those, such as Jay Greenberg and Stephen Mitchell, who argue that the psychoanalytic drive model and the Object Relations relational model constitute "two incompatible visions of life" and of "the basic nature of human experience". But even they concede that

the paradox of man's dual nature as a highly individual yet social being runs too deep and is too entrenched within our civilization to be capable of simple resolution in one direction or the other. It seems more likely that both the drive model and the relational model will persist, undergoing continual revision and transformation, and that the rich interplay between these two visions of human experience will generate creative dialogue. (1983: 406-408)

These two streams of thought can and do continue to inform and enrich each other.

Although not a major focus, some consideration will also be given to the psychological aspects of the artistic process. According to Anton Ehrenzweig,

the process of splitting and reintegration is inherent in artistic creation. In The Hidden Order of Art Ehrenzweig explains that the creative process can be divided into three stages: an initial "schizoid" stage of projecting fragmented parts of the self into the work; a second "manic" phase which initiates unconscious scanning in order to integrate the art work's substructure, but may not necessarily heal the fragmentation of the surface gestalt; and a third stage of re-introjection, in which the hidden substructure is taken back into the artist's ego on a higher mental level (Ehrenzweig 1993: 102-103).

Ehrenzweig's aesthetic theories are similar to Klein's theories of human development in their deployment of splitting and reintegration. The creative act according to Ehrenzweig is a symbolic replication of the initial separation of the self from the (m)other, and the subsequent splitting and reintegration of aspects of self and (m)other. For Ehrenzweig, as for Klein, symbolisation is the basis of sublimation and creativity. Elizabeth Wright observes that the prototype for the aesthetic interaction of the artist to his or her medium and the audience to the art-object is the unconsciously felt encounter between infant and mother. "The creative act repeats the experience of separating from the mother. It can take place in the context of either of the two Kleinian positions, the schizoid-paranoid or the depressive, according to whether the artist is experiencing his or her objects as fragmented or integrated" (1984: 84).

This view differs from Freudian aesthetics. As Wright comments, Freud saw art as a "privileged means of attaining instinctual pleasure" (1984: 84). In order to achieve this end without experiencing fear or guilt, the reader, the viewer or the censor had to be caught unawares. Freud called the successful strategies of the artist to persuade his or her audience to share the pleasure, the "innermost secret". Wright argues that far from deriving any "innocent pleasure" from this encounter, artist and audience are deeply implicated in a process of attrition and contrition" (1984: 84).

However, as Ilan Buchman explains, "the artist, unlike the child, possesses intuitive psychological acuity which enables him to apprehend his own psychic processes and to imaginatively reconstruct them in his work" (1985: 49). The artist remains aware that his or her creations symbolise aspects of his or her internal world, but these aspects represent neither him/her, nor directly his/her internal objects. This gives the artist, the writer, a certain objective detachment from the work which enables him or her to maintain a sense of reality thus distinguishing wishes and phantasy from the realities of the external world. Buchman argues persuasively that "it is therefore implicit that while we cannot directly equate phantasy with artistic creativity, or see artistic creation as entirely the product of wish gratification, a better understanding of unconscious phantasies can nonetheless contribute to a more sensitive

understanding of the many ways in which phantasy can be related to a literary text" (1985: 49). Recent psychoanalytic schools of thought suggest that "phantasy does not replace adult experience, but instead, brings the intensities of childhood experience to bear on current adult life. It adds depth by evoking unconscious remnants of infantile experience, without substituting that experience for an adult one" (Buchman 1985: 49-50).

The main elements of the creative process described above, splitting, reintegration and phantasy, are discernible in White's method of characterisation. Most of the novels under consideration implicitly or explicitly split the self and (m)other into various components or aspects such as "good" parent or "bad" parent, or variations of "good" or "bad" selves, and finally attempt to integrate these various images into a unified surface gestalt through the phantasies, dreams or death-bed hallucinations of the protagonists somewhere towards the end of the novel. The implied reintegration of self and (m)other coincides with the completion of the novel, further suggesting that the one is a symbolisation of the other.

Wright compares this reintegration, or what Ehrenzweig calls "the hidden order of art" to Roland Barthes' explication of "writerly" and "readerly" texts. However, she uses the analogy in reverse. Barthes converts what he calls a "readerly" text into a "writerly" text by breaking it up into fragments. Wright

comments that Ehrenzweig reverses the process and turns "writerly" texts into "readerly" texts by finding a hidden order (1984: 87). This hidden order, my thesis demonstrates, is recognisable in the splitting and reintegration of characters in dreams or death-bed phantasies in various White novels. What is more, there is a sense of progression in the development of the protagonist, from Theodora's implied integration in "madness" of various conflicting aspects of the self and (m)other in The Aunt's Story, to the death-bed phantasies of the eponymous hero in Voss, to integration in paintings in Riders in the Chariot. The integration of the protagonist culminates in the conscious reintegration, in dialogue and relationship, of previously split aspects of the self and the (m)other in The Twyborn Affair.

The psychological concepts described above form the theoretical framework of my thesis. The four novels chosen will be analysed from four different, but successive phases of psychological development of the protagonist. However, common to all of these phases are the processes of splitting and reintegration which are inherent in Object Relations. While on the surface these processes appear similar in all the novels, the dynamics emerge from the differing forms of integration in each novel. These various forms of integration which occur at the conclusion of most novels reflect different, progressive phases in the development of the protagonist.

The four phases of development according to an Object Relations model are: first, separation of the self from the (m)other; second, the splitting of aspects of the self and the (m)other as a consequence of separation; third, the Oedipal phase; and fourth and finally, consolidation of a sense of identity. The novels will be analysed in terms of these progressive phases of development.

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Since many writers have for years studied White's entire body of work from various perspectives, any further general studies of the entire corpus of work would be redundant. What is more, given the limitations of space, exegesis of all the novels would result in a merely cursory reading, while attention to a few novels is more conducive to in-depth analysis from various perspectives. Therefore, four novels have been selected from various phases of White's career to explore the psycho-social implications of the doubling, splitting and reintegration of character and society which are best analysed in terms of the psychological theories described. My analysis will focus on White's novels rather than his short stories, plays or poetry, in order to avoid diffusing the argument by discussing genre, which is beyond the scope of this thesis.

The novels to be studied are The Aunt's Story (1976), from what is generally considered to be the early phase, Voss (1960), and Riders in the Chariot (1964), from the middle phase, and The Twyborn Affair (1981) from the late phase. The first novel, The Aunt's Story, will be analysed in terms of the first phase of development, that of separation of the self from the (m)other; the second novel, Voss, in terms of the second phase, splitting and reintegration, which arises out of separation; Riders in the Chariot will be examined in terms of the Oedipal phase, and the last novel, The Twyborn Affair, will examine notions of gender and identity. The pervasive splitting and reintegration in all these novels link them as a "whole". And the protagonist that emerges from these novels is a composite protagonist, similar to the composite protagonist described by Francis Wyndham when commenting on a selection of four novels by Jean Rhys (Introduction to Wide Sargasso Sea 1966: 6). Viewed in this way the four novels deal with the same hypothetical protagonist at different phases of development, even though the names of the protagonist(s) and the details of characterisation and circumstance alter from novel to novel.

In the first novel under consideration, The Aunt's Story, we see Theodora's quest for selfhood. The theory of Separation and Individuation is relevant in tracing the anxieties and vicissitudes of her psychological development. Separation from the (m)other is a universal prerequisite for

identity formation. No other phases, complexes, development or neuroses can come about without the experience of this separation. Therefore analysis of this first novel draws on the theoretical outlines of the earliest human experience and interrelation, that of separation and individuation.

Attendant upon and arising out of this necessary separation is the process of splitting which enables the child to embark on the next phase of development in which it begins to conceptualise its world and to cope with separation of the self from the (m)other, subject from object. Splitting and Reintegration is the phase following separation, and thus lends itself to the explication of Voss, the second novel in our study. Splitting and reintegration occur in the pre-Oedipal phase of development, and Object Relations theorists claim that these processes influence the outcome or resolution of the Oedipal complex. Consequently, consideration of Oedipal conflict is a logical next step. Riders in the Chariot is therefore explored in terms of the Oedipal metaphor. According to Melanie Klein, the Oedipal conflict is "subsumed and consequently redefined in terms of depressive anxiety and the attempt to restore the mother as a whole object" (Doane and Hodges 1992: 11). This is somewhat limiting, however, for literary analysis. Therefore, in explicating Riders in the Chariot, both Object Relations and Freudian concepts of Oedipal conflict will be utilised.



The Twyborn Affair is then explicated for notions of gender and identity.

The protagonist's struggle for an authentic sense of self will be explored in terms of separation and individuation, splitting and reintegration of the masculine and feminine parts of the self, together with theories of the Oedipal complex as they relate to notions of sexuality. Kristeva's concept of abjection is also of particular relevance to the exegesis of this novel, because of the protagonist's ambiguous identity.

The theoretical applications and divisions suggested are thus broad and not restrictive. They merely suggest a dominant theme or focus in each novel, to correlate with general phases of psycho-social development. A rigid and exclusive adherence to any one theory in any particular novel would tend to be reductive and restrictive. Therefore, the analysis will acknowledge the constant interplay of various psychological undercurrents in the work, while identifying a particular dominant phase of character development in each novel.

Various schools of psychology point to different phases of development. However, no one theory or school of thought could do justice to work as rich and complex as that of White's. Therefore, while the emphasis of my thesis will remain on Object Relations, there will be occasional borrowings from other models of psychological development. To recapitulate, my thesis will trace some of the psychological patterns discernible in White's method of

characterisation. It will follow the development of White's protagonists from attempts to realise the self as separate from the (m)other in The Aunt's Story, to splitting and reintegration of various aspects of self and (m)other in Voss, through the permutations of Oedipal tensions in Riders in the Chariot, and the splitting and reintegration of self and (m)other in terms of masculinity, femininity and androgyny in The Twyborn Affair. Resonating through all the novels are the vicissitudes of individuation and the pervasive processes of doubling, splitting and reintegration, providing what Ehrenzweig calls, a "hidden order".

White's fiction offers an aesthetic rendering of the Object Relations model of development. The ubiquitous splitting and reintegration in his work link the various novels, and to a certain extent integrate them into an organic "whole" or totality which offers a more comprehensive picture of the development of the protagonist. It is within this representative "whole" that a fuller picture of the Whitean protagonist or *persona* emerges.

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## II **SEPARATION AND INDIVIDUATION IN THE AUNT'S STORY**

This becoming one instead of two was the very expression of his ancient need. And the reason is that human nature was originally one and we were a whole, and the desire and pursuit of the whole is called love.

Aristophanes, in Plato's Symposium

In The Aunt's Story Patrick White sensitively and imaginatively portrays a "spinster's" journey through life and the conflicts which she encounters in the process of realising her selfhood. Writing in the *bildungsroman* tradition, White traces Theodora Goodman's experiences, from the confines of an oppressive childhood, to freedom through phantasy in middle age, and ultimate incarceration by society for what it considers to be her "madness". Thelma Herring calls Theodora's journey through life the "Odyssey of a Spinster". She points to many similarities between The Aunt's Story and the Greek myth. "Theodora herself, as well as being at one point Nausicaä, at others is connected both with Telemachus and with Odysseus" (in Wilkes 1970: 15). However in this study Theodora's many personalities will be explained in psychoanalytic rather than in mythic terms.

Most of the critical attention to the novel has concentrated on the adult protagonist's escapades in the *Jardin Exotique* section and many agree that

characters and events in this section exist mainly in Theodora's imagination<sup>1</sup>. J. F. Burrows, in examining the central phase of The Aunt's Story, calls Theodora's mental escapades "fugues", and the result of a "menopausal daydream" (in Wilkes 1970: 95). Few, if any, attempt a plausible explanation for Theodora's flights of fancy and merely conclude that she is schizophrenic or mad. Drawing on Object Relations theories, my thesis will offer some psychological explanations for Theodora's mental confusion and regressive desire to merge with the (m)other. It will argue that the adult Theodora's mental disarray is due to a lack of a cohesive sense of self which may be seen as originating in a traumatic early relationship with the (m)other. Denied the necessary initial bonding with the (m)other, she makes a life-long attempt to redress this, and is unable to separate images of the self from images of the (m)other in the process of her individuation.

Margaret Mahler writes that "optimal human symbiosis" is essential for the "vicissitudes of individuation and for the establishment of a cathectically stable sense of identity" (1968: 14). Failure in this regard results not only in impaired self-esteem, but also activates, metonymically, an endless desire to recapture this elusive union with the (m)other. The novel suggests that Theodora is denied any such semblance of symbiosis or bonding with the (m)other, as can be seen, for instance in: "Mother did not kiss. Or not much. And then only

Fanny" (TAS: 27). There is substantial textual evidence that Theodora does not have a harmonious relationship with her mother which is so crucial to normal development. Mrs. Goodman's emotional rejection and frequent criticisms have devastatingly negative psychological impact on Theodora, for whom "there are many bitter days at Meroe when the roselight hardened and blackened" (TAS: 27). Mrs. Goodman not only constantly undermines Theodora's confidence in herself, but she also discourages her from acquiring what are considered to be "feminine" accomplishments: "'The piano is not for Theodora,' Mother sighed. 'Fanny is the musical one'" (TAS: 28).

In order to more graphically illustrate Theodora's emotional deprivations and psychological conflicts, the narrative explicitly and implicitly, consciously and unconsciously, uses the devices of doubling and/or splitting. As doubles or other aspects of Theodora, several characters embody attributes and characteristics which she either does not possess or which she represses. For instance, Pearl Brawne, as Theodora's double personifies sexuality, and Theodora is repressed and asexual. Fanny is a bourgeois matron and Theodora is a "spinster". Thus this group of characters consisting of doubles of each other synergistically creates a concept of "womanhood".

The opening line of the novel provides many clues to the dysfunctional family relationships of the Goodmans: "But old Mrs. Goodman did die at last"

(TAS: 11). The words "at last" suggest that someone, perhaps Theodora, through whom the narrative is focussed, is longing and waiting for her mother's death. A desire for the death of the parent of the same sex generally signals Oedipal conflicts. However, while there are vestiges of Oedipal conflict in Theodora's implied desire for her (m)other's death, viewed in light of Object Relations theories, these conflicts may be perceived as arising out of anxieties over separation from the parental object, caused by lack of initial bonding with the (m)other, which is essential for successful individuation. The issues of separation and individuation, which occur before the Oedipal stage in psychological development, appear to be more fundamental to Theodora's development and to the novel as a whole, than do Oedipal tensions.

Theodora's desires for the death of her mother may thus more fruitfully be seen as retaliatory, aggressive phantasies against a "bad" and unloving mother. As such, these phantasies are intrapsychic dramas of a child who has been narcissistically wounded.<sup>2</sup> Significantly, this wound is caused not by loss of the mother by death or absence, but because she is aloof and emotionally absent even while she is physically present, and so is incapable of meeting the emotional needs of the developing child.

Mrs. Goodman appears to alienate, rather than bond with Theodora. Consequently, in the process of separation from the (m)other and in order to

cope with the loss of maternal love, Theodora splits the parental object between the "good" father whom she loves and the "bad" mother for whom "her love was sometimes smudged by hate" (TAS: 12). Simultaneously, the image of the female child is split in Theodora's mind, as well as her (m)other's, into the conventionally pretty Fanny who is loved by the (m)other, and who has prospects of a bourgeois marriage, and the plain Theodora, doomed to spinsterhood, who is constantly criticised. Accordingly, Fanny receives the (m)other's love and adulation, and Theodora is the target of incessant criticism. Theodora and Fanny are seen as the focus of the Goodman's family life, though, as Giffin points out this demonstrates an ideal rather than a reality, for in this family "children are not the source of existential possibility, children are the objects of uniformity or conformity as the symbolic order seeks to socialise the Goodman girls" (1993: 89). Giffin argues that their family relationship reveals a "more fundamental dynamic...the politics and the aesthetic ideology which determines who shall be touched, loved and affirmed" (1993: 89). He observes that "Fanny's existence is affirmed by the mother, but only because she accepts the mimetic role being imposed upon her. Theodora's existence is not affirmed because she is both unattractive and intuitively rejects the symbolic order" (1993: 89). Theodora's rejection by her mother is in sharp contrast to her

mother's approbation and adulation of Fanny, which makes it all the more excruciating for Theodora:

'Oh,' she cried, 'Fanny, my roses, my roses, you are very pretty.'....

'And Theo,' she said, 'all dressed up. Well, well. But I don't think we'll let you wear yellow again, because it doesn't suit, even in a sash. It turns you sallow,' Mother said. (TAS: 27)

'Turn your toes out, Theodora. And run and do your hair. You look a fright.'  
(TAS: 40)

Like any other child, Theodora seeks reassurance in the mirror. But what she perceives in the mirror is not the integrated image of normal individuation.

Instead,

the old mirror was like a green sea in which she swam, patched and spotted like gold light. Light and the ghostly water in the old glass dissolved her bones. The big straw hat with the little yellow buds and the trailing ribbons floated. But the face was the long, thin, yellow face of Theodora Goodman, who they said was sallow. She turned and destroyed the reflection, more especially the reflection of the eyes, by walking away. They sank into the green water and were lost. (TAS: 27)

Considered in Lacanian terms, Theodora appears not to have successfully negotiated even the mirror stage of childhood, where the child jubilantly assumes a unified specular image of itself, even if it be a "*méconnaissance*" (in Sheridan 1977: 6, 15-20). For Theodora, the mirror reflects not a unification, but a poignant dissolution of her image and loss of a sense of self.

The destructive (m)other, Mrs. Goodman, is counterpointed with the good parent, Mr. Goodman, who is "not awful. He was serious" (TAS: 22). In a role reversal, it is he who takes the (m)other's place and wakes Theodora in the



mornings, with a gentle touch of a finger on a cheek, like a latter-day Prince Charming. In a spirit of companionship, he teaches her to tote a rifle, to be a crack shot, and to love books: "'You must come in, Theodora,' Father said finally. 'You must come in whenever you like, and take to[sic] books'" (TAS: 23). But Theodora's affinity for what are considered to be "masculine" pastimes in the society of her time, such as shooting, riding, and even reading, contributes to her sense of alienation and tends to erode, rather than strengthen or consolidate her sense of self, and she evolves as a tentative creature, of uncertain identity. Metaphors of unopened roses, unhatched eggs, and even grubs, are used to depict her arrested psychological development:

Morning was bigger than the afternoon, and round, and veined like the skin inside an unhatched egg, in which she curled safe still, but smiling for them to wake her. (TAS: 22)

Not only does Mrs. Goodman alienate Theodora, but she also prohibits a close relationship with her father. In the Goodman household, it is not the patriarch, but the matriarch that rules: "Your father is not to be disturbed, said Mother, which gave to his door a certain degree of awfulness" (TAS: 22). As Michael Giffin observes: "Often the mother figure in White becomes the forbidding and authority figure while the father figure feels impulses towards love and mutuality which never quite express themselves" (1993: 91). Giffin writes that Theodora's sense of disunity is not only due to her mother, but that it

is also due to a weak and retiring father. "As the nominal patriarch of law and authority he remains directionless and ineffectual" (1993: 91). On the surface it would appear that Theodora complies with the maternal edict. But the narrative makes clear that while Mrs. Goodman can regulate Theodora's actions, she cannot control her emotions. Theodora's frustrations at this enforced separation are revealed metaphorically:

So you walked past Father's door with a sense of awfulness, especially as it was that side of the house, where sometimes the pines, when the wind blew, flung themselves at the windows in throaty spasms. (IAS: 22-23)

Mr. Goodman's tentative, compensatory attentions towards Theodora and his affection for her tend to exacerbate rather than heal the growing rift between her and her (m)other. Furthermore, as Starzecpyzel argues, the special attentions of the father or other paternal authority may serve to activate the Oedipal triangle (cited in Kirkby forthcoming). However, her longing for attachment to the father is an attempt to compensate for a cold or indifferent (m)other. In an essay entitled "The Persephone Complex", Eileen Starzecpyzel explains that the Oedipal complex need not involve actual sexuality and that it is often caused by the loss of the mother which compels the child to turn to the father for a positive and nurturing relationship: "Mother Bond Damage, Father Bond Substitution" (cited in Kirkby forthcoming).

While Theodora is depicted as enmeshed within the throes of separation and individuation, some of the other female characters, such as Fanny and Pearl, as Theodora's female avatars, lead social and sexual lives which she either denies or is denied. Fanny, with her conventional good looks, represents the perennial wife and (m)other. She is groomed from childhood to make a successful bourgeois marriage, while the dowdy Theodora is relegated to "spinsterhood". Pearl displays what the other two repress: lust and a vigorous sexuality which leads to a flourishing career as a whore. Taken together, Theodora, Fanny and Pearl present a mosaic of womanhood. However, while Theodora represents the repressed female, she does not appear as essentially feminine, and is seen by others to be of ambiguous gender, even during her childhood:

'Let us play at houses,' Fanny said. 'I shall have a house with twenty rooms. In one room there will be ivory, and in another gold, and another amethyst. I am going to dust the ornaments with a feather duster. I have children too, but they will not be allowed in these rooms, in case they are boisterous and knock over my things. You are my husband, Theo.' (TAS: 31)

Fanny represents the acquisitive wife, and, as Veronica Brady observes, "neither sex nor companionship has much to do with Fanny's dream. At best, the husband is merely the provider who works hard, and showers her with diamonds and furs. As for the children, they are necessary and obligatory" (in Walker 1983: 184).

Theodora's encounter with Pearl and Tom behind the cow bails is a displacement of the primal scene.<sup>3</sup> Instead of witnessing her parents' sexual activity, Theodora stumbles on to Pearl and Tom, parental surrogates who are performing the sexual act. This displacement may also be seen as an indication of narrative ambivalence to sex and the institution of marriage. As often in White's fiction, healthy, active sex is depicted outside of marriage as in Pearl and Tom's liaison, or Rose and Jack's sexual relationship in Voss. It is also interesting to note that in White's fiction sexuality is often linked with the lower classes and not with the bourgeoisie - Pearl and Tom in The Aunt's Story, and Rose and Jack Slipper in Voss are all servants. Nevertheless, from the point of view of Theodora's psychological development, this primal scene constitutes a traumatic experience:

And now you could see some strange and palpitating thing had taken place, unknown, or by accident, in Pearl's blouse. Pearl had burst, pinker than any split mushroom, white-cleft. Pearl's front was open. It was terrible and strange. And the terror and strangeness had mounted. (TAS: 37)

Theodora's childhood is a collage of various negative and traumatic childhood experiences - rejection by the (m)other, primal scene witnessing, and Oedipal yearnings which contribute to a tenuous sense of individuation. But perhaps most damaging of these experiences is the real or phantasised persecution by a threatening (m)other. Her fragile, vulnerable and ambiguous sense of self which is dramatised in her hypnagogic<sup>4</sup> hallucinations:

There was the night, for instance, somewhere early in summer, when she woke in bed and found that she was not beneath the tree. She had put out her hand to touch the face before the lightning struck, but not the tree. She was holding the faceless body that she had not yet recognized, and the lightning struck deep. Breaking her dream, the house was full of breathing people asleep and the pressure of furniture. She got up. It was hot in the passage. It was suffocating as death. A stale cry came out of the mirror in the passage, choked, as if it just could not scream, even in its agony (TAS: 77)

But even lightning and nightmares are not as threatening to Theodora as attacks by a persecutory, destructive (m)other: "It was terrible, the strength of Mother. All your own weakness came flooding back. Mother was more terrible than lightning that had struck the tree" (TAS: 42).

Theodora's desperate search for herself is of Gothic dimensions. According to Wilt, Gothic involves ontological, not just psychological, premises. Dread is the mainspring of the Gothic, and Theodora's delirium reveals both dread and anxiety about her identity. "Dread begets rage and fright, but Dread has no face...no face but not - nothing" (Wilt 1980: 5). Theodora's Prince, her father, comforts and calms her after her nightmare, and she tries to lure him on and delay his retiring behind a closed door:

and she wanted to stop him, because all the sadness of the world was in the house. There was the possibility that when the door closed, he would suffer the fate of the Man who was Given his Dinner, she might never see him again. But there are occasions on which you cannot stop the closing of the door. It closed. It closed on Father. She was alone in the passage. It would happen. It would be like this in time. (TAS: 78)

Theodora's neurotic fear about her father's closed door is a displacement of her fear of separation from the (m)other. Denied bonding with her mother, she yearns for it with her father.

Theodora's clinging to her father as he retreats behind the bedroom door prefigures her father's death scene. He dies a frustrated and saddened man, who never realises his life's ambition of seeing Greece, because his wife forbade it, just as she forbade Theodora's closeness to him. In his final moments, it is Theodora who takes her (m)other's place with George Goodman. Self and (m)other merge as "her own close thought spoke to her from his mouth and said: 'I am glad that you have come, Theodora. I thought that you would. Because I know I am going to die'" (TAS: 85).

The deathbed scene is reminiscent of the miner's death in D. H. Lawrence's short story "Odour of Chrysanthemums" (1963). In Lawrence's story, mother and wife compete in fondling and touching the dead man, the beloved child and husband, each vying with the other to perform the last ablutions for him. In The Aunt's Story, with the odour of chrysanthemums hanging heavily in the air, Theodora replaces her (m)other, and shares in private her father's last moments:

'But there is no reason, my dear Theodora, why I should go on living. I have finished.'

'No,' she said, 'not yet.'

She would throw her strength against this stone that he kept rolling on her mouth.

'And we are close,' he said. 'It is not possible for us to come any closer.' (TAS: 85)

The "stone that he kept rolling on her mouth" metaphorically suggests a barrier to deeper intimacy and indicates that this need for further closeness with her father is Theodora's alone, and not a mutual desire between parent and child.

A part of Theodora dies with her father. But the experience is too intense and private to share with any one, including her mother, and perhaps, especially her mother. In a poignant moment, drowned in grief, Theodora cries out to her mother mentally, but not vocally: "Mother, I am dead, I am dead" (TAS: 85). The mental cry illustrates the extent of Theodora's isolation and alienation, not only because of the death of her father, but because of her inability to communicate or share her grief with the (m)other.

The fact that Theodora feels a part of her is dead with her father may be seen in a dual light. This wished for, or imaginatively experienced, "death" is a metaphor for her acutely repressed and alienated condition. It may also be seen in terms of what Kenneth Burke in his "Thanatopsis for Critics" (1952) calls the "*Liebestod* principle" - dying as a surrogate for sexual union, in this case, with her father. But even more than the desire for sexual union, it represents a displaced yearning for regression to primal fusion with the parental object, the (m)other.

The death of her parents extinguishes even Theodora's fragile sense of self: "she could not say with conviction: I am I", since her main role in life was to be their daughter. Narcissistically wounded people depend on others to validate their sense of self, and Theodora turns to her niece and nephew to restore "the lost identity. The children would ratify her freedom" (TAS: 13).

Theodora clings to the institutional role of aunt to salvage her identity. She is "this thing a spinster which, at best, becomes that institution an aunt" (TAS: 12). She tries to reassure herself that she is "at most, but also at least, an aunt" (TAS: 12). In Theodora's phantasies, her niece, Lou, is her own daughter. "Lou had no obvious connection with either Frank or Fanny". She emanates from "some dark and secret place in one's own body" (TAS: 13). The role of aunt is a displacement for the more intense and intimate role of motherhood for which she unconsciously longs.

The boys, on the other hand, insensitively stroke her moustache, thereby not only reifying her as a thing, an object or a toy, but also exacerbating her fragile sense of identity as a woman. She is an ambiguous creature, with hermaphroditic qualities, a biological female, with male characteristics and mannerisms. She has a moustache, is skilled at shooting, and is seen by others as "the bloke in skirts" (TAS: 67). As a female with male characteristics, Theodora is also Other to herself.



The difficulties experienced in reconciling these dualities attenuate her sense of self. Not only does she represent one aspect of the feminine personality, the repressed spinster, but her tenuous sense of self is also assailed by her sexual undifferentiation or duality. She appears as neither completely male nor completely female. In fact, her very name, Theo-Dora, implies her hermaphroditic duality, combining both male and female nomenclature. "Theo" is an abbreviation of a masculine name, and "Dora" is a "feminine" name made famous by Freud in his "Fragment of an analysis of a case of hysteria" (1953). Narrative endorsement of Theodora implies that like many of White's hermaphrodites, she is one of the elect. The name "Theodora" also suggests that she is imbued with the numinous. As Giffin observes, "Theodora" translates from Greek as God's gift or God's offering and can be interpreted as either a gift from God or offering to God (1993: 89).

The various connotations of her name suggest psychological and physiological complexities. This produces a sense of tension, with the male/female complementarity expressing further division within the personality.

As Dollimer posits:

But the subject is not only split in the sense of needing the other to complete itself; it is also split because its identity is actually informed by the other, by what it is not (1991: 254)

To the conventional members of her society she appears as freakish as a lamb with two heads, which is an apt symbol for her ambiguous identity: "So the lamb was born with two heads in the hollow, and they put it in a jar, in a cupboard at Meroe, to be shown to the curious until its wonder was forgotten" (TAS: 60). Like the freakish lamb, Theodora is often gawked at by society. Since she grows up in Australia in the years surrounding The Great War, her equivocal identity appears as a social and psychological handicap, reflecting the ideology of the era. Her attempts to deal with conflicting aspects of herself, including perhaps her androgynous qualities, culminate in what her society calls "madness". A much later novel, The Twyborn Affair, written almost thirty years later and set in the changing and volatile social climates of the French Riviera, Sydney and London, explores the possibilities for the protagonist's hermaphroditic or androgynous qualities and heterosexual and homosexual relationships more openly. But for Theodora, in her time and age, as a biological female, her "non feminine" or "masculine" attributes are seen as impediments to successful heterosexual relationships in a patriarchal society.

Considering the period in which the novel was written and its early twentieth century setting, the possibilities of exploring a homosexual relationship for Theodora, (except in phantasy or madness) are also negligible. Her intimate friendship with Violet Adams and their feverish excursions into

love poetry are brief, but intense: "They were one body walking through the trees. Their voices rose and stroked at each other like grey birds. Violet Adams was one mystery which it was possible to touch" (TAS: 54). However, their relationship is seen more in light of a displacement of Theodora's need for merging with the (m)other, than as a homosexual urge.

Theodora's problematic interpersonal relationships are envisioned by the finishing school *duenna*, Miss Spofforth:

Probably you will never marry. We are not the kind. You will not say things they want to hear, flattering their vanity and their strength, because you will not know how, instinctively, and because it would not flatter *you*. But there is much that you will experience. You will see clearly, beyond the bone. You will grow up probably ugly, and walk through life in sensible shoes. Because you are honest, and because you are barren, you will be both honoured and despised. (TAS: 63)

Here the reader is drawn into a collusive relationship with the narrator. Miss Spofforth's interior monologue makes the reader privy to her secret thoughts about Theodora's ugliness, barrenness and spinsterhood, which reflect the views of a patriarchal society. This creates the effect of distanciation, with the result that the reader feels caught, somewhat guiltily, feeling pity, rather than empathy, for Theodora, because she is not equipped with the conventional good looks or social graces necessary for survival and for marriage in a patriarchal society. As Carolyn Heilbrun observes, "woman's most persistent problem has been to discover for herself an identity not linked by custom or defined by attachment to some man" (1973: 72-73). Nor does Theodora possess the flight of genius and

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creativity which might enable her to restore her sense of self. Miss Spofforth mentally prophesies for Theodora that

You will never make a statue, or write a poem. Although you will be torn by all the agonies of music, you are not creative. You have not the artist's vanity, which is moved finally to express itself in objects. (TAS: 63)

The end of her stay at Miss Spofforth's finishing school signals a new phase in Theodora's life, and launches her into the marriage market.

As mentioned earlier, Margaret Mahler tells us that psychological development evolves in phases. Following an initial phase of differentiation from the (m)other, the developing child practises at separation from her, progresses towards independence, rapprochement and ultimately to consolidation of identity. Theodora's tentative forays into the marriage market with Frank Parrott and Huntly Clarkson represent the practising phase in her life. She "practises" leaving her (m)other, and tries to function on her own by attempting to establish a relationship with Frank Parrott, her first suitor. The narrative suggests that Theodora never makes more than an occasional or tentative attempt at such "practising" and therefore does not achieve rapprochement and ultimate consolidation of a sense of self.

In the dance with Frank Parrott, she experiences a fleeting moment of awakening, where she feels released from the confines of her body, and realises

the possibilities of another level of existence. This is a further indication of her sense of a split or dual self - a repressed self and a potential uninhibited self:

And the music took them and flung them, the cool and relentless music that they entered, to lose control, that they did not question. Inside the dictatorial stream they were pressed into a dependence on each other that was important....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 Parrott. (*TAS*: 75-76)

Theodora's "release from her own body" and "imprisonment" in Frank Parrott is a displacement of her desire to merge with the (m)other. But the symbiotic impulse is experienced only by Theodora, and not by Frank. Frank also takes Theodora on a shooting expedition, but his ardour is quickly quenched when she outshoots him. This wounds his masculine ego, and he marries Fanny instead.

The shooting incident has attracted much critical attention. Many critics point out that Theodora identifies with the hawk which she subsequently shoots. They argue, therefore, that in shooting the hawk Theodora reveals suicidal tendencies (Beatson 1977: 98; Bliss 1986: 39; Burrows 1966: 154). And indeed, the narrative appears to make this explicit when Theodora comments on the shooting: "I was wrong, she said, but I shall continue to destroy myself, right down to the last of my several lives" (*TAS*: 71). Beatson comments that Theodora begins a quest to destroy "the monster Self". He argues that she is "forced in paradoxical self-defence to commit acts of 'suicide'; negating her own existence so that it may not be hurt or destroyed from without" (1977: 98). Bliss

posits that "since the hawk seems to stand for a ferocious will to live, its killing fittingly initiates a larger suicidal project" (1986: 39). And Burrows sees it as "another way to freedom, a symbolic suicide, a destruction of the life she might have led with him" (1966: 154).

But there is more to the shooting incident than that. The "several lives" suggest the various conflicts within Theodora and indicate her growing awareness of the possibilities of other lives and modes of living which transcend the socially defined and approved roles of wife and mother. In a conversation with a friend, Una Russell, Theodora confides that she does not want to marry, implying that it would interfere with her "seeing".

'I don't want to marry,' said Theodora.

'Why ever not? There is nothing else to do.'

'I want to do nothing yet. I want to see.'

'If you are not careful you will miss the bus,' said Una Russell. (TAS: 52)

"I want to see" could mean that she wants to wait and see what happens, whether she will want to marry or not, and it could also mean that instead of marrying, she wants to "see" other aspects of life. To Theodora, the two appear to be incompatible. The shooting incident, then, may be seen in motivational terms. By proving that she is more skilled in what is traditionally considered to be a "masculine" sport, Theodora crushes Frank's ego thereby destroying her prospects of marriage with him.

This is not merely accidental, and may be seen as a defence mechanism on her part to protect the possibility of pursuing an inner, intrinsic, life. By destroying her prospects of marriage with Frank, it is implied that she enhances her chances of "seeing", because marriage would be, for Theodora, an obstacle toward such awareness. She fears it would become for her, as for her parents, a "long sleep" (TAS: 66). Worse still, she could become, like her mother, a potential or symbolic murderess:

And if Julia Goodman took a knife and turned it in her husband's side to watch the expression on his face and scent the warm blood that flowed, George Goodman stirred in his sleep and changed position to another dream, of mortgages perhaps, or drought, or fire. (TAS: 66)

Their marriage, like Fanny's phantasies of marriage, is devoid of notions of love and companionship, and Theodora's destruction of her chances of marrying Frank Parrott may be seen as an attempt to escape such a fate. However, what is more significant is that Theodora so identifies with her (m)other that she cannot conceive of a married life different from that of her parents, and more importantly, that she is frightened at the prospect of separating herself from (m)other and her home.

The game of marksmanship is repeated with Huntly Clarkson, with similar devastating results to her prospects of marriage. Her superior shooting skills reduce Huntly to a big, soft, sweaty mass like a "grey emasculated cat" (TAS: 120). With one swift shot Theodora deflates his ego, symbolically



castrates him, curtails his acquisitive power over her and releases herself from prospects of a sterile marriage. Nevertheless, Clarkson tries to seduce her with his riches. Just like Christ who was tempted by Satanic bread in the desert, Theodora is tempted by Clarkson's "smoky voice", his "kindness" and "affluence", as she surveys the offering of his estate. "His voice compelled her to make the balcony her universe" (TAS: 99). He "attempted even to buy her with brilliance" (TAS: 105). Theodora's prize for winning the shooting match with Huntly is a kewpie doll, an ironic symbol of the child she may never physically have. However, in consideration of her mother's fear that she would appear vulgar for carrying a doll in the streets (TAS: 121), and fearful too of her nagging, Theodora does not pick up her prize, thereby at once refusing the ironic symbol, and attempting to keep the peace and pacify her mother.

Huntly's courtship, however, does not appear to be inspired by love or romance, but to be prompted by his acquisitive nature in the pursuit of power:

'I collect,' he said, 'unusual objects. I have the signatures of four English kings. I have the breviary of Maximilian of Mexico and a ball of hair that was cut out of the stomach of a cat.' (TAS: 102)

Theodora is another such rare object, an oddity. But by displaying her prowess at shooting she threatens Huntly's sense of masculine identity and saves herself from becoming one of his collectibles, in a marriage which would reify and dehumanise her and stultify her development. However, it is ironic that in

refusing Huntly's offer of marriage, and in returning to life with her cantankerous (m)other, Theodora is, in reality, substituting one form of bondage for another.

Her attempts at romance with prospects of ultimate marriage which would entail leaving home and (m)other are analogous to the "practising" phase Mahler writes about. But her refusal of marriage and her continuing to live with her domineering and oppressive (m)other indicates Theodora's failure to successfully negotiate this phase of separation and individuation. Viewed in this context, return to a life with her mother appears to be more damaging to Theodora's psychological development than life with Clarkson would have been.

Theodora and her mother appear to be imprisoned in a mutually dependent relationship of reciprocal hate. Fear of annihilation by the (m)other, phantasised or otherwise, is a constant menace in Theodora's life. There is a dialectic of mutual hate. Prompted by the recent murder of the neighbouring Frost family, Theodora seriously considers, but ultimately refrains from committing matricide. However, it must be pointed out that she ultimately stops short of murdering her (m)other, not because of love for her, or a sense of guilt, but because she fears it would be futile. She feels her inextricably linked with her (m)other. "But this, she trembled, does not cut the knot. She threw back the thin knife, which fell and clattered on the zinc" (TAS: 123). Nevertheless, she

feels "guilty of a murder that has not been done...it is the same thing, blood is only an accompaniment" (TAS: 123). Nor is Mrs. Goodman oblivious to her daughter's hatred of her: "'Theodora, you look as if you have seen a murder'" (TAS: 123).

Her exchange with the (m)other after the shooting incident with Huntly is one of the most vicious episodes in the novel:

'You must have looked a sight,' said Mrs. Goodman, 'carrying a vulgar doll through the crowd.'

In her hate she would have hewn down this great wooden idol with the grotesque doll in its arms.

'I spared your sensibility,' Theodora said. 'I did not take my prize.'....

'Mother, must you destroy?'

'Destroy?' asked Mrs. Goodman.

'Yes,' said Theodora. 'I believe you were born with an axe in your hand.' (TAS: 121)

Mrs. Goodman's murderous rage and Theodora's fear of destruction by her mother is evocative of the Kleinian child's phantasies of persecution by the (m)other, and bodes ill for Theodora's developing sense of self. Mahler points out that in cases of traumatic separation, normal individuation is not accomplished successfully (1968: 2). The axe imagery depicts the malevolence of the mother-daughter relationship, and metaphorically represents the traumatic savagery of the separation experience.

In her own mind, Theodora's relationship with her persistent suitor, Huntly Clarkson, is analogous to the relationship with her (m)other. Both relationships drain and exhaust her. "When we have drained the last emotional

drops from a relationship, we contemplate the cup which is all that is left, and the shape of that is dubious. So neither Mrs. Goodman nor Huntly Clarkson had survived in more than shape" (TAS: 123). According to Bliss, this is another of Theodora's metaphoric suicides, because "she has excised both from her life, and with them vital pieces of herself" (1986: 40).

Refusing offers of marriage, Theodora loses herself in compensatory phantasies. At Moraïtis' cello concert, as in the dance with Frank Parrott, she is transported into another world in euphoric union with the man and his music. Like God breathing life into Adam, Moraïtis "could breathe into her mouth" (TAS: 111). According to Marr, White was familiar with James Joyce's work, (1991: 49), and there is occasional evidence of Joyce's influence on White's fiction. The tone of the narrative is Joycean and Theodora's moment of metaphysical union with Moraïtis is reminiscent of Stephen Dedalus' epiphanic moment on the beach in Ireland:

The 'cello rocked, she saw. She could read the music underneath his flesh. She was close. He could breathe into her mouth. He filled her mouth with long aching silences, between the deeper notes that reached down deep into her body. She felt the heavy eyelids on her eyes....But in the last movement Moraïtis rose again above the flesh.... He wore the expression of sleep and solitary mirrors. The sun was in his eyes, the sky had passed between his bones. (TAS: 111)

Compare this with the passage from James Joyce's A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man:

Her image had passed into his soul forever and no word had broken the holy silence of his ecstasy. Her eyes had called him and his soul had leaped at the call....

He closed his eyes in the languor of sleep. His eyelids trembled as if they felt the vast cyclic movement of the earth and her watchers, trembled as if they felt the strange light of some new world. (Joyce 1977: 156-157)

White's language, like Joyce's suggests epiphany. In both passages the sensuous, the numinous and the artistic converge. The mythic resonance of the language indicates that, for Theodora, this is more than rapture at a concert. She feels transported into a meta-sexual union with Moraïtis. In her phantasies his music is "more tactile than the hot words of lovers spoken on a wild nasturtium bed, the violins had arms" (TAS: 112). Like Mary at the Annunciation, Theodora experiences something physical: "This thing which had happened between Moraïtis and herself she held close, like a woman holding her belly" (TAS: 112), revealing her unconscious desire to have a child by Moraïtis. Incapable of establishing intimacy and of consummating physical union in order to bear a child, she resorts to phantasy for wish fulfilment. Nevertheless, it is a deeply felt experience for Theodora, and elicits an empathic or sympathetic response from the reader. To borrow Kristeva's terminology, Theodora experiences "*jouissance*", an ecstasy which is "sexual, spiritual, physical, conceptual at one and the same time" (in Roudiez 1990: 16).

Theodora's phantasmic pregnancy is juxtaposed with news of Fanny's actual pregnancy, thus recalling the splitting of the female character into

Theodora, the barren spinster, and Fanny the fertile (m)other and wife. Theodora's symbolic motherhood is counterpointed with Fanny's actual prolific motherhood and the rollicking promiscuousness of the servant Pearl, who is now a full-fledged whore.

Internalising her (m)other's and society's negative images of her, Theodora feels unlovely and unloved in the presence of Pearl:

Theodora felt the warm gusts of the white woman. She felt her yes. She saw the wet lips that many nights had pulped. Such a glittering progress, that was both lovely and obscene, turned her own skin to bark under her brown clothes. (TAS: 125)

The representation of Pearl, the good-hearted whore, a forerunner of Nance Lightfoot in The Vivisector, reveals narrative ambivalence towards conventional norms of morality: "She was kinder than kindness. Theodora's body bloomed under the kind rain of Pearl" (TAS: 126).

Effie Lambadaridou suggests that Pearl implicitly provides evidence of George Goodman's responsibility for her pregnancy. She cites Pearl's reference to her mysterious friend, Cyril, who resembles George Goodman, and the stationary light bulb, a symbol of truth, which hangs over her as she talks to Theodora, as suggestions of this evidence (1986: 57). Moreover, Pearl herself protests that she "never cared for Tom", the man she was originally seen having sex with. She also makes suggestive references which hint at familiarity with

George Goodman (TAS: 127). "My bloody word! As bad as your Dad, Cyril was. Remember your Dad, Theo, eh?" (TAS: 127).

The notion of George Goodman fathering a child with a servant is a tantalising possibility, which gains plausibility when one considers White's indebtedness to the nineteenth century Victorian tradition, where it is a commonplace for men to make angels of their wives, and then turn to working class whores to satisfy their sexual appetites. If Pearl is indeed impregnated by George Goodman, then she is in the position of Other and (m)other to Theodora.

Theodora cherishes the memory of her meeting with Pearl, her alter ego, which she feels is "far too secret" to share with her (m)other (TAS: 128). The meeting with Pearl Brawne is of particular significance because it demonstrates alternative possibilities of womanhood. Even though, as servant and whore, Pearl is society's Other, she enjoys a measure of freedom. She achieves sexual intimacy and motherhood, and exercises the option to pick and choose her sexual partners in her profession, while Theodora stands helplessly by, feeling that she has "no lifeline to other lives" (TAS: 132).

The three aspects of womanhood as represented by Theodora, Fanny and Pearl broadly exemplify the three phases of separation and individuation which Mahler calls "hatching". According to Mahler, these phases comprise: awareness of differentiation from the (m)other, the establishment of a specific

bond with her, and the growth and functioning of autonomous ego apparatuses in close proximity to the (m)other (1972: 335). Theodora's propensity for merging with and appropriating the experiences of the Other shows lack of proper differentiation from the (m)other and a desire for regressive union with the (m)other; Fanny, the loved and favoured child, demonstrates the effects of bonding with her (m)other; and Pearl displays an autonomous ego and functions independently, as a whore.

Mrs. Goodman's death ultimately sets Theodora both free and adrift, and she embarks on a journey to Europe *and the Jardin Exotique* where, as Edelson describes it, she seems to be "shopping for a self" (1985: 236).

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Most of the critical attention to The Aunt's Story has focused on the *Jardin Exotique*. The majority of critics agree that this section involves Theodora's phantasies and that the many characters represent various aspects of herself and members of her family. Characters appear as Theodora's doubles, merge, change and exchange roles. As John and Rose Marie Beston observe "all have multiple identities, sometimes simultaneously" (1975: 6). This is more than a Freudian



dream or phantasy. It represents psychic confusion and undifferentiation of the self from the (m)other to the extent normally called "madness" by society, as the conclusion of the novel indicates. As such, it is not very profitable to chronicle in detail each incident at the Hôtel du Midi, especially in view of the fact that perspectives are kaleidoscopic, and characters change into doubles, surrogates and avatars of Theodora and the (m)other with dizzying rapidity. Nevertheless, it may be useful to note that Theodora's interaction with the other characters in the *Jardin*, phantasised or otherwise, are re-enactments of practising at separation of the self from the (m)other in the process of individuation.

In order to make sense of the novel and to establish the relevance of these phantasies to Theodora's life of repression, it is helpful to identify some points of connection with her "normal" life. In the *Jardin Exotique* the doubling and splitting of characters is multiplied into an explosion of various incarnations of Theodora and members of her family. Very appropriately, the fantastic mode dominates in this section of the narrative. In Flaws in the Glass (1983) White writes about his stylistic approach to the novel:

In writing this novel I first had to break myself of the habit acquired while compiling factual reports in the Air Force, closer to the practice of *objective* journalism than the pursuit of truth in creative fiction. I grew drunk cultivating a garden of words and sensations which had been waiting years to germinate. (EG: 1983: 127)

In the "fantastic" literary mode, as in Klein's theory of "phantasy", classical unities of character, space and time are shattered. According to Rosemary Jackson, in fantastic literature chronological time is exploded and the past, present and future blend, losing their historical sequence (1981: 47):

Fantasy, with its tendency to dissolve structures, moves towards an ideal of *undifferentiation* and this is one of its defining characteristics. It refuses difference, distinction, homogeneity, reduction, discrete forms. This desire for undifferentiation is close to the instinct which Freud identified in Beyond the Pleasure Principle (1920), and in his late works, as the most fundamental drive in man: a drive towards a state of inorganicism. This has been crudely termed a 'death wish', but it is not a simple desire to cease to be. Freud sees it as the most radical form of the pleasure principle, a longing for Nirvana, where all tensions are reduced. This condition he termed a state of *entropy*, and the desire for undifferentiation he termed an *entropic* pull, opposing entropy to energy, to the erotic, aggressive drives of any organism. (1981: 72-73)

In the *Jardin Exotique* boundaries are blurred and there is no clear distinction between illusion and reality, self and (m)other. Time is fluid, silence is intensified, and "the soul, left with little to hide behind, must forsake its queer opaque manner of life and come out into the open" (TAS: 140).

The narrative prepares the reader for the forthcoming phantasmagoria of Theodora's many-splendoured lives and selves. In Dickensian fashion, walls come alive and yawn, setting the stage for the eruption of the main events (TAS: 143). Theodora waits in breathless anticipation of meeting the other guests. Katina's appearance on the scene triggers the onset of Theodora's metamorphoses into several selves, transcending the boundaries between self and (m)other:

Each moment of waiting was a death. And Theodora Goodman had become a mirror, held to the girl's experience. Their eyes were interchangeable, like two distant, unrelated lives mingling for a moment in sleep. (TAS: 142)

Considered in mythic terms, the death which is referred to suggests Theodora's stages of reincarnation. However, in psychoanalytic terms, the "interchangeable eyes" and the mingling of selves depict both endless desire and "*méconnaissance*". Elizabeth Wright offers a useful commentary on Lacan's notions of *méconnaissance* and the significance of the 'gaze':

Desire is lodged to a degree in all that is seen, every observer taking his object-world for granted, but since the unconscious is inscribed in that desire there will always be a mis-seeing, a *méconnaissance*. Unconscious and repression, desire and lack - this dialectical opposition is present in every visual recognition. (1984: 116)

Lacan identifies a 'scopic drive' for this lodging of desire in looking, a subject's search for a fantasy that represents for him/her the lost phallus....For Lacan this happens when the child learns to signify the presence and the absence of the mother. The sexual drive is now deflected from the child's primal object, the mother, into seeking an object always out of reach, to be found only by discovering its trace as an absence in every signifier. This signifying process comes to affect all looking, every recognition at once a finding and a failure to find. (Wright 1984: 117)

Katina is the desired Other, and in a classic case of "*méconnaissance*". Theodora assumes the image of the Other. She waits for the earthquake which Katina has already experienced. The earthquake they experience together, whether a "fact" or phantasy, is a significant event and suggests, metaphorically, an explosion into multitudinous selves which Theodora experiences in the *Jardin Exotique*.

Katina is a multivalent symbol, an over-determined or condensed image of many of Theodora's desires. She serves as a double for Lou, an absent niece,

with whom Theodora shares an intimate love. Theodora becomes Katina's mirror, absorbing and reflecting her experiences, albeit in *méconnaissance*", and in narcissistic fashion, they become one, "two distant unrelated lives mingling" (TAS: 142). According to Rogers, narcissism is one of the bases of lesbianism: "Another form of narcissistic gratification is that obtained by the homosexual in seeking out objects more like himself" (1970: 19). But what is more significant than the notion of lesbianism, is that Theodora's and Katina's relationship may be seen as a displacement of the symbiotic union Theodora wishes to experience with the (m)other.

Despite the sexual overtones in the liaison between Theodora and Katina, Theodora retains a measure of repression. She projects her wishes on to Katina, who makes the overtures, while she herself remains primly correct:

'I would like you', said Katina, 'to be a kind of aunt. Then we would still come to the islands, but without books. We would sit without our dresses, and eat *pistaches*, and do nothing, and talk. And I would kiss you, like this, in the particular way I have for aunts.'

'Go, Katina! It is far too hot.'

'It is never too hot for kissing. And your skin smells nice.' (TAS: 143)

Katina continues to be a potent symbol and a double for Theodora. Since Katina personifies Theodora's projections, her precocious and incestuous licentiousness with Alyosha, the father-figure, is a displacement of Theodora's wish fulfilment of intimacy with her own father (TAS: 221). Through her identification with Katina, Theodora experiences both fulfilment and despair.

Katina articulates Theodora's love for the General, who is a paternal figure for both of them. Katina, in her overtures to the General acts out Theodora's own frustrated Oedipal desire: "Of course, I adore you. If I did not, I would not kiss you. There!" (TAS: 219). Declaring that it is usual to "call one's lover by endearing names" Katina dubs the General her "*Monstera deliciosa*" (TAS: 219). Katina trills with laughter over her conquest of the General, while Theodora Goodman knew "that her own laughter, which she held inside her, hurt" (TAS: 218). Theodora stands by helplessly while in the General's eyes Katina herself merges with Varvara, his original sweetheart: "Come here, my sweetheart, my Varvara. I have a present for you. A prize for prettiness" (TAS: 218).

White's narrative technique and use of indirect speech and interior monologue without the use of punctuation marks reflects the blurring of boundaries:

In the sun, Katina herself was a small round white flint. That I could pick up and fling, wrapped in my love, Theodora felt, into the deathless, breathless sea....

In her arms the child's body, still limp with sleep, was like her own nakedness. (TAS: 143-144)

There is no clear distinction between illusion and reality. The reader is never certain whether Katina actually spent the night with Theodora, lying down in

nakedness, or whether it is a figment of Theodora's imagination, her wish fulfilment:

See, we offer this dispensation, endless, more seductive than aspirin, to give an illusion of fleshy nearness and comfort, in what should be apart, armed, twisted, dreamless, admitting at most the echoes of sound, the gothic world. (TAS: 145)

Elsie van Tuyl, *alias* Mrs. Rapallo, also serves as a double or mirror image for Theodora by reflecting and duplicating some of her experiences. As it turns out, she is also a frustrated "spinster". Her marriage and her daughter, the glorious Principessa, are both figments of her imagination (TAS: 242), just as Lou Parrott, even though she exists as Fanny's daughter, is also, in Theodora's phantasy, the product of Theodora's metasexual union with Moraitis. For Elsie van Tuyl, as for Theodora, the child of her imagination is entirely hers, "unlike any child of the bowels" (TAS: 243). The barren spinster, claiming she has a child of her own, appears to be a recurring image in White's work. It is seen again later in Laura, co-protagonist of Voss, who appropriates her servant's child.

Mrs. Rapallo, with her imaginary daughter, the "Principessa," resembles Julia Goodman in her social ambitions for the marriages of her daughters, and the General is a surrogate father figure for whom Theodora feels both attraction and revulsion, as she "walked with the General in almost Siamese attachment", peering out of "their common emotion" (TAS: 182). This not only suggests a

hermaphroditic image which is further evidence of Theodora's ambiguous sexual identity, but because the General is in a parental position, it also displays her continuing need for symbiotic union with the (m)other.

Theodora's repressed lesbian desires surface periodically in her phantasy. She and Elsie share adjoining bedrooms with a connecting door, and Theodora brushes Elsie's "long, black, intimate, distant, vastly expansive hair in her own hands" as she wondered "just how far companionship went" (TAS: 159). Theodora projects her desires on to the (m)other, Elsie van Tuyl, and her desires become, in Lacanian terms, both the desire for the (m)other and the desire of the (m)other as Elsie murmurs:

Let us take our things and go to the shack. Just the two of us. Alone. We shall walk in the lanes, and gather blueberries, and feel the rain on us, and watch the emerald beetles. (TAS: 159)

But lesbianism is just one of Theodora's many repressions which is unleashed in her phantasies.

The doubling, merging and blurring of identities and breaking down of divisions of race, gender, and spatial and temporal frames continue unabated. In her phantasies, Theodora transcends limits of time and space, experiencing earthquakes, revolutions traversing continents, and taking in cathedrals and circuses *en route*. According to Jackson, in the fantastic mode, "the fragmentation of 'character'... deforms a 'realistic' language of unified, rational

selves. The subject becomes ex-centric, heterogeneous, spreading into every contradiction and (im)possibility" (1981: 90). The General's description of his androgynous sister, Ludmilla, suggests another incarnation for Theodora:

'Even my sister, a reasonable soul, and a spinster, whom I respected, God knows,' sighed the General, 'even my sister Ludmilla was not a lady. She took snuff, and spat in corners, and wore boots like a Cossack under her long skirts.'

Theodora smiled. Because the General was expecting it. And because her boots rang hollow on the cold yellow grass, and in her armpit she felt the firmness of her little rifle. (TAS: 149)

Theodora assumes Ludmilla's identity and becomes Ludmilla, both to herself and to the General:

'Ludmilla, I love you,' said Alyosha Sergei. 'Even when you are a sour, yellow, reasonable woman, who rumbles after camomile tea. Even when you are yourself. But when you are your two selves among the saints, then Ludmilla, I love you best.' (TAS: 152)

The novel's representation of the female is complementary, but not very complimentary. Mrs. Goodman is a harsh and unloving virago, and a would-be murderess, Fanny is a materialist, Pearl is a whore, albeit good-natured, and Theodora is a frustrated "spinster". This predilection for contrasting types is not merely a Romantic convention, but it is also a symptom of splitting.

In the *Jardin*, Theodora becomes a psychological chameleon. Psychologically and emotionally omnivorous, she assumes various changing forms in her struggle towards individuation. As soon as she hears of other personalities, she assumes their characteristics and becomes them. As Beston



observes, she is "clearly in Oedipal relationship with Sokolnikov - George Goodman, being his sweetheart (Varvara), his devoted sister (Ludmilla), and in life his daughter - everything except the ultimate relationship, that of his wife" (1975: 11). Ludmilla/Theodora is a "sour, yellow, reasonable woman", but her duality of selves<sup>5</sup> makes her attractive to the General and opens the door to communion with the saints. Both Ludmilla and Theodora are depicted in ambiguous terms. Biologically, they appear as females, but their mannerisms and posturings are masculine, even suggesting an air of power and superiority:

Theodora heard her boots on the bare boards. She sat with her legs apart, like a man, on equal terms with the saints. Sometimes, very late, when the darkness was full of clocks, the world was a little crystal ball that she would hold in her hand, and stroke and stroke. (TAS: 151)

This implies, to a certain extent, that it is only by combining the dichotomous aspects of the masculine and feminine principles into an androgynous being, that she can assume a position of power and, at the same time, also be alluring to the General. In her phantasies then, as an androgynous being, she assumes this position of power and allure by merging with the image of Ludmilla, or the (m)other.

Theodora's phantasies are not solely directed to seeking nirvana. She identifies so closely with the General that his betrayals and disappointments "laid bare many gaping moments of her own" (TAS: 184). The General's ontological insecurities recall and reflect her own terrifying childhood memories

as "she saw many midnights look into mirrors in doubt, stumble down the corridor, and turn the key" (TAS: 153).

The General and Mrs. Rapallo also appear as doubles or surrogates for her parents. The blurring of their identities triggers within Theodora a return of the repressed. The General blurs into her (m)other, belittling her as memories of her wounded childhood haunt her:

'You would not know,' said the General. 'It takes a lifetime to unravel the history of such impostors. And you have arrived by the morning train.'

She began to feel this without the telling. But it was something she had suspected all her life. Now she knew. She walked with her hat in her hands, the big straw with the unfortunate sallow ribbons, she walked to where her mother sat, saying in her small, horn, [sic] interminable voice: Here is Theodora, we were discussing whether, but of course Theodora would not know, Theodora has just arrived. (TAS: 153)

The yellow ribbons that as a child made her skin appear sallow are now stigmas of parental rejection and ridicule. In her phantasies Theodora destroys the frilly image of the much favoured Fanny, reducing her to pink dust as the music of her gavotte floods the memories of a sad childhood (TAS: 187).

*Le petit* is yet another of Theodora's doubles. She shares vicariously in his narcissistic posturings in front of a mirror, thus redressing her own wounded mirror image of her childhood days. He "loved his reflection endlessly" because "*le petit* did not acknowledge desires, except his own" (TAS: 194). For Theodora, as for *le petit*, the desire for the Other merges with the desire of the Other, which is ultimately, a desire for fusion with the (m)other.

The merger of the self with the (m)other is a frequent occurrence in the *Jardin*. Theodora projects her need to merge with the (m)other on to Lieselotte, another aspect of herself. Lieselotte's relationship with Wetherby is reminiscent of the Catherine and Heathcliffe relationship in Emily Brontë's Wuthering Heights. Lieselotte and Wetherby drown themselves in each other as they engage in narcissistic dialogue, which is in the final analysis, a monologue, since they perceive their identities as fused:

'When I look into your eye I can see myself,' said the voice.  
'That is why you are so necessary to my existence.' (TAS: 196)

'If I were to die of just this extra pressure, which your hands have not the courage to give my death would mean your suicide. You must continue to suffer, slowly, by any and every dreary means, to feel the numbness and desperation of what you choose to call love.' (TAS: 197)

Laurence Steven correctly points out that Theodora experiences difficulties in establishing meaningful human relationships in Parts One and Three of the novel, when she bemoans that "there is no lifeline to other lives." He observes that in both sections this inadequacy is justified by pointing to the limitations of those whom she encounters. However, Steven argues that if Theodora's encounters in the *Jardin* are phantasies, then they need not be given serious consideration (1989: 44-46). On the contrary, according to Kleinian theories, phantasies are the essence of psychic life in the developing ego, as in the creative process, and as such are of crucial importance to the development of

the protagonist and of the novel. The permutations of the adult Theodora's relationships in the *Jardin* poignantly evoke her childhood hopes, fears and anxieties. It is a brilliant, vivid and imaginative representation of a mind that has split and slid into psychic confusion under the stress of separating the self from the (m)other in the process of individuation.

Bliss sees the *Jardin* as offering Theodora a context of dialectic and doubleness in which "instead of expunging her past, she begins to incorporate it" (1986: 42). She argues that Theodora's relationships in the *Jardin* are remedial or therapeutic for most of the characters, including Theodora: that with Katina, she expresses "in positive action the love she had felt for Lou"; and that in her "relationship with Mrs. Rapallo, Theodora learns to feel the pity she could never give to her mother" (1986: 42). However, Bliss concedes that despite her "now enormously intricate identity....the novel does not award Theodora an unambiguous triumph" (1989: 47).

Scenes from Theodora's past are indeed re-enacted and many aspects of her previous life are relived and varying degrees of compensation and redress are experienced. For instance, the picnic which Frank Parrot forgot is realised by displacement - in the picnic which is organised for Katina. Katina becomes the "instrument" (TAS: 221) which records Theodora's psychological "climatic disturbance, still too sudden to accept or understand" (TAS: 221). Theodora

lives vicariously through Katina, sharing in and making Katina's experiences her own. "So it is to take place then, Theodora knew....There will be stuffed eggs, and conversation, and silences, and swords. But the picnic will be made" (TAS: 221). Her excitement at the prospect of the picnic is expressed metaphorically: "Already the wintergarden could not contain the event. It pressed, it brimmed, rustling with the barely suppressed wind of excitement the brown bodies of dead flies" (TAS: 221).

There are numerous instances in the *Jardin* where Theodora identifies herself with the (m)other. Mrs. Rapallo's daughter, Gloria, marries well, becomes a Principessa, and remains generous and enchanting. By identifying with the Principessa, Theodora assuages her sense of guilt at disappointing her mother by not marrying the successful and prosperous Huntly Clarkson. But Mrs. Rapallo finally confesses that her daughter, the Principessa, is a figment of her imagination (TAS: 242). So Theodora's sense of atonement and therapeutic healing is short lived. Her major problems of ontological insecurity remain. She is unsure whether she is male or female, person or object, illusion or reality, dead or alive, and remains in phantasy, as in "real" life, a plain, ugly, poor, spinster, the disdain of the patriarchal society:

'I am yellow and thin, with a slight moustache. I am single, for the same reason, because I am ugly, and because I have never been in a position to buy a husband.' (TAS: 207)

This passage critiques the values of a society in which feminine beauty and money are essential commodities for the contracting of marriage. More importantly, Theodora appears to have internalised her (m)other's and society's disapproval of her. Phyllis Edelson observes that from a feminist perspective, Theodora is "undone by her early failure to live up to the expectations imposed upon females of her time and place", and because of maternal and social rejection which damages her ego, she is incapable of psychological growth or rebirth (1985: 5).

Unable to form a stable relationship even in her phantasies, Theodora escapes into many forms. There is in her phantasies a hint of Sade, who proposes what Rosemary Jackson calls a "universal prostitution of all beings" (1981: 73). According to Jackson:

Sade urges transgression of the limits separating self from other, man from woman, human from animal, organic from inorganic objects. He seeks a defiant and violent disorder, a fluidity, a lack of discretion.

Instead of a separation into discrete selves, Sade proposes a 'universal prostitution of all beings', providing unity with nature in a state of perpetual motion. Death, he suggests, ceases to signify: it is merely a translation of forms, a kind of metamorphosis. (1981: 73)

In this "universal prostitution of all beings", Theodora is loved by a monkey (TAS: 211), phantasises she is Epaphroditos, the lover of Aphrodite (TAS: 198); declares she is a nun (TAS: 188); an ointment (TAS: 163); she is suspected of being a Communist (TAS: 165); she becomes a nautilus thief (TAS: 212); a Pale

Horse (TAS: 203); a man (TAS: 165), and Alyosha thinks she is either an illusion (TAS: 204), or that she might even be dead (TAS: 204).

Theodora's relationship with Lieselotte, as with many others in the *Jardin*, is one of projective identification. She projects her emotions and re-enacts her conflicts through the agency of others. Through Lieselotte she is embroiled in an emotional entanglement with Wetherby, Lieselotte's lover. Theodora "feels" the words of Katina's and Wetherby's love:

Theodora knew the words. She watched him take Katina Pavlou's fingers, and read his own mind into the purple stains.

'I shall like you,' said Katina Pavlou. 'If you will let me.'

'I should love you, Katina.' Wetherby said.

He watched her fingers tremble in his hand.

'There is no need,' said Katina Pavlou. 'If you will let me, I shall love you enough. if you will let me show you.' (TAS: 228)

Theodora is doubly wounded: by the fickle Katina whom she loves, and who now flirts with Wetherby, and by Wetherby, who prefers Katina to herself, thereby shattering her morale and self esteem. Internalising the criticism of herself by the (m)other she hates her dark moustache, and feels unworthy of him because, "he was a pale young man in a tweed coat. She was a sallow spinster of forty-five" (TAS: 233).

As a projection of Theodora's aggressive and destructive urges, Lieselotte wields the knife that Theodora wishes she had used against her (m)other. Repressed memories of her own destruction of the hawk merge with Lieselotte's actions as she smashes the glass pagoda (TAS: 167). Lieselotte's words, "we

must destroy everything, everything, even ourselves. Then at last when there is nothing, perhaps we shall live" (TAS: 168) echo Theodora's own: "I shall continue to destroy myself, right down to the last of my several lives" (TAS: 71). Like Bertha Mason in Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre, in a fury of jealousy, love and hate, Lieselotte hurls a lighted lamp at Wetherby, her partner in a sado-masochistic relationship. She is Theodora's doppelgänger, and performs for her the acts of violence which she will not perform herself.

Object Relations theorists posit that separation and individuation are universal processes which each individual experiences with varying degrees of trauma or normality. They argue that traumatic separation from the (m)other results in inadequate individuation or a tentative notion of selfhood. Seen in the light of this theory, Theodora's traumatic childhood appears as a reasonable and plausible psychological reason for her altered mental states and psychic confusion between self and (m)other.

The doubling, splitting and merging of personalities and identities is parodied in the representation of the twins, the Misses Bloch, who offer a note of comic relief. Like Dickens, White appears unable to resist satire or the comic touch, even in matters as serious as that of identity crisis. John and Rosemarie Beston remark that the Misses Bloch function as a sort of Chorus. Their



continual losing of things such as stylo, tooth brush, doily, symbolises increasing loss of control, and warns of vague, impending threats (1975: 13).

'We have lost everything, everything,' said Mademoiselle Marthe, as if she took pleasure in confirming what had always been bound to happen.

'But you have yourselves,' suggested Theodora.

'Oui, c'est vrai,' Mademoiselle Berthe said, perplexed, 'Mais vous savez, quand on perd ses affaires...' (TAS: 247)

But what is more pertinent to our discussion is that in their relationship with each other the Misses Bloch reveal desire for fusion with the (m)other, while, at the same time fearing engulfment. "You saw, now, the one was two. But in reverse. It was obvious, subtract one from two and the answer would be nought" (TAS: 146). The relationship of the twin ladies, the Misses Bloch, reflects Theodora's fear of the loss of self without the (m)other.

As Riemer observes, whether or not Theodora's experiences at the Hôtel du Midi represent phantasies of a frustrated and lonely spinster isolated by barriers of language and culture, surrounded by a polyglot world, is not only a moot question that cannot be resolved, it is irrelevant. What is relevant and what is emphasised is the quality and nature of her experiences even though her life appears ambiguous and threatened (1987: 364-365).

The fire which ravages the Hôtel du Midi is apocalyptic. Alyosha Sokolnikov feels that he is saved by a "miracle", through the prayerful agency of Theodora:

Yes, I am here, Ludmilla,' said Sokolnikov, blowing like the sprays of several hoses. 'I have escaped. That is, a few minutes earlier I was delivered by a miracle from a horrible and tragic death. Let us praise your saints.' (TAS: 249)

The fire is a reduplication of the lightning which Theodora experiences on her twelfth birthday, when, like St. Paul, she is thrown to the ground. But the time for revelation is not right, and Theodora at twelve years does not experience any epiphany. The time for revelation appears ripe when Theodora, as a middle-aged woman, experiences or hallucinates the fire at the Hôtel du Midi. The narrative implies that Theodora experiences a revelation, and like Moses before the fiery bush, she seems to have had an encounter with God. This is felt by Theodora as well as Alyosha, who tells Theodora that he gives thanks for his miraculous survival not to *the* saints, or *our* saints, but to *your* saints:

'Let us praise your saints....

'It was no miracle. Alyosha Sergei', said Theodora. 'that you failed to burn'. Her affection would not have allowed it....

She could not explain the certainties, even in the fierce mouths of fire. (TAS: 249-250)

The narrative suggests that Alyosha actually survives the questionable "reality" of the fire under miraculous circumstances. Patrick White himself has said that while The Aunt's Story "celebrates the human spirit" when writing the novel "I had not yet begun to accept (except unconsciously) that I believe in a God" (in Herring and Wilkes 1973: 136-137). Nevertheless, one critic considers it to be "almost a religious novel", and argues that Theodora assumes the

burdens of others in a Christian manner (Burns 1975: 175). The narrative implies that Alyosha's "miraculous" escape is at least due to Theodora's "illumination" and intercession with the saints. Michael Giffin points out that White makes a necessary distinction between "illumination" and "enlightenment". Illumination, he argues, belongs to the unconscious world of mythical and irrational truth, while enlightenment belongs to the conscious realm of reason (1993: 12). Theodora's revelation appears to belong to the realm of "illumination". But what is even more important for our discussion is that Alyosha, the father figure or the loved or "good" parent figure, survives in Theodora's phantasies.

The lightning imagery links several significant paternal characters and events in her past and present life, such as her father, Alyosha and The Man Who was Given his Dinner. The Man Who was Given his Dinner arrives on her birthday, along with lightning, and prophecies:

'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.' (TAS: 45)

The fire disbands the group of survivors: Katina, perhaps to Africa, and Theodora on a return journey to "Abyssinia", during which she meets Holstius.

En route to Abyssinia Theodora destroys her steamship tickets, snapshots and other tokens of "what was accepted as Theodora Goodman" (TAS: 263). Even "her name was torn out by the roots" as she came "a little closer to humility, to anonymity, to pureness of being" (TAS: 269). Her anonymity represents an emptying out of self and loss of identity. The phonetic similarity of her assumed name "Pilkington" to the well-known detective agency, Pinkerton, also suggests a search of some sort - perhaps for a sense of self as she observes her "disintegrating world" in which "light and silence ate into the hard, resisting barriers of reason, hinting at some ultimate moment of clear vision" (TAS: 275).

Lighting a fire to warm herself, Theodora summons up the genie-like figure of Holstius (TAS: 275) who is a displacement of an idealised parent, and who calms Theodora's fears as her father once did. He is prophet, seer and healer, but ephemeral, other-worldly: "Holstius laid his hands on, and she was a world of love and compassion that she had only vaguely apprehended" (TAS: 283). Under the hypnotic direction of Holstius, she feels fulfilled, but according to the conventions of the society in which she lives, this is called "madness".

There has been some critical debate about whether Holstius "actually" exists within the novel, or is hallucinated by Theodora. Whether Holstius is a real figure within the novel, or a product of Theodora's hallucination is not crucial; although in terms of Theodora's psychological development, it is more

than likely that he is a "phantasy". What is important is his usefulness in bringing some sort of meaning and closure to the narrative. He is a multivalent symbol used to tie up loose ends, and to see that the promise made by the Man who was Given his Dinner to the little girl, Theodora, is kept, in fairy tale fashion. He serves as a double for The Man, and for Theodora's father. His clothes have the "familiar texture of her childhood, and smelled of horses, and leather, and guns" (TAS: 278), linking him both with her father with whom she rode and shot, and with the Man who was Given his Dinner. But more importantly, he is used as a tool to articulate the acceptance of the dualities and divisions in life:

'You cannot reconcile joy and sorrow,' Holstius said. 'Or flesh and marble, or illusion and reality, or life and death. For this reason, Theodora Goodman, you must accept. And you have already found that one constantly deludes the other into taking fresh shapes, so that there is sometimes little to choose between the reality of illusion and the illusion of reality. Each of your several lives is evidence of this.' (TAS: 278)

It is implied that through the magical or miraculous power of Holstius, Theodora finds peace and tranquillity by integrating previously split aspects of self and (m)other:

In the peace that Holstius spread throughout her body and the speckled shade of surrounding trees, there was no end to the lives of Theodora Goodman. These met and parted, met and parted, movingly. They entered into each other, so that the impulse for music in Katina Paviou's hands, the steamy exasperation of Sokolnikov, and Mrs. Rapallo's baroque and narcotised despair were the same and understandable. And in the same way that the created lives of Theodora Goodman were interchangeable, the lives into which she had entered, making them momentarily dependent for love or hate, owing her this portion of their fluctuating personalities, whether George or Julia Goodman, only apparently deceased, or Huntly Clarkson, or Moraïtis or

Lou, or Zack, these were the lives of Theodora Goodman, these too. (TAS: 284)

The narrative suggests that Theodora's present psychological state is not a passing phase, but one which will be continually reactivated in multiplication and division of the self, which Holstius and Theodora consider to be "wholeness". The very name "Holstius" suggests wholeness, as in "holism" - "Tendency in Nature to form wholes that are more than the sum of the parts by creative evolution" (Concise Oxford Dictionary). Tacey states that Holstius is the "wood of life", the tree of life from within" and in this sense, a bringer of revelation. In the Gnosis of Justin, the angel Baruch, named the "wood of life" is the angel of revelation (1977: 67). And Burrows points out that the word "Holstius" is a latinization of the German word "holz" meaning wood, and is expressive of his relationship to George Goodman. According to Burrows, Holstius bears enough marks of father figures in general, and of George Goodman and Alyosha Sergei in particular, to indicate that he is "entirely an emanation of her psyche." He is an overdetermined image. Not only does he appear as a double for the father figures in the novel, but he also appears as a double for Theodora herself:

At the bottom Holstius is Theodora herself drawing on her experience of fatherly preceptors in order to act as preceptor to herself. When "he" persuades her of something which those others had striven to teach her, we are to recognize that she is at last assimilating the earlier lesson. (Burrows 1966: 171-172)

All of the critical comments cited have merit. But what is important for this thesis is that Holstius is a literary device used to convince Theodora and the reader that she has achieved a measure of reintegration by accepting conflicting aspects of self and (m)other. He appears as the Great Physician, who heals Theodora, ratifying her acceptance of dualities and reintegrating various elements of her past life and experiences. Doing so also brings the narrative to an end.

This imposes a measure of unity and order or closure to the conclusion of the novel, which is in keeping with the nineteenth century tradition in which White writes. In an interview with Thelma Herring and G. A. Wilkes, Patrick White stated that he wrote in the nineteenth century tradition of Stendhal, Flaubert, Balzac and Dickens (1973: 139). White seems to be influenced by Dickens more than by the other writers mentioned, in his manner of concluding the novels. Like Dickens, he appears to articulate an affirmative image based on Utopian yearnings. The reintegration of Theodora's many split lives and experiences appears to produce a surface gestalt of artistic unity. But despite the affirmative images, the conclusion remains ambiguous, because Theodora's state is perceived as psychic confusion, and she is consigned to an insane asylum by her society.

There is a range of varying critical opinion about the conclusion of the novel. Some critics are of the opinion that Theodora achieves a sort of unity by accepting her multiple selves, and becoming what Manfred Mackenzie calls "encyclopaedic" (1965:12). Bliss posits that White uses androgyny in a "traditional way described by Joseph Campbell as a means of recalling a prelapsarian unity in which all dualities are encompassed" (1986: 47). While androgyny is one of the themes of The Aunt's Story, and one which White explores repeatedly and more thoroughly in later novels, the dominant theme in the novel is rather one of "hatching" or of the separation of self from the (m)other, and of the formation of the self. Peter Beatson seems convinced that Holstius gives Theodora the courage to "return to humanity" at the end of the novel, and that she is able to say "I am I" with confidence from a deeper level of personality than she had ever known (1977: 102). On the contrary, it would appear from this thesis that Theodora is incapable of separating self from (m)other, of being able to say unequivocally, "I am I" and "you are you". Theodora merges with the (m)other, the not-I. Kernberg writes that habitual deprivation and frustration of early instinctual needs is the main cause of the lack of differentiation between self and objects, because "excessive frustration reinforces the normal disposition to regressive refusion of self and object images, representing early merging fantasies between self and object in an



attempt to retain or regain absolute gratification" (1975: 27). White's narrative depicts the problematic psychological development of a neglected and unloved child which results in psychic confusion of boundaries between self and (m)other.

Brian Kiernan concedes that the disturbing elements of The Aunt's Story are part of its achievement, but concludes that the novel ends on solipsism (1980: 32). And William Walsh aptly observes that:

The Aunt's Story is neither a passive history nor a clinical description, but the rendering in terms of art of the process of mental collapse, and one is conscious from the first, in the tone, in the nuance of word and image, of some disturbing irregularity in the material of Theodora's experience.... It has to do with the nature of the self and more particularly with the release from the self and even indeed with the obliteration of the self. It is this complication, this further resonance, which turns what might have been a medically exact account of mental disintegration into a richer and more humanly significant composition (1974: 201)

The Aunt's Story chronicles the protagonist's quest for identity, the splitting of her personality and what is implied as the subsequent reintegration of the split-off aspects of the self. A corollary appears to be the questioning of the values of society; and Theodora as a "mad" woman, and Fanny as a purblind materialist, are not the ones to do it. It takes an outsider, who has no stake in either, to interrogate societal values. This appears to be Holstius' function in the narrative.

The epigraph to the final section "When your life is most real, to me you are mad" (TAS: 253) shows us society's opinion of Theodora's psychic condition. White's position may be seen in the question posed by The Man who

was Given his Dinner: "Though who's crazy and who isn't? Can you tell me that, young Theodora Goodman? I bet you couldn't" (TAS: 45). Far from preaching his own dogma in a spirit of proselytisation, White leaves it up to the individual reader to decide, define and evaluate the quality of Theodora's psychic evolution. In the oxymoronic conclusion, Theodora does appear to have incorporated some aspects of her own and others' fragmentary lives, but in the final analysis, she cannot separate images of her self from images of the (m)other. Holstius and Theodora may assert such an integration, but the society in which she lives declares her to be mad and relegates her to isolation in a lunatic asylum. The crucial point for our thesis is that Theodora cannot and does not distinguish or separate the self from (m)other which is an essential first step towards psychological development. Even the "belt round her waist was no great guarantee of personality" (TAS: 205). She feels that "although she was insured against several acts of violence, there was ultimately no safeguard against the violence of personality" (TAS: 260), thus revealing both her fear of abandonment and of engulfment by the (m)other.

In experiencing various ambivalent aspects of personality, she assumes others' identities, and fuses and merges with them, signifying a regressive blurring of the boundaries between self and (m)other. In fact, the lunatic asylum in which she is confined may be perceived as a symbol of a threatening maternal

womb where the self is enclosed within the (m)other, and therefore has no need to relate with the (m)other as an independent identity.

According to Greenberg and Mitchell

the bench mark of successful development....[is] a developmental movement from embeddedness within a symbiotic matrix of child-mother to the achievement of a stable individual identity within a world of predictable and realistically perceived others. (1983: 172)

Theodora cannot differentiate between illusion and reality, self and (m)other, constantly displaying a regressive need for symbiotic fusion with the (m)other. As Stephen Johnson explains, the symbiotic character experiences a failure to establish good self-other boundaries. This is largely due to the essentially damaging messages from the (m)other which threatens individuation: "You can have the sustenance you require from me only if you deny the development of yourself. You can have me or you, not both" (Johnson 1991: 86). Mrs. Goodman's interior monologue explicitly reveals this threat:

Life would be simpler, neater, more consoling, if we could take the hearts of those who do not quite love us and lock them in a little box, something appropriate in mother-o'-pearl. Then I would say: Theodora, now that you are hollow, my words will beat on your soul for ever so that it answers regularly as an African drum, in words dictated by myself, of duty and affection. (TAS: 1948: 92)

In discussing the anxieties of separation, Margaret Mahler comments that "rapprochement" between the developing self and the (m)other is an important part of the process of individuation. "During this subphase some mothers cannot accept the child's demandingness; others cannot face the fact that the child is

becoming increasingly independent and separate" (Mahler 1972: 337). Despite her lack of love for Theodora, Mrs. Goodman clearly cannot allow her to grow and develop emotionally, thus exacerbating Theodora's own regressive urges for symbiotic fusion.

At the conclusion of The Aunt's Story, as with the conclusion of most of White's novels, the reader experiences what is called, in psychological terms, "cognitive dissonance", i.e. an "internal state of unease produced when one perceives inconsistencies between one's attitudes or between one's attitudes and one's actions" (Rubin and McNeil, 1985: 48). The reader is caught experiencing sympathy for Theodora, and at the same time feels manipulated into criticising a society that metes out harsh punishment to her even while realising that Theodora has not convincingly attained an authentic sense of self.

Most critics comment on the ambiguity of the conclusion of the novel, and several critics agree that Theodora achieves partial "integration" of previously split aspects of the self. Bliss comments that "we are uncertain how to respond to her confinement, and our uncertainty derives from...evasiveness on White's part". However, she points out that Theodora's integration of her "many lives" also includes masculine and feminine characteristics. "In fact, long before she attains the comprehensiveness which supersedes sexual distinctions, White establishes her essential androgyny...It is a concept to which he will frequently

recur, [sic] continuing to remark and celebrate the depth and subtlety of character" (Bliss 1986: 47) which results from this perspective.

And Lawrence Steven argues that Theodora finds "psychic integration through the peace that Holstius offers her", by entering a "transcendent world of meaning that previously she had only had sporadic glimpses of". However where I am in disagreement with Steven is when he writes that "Theodora's peace entices us to lose our critical and human perspective entirely". It is "solipsistic, it cannot be shared. If this is White's conception of true reality, then it is a reality which is so inclusive it becomes meaningless" (1989: 54-55). I would argue two points: first, that neither Patrick White nor the narrative presents Theodora's integration as the representation of a fixed "reality"; and second, that if the novels under consideration are taken as a whole (as is done in this thesis and in Steven's study), then there is "meaning" which Steven denies, and a measure of progression in the psychological development of the protagonist. Theodora makes some progress towards integrating split aspects of self and (m)other, but in the final analysis cannot recognise or accept the boundaries between the self and the (m)other.

However, when the body of White's work is taken as a whole, and the development of the protagonist is traced in the course of progression through this body of work, then the psychological growth of the Whitean protagonist

takes on added significance and meaning. As Margaret Mahler writes, "consciousness of self and absorption without awareness of self are the two polarities between which we move, with varying ease and with varying degrees of alternation or simultaneity" (1972: 333). In the novels under consideration we perceive the protagonist(s) move between these polarities. Mahler calls this "rapprochement", which is the "mainspring of man's eternal struggle against both fusion and isolation" (1972: 338). This rapprochement of the developing self with the (m)other, I would argue, is particularly well demonstrated when the four novels under review are reviewed as a corporate body, rather than as individual fragments.

Considered in terms of the creative process, the symbolic imposition of order suggested in Theodora's phantasised wholeness, coalesces with the completion of the art object, in a process which Anton Ehrenzweig calls "syncretism"<sup>6</sup>. Holstius is the *deus ex machina* which brings about such integration, and as a vehicle through which White articulates to Theodora and to the reader his message of incorporation and acceptance of dualities. According to Ehrenzweig, a "syncretistic" view in artistic creation is

a comprehensive and precise grasp of a total view in which the elements are variable and exchangeable .... Syncretistic primary-process techniques rather than analytical clarity of detail are needed by the creative thinker to control the vast complexities of his work. (1993: 41-46)

White has said that The Aunt's Story "is a work which celebrates the human spirit" (in Herring and Wilkes 1973: 137). And, indeed, the narrative wholeheartedly endorses Theodora. In doing so, it implicitly criticises the (m)other for depriving Theodora of love which is essential for psychological development, and society for incarcerating her for her "phantasised" wholeness.

In The Aunt's Story, White grapples with some basic dichotomies and psychological conflicts: love and hate; separation from and fusion with the (m)other, phantasy and reality, sanity and madness in an attempt to chart the quest for selfhood. The Aunt's Story offers insights into much of White's later work in which the relationship of the self with the (m)other and the quest for an integrated self or a stable sense of identity continues to be a major theme. In many of the later novels psychological integration often occurs in the protagonist's death-bed phantasies, suggesting that the processes of separation and individuation, splitting and reintegration are never quite completed. They remain potentialities rather than realities. However, each succeeding novel under review appears to deal with a different phase of psychological development, and the integration suggested in each becomes progressively more persuasive.

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### III SPLITTING AND REINTEGRATION IN VOSS

Which world is this? What is to be done in it? Which of my selves is to do it?  
(Higgins 1978: 101)

Voss is a complex novel dealing with physical, metaphysical, psychological and spiritual issues, and with the titular hero's struggle to come to terms with them. White appears to deal with these issues by doubling and splitting characters, themes and events, to dramatise intra-psychic conflict of the protagonists, and then reintegrating them, after a fashion, in dreams or hallucinatory sequences which produces the effect of artistic unity. However, there is a tension between what appears to be artistic reintegration in the work and the question of psychological reintegration of the characters through Laura. The protagonists appear to accept and resolve various psycho-social conflicts via phantasies, dreams or hallucinations. However, within the surface "reality" of the novel, the reader is aware of the pervasive sense of death and destruction which signals disintegration, rather than the reintegration and acceptance of the split-off, conflicting or undesirable aspects of personality which are represented by the various discrete characters. Thus the reintegration is not totally convincing and to a certain extent appears arbitrary. Nevertheless it offers the reader a tentative sense of closure.



Bearing in mind the development of the protagonist in the course of White's fiction, the splitting so prevalent in Voss represents the next phase in the protagonist's psychological development. This phase arises out of anxieties over separation of the self from the (m)other, which was explored in the previous chapter on The Aunt's Story. These psychological processes, separation and individuation, splitting and reintegration, may never be complete. Each new phase does not supersede the previous one and successive phases of development may be seen as accretive, so to speak, added on to the previous phase. Thus in Voss, as in The Aunt's Story, there are instances of merging of the self with the (m)other. Despite the overlap there is a distinct sense of progress in the development of the protagonist in so far as while Theodora, in The Aunt's Story, remained enmeshed in the throes of separation anxieties, in her inability to successfully separate the self from the (m)other, the protagonists of Voss are more involved in integrating split aspects of the self and (m)other which is a mark of psychological growth.

Doubling and splitting generally reflect a concern to separate good from evil, physical from spiritual. Doubling and splitting in Voss. As Karl Miller, in his study of doubles in literary history observes, "the dynamic metaphor of the second self" dramatises the notion of a "heterogeneous selfhood" and depicts the conflicts between various value systems, in a heterodox manner (Miller 1985:

vi). Seen in this light, the *dramatis personae* in Voss comprise a complex, composite character of many "selves", with seemingly autonomous characters representing diverse aspects of personality, such as masculinity, femininity, physicality, spirituality, intellectuality and innocence. Thus the conflict which ensues between the *personae* may be often perceived as intra-psychoic rather than inter-psychoic.

As Beatson so aptly observes, White's characters are

divided within and often against themselves, dominated by one function and repressing others. The will, the conscience, the instincts, the social facade or the unconscious assert themselves, suppressing or ignoring other faculties or entering into conflict with them. (1977: 90)

The pervasive splitting in Voss is also reflected in the dual themes of the novel which have been noted by several critics. In a recent book-length study, Williams observes "Voss gives the appearance of being two radically different novels placed uneasily side by side" (1993: 60). In his opinion, the first deals in a realistic fashion with the rise of a bourgeois family and the second deals allegorically with Voss's expedition into the interior of Australia. Williams continues:

The members of the expedition are meant to be seen not only as characters but also as types in a religious scheme. They make up a single allegorical figure, 'Man', as he journeys not through the physical world but into the self. (Williams 1993: 60)

Melanie Klein's theory of Splitting and Reintegration is particularly useful in examining the interactions of Voss and the other characters in terms of

the self and (m)other paradigm. Doane and Hodges describe Klein's theory of Splitting as a *mis-en-scene* "in which an active infant creates fantasies about the mother" (1992: 8) in order to conceptualise its world and interpersonal relationships. What is "reality" and what is "phantasy" in these relationships is not as important as the manner in which the infant internalises his or her experiences. Doane and Hodges point out that while good parents may have a beneficial effect on the child's phantasies, Klein rarely describes the (m)other's interaction with the infant, focusing instead on the infant's phantasies of the (m)other (1992: 7, 15). The Kleinian mother need not do anything more than offer or withhold the breast to trigger "good" or "bad" phantasies. Because Voss provides few details of the early lives of the protagonists, Klein's theories of splitting, introjection and projection in "phantasy" are particularly useful in comprehending their interaction with each other and with the other supporting characters. These theories have particular relevance, for instance, to an understanding of Le Mesurier's poetry, and also Voss and Laura's relationship which is conducted mostly in dreams and phantasies.

In accord with the theoretical assumption that the relationship with the mother, the first object, is the prototype of all future relationships, various characters in the novel can be viewed as projections or constellations of aspects of self and (m)other which enact, through the medium of interpersonal

relationships, the predisposition to conflict present in a single personality. To borrow Rogers' hypothesis in his study of *Hamlet*, *Voss* "can profitably be viewed as a macrosign within which [Voss] and other characters represent components of a complex set of conflicting inclinations symbolized by the titular hero" (1991: 166). Voss represents both the composite titular hero and a component thereof. And Laura and the various members of the expedition represent conflicting aspects of Voss. The essential intactness or integrity of the titular hero may be seen as split into various aspects of self and of (m)other. The reader is often explicitly directed by the author to consider the various members of the expedition as "emanations of the one man, their leader" (V: 359).<sup>1</sup> Kleinian notions of phantasy, splitting, introjection and projection offer a theoretical framework for this perspective.

The male members of the expedition accompany Voss on his physical journey into the Australian interior, and Laura, as his psychic counterpart, is depicted as accompanying him on his metaphysical journey into the self.<sup>2</sup> But this distinction is not absolute. Voss's interactions with the various members of his expedition may be perceived in both psychological and metaphysical terms.<sup>3</sup> At critical events and at crucial points in these relationships, Laura is depicted as sharing in and monitoring Voss's behaviour and experiences.<sup>4</sup> Laura may thus be seen as comprising Voss's internalised images of the (m)other, who alternately

provides both nurturing and censorship. In a sense Voss's journey also depicts a psychological voyage inward which maps an evolving psyche. At the commencement of the journey the protagonists introject "good" or benign properties of some psychological (m)others, and disengage from the impediment of aggressive or destructive impulses by projecting these impulses outwards on to (m)others. As the journey progresses, the protagonists attempt to reintegrate previously split aspects of the self and the (m)other and grow towards self-discovery along with recognition and acceptance that "good" and "bad" both can coexist in the self as well as the (m)other.

Among the numerous splitting devices in the novel is the description of the stations, Rhine Towers and Jildra, and their respective owners, Sanderson and Boyle, as opposites who, as Bliss so aptly observes, "preside over the novel's patently paradisaical and infernal demesnes" (1986: 67). Hosts to Voss and his team members, they also serve as doubles or projections of aspects of Voss. Sanderson represents the "good" or idealised aspect of the self, and Boyle is a projection of the "bad" part of Voss who wallows in carnality. The name "Boyle" itself may be seen to serve as a pun and metaphor for Boyle's moral decadence. Jildra is depicted as dirty and dilapidated and overrun by mice (V: 166), in sharp contrast with the comfort and light that envelop Rhine Towers. The cleanliness, warmth and harmony of the Sanderson home metaphorically

represent his wholesome spiritual state, just as Boyle's squalid surroundings metaphorically depict his degeneracy. Books are cherished at Rhine Towers whereas they are used as mops and covered with mould at Jildra (V: 166).

The oppositions between Sanderson and Boyle are numerous. The former lives in a state of domestic bliss and marital harmony, while for the latter the Aboriginal women serve only to satisfy his "crude requirements" (V: 166). Even their children appear as contrasting doubles. Sanderson's children have a cherubic air about them. They appear as "rosy children" who gaze in "natural wonder" (V: 125). Boyle's, on the other hand, apparently illegitimate, are "little red-haired boys with toy spears" (V: 172). The children are of mixed race and are linked to Boyle by their "red hair" and his "reddish, chestnut colour" (V: 165), thereby suggesting his paternity. The "toy spears" offer a condensed image, drawing on stereotypical images of Aborigines with spears, and at the same time suggesting that the aggressiveness of their games reflects the destructive nature of Boyle, the father figure. Boyle himself feels "he wanted to kill something" (V: 175). The spear imagery also foreshadows the Aborigines' killing of Palfreyman by spearing, and may even be extended to the ultimate decapitation of Voss by the Aboriginal guide, Jackie.

Like Christ who hand-picks his Apostles, Voss hand-picks the men to accompany him on his expedition. Each of them appears to personify

characteristics that Voss either consciously or unconsciously represses or sublimates. Voss's recruitment strategy appears to be based on the imperialist axiom of "divide and rule". He is aware of the differences between the men he selects, and uses this knowledge as a means of keeping the men dependent on him, in spite of, or because of, their interpersonal conflicts. But these conflicts are ultimately intra-psychic conflicts, since most of the men who accompany Voss on the expedition may be viewed as projections of Voss.

'Mr. Topp,' the German was saying, 'if I had mastered the art of music, I would set myself the task of creating a composition by which the various instruments would represent the moral characteristics of human beings in conflict with one another.' (V 42)

The musical composition itself is a metaphor for a composite being. But, as Voss makes it clear, this composition of human characteristics is not harmonious, but discordant. The aspects of personality embodied in the various characters in the novel represent sophisticated or subtle variations on the "goodness" versus "badness" dynamic inherent in splitting. Broadly speaking, Voss represents the domineering will that masterminds and manoeuvres the expedition. Le Mesurier, the poet, represents the intellect. Harry Robarts is the innocent simpleton who serves as an "easy shadow" for Voss (V: 31). He is "weak in wit", and "glad to offer his services to someone who might think for him" (V: 32). Judd represents the physical, and Palfreyman represents the spiritual aspects of personality. As Bliss observes, "Judd and Palfreyman are not

so much pieces of Voss himself as objectifications of a spiritual conflict within him" (1986: 70). Angus and Turner appear as dilettantes, mere bodies who add to the numbers of the expedition, and sometimes add choric, if comic and vulgar, relief. As Bliss comments, they are also used "to prove that pettiness and mediocrity exist at both ends of the social scale" (1986: 72).

The members of the expedition may be perceived as projections of various aspects of the protagonist, Voss, but are also characters in their own right and so represent aspects of the (m)other. However, as Stephen Mitchell observes, the "intra-psychic and the interpersonal are continually interpenetrating realms, each with its own set of processes, mechanisms and concerns" (1988: 35). Voss's relationships with his team members are both of an intra-psychic and inter-psychic nature, based on the paradigm of the earliest relationship of the self with the (m)other.

In considering the members of the expedition as emanations of Voss, their leader, the narrative appears to marginalise the Aboriginal, treating him as the alien Other: "The blackfellow was a doubtful quantity, but there was nobody, except perhaps the leader himself, who did not expect to discard him" (V: 359). In this reading of the novel, the Aborigines are also considered to be aspects of the composite personality. The Aboriginal guides, Dugald and Jackie, represent the natural and the instinctual. Dugald is the natural man, at home in



the Bush, and Jackie, as Bliss observes, appears as a "kind of Jungian shadow which Voss would deny, and which therefore destroys him" (1986: 73).

There are repeated references to the members of the expedition as split parts of a "whole" personality. When the party ultimately splits, the remaining members of Voss's party consider themselves and Voss as parts of an integral unit, excluding Jackie, the Aboriginal. It is said that the others wanted to get rid of Jackie and "longed to be one less, so that they might enjoy their trinity" (V: 359). Jackie represents the split-off bad or undesirable aspect of the self. The concurrent idealisation of self is seen in the metaphor of the trinity with its God-like connotations of The Blessed Trinity. The characters themselves appear to be aware that they are aspects of an integral "whole". Harry is obviously the Son, Le Mesurier, the Father, and Voss the Divine Spirit. At other times, Le Mesurier also sees himself as "God with a spear in his side" (V: 297), evoking images of the crucified Christ, the Son of God, with a spear in his side. The trinity is a symbol of various aspects of the Godhead which are split and reintegrated into a "whole", and serves to reinforce the idea of splitting, and reintegrating of various aspects of the self and of the (m)other. As Patricia Morley observes, "White's juxtaposition of...dissimilars, cynical intellectual and simple innocent, throws into relief the qualities of each" (1972: 89).

Harry Robarts, the first of Voss's recruits, represents one aspect of self, innocence: "Voss felt weak with knowledge, and the boy beside him strong with innocence" (V: 32). Harry is one of White's stock characters, the holy fool. Like Theodora before him, and Mary Hare and Waldo Brown after him, he senses things instinctively. In The Mystery of Unity, Patricia Morley explores the role of "God's Fool" in White's fiction more thoroughly (1972: 85-95). Because of his innocence and simplicity, he is often treated condescendingly and contemptuously by others. For example Mrs. Thompson, the musician Topp's landlady, does not extend to him the courtesy she reserves for members of a higher social class. To those whom she favoured she would say: "Go up, though, my dear, and make yourself comfortable, we are long enough on this earth" (V: 31). But to those, like Harry Robarts she would command: "Wait...this is a gentleman's rooms, let me remind you, not a cockpit; if you will rest a while upon the step, you will find it clean, God knows, scrubbed down every day, and the weather permittun" (V: 31). A forerunner of Mrs. Flack and Jolley in Riders in the Chariot who epitomise social and moral hypocrisy and viciousness, she prides herself on being a Christian, but her form of Christianity is influenced by class distinctions.

Harry's innocence and simple-mindedness bring out the best and worst in people. Le Mesurier is condescending and rude, and Judd is paternalistic and

benevolent towards him. For his part, Harry appears to have no sense of self and appears to exist only in relation to others: "I dunno what I am" (V: 37). He feels he is nothing unless he is near Voss and, in his absence, snuggles up to the clothes in his cupboard for reassurance. A similar incident appears in The Vivisector, where Mrs. Courtney pushes the young Hurtle Duffield's head into her clothes, forcing him to experience their sensuousness. For Duffield this is a sensuous experience, but for Robarts the feel of Voss's clothes offers him a sense of security and reinforces his fragile sense of identity.

Robarts' weak and tenuous individuation may be seen as caused by traumatic separation from a savage and brutal parental object, a father, who "had hung him by the ankles, with chains, above a fire of sea-coals, to watch the sweat run out of him" (V: 141). In psychological terms, "separation" generally refers to an awareness of the self as distinct and separate from the (m)other, usually the parental object, after the initial period of symbiotic union. The subsequent relationship of the self with the (m)other is indicative of the success or failure of this initial bonding. Robarts' horrendous experience with his father does not appear to be an isolated incident, but suggests that any symbiotic bonding between parent and child, which is a necessary precondition of psychological development, is significantly and pathetically absent. Consequently, Robarts appears to be constantly looking for surrogate fathers

who will be kind to him. The parental object is split into the "good" and the "bad". Judd appears as a benevolent father figure to him, in contrast to his actual brutal father.

Concomitantly, for Judd, Harry appears as a double for his absent sons. There is a blurring of boundaries and fusing of "good" and "bad" aspects of self and (m)other in Judd's mind. Repressed memories of his convict past merge with memories of his love for his sons and Harry, producing sado-masochistic tensions: "suddenly his ribs were aching, and the welts of old punishment. The cat of love smote him in the hands of his great sons" (V: 244). Judd displays both attraction to the Other, and fear of losing himself in the Other, a behaviour pattern which, according to James Masterson, is typical of borderline dispositions. According to Masterson borderline people habitually orient their activities toward the other. "The borderliner defends by clinging to or distancing from the object" (1981: 28). Judd, in his relationship with Harry, and his endless catering to the physical needs of the party, clearly falls within Masterson's "borderliner" category. In his "craving for earthy love" and physical intimacy, Judd rides so close to Harry that their stirrup irons clash. At the same time, he wishes to deny this need and remonstrates: "move over, son,...You are riding that close we will be joined for ever at the stirrup-irons" (V: 244).

The relationship between Judd and Harry is tinged with sexual undertones. Harry is said to have "fallen in love with his mate" (V: 337). They symbolically share a physical and spiritual communion with a lump of gum<sup>5</sup>:

'Open your mouth, shut your eyes.'

Then, when his suggestion had been followed, he popped a little lump of gum into the lad's open mouth....

So they rode, and sucked the gum, which was almost quite insipid in flavour, if slightly bitter. Yet, they were both to some extent soothed and united by its substance and their act. (V: 245)

The united image of Judd and Harry offers many readings. The image of being joined by their stirrup irons suggests that Harry and Judd may be seen as parts of a composite self. But since Harry appears to be effeminate, this union of selves may also be perceived as hermaphroditic, a recurring image in the novel, and a foreshadowing of the implied union of Voss and Laura within an androgynous "whole".

As father figure and mentor to Harry, Judd is a double for Voss. Judd focuses on Harry's physical well-being, and Voss on the mental. Judd's choice bits of beef and mutton are his offerings of love to Harry and are counterpointed with Voss's tutelage in languages and ornithology (V: 246).

Harry, the "holy fool", is one of White's elect characters, who, because of his innocence, is not blinded by bias, and occasionally experiences flashes of insight. At Palfreyman's burial, the meaning of the words of the service appear

to be too much for the land-owner, Ralph Angus, to comprehend, but not for the simpleton, Harry:

In the case of Harry Robarts, however, truth descended upon ignorance in a blinding light. He saw into the meaning of words, and watched the white bird depart out of the hole in Mr. Palfreyman's side as they lowered the body into the ground. (V: 344)

It is the working-class simpleton, Harry, who understands the connotation of the words of the burial service and their significance for Palfreyman's soul. What may be deduced is that the materialistic trappings and preoccupations of the upper class stifle sensitivity or spiritual awareness. The narrative reveals ambivalence towards class distinctions. On the one hand, Boyle is described as degenerate, yet likeable; and, on the other hand, the upper class Angus is derided for his inability to comprehend spiritual matters: "the meaning of the words was too great for him to grasp; he had been brought up a gentleman" (V: 344). Regardless of the ambivalence, the notion of "good" and "bad" inherent in splitting may be extended to include "enlightenment" and "materialism" respectively.

Le Mesurier represents the intellect, and is as cerebral as Harry is simple. He resembles Voss, with certain modifications. As Dorothy Green observes, he is "most like Voss in his determination to give shape to his life, though his pride is intellectual rather than spiritual" (1974: 300). Voss himself is shown as being aware "that the young man was possessed of a gristly will, or daemon, not

unlike his own" (V: 248). Le Mesurier does indeed serve as Voss's doppelgänger. When the expedition is caught in a raging storm, Voss shirks his responsibility as leader and sends Le Mesurier to brave the elements and carry a message to Angus and Turner.

Voss and the rider had touched hands, the same glint of decomposition and moonlight started from the sockets of their eyes and from their teeth, and their two souls were united in the face of inferior realities.

So like clings to like, and will be saved, or is damned. (V: 250)

The blurring of boundaries between self and (m)other, hallucination and "reality", is frequently reflected in narrative style. Because of White's frequent use of the stream of consciousness technique and refusal to be restricted by the rules of grammar and syntax, the reader is never quite certain whether Voss actually accompanies Le Mesurier on his return journey or whether it is the phantasy of one or the other of them, or indeed a mutual hallucination, as in the later Voss and Laura scenes to follow.

Voss began to go with him, never far distant, taunting him for his failures, for his inability to split open rock, and discover the final secret. Frank, I will tell you, said his mentor, you are filled with the hallucinations of intellectual power: I could assist you perhaps, who enjoy the knowledge that comes with sovereignty over every province of illusion, that is to say, spiritual power; indeed, as you may have suspected, I am I am I am....(V: 250)

There is an ironic twist in the narrative, which implies that while the mutual phantasy helps Le Mesurier to ride out the storm, the declaration of Voss's omnipotence is lost on him. It would appear that Voss's motivation is to impress

and inspire Le Mesurier with his divinity, rather than merely to help him. But Le Mesurier "failed to catch the divine Word" (V: 250).

The manifest content of Le Mesurier's hallucination suggests that he accepts Voss's encouragement, but the latent content reveals that, despite his acceptance of his help, he is reluctant to hear the divine Word, and acknowledge the divinity Voss claims for himself, leaving, perhaps, this path open for himself. Evidence of this may be seen in his reaction to the invitation by Angus and Turner to share their rocky roof as shelter from the storm, because he "who had been admitted to infinity at times, did not wish to enter their circle" (V: 249).

As noted earlier, one of the off-shoots of splitting is idealisation of self as a protection from persecution by the split-off "bad" objects. Such idealisation of self is evidenced in Voss who claims spiritual power and Divine sovereignty, as he cries in maniacal fashion: "I am I am I am...." (V: 250) recalling Yahweh's "I am who I am". The incomplete sentence also appears to echo and reflect the psychological permutations of the character, and mimetically suggests uncertainty of identity or incomplete individuation. The omission of the word "who" also suggests that Voss, in his megalomania and sense of omnipotence, refuses to be limited by the grammatically necessary complement. Voss's notion of himself as divine is also narcissistic. He does not define himself in terms of



what he does or thinks (e.g. *Cogito, ergo sum*) but merely in terms of a solipsistic, narcissistic "I am I am I am" which is an exclusively self-referential logical loop. As Masterson explains, the "intrapsychic structure of the narcissistic personality disorder consists of grandiose self-representation and omnipotent object-representation which have fused into one unit which is more or less continuously activated to defend against the underlying aggressive or empty object relations fused-unit" (1981: 29).

Voss is aware that his identity is linked with that of Le Mesurier's, or in other words, that Le Mesurier is a projection or split-off aspect of himself. When he surreptitiously reads Le Mesurier's poetry, he hesitates "as if about to look in a mirror and discover the deformities he most feared" (V: 294). On reading the poem entitled "Childhood", Voss himself feels he is standing in the "terrible arena of childhood" as he reads them (V: 294). Le Mesurier's poetry reflects a projection of Voss's infantile phantasies. The violent imagery of castrated and dismembered kangaroos (V: 297) reveal Oedipal tensions, and the children's bleeding hearts being eaten "as if they had been roses, all with joy" (V: 294), reveal persecutory anxieties. As a protection against such persecution, Le Mesurier in his phantasies, identifies himself with God: "then I am not God, but Man. I am God with a spear in his side" (V: 297). "God with a spear in his side", is God Incarnate, and Le Mesurier's "stages" of God into Man recall Laura's

oracular statement about Voss and his progression in the "stages" of "God into man. Man. And man returning into God" (V: 386).

Le Mesurier's poetry is a graphic demonstration of splitting, which occurs in what Melanie Klein calls the paranoid-schizoid position of psychological development. This defensive splitting can result in excessive paranoia and feelings of persecution (due to the split-off bad object) and excessive idealisation of self (as protection against persecution). According to Klein, hunger, greed, rage and envy are rampant in this position (Klein 1975; H. Segal 1988). All of these ingredients are present in Le Mesurier's poetry in the images of gory banquets of children, knives hacking at flesh, identification with God, and phantasies of persecution by numerous objects.

Despite his protestations that the poems are the work of a maniac, Le Mesurier's narcissistic, grandiose and egotistical image of himself as God is a duplication of Voss's own idealisation of himself as God. The image of Le Mesurier as God "with a spear in his side" links him with both Palfreyman and with Voss, whom Judd in his madness thinks of as also dying with a spear in his side (V: 444). This linking of the characters by means of imagery reinforces the notion that they are parts of a composite self. Voss reads Le Mesurier's poetry in morbid fascination, feeling as if his hands are "nailed" to the book (V: 294), suggesting his identification both with Le Mesurier and Christ who was nailed

to the Cross. Peter Wolfe comments on "the artful foreshadowing of Frank's death" which links the various characters and threads of the novel. He cites the conversation between Voss and Le Mesurier early in the novel, where Frank Le Mesurier tells Voss that he has not yet decided to join the expedition because he was not yet ready to cut his throat. Wolfe views the connection between Voss and Le Mesurier in Biblical terms. He points out that "the headlessness created by his throat-slitting installs Frank in the role of John the Baptist *vis-à-vis* Voss's Christ without negating Voss's role as headless precursor to Australia's unidentified, perhaps even unborn, redeemer". Wolfe argues that "this overlapping or extension of roles enriches the novel. It also cooperates with other narrative elements to organize the reader's responses; the suggestion that Frank is a precursor implies the interpenetrability of spirit" 1983: 120).

While Le Mesurier represents the intellect, Palfreyman represents the spiritual aspect of the self. His subjection to the will of God recalls Christ's submission to God's will during his Passion in the Garden of Gethsemane. "It is not a question of *my* will, Mr. Voss. It is rather the will of God that I should carry out certain chosen undertakings" (V: 47). As Voss's double, Palfreyman believes in God, while Voss, as a result of excessive self-idealisation, believes in himself as God. The antithetical connections between Voss and Palfreyman continue, acted out as Manichean polarities of good and evil. Palfreyman,

moved by Christ-like compassion, sows cress and mustard greens in the desert, cultivating them for the ailing Le Mesurier and Turner. The selfish Voss steals and eats the greens, depriving the sick of their much needed sustenance (V: 288). This incident is a further dramatisation of intra-psyche conflict between two aspects of a self, the selfish and the altruistic, which is played out between two discrete characters, Palfreyman and Voss. There is another aspect involved in Voss's theft and eating of the greens. It is prompted by greed, which is a primitive oral characteristic, and also signifies Voss's aggression and frustration. According to Klein, envy, hunger, greed and rage are typical accompaniments to splitting (H. Segal 1988: 3-5).

When surrounded by Aborigines, Voss reneges on his duties as leader of the expedition, and sends Palfreyman, as his *doppelgänger*, to deal with them. From Voss's megalomaniacal point of view it would also appear that like God, he sends his son, another aspect of himself, to meet his death at the hands of the "enemy". With Palfreyman's death, all members of the team experience a loss of themselves: "Nor was there a single survivor who did not feel that part of him had died" (V: 343), reinforcing the idea that they are aspects of an integral self.

Palfreyman's death has attracted a flurry of critical attention. Geoffrey Dutton undermines his Christ-like qualities, calling him a "professional Christian saint", who is despised by Voss, and finally dispatched by Voss to the

martyrdom he deserves" (1978: 26). John Rorke is of the opinion that Palfreyman's death may be the sacrifice which atones for Voss's sins in Christian terms (1959: 171). And James McAuley points out that Voss, in considering potential sacrificial victims, by-passes the pagan Angus and chooses Palfreyman. To McAuley, Palfreyman "dies as an ineffectual Christ figure" with a spear in his side. In his opinion, Voss rejects the Christian idea of sacrifice and substitutes his own (1965: 39). Bliss sees Palfreyman as "resurrecting what Voss contemptuously calls the 'Christ picture' for others of the party, and, eventually, for Voss himself" (1986: 72). Bliss observes that this sacrificial death has added significance because of the similarities between Voss and Palfreyman's agnostic sister. Both are "wilful, perverse, self-punishing, and anxious to make others in their own image. Above all, she, like Voss, is in love with the Gothic splendours of death" (1986: 72). There is merit in all the views expressed. Most of them in one way or another involve seeing Palfreyman as a scapegoat, or double for Voss. However, viewed in terms of Klein's theory of splitting and projection, Palfreyman's murder by the Aborigines may be seen as a projection of Voss's phantasy of persecution by the Aboriginal (m)other, which also foreshadows Voss's own death at Jackie's hand.

Palfreyman's death serves as a catalyst which actually splits the expedition into two parties: one, that proceeds to the bitter end with Voss, and

the other, which sees the expedition as futile, and turns back. The latter party is led by Judd, who may be seen as Voss's double. Voss may wish to turn back but does not want to admit it. Thus Judd's defection may be seen as an acting out or a projection of Voss's own fears and desires. Harry, the Divine Fool, Le Mesurier, his cerebral counterpart, and Voss, the pretender to the Godhead, form one party; the earthly Judd, the materialist Angus, and the drunk Turner, form the other. Voss feels threatened by Judd's qualities of strength, compassion and endurance, which he himself lacks. In the somnambulistic episode, in an act of projective identification, Voss plants the compass in Judd's knapsack. Cashdan explains the undercurrents of projective identification as

powerful relational artifices that straddle the intrapersonal and the interpersonal. An individual unconsciously projects a part of the self into another human being as a means of converting an inner struggle over badness and unacceptability into an external one. (1988: 57)

Generally, the part projected on to the (m)other, is undesirable or "bad". By doing so, the character hopes to preserve intact all good images of himself or herself. Voss himself is a selfish thief as is seen in his theft of the cress (V: 288), but he projects this attribute on to Judd. In addition, he projects his own wish to get rid of his rival on to Judd, by making it appear that Judd steals the compass in preparation for his departure from the expedition. In effect, Voss projects his undesirable qualities on to the other in an attempt to preserve a good image of himself. Simultaneously, Voss also introjects Judd's nurturing qualities, which

are, in effect, the qualities of a loving and nurturing (m)other. When Le Mesurier lies deathly ill after his nocturnal ride to carry Voss's message to Angus and Turner, Voss perhaps prompted by guilt at being responsible for Le Mesurier's illness, takes on the role of nurturing (m)other and nurses the patient. "He began to clean up the invalid's mess with equanimity, even love. Noble gestures of doubtful origin did stimulate him most of all" (V: 283-284).

While Voss is a counterfeit God and king, Judd aspires to be nothing more than a man. The love Judd craves is earthly. He yearns neither for power nor metaphysical revelations as Voss does. It is this division between God and man, mind and body, one who aspires to be God and the other who aspires to be just a man, which ultimately forms the basis of the splitting of the party. This is particularly clear in Judd's thoughts:

Since his own fat paddocks, not the deserts of mysticism, nor the transfiguration of Christ, are the fate of common man, he was yearning for the big breasts of his wife, that would smell of fresh-baked bread even after she had taken off her shift. (V: 345)

There is an apparent conflict in the narrative between the social and the moral distinctions inherent in the division of the party. Angus, although he is not particularly well educated, mentally aligns himself with Voss and Le Mesurier, the educated ones. Obviously, it takes money to secure an education, and Angus is apparently from the moneyed class, which indirectly links him to the educated members of the expedition, Voss and Le Mesurier. The working class is

represented by Judd and Turner. Seen in this light, Robarts belongs to Judd's working class group, and Angus with Voss's. However, in the actual division of the party, Harry is linked with Voss and Le Mesurier, and Angus with Judd and Turner. What this signifies, then, is a division based on the spiritual versus the physical. It would appear that there are two kinds of class distinctions: one based on notions of spiritual superiority or enlightenment which is arbitrarily imposed by the narrative, and the other, sensed by the character, Angus, which is based on conventional social class divisions. Robarts remains with Voss and Le Mesurier, as one of the visionaries; and Angus turns back with Judd, whose party represents the physical, the quotidian and the mundane.

In the role of leader, Judd, the convict, asks Angus to perform a task. In obeying Judd's order, Angus symbolically accepts his leadership, "although the young man himself felt like betraying his class both then and forever" (V: 347). Angus, often a target of narrative scorn, is described as being "terribly uncertain in his certainty and in need of that macassar, which provided half the assurance of young, personable gentlemen" (V: 347). Angus's dying phantasies of being nursed by "young ladies of his own class" amid Palladian splendours (V: 426) reveal that he remains class-conscious to the end. His dreams are a mixture of the erotic and the maternal, but also reveal yearning for a dual regression: into his own class, and into the safety of fusion with the (m)other - "Deliciously their



fingers of rose and lilac which braided him up in their possessive hair. They smothered him, mothered him, until, at the last, he was presented as a swaddled baby" (V: 426).

Angus and Turner are similar aspects of a coherent self, but from two different social strata. They exist largely as vehicles for the narrative's expression of distaste for pettiness, stupidity and dishonesty, regardless of class boundaries. Turner, the low-life, had been a pickpocket and murderer and Angus had inherited "Palladian splendours" because his father "had grabbed several thousand acres by honest means" (V: 253). The appropriation of native land by the squattocracy is aligned with the heinous crimes of murder. Greed and avarice are revealed by the word "grabbed" which renders the term "honest means" ironic. As a split-off aspect of Voss, Turner's debauchery counterpoints Voss's own repressions, and his demeaning attitude towards the Aboriginal women contrasts with Voss's courtly consideration for them. The incident in which Turner bids for the Aboriginal "molls" with the handle of a frying pan is a case in point. Voss chides him: "Turner...your behaviour will always live down to what I would expect. You will please me by not molesting these people who are my guests" (V: 205).

The division of the expedition party has attracted considerable critical attention, and the critics themselves fall into two camps, those who commend

Judd and those who find fault with him. Geoffrey Dutton sees Judd as "the only thoroughly good character in the book" (1971: 24); and William Ashcroft sees him as "a true visionary, one who has no need to journey to the point of self-negation because he has already been refined and mortified into a union of strength and delicacy". Ashcroft argues that "Judd cannot continue with Voss to his death because he has always understood that transcendence is immanent in...ordinary reality, even if, like his telescope, he could never reach the widest circle of that reality" (in Shepherd and Singh 1978: 128). There are others, who like David Martin, see Judd as a Judas figure (1959: 54), and Veronica Brady categorically states that Judd is wrong in turning back:

Only the man prepared to lose his life will save it and earn the right to become a true inhabitant of the country of the mind, the true new world...Voss was right and Judd was wrong. (1979: 180-181)

A psychoanalytic reading such as this is not concerned with moral evaluation, but with exploration and interpretation. (When terms such as "good" and "bad" are used, they reflect what is considered to be the fictional character's perspective, rather than the perspective of this thesis). Consequently, in this reading, the splitting of the party is merely seen as consistent with the prevalence of splitting within the novel, in which the spirit-body dichotomy that the two parties represent does not appear to be reconciled, but rather emphasised. Dugald and Jackie, the Aboriginal guides, are the last pair to join

the expedition and are presented from a Eurocentric perspective. The image of the Aborigine as Other is split into Dugald, the Rousseauesque Noble Savage with instinctual wisdom, at one with nature, and Jackie, the dark shadow, the evil and murderous alien. Voss offers Dugald a brass button which is a metaphor for the Eucharistic wafer, since Voss perceives himself as God. The gift symbolises desire for communion with the Other. The brass button may also be perceived as the European invader's attempt to purchase a sense of "oneness" with the other, presupposing perhaps, a desire on the part of the other for (comm)union. The notion of communion occurs frequently in the novel in metaphors of lilies, wafers and pills which reflect Voss's delusions of himself as God.

The knife Voss offers Jackie is an antithetical symbol. It is a gift offering, suggesting a desire for harmony and union with the Other. At the same time, the knife is a weapon of destruction, and so also symbolises Voss's desire for the Other and fear of destruction by the Other. The oracular Dugald prophesies Voss's death. The dark shadow, Jackie, is the agent of death, and ironically, Voss's knife is the instrument used to kill him.

While critics have been vociferous over the splitting of the party into two, they tend to overlook the fact that there is a third split within the party. Dugald leaves the expedition, carrying a letter to Laura. *En route*, he encounters

a party of fellow Aboriginals who destroy the letter and playfully divest him of his ragged swallowtail coat, and with it the "conscience he had worn in the days of the whites" (V: 219). Thus relieved of the trappings of civilisation, Dugald, the natural or prelapsarian man, has no conception of guilt. A latter-day Odysseus, he dallies with the Aboriginal maidens and, like Odysseus, who eats the lotos, he eats the lilies which fill him with languor and forgetfulness. The depiction of Dugald rejoined with the tribe and in harmony with nature is couched in idyllic, almost mythic terms, suggesting narratorial endorsement of his defection. This tone of endorsement implies that Dugald rightly belongs with his own people, and not with the white explorers who seek to appropriate both him and the land.

The incident in the lily fields is later duplicated in Voss's death scene, in which Laura comes to him in his dreams, in the middle of a field of lilies. Again, as with Dugald, the lilies serve as a kind of panacea (V: 393). In both instances, the harmony of the human being with nature is depicted in beatific terms. Lilies signify purity, and by association with them, the characters appear to be purified and absolved of any transgressions.

In psychoanalytic terms, this harmonious blending of the self with nature represents a merging or fusion into the (m)other metaphorically represented by Mother Nature. However, it would also appear that the segments of white and

black society remain discrete and split and not reintegrated. Dugald and Voss occupy their own racially demarcated Edens.

The figure of the Aboriginal as the Other is split into Dugald the "good" object and Jackie the aggressive and murderous "bad" object. The name "Jackie" is of Western origin and is evidence not only of naming of the Other, but by naming, appropriation of the Aborigine by the white race. Jackie appears to be split by divided loyalties. He feels "possessed by whiteman's magic" (V: 365), but also feels he belongs with members of his own race. "Blackfeller no good along white men. This my people" (V: 364). In the aftermath of a Corroboree, and goaded on by his tribesmen, he murders the weakened Voss. Jackie's struggle to free himself from the white men reveals fear of engulfment by the (m)other and is analogous to the struggle for individuation.

His audience was hissing.

The boy was stabbing, and sawing, and cutting, and breaking, with all of his increasing, but confused manhood, above all, breaking. He must break the terrible magic that bound him remorselessly, endlessly, to the white men. (V: 394)

There is a depiction of mob psychology here - the hissing audience goads Jackie into murderous action, which is ultimately depicted as a matter of self-defence, based on what is implied as Aboriginal belief in a magical spell that binds Jackie to the white man.<sup>6</sup>

Theodor Adorno argues that when in a large group the "individual tends to identify less with his own ego-ideals and more with impersonal group ideals" (in Elliott 1992: 61). Jackie is thus discouraged from "individual autonomy through the undoing of unconscious repression" which releases powerful destructive energies. "The key mechanism necessary for this release of violent and sadistic unconscious drives is identification". Adorno argues that it is "through an identification with the...leader that the follower is unconsciously able to introject desensitized and ruthless celebrations of brute power itself" (cited in Elliott 1992: 62).

It is suggested that the murder is an act of vengeance. "Blackfeller dead by white man" (V: 365). Nevertheless, the sense of ambivalence prevails. If the Aboriginal elders really believed it was a righteous act, or an act of self-defence, they would have done it themselves. As it stands, they "had been clever enough to see to it that they should not do the deed themselves" (V: 394).

Michael Cotter sees Voss as responsible for Jackie's sense of alienation, which ultimately triggers a retaliation, and a "turning of the evil of colonialism back upon the instigator" (1978: 178). Another view of race relations in the novel is offered by Jeffrey Robinson. Robinson points to White's ambivalent attitude to race relations by citing the deathbed episode of the aged Aborigine placing a grub in Voss's mouth, amid narrative references to "congregation",

thus linking the act with other Eucharistic acts of compassion in the novel, such as Judd's offering of gum to Harry, and the repeated offerings of lilies between Voss and Laura (1985: 153). Both views have some merit - Jackie does appear to be a split subject because of being torn between two civilisations; but the image of the Aboriginal as Noble Savage or as fearful "other" focused through the eyes of the white explorers of the nineteenth century, reveals ambivalence.

While some critics may associate Judd with the Judas figure, it may be argued that Jackie more clearly fits the image of guilty traitor. He murders the man he loves and who loves him, in his own peculiar fashion: "Of the three souls that were dedicated to him, Voss most loved that of the black boy" (V: 361). Like Judas, he is tortured by guilt and wanders around demented as "terrible knives of thought, sharpened upon the knives of the sun, were cutting into him" (V: 418). The image of his spirit being hacked by knives is phantastic and resembles Voss's delirious image of his own spirit as a "species of soul, elliptical in shape, of a substance similar to human flesh, from which fresh knives were continually growing in place of those that were wrenched out" (V: 393). While for Voss this may be a premonition of his death, it also serves to link the two characters, with Jackie as his murderous double. As far as Voss is concerned, Jackie represents the persecutory (m)other, threatening and ultimately annihilating. Furthermore, the knife imagery surrounding the deaths

of Palfreyman, Le Mesurier and Voss serves to link them as aspects of a composite character.

There is a suggestion that these aspects or fragments of selves as personified by Le Mesurier, Palfreyman, Voss and Jackie, intermingle in death as they are dispersed into the elements. Le Mesurier's prayerful poem begs that his body may be scattered into the elements and into all men (V: 297); at Palfreyman's death, Harry sees a white bird, a symbol for the soul, departing out of his side and into the air (V: 344); at Voss's death, his dreams are said to fly into the air, while his blood is absorbed into the earth (V: 394); and Jackie's thoughts "less defined, became, or were interchangeable with those spirits that haunted the places where he chose to sleep" (V: 418).

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The splitting dynamic is pervasive throughout Voss. Just as the male figures represent projected aspects of an integral character, so also do the female figures represent various aspects of personality. Taken together these aspects of selves synergistically create a concept of manhood and womanhood which is a recurrent pattern in White's fiction. For instance, in Voss and The Aunt's Story,



the female appears to be split into the "enlightened" or "elect" "spinsters" such as Laura and Theodora; the acquisitive or materialistic bourgeois wives, Belle and Fanny who are depicted as angels of the hearth, and the sexual beings, the servants, Pearl Brawne and Rose Portion, who are often described in animalistic terms.

In Voss, while Belle and Laura represent complementary aspects of the social self, the interaction of the physical and the spiritual, as is dramatised in the relationship between Laura and Rose, is more significant. As Bliss observes, Rose embodies all the "unsavoury aspects of the flesh. Her heavy, stolid, stupid presence oppresses Laura" (1986: 76). Like the later Rhoda Courtney, Rose is repulsive by conventional standards. However, as Bliss points out, "like Rhoda, who is herself both rodent and rose, she becomes a vehicle through which Laura can experience and express a compassionate love" (1986: 76). What is more, as the name Rose Portion suggests, she is both a "portion" or aspect of the female personality, but also the "rose" component, representing romantic love, and ultimately, the physical love which Laura denies, but which is nevertheless a necessary prerequisite for the motherhood she later embraces.

Jack Slipper and Rose Portion are seen as doubles for Voss and Laura, and the physical relationship of the former appears as diametrically opposed to the metaphysical relationship of the latter. Nonetheless, the physical union of the

former provides a child that the latter appropriates as a token of their metaphysical union. It is through Rose that Laura deals with her own repressed sexuality. Mrs. Bonner also appears to be unconsciously aware that Rose and Laura may be closely linked. As Rose's pregnancy advances, she notes that "Laura is becoming heavy" (V: 77). When Laura snaps at Belle, Rose is the scapegoat who "takes upon herself that chastening which was intended for Miss Belle" (V: 121), further suggesting that the women represent aspects of each other.

That the three women, Laura, Belle and Rose are to be seen as aspects of a composite personality is further indicated in the narratorial linking of the three characters on the occasion of the departure of the Osprey. Three times in 18 lines, on a single page, almost to the extent of monotony, the narrative reiterates, with slight variations, that "the three women watched the ship" (V: 121) as it set sail. As the three women watch the ship sail, it is suggested that Belle and Laura "could not have told whether they were quickened or drugged" (V: 122). "Quickened" has connotations of pregnancy. It is Rose who is pregnant, but Belle and Laura are "quickened", by displacement. There are Biblical evocations of the Annunciation and the Visitation in the description of Laura's body as "quickened" and "mysterious" (V: 122), hinting at an Immaculate conception. The wind imagery is used to suggest this impregnation metaphorically. "In the

bosom of the all-possessing wind, they were soothed to some extent, and the light, touching the cumquats on the little bamboo table, turned these into precious stones, the perfection of which gave further cause for hope" (V: 123). Since wind imagery is also associated with the Holy Spirit, one facet of the Blessed Trinity, this imagery suggests a link with Voss's idealised notion of his own Godliness. And Laura, as a Virgin of Immaculate Conception, may be seen to be symbolically impregnated by his spirit.

Like Theodora in The Aunt's Story, who experiences a metasexual union with Moraïtis, the cellist, through "the deep notes that reached down deep into her body" (TAS: 111), and who later considers Lou Parrott, her niece, as a token of that union, Laura appropriates Mercy, Rose's child, as the token of her union with Voss. These incidents suggest the privileging of a spiritual or mental union over the physical in human relationships, and can be interpreted as symptoms of ontological insecurities. As explained by R. D. Laing, ontologically insecure persons do not seem to have

a sense of that basic unity which can abide through the most intense conflicts with oneself, but seem rather to have come to experience themselves as primarily split into a mind and a body. Usually they feel most closely identified with the 'mind.' (1960: 65)

This appears to be true of Voss and Laura, who deny the physical and align themselves predominantly with the mental. The narrative implies that sexuality is an undesirable quality and is split off from the protagonists and projected on

to the lesser characters, in some cases the servants, who provide the child for them.

Laura's parthenogenesis or psychosomatic pregnancy parallels Rose's actual pregnancy and delivery. She makes Rose's experiences her own:

Then a great cry was shattering all the glass in the house. The walls were falling. Flesh subsided only gradually upon the ridge of the spine....

Laura Trevelyan could have screamed with pain. Her throat was bursting with it.... Their livid, living stone was turning, by divine mercy, into flesh.... Laura Trevelyan bit the inside of her cheek, as the child came away from her body. (Y: 229-230)

But Laura not only experiences Rose's childbirth, she also vicariously experiences her death, reiterating the notion that they are dual aspects of an integral self. At Rose's funeral, Laura has a phantastic experience of undifferentiation, which blurs all boundaries between self and (m)other, spirit and matter, in a state of amorphousness:

the material part of myself became quite superfluous, while my understanding seemed to enter into wind. earth, the ocean beyond, even the soul of our poor, dead maid. I was nowhere and everywhere at once. I was destroyed, yet living more intensely than actual sunlight. (Y: 239)

This is similar to Kristeva's notion of "abjection", which is a sudden sense of uncanniness:

Not me. Not that. But not nothing, either. A "something" that I do not recognize as a thing. A weight of meaninglessness, about which there is nothing insignificant, and which crushes me. On the edge of non-existence and hallucination. (1982: 2)

Laura's lack of differentiation and merging, shifting identification with Rose and with the elements, is repeated with greater intensity in her later experience of

undifferentiation from Voss. Laura physically remains on shore, but the narrative suggests that she accompanies Voss on a metaphysical expedition. Laura herself seems to be confident about this: "I think I can enter the minds of most men" (V: 86). On shore with Laura in Sydney, Belle recalls Tom's words: "It is Laura who will escape, by putting on canvas. She has sailed" (V: 120).

The various split aspects of male and female personality are seen as ultimately subsumed in the splitting and reintegration of the protagonists, Voss and Laura, who are depicted as the masculine and feminine components of an androgynous being. The men physically accompany Voss on the expedition, and the narrative suggests that Laura, as his psychic counterpart, accompanies him on a metaphysical journey through the desert: "You are my desert" (V: 88). The intensity of their phantastic relationship and their identification with each other is similar to the Cathy and Heathcliff relationship in Wuthering Heights, and evokes memories of Cathy's famous impassioned cry, "Nelly, I am Heathcliff" (Bronte 1972: 74).

Laura participates in Voss's travails and agony in the desert, and appears to be present within or beside him at various significant moments in the expedition. The narrative does not differentiate between "phantasy" and "reality", thus suggesting to the reader that Laura is to be perceived as an integral part of Voss. White himself encourages such a perspective. In Flaws in

the Glass he refers to the Brown Brothers, of The Solid Mandala, and Voss and Laura not merely as two parts of a whole, but even, specifically, as two parts of himself (EG: 145, 197). "I became in turn Voss and his anima Laura Trevelyan" (EG: 103). White argues that the masculine principle in women, and the feminine principle in men, contribute to subtlety in representation of the Australian character (EG: 155). Thus the interactions of Laura and Voss as the feminine and masculine principles of each other reveal the intricacies of the intra-psychic configurations of the androgynous being.

Early in the novel, there are suggestions that Voss and Laura are to be seen as psychological mirror images of each other. There are numerous affinities and similarities between them. They sit in "identical positions on similar chairs" (V: 11), and Oedipal elements are hinted at in both their childhoods. Laura reminisces about "moist" kisses and falling in love with her father, who is represented metonymically, by his rough coat (V: 13). Voss also displays Oedipal conflict in his aggressive phantasies. He "knew he must tread with his boot upon the trusting face of the old man, his father" (V: 14). Both have narcissistic and grandiose notions of self-sufficiency (V: 88-89). Laura is atheist and feels she is in no need of God, and Voss believes that he himself may be God. These and other similarities between Voss and Laura set the stage for their psychic communion.

There is considerable controversy among critics over their long-distance, clairvoyant relationship, and the credibility of their telepathic encounters remains a vexed question. White himself appears to believe in E.S.P. According to Marr, White does not use their "long distance courtship entirely as a literary device, for White believed in such communication of the spirit as a fact" (1991: 317). Some critics, like Margaret Walters, find the depiction of their telepathic intimacy unacceptable. Walters accuses White of resorting to too much "Gothic fantasy" and "crude dream symbolism" (1963: 18). Others, like John Rorke and James McAuley, applaud its use (Rorke 1959: 72; McAuley 1965: 41).

Whether or not E.S.P. as used by White, like Dickens' use of spontaneous combustion, can be scientifically proven or not is beside the point. Furthermore, Voss does not purport to be an exclusively realist text. Voss's and Laura's relationship, conducted as it were *in absentia*, is part of the novel's prevalent technique of splitting and reintegration. Their psychically shared experiences suggest that they are the masculine and feminine aspects of a "whole" character. And because most of their communications are through the medium of phantasy, they are not limited by barriers of time and distance.

In the garden encounter, the conflict between them assumes metaphysical dimensions. The confrontation appears to be between two component parts of the psyche - one who believes in God, because he believes in himself as being

God-like, and therefore able to equate with or supplant God; and the other who doubts the existence of God, because she believes she is self-sufficient and therefore not in need of a God.

'*Ach*,' he pounced, 'you are not *atheistisch*?'

'I do not know,' she said....

'Atheists are atheists usually for mean reasons,' Voss was saying. 'The meanest of these is that they themselves are so lacking in magnificence they cannot conceive the idea of a Divine Power'....

'Their reasons,' said Laura, 'are simple, honest, personal ones. As far as I can tell. For such steps are usually taken in privacy. Certainly after considerable anguish of thought'....

'But the God they have abandoned is of mean conception,' Voss pursued. 'Easily destroyed, because in their own image....*Atheismus* is self-murder. Do you not understand?'(V: 88-89)

As Xavier Pons observes, both Laura and Voss are "narcissistically wounded" (1979/80: 9). Laura's insistence on self-sufficiency and Voss's megalomania are defence mechanisms, which take the form of denial of their vulnerability. Laura imagines her mind to be complete, and therefore feels she is not in need of a God, while Voss prefers a narcissistic relationship with himself to normal inter-personal relations. To deny the existence of God would be to deny his own grandiose image of himself and of his own possibilities as God. According to Kernberg, narcissistic people experience a "fusion of ideal self, ideal object, and self images" which creates a vicious circle of self-admiration, depreciation of others, and elimination of all actual dependency. He goes on to explain that these people "experience themselves as part of that outstanding



person" (1975: 235-236). Voss identifies with his hero, or Ego Ideal, who exceeds all human limitations and is God himself.

Laura's agnosticism is that aspect which needs to be split-off in order for Voss to construct a narcissistic and omnipotent image of himself as God. The conflict between them is conducted as it were between two spirit beings, rather than humans; the imagery is apocalyptic, and reminiscent of the battle between God and Lucifer:

He was glittering coldly. The wind that the young woman had promised had sprung up, she realized dully. The stars were trembling. Leaves were slashing at one another. (V: 89)

Then he was touching her, his hand was upon her shoulder-blades, and they realized they had returned into their bodies. (V: 90)

Laura and Voss are depicted as leaving their bodies to encounter each other's spirits in battle. This spiritual encounter sets the terms of their relationship and gives the reader a foretaste of their subsequent spiritual and telepathic communion. Laura's pride, which she sees as magnified and reflected back to her by Voss, triggers a recovery of faith, and she offers to relearn the lost art of prayer in order to ensure his safety, while he scoffs: "My poor Miss Trevelyan! I shall be followed through the continent of Australia by your prayers, like little pieces of white paper" (V: 90).

On the first stop of the expedition, at Rhine Towers, the idyllic life of the Sandersons serves as an erotic stimulus for Voss's repressed desires to surface.

In his phantasies, Laura is with him and the surrounding hills of the estate dissolve into her flesh. The psychological relationship of self to environment has object-relational valency, and Voss's reactions to and identification with his natural environment are similar to the relationship of the self with the (m)other.

So he was touching those same hills and was not surprised at their suave flesh. That which would have been reprehensible, nauseating, frightening in life, was permissible, even desirable, in sleep. And could solve, as well as dissolve ....That is the hill of love, his voice said, as if it had been most natural. (V: 139)

In Voss's phantasies his defences are down, and he talks naturally about the "hill of love", a topic he would suppress if he were awake. The hand Laura proffers him, and which he buries in his bosom, is a metonymic representation of his desire for union and merger with Laura, and, ultimately, with the (m)other. In dreams his problem of sexual repression could be "solved" as well as "dissolved". There appears to be a two-fold meaning in his dream. The first is the desire for sexual fulfilment, which would "solve" the problem of his repressed desire. The second is that of the absorption of Laura into himself. She would "dissolve" into him. This dissolution of Laura into himself suggests a hermaphroditic image, recalling the Biblical Adam, who carries the nucleus of Eve within his ribs. For Voss, Laura becomes "the loving companion who lived and breathed inside him" (V: 267).

The description of Rhine Towers with its "voluptuous fleshy forests" and "veiled mountains" (V: 137) evoke images of Voss's childhood in the lush "green forests" and "yellow plains" of Germany (V: 14). The name itself, "Rhine Towers", is Germanic and recalls Voss's childhood memories. Seen in terms of the theory of separation and individuation, his dream also represents a wish to regress into a symbiotic infantile state, where all that is "reprehensible" becomes "permissible, even desirable" (V: 139), and could bring about a solution to his waking problems, by a dissolution of self into the (m)other. While the manifest content of the dream involves Laura, the latent content reveals his own ontological insecurities. Country, lover and (m)other are condensed and conflated into one image, as he contemplates his lordly journey into the Australian interior.

He entered in advance that vast, expectant country, whether of stone deserts, veiled mountains, or voluptuous, fleshy forests. But his. His soul must experience first, as by some spiritual *droit de seigneur*, the excruciating passage into its interior. (V: 137)

Laura and country become both self and (m)other in Voss's phantasies. The "stone deserts" represent a cold and unresponsive (m)other and the "voluptuous fleshy forests" are a displacements of a libidiously gratifying nurturing (m)other.

But because Voss is narcissistic he not only displays excessive investment in the self, he also fears being engulfed by the (m)other. Voss

oscillates between self-love and a desire for union with the (m)other, as well as fear of engulfment by the (m)other. In his dream he protests that he is not ready for union with Laura but she insists upon it, explaining that togetherness is filled with cells and "see seeds":

I do not wish this yet, or *nie nie nie, niemals. Nein*. You will, she said, if you cut and examine the word. *Together* is filled with little cells. And cuts open with a knife. It is a see seed. (V: 187)

The "see seed" could specifically refer to her clairvoyance in "seeing" and sharing his experiences in the desert, despite the distance, and could also refer to his symbolically planting his seed in her.

Their union, however, results in a hermaphroditic image which is metaphorically represented by Palfreyman's drawing of a lily with seeds attached which "were of a distinct shape, like testes, attached to the rather virginal flower" (V: 187). This image suggests not so much the union of two separate beings coming together, as a reintegration of two parts of a whole:

Now they were swimming so close they were joined together at the waist, and were the same flesh of lilies, their mouths, together, were drowning in the same love-stream. (V: 187)

Heinz Kohut explains that narcissistic people depend on others to provide their missing self-esteem but, because of their arrested psychological development, they perceive the other, not as Other, but as a missing part of the self, a "self-object" (1971 xiv). This is apparent in the Voss and Laura relationship.

When Judd nurses Voss for an injury he sustains from a mule's kick, self and (m)other blur in Voss's phantasy: Judd, an aspect of Voss, merges with Laura, an aspect of the self, Voss, as well as of the (m)other. He ruminates that "to surrender itself into other hands is one of the temptations of mortal flesh....Voss wondered how much of himself he had given into her hands" (V: 208). The physical injury renders Voss vulnerable, and for the first time he ponders whether he should "renounce the crown of fire for the ring of gentle gold" and accept "salvation" at the hands of his wife (V: 213). Voss's injury is, suggestively enough, to his stomach and while Judd ministers tenderly to this part of his anatomy, (V: 212), far away, in Sydney, Laura feels the child kick inside her (V: 227). The language suggests that this is more than mere coincidence, and that they are similar events that occur in two parts of an integral character.

Voss both desires union with the (m)other, and fears engulfment. His decision to kill his dog Gyp, for fear of being too attached to her emotionally, is a displacement of his fear of emotional involvement with the (m)other, Laura. He rationalises that "his act could but have been for the common good" (V: 267). But he is aware of Laura's presence and censure, which he tries to overcome by dismissing her own love as dog-like (V: 267). As Edgecombe observes, Laura is internalised as a "conscientious presence to which, by

characteristic sophistry and involuted logic" Voss attempts to justify his brutal act (1989: 30). But the guilt feelings persist, and Laura prevails:

As they rode along he explained to that loving companion who lived and breathed inside him; he had only to hold the muzzle to his own head, to win a victory over her. At night, though, his body was sick with the spasms of the dying dog. Until the continuous lovers felt for each other's hand, to hear the rings chatter together. Truly, they were married. But I cannot, he said, stirring in his sleep, both kill and have. He was tormented by the soft coat of love. (V: 267)

The word "muzzle" refers to both the weapon and the animal. Voss indulges in emotional blackmail. By holding the muzzle to his head, Voss, dog and Laura are conflated in a blurring of selves and entities. If killing the dog is a displacement for killing Laura, then, ultimately, killing Laura may be seen as an unconscious desire to kill himself, since he believes she is part of himself. As Stolorow explains:

Indeed, one finds the most violent and primitive manifestations of self-directed and object-directed aggression precisely in those individuals who are most narcissistically vulnerable. (1975: 446)

There are recurring instances of telepathic communication between Voss and Laura which emphasise the idea of their duality or that they are projections of each other, a concept on which White focuses in later novels such as The Solid Mandala and The Twyborn Affair. Voss's second letter to Laura, in which he professes his love, and addresses her as his wife, is intercepted and destroyed by the Aboriginals, and so never reaches its destination. Nevertheless, Laura acts as if she has received it. She too talks of union with him and of the baby, Mercy,

as a token of their love (V: 239). She mirrors his sentiments, and believes she is truly his wife, as she vicariously experiences Rose's pregnancy, thereby realising in phantasy what she could not in reality: consummation of her (meta)sexual union with Voss:

Then, in the mysterious garden, obsessed by its harsh scents, she would be closest to the unborn child, and to the love of her husband....As if words were necessary. Long before pen had been put to paper, and paper settled on the grass in its final metamorphosis, she had entered the state of implicit trust....Once she had felt the child kick inside her, and she bit her lip for the certainty, the shape her love had taken. (V: 227)

The narrative calls on other characters to bear witness to these preternatural happenings. At Mercy's birth, Mrs. Bonner looks at Laura and becomes afraid "as if she had been present at a miracle" (V: 231). While Laura goes through her phantasised or parthenogenetic pregnancy and delivery, Voss has a corresponding dream of pregnancy and parturition. Thus both share complementary experiences, despite obstacles of time and distance, constantly reinforcing the idea that they are dual parts of an androgynous being.

In his vision he administers a small white pill, resembling a wafer, symbolising their spiritual and physical union. He diagnoses her illness as "celibate paralysis" (V: 269). While this may be an accurate diagnosis of Laura's state, it also represents a projection by Voss of his own state on to her. Thus both share a similar state of "celibate paralysis". Voss, as implicit Divine Physician, attempts to administer a pill which is said to grow to large

proportions within her. This of course symbolically represents physical and sexual union and impregnation. However, because of its similarity to the ritual of Eucharistic communion, it also symbolises spiritual union. And, because Voss believes in his own Godhead, it is an implied version of transubstantiation:

At this stage of the sickness, he said, I will administer this small white pill, which will grow inside you to gigantic proportions....Can you bear to receive what will entail great suffering?....If I have suffered the Father, she smiled, then I can suffer the Son. Immediately he sensed the matter had attained flesh-proportions, he was nauseated. He was no Moslem. His trousers were not designed for parturition. I am One, he protested, forming the big O with his convinced mouth. And threw the pill upon the ground. (V: 269)

Laura's response, that if she suffered the Father, she can suffer the Son, infuriates Voss, because of its implicit reference to God assuming the flesh of man, and flesh disgusts him. What is more, it would seem that he would rather retain his notion of himself as God the Father, rather than assume the flesh of the Son. Nevertheless, he moves between images of Father and Son, assuming roles of both, and claiming that he is the One. As Edgecombe observes, "however confused the finer details of this episode might seem, there can be no doubting its centrality to the 'mystic marriage' of the characters, not the least because it suggests an interfertilization of their respective attitudes and values" (1989: 31). Laura's psychosomatic pregnancy and childbirth symbolically represent the humanisation of Voss, which is so crucial to his spiritual progression and salvation.



Voss has a revulsion for the physical and cannot relate to Laura as a woman. However, as an androgynous figure she appears less threatening, and is acceptable to him. The description of Laura as an androgynous being recalls the description of Theodora, *alias* Ludmilla, in The Aunt's Story. Both are strong and admirable in their thick men's boots. In this androgynous state, Theodora, in her role as Ludmilla, is acceptable for communion with the saints and gains the love of the General (TAS: 149, 152), while Laura is acceptable for communion with Voss, who is aware of his own composite nature:

She, however, was quite strong and admirable in her thick, man's boots beneath the muddied habit. Her hands were taking his weakness from him, into her own, supple, extraordinarily muscular ones. Yet, her face had retained the expression he remembered it to have worn when she accepted him in spite of his composite nature, and was unmistakably the face of a woman. (V: 285)

In this phantasy, there is a fusion and exchange of roles between Voss and Laura, masculine and feminine, self and (m)other. Laura assumes physical strength and muscularity, which were generally considered to be masculine characteristics, and is attired like a man, but retains the face of a woman. Voss, for his part, gives in to his weakness, which was assumed to be a feminine characteristic. Thus both Voss and Laura display masculine and feminine characteristics which suggests that in the ultimate analysis, they are merging aspects or projections of each other.

The form of the narrative mimetically reflects the blurring of boundaries between self and (m)other. While earlier chapters alternate between scenes of Sydney and the desert, in Chapter thirteen these divisions are blurred, again mimetically reflecting the blurring of psychological and geographic boundaries. The city and the bush, self and (m)other are conflated as the "party rode down the terrible basalt stairs of the Bonners' deserted house, and onward" (V: 358). Voss's and Laura's mutual experiences and hallucinations merge, blurring psychological, and geographic and temporal boundaries. There is no clear distinction between time frames and distances, city or the Bush, phantasy and reality, self and (m)other.

There is further confusion and blurring of identities between Voss and his Ego Ideal, the Divine Lord. Surrounded by Aborigines, Harry exclaims:

'Good Lord, sir, what will happen?' asked Harry Robarts, rising to the surface of his eyes.

'They will know, presumably,' replied the German.

'Lord, sir, will you let them?' cried the distracted boy. 'Lord, will you not save us?'

'I am no longer your Lord, Harry,' said Voss. (V: 366)

To quote Edgecombe again, there is a "blurring of the boundary between humanity and godhead. ... achieved by the syntactic legerdemain of transference". Voss applies to himself the "invocatory and expletive use of 'Lord'" (1989: 16-17). But ultimately, overcome by fear and realising his vulnerability, Voss relinquishes the idealised notion of himself as God-like and

resigns from the divine position. This resignation may also be viewed as being influenced by the introjection of the "good" qualities of others, such as for instance, Palfreyman's humility.

This signals a turning point in Voss's dual journey through life and the desert. He realises that the notion of his divinity is a delusion, and it begins the process of his humanisation. Idealisation of self is an off-shoot of splitting, and is prompted by the desire to protect the self from the split-off bad objects. Voss's recognition and acceptance that he is not God signals progress towards psychological integration, diminishing both narcissistic idealisation and persecutory anxiety. Laura is constantly metaphysically with him on his journey into self-realisation and resumption of human status:

He would not look at her, however, for he was not yet ready.

In spite of his resistance, their stirrup-irons grappled together as they rode....

So they rode through hell, that was scented with *Tannenbaum*, or hair blowing. His mouth was filled with the greenish-black tips of hair, and a most exquisite bitterness. (V: 363)

In this passage, various significant elements of his life are linked and fused, again suggesting the diffusion of boundaries. The image of the grappling stirrup-irons is suggestive of lovers' union, but also suggests Voss's ambivalence toward the notion of Laura as an integral part of himself. He is narcissistically dependent upon Laura to acknowledge and reflect him and, at the same time, he fears engulfment. The use of the German word "*Tannenbaum*" for pine trees

recalls Voss's childhood in Germany and suggests, metonymically, a desire to regress into a childhood state. At the same time, in keeping with his notions of himself as God, the "exquisite bitterness" he tastes is reminiscent of the vinegar and gall offered to the dying Christ. And the journey through hell becomes a purgation necessary for his salvation. Ultimately overcome by Laura's tenacity, devotion and doggedness, Voss accepts both his humanness and the fact that she is an inescapable part of himself. as they drift together "sharing the same hell, in their common flesh, which he had attempted so often to repudiate" (V: 364).

Playing Magdalene to her fallen Christ, she "anoints" his sores, as his mouth is filled with the tips of her "greenish-black" hair (V: 363). She persuades him that his bleeding means that "Man is God decapitated. That is why you are bleeding" (V: 364). On realising that he is human Voss becomes fearful and experiences separation anxieties. as he makes a plaintive plea to Laura for help:

'You will not leave me then?' he asked.

'Not for a moment,' she said. 'Never, never.'

'If your teaching has forced me to renounce my strength. I imagine the time will come very soon when there will be no question of our remaining together.' (V: 366-367)

In this moving dialogue. Voss accepts his humanity. mortality and duality.

The image of Laura bleeding from the roots of her hair symbolically suggests her participation in Voss's beheading. reinforcing the idea of their duality. Beheading phantasies are the ultimate form of castration anxieties and

suggest that Voss's desire for fusion with the Other, is, ultimately, a desire for fusion with the (m)other. In his dream they ride through Elysian fields of lilies, and he abdicates from the once-usurped throne of God. Laura's prayers, which were said on Voss's journey towards his supposed coronation, are now metamorphosed into lilies, as manna for their human bodies (V: 393). But more important than physical food "were his own words of love that he was able at last to put into her mouth. So great was her faith, she received these white wafers without surprise" (V: 393). The wafers signify both physical union and spiritual communion. While Voss is ravaged with sickness and exhaustion to the point of death, Laura lies dangerously ill in Sydney, and begs God for help:

'O Jesus,' she begged, 'have mercy. Oh, save us, or if we are not to be saved, then let us die. My love is too hard to bear. I am weak, after all.' (V: 374)

Correspondingly, Voss, finally humanised and stripped of his delusions, and desperately ill, is filled with fear and trembling at the visions of "the arms, or sticks, reaching down from the eternal tree, and tears of blood, and candle-wax" (V: 390). He throws himself on God's mercy and, like Christ in Gethsemane, utters a poignant cry, in his native tongue, which echoes Laura's words: "'O Jesus,' he cried, '*rette mich nur! Du lieber!*'" (V: 390).

Voss's agony in the desert and Laura's simultaneous delirium in Sydney are rendered in terms of "phantasy". These mutual "phantasies" arise from anxieties over separation from each other, which is analogous to anxieties over

separation from the primordial object of desire, the (m)other. These anxieties are conceptualised in gratifying and persecutory images. Laura is the (m)other who alternately nurtures Voss, gratifying his needs or frustrates and criticises him, acting as his persecutory, punitive (m)other.

In the last hours before death, the various conflicting aspects of Voss's life blur and merge in his vision, suggesting integration and acceptance of conflicting aspects of self and (m)other. This is metaphorically represented by the figure which keeps vigil over him. The amorphous watchful figure which appears during his illness may be seen as a dramatisation of the integration of the various aspects of personality. It is a composite character, an androgynous being, comprising man and woman, Aboriginal and white, self and other, mother and wife, which transcends racial divisions, gender boundaries and sexual dichotomies. Voss was dozing and waking:

While they were asleep, an old man had come and, stepping across the body of Harry Robarts, sat down inside the hut to watch or guard Voss.... For in the grey light, it transpired that the figure was that of a woman, whose breasts hung like bags of empty skin above the white man's face.... While the woman sat looking down at her knees, the greyish skin was slowly revived, until her full, white, immaculate body became the shining source of all light. (V: 382-383)

According to Klein, the recognition and acceptance of dualities occurs during what she calls the "depressive" phase (H. Segal 1988: 3-5). Hanna Segal explains that if there is a predominance of good experiences over bad, the fear of persecution decreases, and the split between persecutory and ideal objects also

lessens, thus allowing these objects to come closer together, which is conducive to integration (1988: 37). Laura's steadfast love and constant companionship through the hardships, deprivations and excruciating agony in the desert enable Voss to overcome his paranoid tendencies and excessive idealisation of himself and to integrate various split-off aspects of the self. His fear of persecution diminishes in proportion to his realisation that he is not God, but man.

Object Relations theorists posit that in the depressive position which enables integration, the genesis of symbol formation may be perceived. The ambiguous figure beside Voss's deathbed is the symbol of Voss's integration of various psychic conflicts. The previously split masculine and feminine parts of the self are now represented as integrated into this figure. The original fatal conflict between the white explorer and black guide is now muted in the "greyish skin" which slowly reveals a "full, white, immaculate body...the shining source of all light" (V: 383).

Psychological maturation is signalled by the reintegration of split aspects of self and (m)other. The narrative suggests that in Voss's last phantasy he begins to recognise and love Laura not merely as a missing part of himself, but also an aspect of the (m)other. In a letter to Ben Huebsch, his publisher, White mentions that he perceives the Voss-Laura relationship as a unique, and "grand passion" (in Marr 1994: 107). The culmination of their passion occurs, when in

a weakened state and denuded of delusions of paranoia and grandeur, Voss surrenders himself to euphoric union with the lover:

Instead, she came to him, and at once he was flooded with light and memory. As she lay beside him, his boyhood slipped from him in a rustling of water and a rough towel. A steady summer had possessed them. Leaves were in her lips, that he bit off, and from her breasts, the full, silky, milky buds. (V: 383)

Sexuality, previously displaced on to the servants Jack Slipper and Rose Portion, is now symbolically accepted by the chastened, but more mature lovers as Voss's "boyhood slipped from him in a rustling of water and a rough towel" (V: 383). The water imagery serves as a wished-for general absolution and the milky breasts symbolise both the maternal and the wifely.

As in most of White's novels, the attempted integration of the protagonist coincides with the integration of the art object or the conclusion of the novel. From the point of view of the artistic process which brings the novel to an end or the art object to completion, Voss's death-bed "phantasies" represent what Ehrenzweig calls a "manic-oceanic" phase, which involves "unconscious scanning". According to Ehrenzweig, in this phase all differentiation ceases, and fragmentation is resolved. "The inside and outside world begin to merge and even the differentiation between ego and superego becomes attenuated" (1993: 103). The narrative implies that in Voss's phantasies fragmentation is reconciled. Ehrenzweig explains this further, "the creative man[sic] prepares, as it were, in his work a receiving "womb", the image of a benevolent mother figure, to



contain and integrate the fragmented material" (1993: 192). Voss's death-bed hallucination is the vehicle through which he reintegrates the various fragments of the self. Laura herself may be viewed as representing the receiving maternal "womb" in which Voss heals his fragmented self. As Ehrenzweig comments on this stage of the creative process, "all opposites merge, death and birth become one, the difference between the sexes, the differentiation of parent and child disappear. Temporarily, all splitting is undone" (1993: 192). There is a distinction between this form of artistic integration, and the psychological development of the protagonist. The lack of differentiation between parent and child, referred to by Ehrenzweig applies to the surface gestalt of the novel's artistic unity rather than the regressive symbiosis of the protagonist. As Elizabeth Wright observes, from the viewpoint of artistic creation

this state is not to be regarded as regressive, but as the re-experience of a primal state which enables the artist to integrate the fragments within the flux of experience, on an 'unconscious undifferentiated level.' (1984: 87)

There is a tension between the implied reintegration of previously split-off aspects of self and (m)other, and the reader's awareness of the sense of death and dementia that looms over the novel. Most members of the expedition, Voss, Palfreyman, Le Mesurier, Angus and Turner, representing various split-off aspects of the self, hubris, spirituality, carnality and mediocrity, all meet with

violent deaths. Jackie, the *deus ex machina* who decapitates Voss, also dies, grinning in everlasting death in the wilderness (V: 427).

The destruction seems to be indiscriminate - even Harry, the harmless innocent, is destroyed. This is in keeping with notions of paranoia and persecution which accompany the process of splitting. As Doane and Hodges explain, defences of splitting, projection and introjection are symptoms of vulnerability. Envy, an infantile form of aggression, is directed not toward bad objects, but towards good ones, the "riches" of the mother's body. "This primitive emotion may undo the process of splitting by destroying the good object that is protected when the bad object is split-off from the good object" (1992: 9). Harry, part of the "good" object, may be perceived as the target of envy and thus becomes a casualty of splitting.

The natural man, Dugald, returned to his people and the Bush, has descended into dotage and senility, or second childhood, and is beyond reproach or hate: "Dugald had become so old, he was again young" (V: 420). Those who survive are an enfeebled Judd, the leader of the opposition, and Laura, Voss's psychological counterpart. Judd and Laura are brought together some twenty years after the expedition. They appear to coexist at Voss's commemoration, but the physical Judd exists in a chastened and impaired or modified form. So the acceptance of the physical is only partial, just as the acceptance of sexuality is

only by dream or displacement. The result is a tension between what the reader views as the psychological development of the protagonists and the achievement of aesthetic or artistic unity.

The novel concludes with Laura as the focus of attention, representing the consciously integrated image of various aspects of the composite psyche. She acquires, by "right of vision" and psychic experience, motherhood, love, a return to God and, through phantastic participation, all of Voss's experiences in the desert. Arriving at what Klein calls the "depressive position" (H. Segal 1988: 3-5), she symbolises the acceptance and reintegration of various conflicting, psychic experiences.

'Whether Judd is an impostor, or a madman, or simply a poor creature who has suffered too much, I am convinced that Voss had in him a little of Christ, like other men. If he was composed of evil along with the good, he struggled with that evil. And failed.' (V: 444-445)

Reintegration involves the recognition and reconciliation of various split-off parts of self and object, and the acceptance of good and evil as co-existent. What is considered "bad" is not necessarily grounds for rejection or abandonment. The fact that good and bad can exist side by side holds out the opportunity for acceptance of badness as an integral part of the self (Cashdan 1988: 170). Laura testifies to such integration.

A corollary to this implied integration is sanctification of Laura: "her eyes were overflowing with a love that might have appeared supernatural" (V:

445). Her virgin motherhood embodies a kind of perfection of fulfilment. Kristeva's observation about the *Stabat Mater*, is apt commentary on Laura's virgin maternity: "It integrates a certain feminine masochism but also displays its counterpart in gratification and *jouissance*" (in Moi, 1986: 171-172).

Doane and Hodges in commenting on Kristeva's analysis of the *Stabat Mater* observe that

the virginal maternal allows a "feminine denial of the other sex" through a third person, God; it assumes a "paranoid lust for power" by changing a woman into a queen and yet allows her to deny her power by kneeling at the foot of her son. (1992: 63)

Laura's appropriation of Mercy's child is a token of this metaphysical or spiritual union with Voss, the God figure, and is a dramatisation or re-enactment of immaculate conception. According to Kristeva, this allows the woman to "satisfy the needs of female paranoia - especially to disguise a homosexual identification with the mother - while simultaneously submitting to the paternal agency of the Symbolic" (Doane and Hodges 1992: 63). While this is an apt explanation for the exaltation of Laura and her immaculate conception, Laura (and Voss) appear to be driven more by separation anxieties seen in splitting and reintegration, than the urge for homosexual identification.

White's method of reintegration is only partially convincing, since reintegration appears in the form of assertions such as Laura's, or in dreams or phantasy sequences which occur at the point of madness, such as Theodora's in

The Aunt's Story, or at the point of death as in Voss. There is a tension between what the novel asserts and what it demonstrates.

There thus appear to be dual facets to the conclusion of Voss: the psychological development of the protagonist and the aesthetic unity offered by the conclusion of the novel. Considered in terms of the psychological growth of the protagonist, Voss's moving but brief death-bed phantasies of integration seem somehow overshadowed by the brooding presence of death and destruction in the novel. This suggests that integration is only partial. Nevertheless, it does represent some progress in the development of the Whitean protagonist. Voss, if only fleetingly and intermittently, and at the point of death, accepts and integrates Laura as the previously split-off feminine aspect of himself. And in the tenderly phantasised love scene, he also recognises her as the (m)other. This is more than Theodora does in The Aunt's Story. To this extent, then, this recognition signals progression in the development of the protagonist.

Ehrenzweig observes that in modern art there is often a conflict between the conscious surface gestalt and the hidden sub-structure (cited in Wright 1984: 84-85). The unified surface gestalt is represented by Laura's articulation of reintegration. The hidden sub-structure is the widespread death and destruction in the novel. In terms of the artistic process, the partial reintegration achieved

suggests reintegration of some previously split-off aspects of the self and (m)other, and the dissolution, if not reconciliation, of conflict. However, for the reader who experiences some aesthetic pleasure while remaining aware of the widespread destruction in the aftermath of the intrapsychic conflict, it may well be argued in accord with Kleinian theorists that "aesthetic pleasure resides in the creating and perceiving of an object whose integrity has been fought for" (cited in Wright 1984: 84).

Reintegration occurs in the depressive position, and is marked by recognition of the (m)other and the self as "whole" persons. Melanie Klein chose the term "position" to stress the fact that the phenomena of splitting and reintegration are not merely "stages" or "phases" of development but denotes a "specific configuration of object relations, anxieties and defences which persist throughout life". The integration achieved may never be complete, and the individual may oscillate between the paranoid-schizoid position and the depressive position (H. Segal 1988: ix). The depressive position is particularly significant in psychological development, not only for its recognition of self and (m)other as whole objects, and for its tolerance of ambivalence, but also because it triggers the onset of the early Oedipus complex which is an integral part of this position (H. Segal 1988: 103). The reintegrative process is also responsible for reparation, sublimation and creativity (Segal 1988: x). The reintegration of

split aspects of self and (m)other in Voss is noticeable, but tenuous. However, even this tenuous sense of reintegration is useful when seen as a catalyst in progression towards the next phase of the protagonist's psychological development, which is viewed in Oedipal terms. The Oedipal metaphor examined in The Riders in the Chariot is thus a logical choice in terms of a progression of "positions" even if they are not mutually exclusive. As will be seen in The Riders in the Chariot, the integration of the protagonist is never complete and defences against depressive conflict may cause regression to paranoid-schizoid phenomena.

What is particularly useful for my thesis is the theory that splitting may be prevalent throughout life, as in White's fiction under review, and may be accompanied by varying degrees of ambivalence, guilt and anxiety. However, as integrative processes initiated in the depressive position continue, "anxiety lessens and reparation, sublimation and creativity" (Segal 1988: x) are set in motion. All of these phenomena are recognisable in Riders in the Chariot which is discussed in the following chapter.

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## IV THE OEDIPAL METAPHOR IN RIDERS IN THE CHARIOT

That one who on earth  
 usurps my place, my place which is vacant  
 in the sight of the Son of God,  
 has made of my cemetery a sewer

Dante, *Paradiso*, XXVII,22-25  
 (Trans. H.R.Huse, 1965)

What goes by the name of love is banishment.

Beckett. *First Love*

Much has been written about the origin and significance of the symbolism in Riders in the Chariot. The Chariot itself has been associated with Judaism, Jewish Merkabah mysticism and Christianity. Links may be established with any and all of the above. Most critics are of the opinion that the four Riders represent faculties or characteristics which, in combination, represent a "whole" or "complete" personality. For instance, the late Dorothy Green connects the four Riders with Blake's four Zoas (1973: 45), and, indeed, the quotation from Blake which forms the epigraph to the novel suggests such an association. Patricia Morley sees the Riders as comprising "one perfect man [sic] of intuition, intellect, practical action and artistic talent" (1972: 173); and Edgar



Chapman identifies each Rider with an element and also with a Jungian faculty (1979: 188). However, as Bliss observes:

determination of precisely what each stands for is less important than the recognition that they are, ultimately, one in their sense of election, dedication to a sometimes dimly conceived mission, experience of the vision of the chariot, and acknowledgement of each other. (1986: 82)

As Manfred Mackenzie comments, this is the most obvious of Patrick White's allegories, with each Rider representing a "mock pastoral archetype, the divine fool, the wandering Jew, the Bunyanesque pilgrim, the poete maudit". They represent sides of the soul of a "giant Everyman", which is seen as a "divine quaternity" (1965: 17). Chris Wallace-Crabbe observes that "the four contrasted *zaddikim* or visionaries might also be seen as making up one compound being, of enormous potential" (1986: 7). And Patrick White, in a letter to Ben Huebsch, his publisher, writes that "what I want to emphasise through my four 'Riders' - an orthodox refugee intellectual Jew, a mad *Erdgeist* of an Australian spinster, an evangelical laundress, and a half-caste aboriginal painter - is that all faiths, whether religious, humanistic, instinctive, or the creative artist's act of praise, are in fact one" (in Marr 1994: p. 153). The four Riders are from various ethnic, social and religious groups and suggest, synergistically, a universal quest for meaning and fulfilment in life. Their individual forms of religious experience or epiphany are linked by the

symbolism or common denominator of the Chariot, which is imaged for each Rider in his or her own idiom.

In Voss, which is set in the nineteenth century, the Aborigine was a relatively minor figure described as "a doubtful quantity" to be discarded (V: 359). In Riders in the Chariot, which is set in the twentieth century, the Aborigine, Alf Dubbo, is a protagonist. Within the novel, as a Rider, he is accorded equal significance with the other Riders. However, in the society within which they live this is a dubious benefit or status, since all the Riders are considered to be outsiders, society's "others" for various socio-economic reasons, but also because of their preoccupation with the transcendental. Taken together, the four Riders serve as a paradigm for that segment of society which the novel depicts as seekers or visionaries.

In Voss it is suggested that the female seeker, Laura, as Voss's psychic counterpart, mentally accompanies him on a journey of discovery, both geographic and of the self. Riders in the Chariot depicts the actual and metaphysical journeys of the female protagonists, Mary Hare and Ruth Godbold, alongside those of the male protagonists, Mordecai Himmelfarb and Alf Dubbo.

From an Object Relations perspective, the four Riders personify various split aspects of personality, such as innocence and instinct in Mary Hare,

physicality in Ruth Godbold, the religious and the intellectual element in Mordecai Himmelfarb, and artistic talent in Alf Dubbo. Whereas in Voss aspects of personality represented by the various characters are often in conflict with each other, in Riders in the Chariot the different aspects of personality embodied in the various protagonists are complementary rather than contradictory. Consequently, the Riders are not so much in conflict with each other, as with society in general. However, the focus of this chapter is not so much on the complementary or contradictory nature of the characters, which has been discussed thoroughly in the chapter on Voss, as on the Oedipal patterns of their familial relationships. The similarity of these relationships not only links the Riders together, suggesting that they are manifestations of a "whole", but, more importantly, also signals a different, progressive phase of development of an evolving protagonist.

The evolution of White's protagonist in the novels under review generally follows an Object Relations model of development. In this model, as in the novels, the various phases of development are never completed, terminated or superseded, but are accretive and complicated by the addition of other successive facets or phases of psychological development. Thus, in Riders in the Chariot there are vestiges of the separation anxieties which are so prevalent in The Aunt's Story, together with reverberations of splitting and reintegration

ubiquitous in Voss, alongside Oedipal tensions. Nevertheless the predominant phase uncovered in each succeeding novel represents a different and successive phase of psychological development. In Riders in the Chariot Oedipal tensions appear to dominate.

The Riders themselves are society's Others: Mary Hare because she is considered to be "mad", Mordecai Himmelfarb, because he is a Jew in a predominantly Gentile society, Ruth Godbold because she is an immigrant and a lowly laundress, and Alf Dubbo because he is an Aborigine. This quartet, who experience various degrees of "illumination", interact with each other and with a larger group of almost seventy minor characters who are depicted as materialistic Australian suburbanites representing society *en masse*. The four Riders are generally portrayed as "good", and the society in which they live is generally depicted as "evil". Some critics, such as Leonie Kramer, are of the opinion that those members of society who are depicted by Patrick White as "evil", "violate aesthetic rather than moral values" (1973: 14-15). However, these critics do not give adequate consideration to the actual and/or symbolic crucifixion of Himmelfarb, which appears evil rather than a matter of aesthetics. Furthermore, Alf Dubbo, one of the Riders, is also depicted as diseased, living in filth and squalor, and as being generally offensive to the sensibilities of middle class white Australian society. But Alf is an endorsed character, depicted

as "good", not "evil". So White's debate about "good" and "evil" does revolve around "moral" rather than "aesthetic values".

While society itself appears to be polarised in simplistic terms, between the good and the evil, what the warring segments have in common appears to be disaffection, disunion and disruption within families. For example, the Hares, the Joyners, Mrs. Flack and Mrs. Jolley, are all alienated from their children. This lovelessness and strife within families may be seen as paradigmatic and symptomatic of the conflict within the larger family of man. In Riders in the Chariot domestic hostilities are reflected and magnified in war between various segments of society, and ultimately escalated into a world war.

Lovelessness or forbidden love appears to be a common problem within the novel. The Riders themselves, from different walks of life and of varying racial origins and geographic locations, suffer from dysfunctional family relationships. But the major conflict within these families is seen to be of an Oedipal nature, and this is reflected, metaphorically, on a broader scale within society. First Nazi Germany, and then Australian society, is seen in the role of the forbidding father to Himmelfarb, the main protagonist. However, the Riders sublimate their repressions, emotional deprivations and psychological conflicts into quests for the mysterious and often elusive Chariot, while society, *en masse*, descends into a quagmire of evil and destructiveness. The *anagnorisis* appears

the crucifixion of one of the Riders, Mordecai Himmelfarb. Unlike in Voss, in Riders in the Chariot the reader is furnished with more biographical detail about the protagonists, including their childhoods and early adult years, which appears to affect their later lives. Oedipal conflicts are noticeable in all their life stories, both literally and symbolically. White's view of family and society appears to be growing progressively pessimistic in succeeding novels. The first Rider introduced to the reader is Mary Hare. Her childhood, like many others in White's fiction such as Theodora's in The Aunt's Story, and Le Mesurier's in Voss, appears to be traumatic. But unlike Theodora, who has a compensatory "good" parent in her father, Mary Hare has no one to champion her cause. Norbert Hare exacerbates her sense of alienation by his cold and rejecting attitude and by his unmitigated castigation of her for something which is beyond her control - her physical ugliness. Ignored by her mother, and spurned, rejected and abused by her father, she is alienated and "often cried in private" (RC: 18).

Not only do the Hares not nurture Mary, but there is also a hint of the incestuous in Norbert Hare's encounters with his daughter. On one occasion, his inhibitions loosened by the brandy he imbibes, he fondles Mary in the red glow of sunset:

His eyes, in the dazzle from the sun, appeared almost vulnerable. There they stood, the father and daughter, facing each other, alarmingly exposed. He came forward, and seemed at once both puzzled and assured. Fondling her. Which was not his habit. And it was not altogether pleasant: his hands playing amongst her hair. She was reminded of a pair of black-and-white spaniels she had seen lolloping and playing together, too silly to help themselves. But just

because her father's temporary silliness and loss of control had reduced him to the level of herself and dogs, she did submit to his fondling her. (RC: 23)

There are Oedipal undercurrents in their clandestine embrace, during which they feel "vulnerable" and "alarmingly exposed". Reminiscent of a Joycean moment of epiphany, physical, erotic sensations and metaphysical preoccupations merge into one moment, as the father mumbles: "'Who are the riders in the Chariot, eh, Mary? Who is ever going to know?'" (RC: 23).

Mary's traumatic life with her parents is described as a "series of savage blows during what passed for childhood" (RC: 21). Despite their negligence and phantasised or "real" abuse of Mary, both parents suspect that "'Mary's plainness may have been given to her for a special purpose'" (RC: 22). And Mary, like the simpleton Harry in *Voss*, has intuition and insight: "'But the truth is what I understand. Not in words. I have not the gift for words. But know'" (RC: 36). As Giffin comments, "her father has language but no illumination. Mary has illumination but no language" (1993: 116).

'Who are the riders in the Chariot, eh, Mary? Who is ever going to know?'

Who, indeed? Certainly *she* would not be expected to understand. Nor did she think she wanted to, just then. But they continued there, the sunset backed up against the sky, as they stood beneath the great swinging trace-chains of its light. Perhaps she should have been made afraid by some awfulness of the situation, but she was not. She had been translated: she was herself a fearful beam of the ruddy, championing light, reflected back at her own silly, uncertain father. (RC: 23-24)

Part of Norbert Hare's violence and resentment towards Mary stems from the fact that he has a vague hankering for some transcendental meaning in his life

which he feels is denied him, and to which he suspects that Mary may somehow have access. While he tolerates her mere existence with difficulty: "although he had forgiven her for the crime of being, it was doubtful whether he would ever forgive her for that of seeing" (RC: 36). He repeatedly abuses her: "'Ugly as a foetus. Ripped out too soon'" (RC: 56). According to Klein, Oedipal conflicts trigger aggressive feelings and phantasies (Hanna Segal 1973: 104). In Mary's phantasies "their emotions were whirling, the spokes of whitest light smashing, the hooks grappling together, hatefully" (RC: 56).

The chandelier shooting incident metaphorically dramatises the Oedipal dynamics of the father-daughter relationship. Just as Theodora, in The Aunt's Story, identifies with a hawk, Mary identifies with the beautiful chandelier in the dining room:

The great thing loomed and brooded, at times fiery, at times dreamily opalescent, but always enticing away from the endless expanse of flat thought. Mary Hare loved it, though she had always believed her passion to be secret. (RC: 34)

In a fit of drunken fury, Norbert Hare shoots the chandelier, shattering it into fragments. While on the surface the shooting of the chandelier with which Mary Hare identifies is reminiscent of Theodora's shooting of the hawk with which she identifies, there is a distinct difference in the significance of the two incidents. Some critics view the shooting of the hawk as suicidal, others view it as Theodora's means of protecting herself from a disastrous or sterile marriage



with Frank Parrott or Huntly Clarkson. But it also indicates Theodora's denial of her potential as a woman. The subtle undertones of the language surrounding the Hare family shooting incident is erotic, and suggests Oedipal tensions. Mary vicariously experiences the destruction of the chandelier as "an excruciating crystal rain", while her mother responds "spasmodically" to this outburst. Oedipal tensions and conflict are sensed as mother and daughter watch the violence in horror:

'Come! I cannot endure your father any longer!'....

The daughter remained silent, for she knew she was the greater part of what her mother had to endure. (RC: 35)

In his essay, "A Child is Being Beaten". Freud articulates the neurotics of desire and punishment in the father-daughter relationship: "the Oedipus complex is the actual nucleus of neurosis, and the infantile sexuality which culminates this complex is the true determinant of neuroses" (S.E. XVII: 193). Freud interprets the girl child's fantasy of being beaten by the father as originating in the struggles of the Oedipus complex, and as signifying erotic love for the father. Since Mary Hare identifies with the chandelier, her father's shooting of the chandelier may be seen as a displacement of being beaten by him.

In her time she had seen dogs receive a beating for having glimpsed their masters' souls. She was no dog, certainly, and her father had not beaten her, but there had been one occasion when he did start shooting at the chandelier. (RC: 33)

Seen in light of Freud's theory, Norbert Hare's wanton destruction of the chandelier while Mary and her mother watch, hints at Oedipal desire and conflict. Because this desire is forbidden by society, it is repressed and appears by displacement in the language of the unconscious. As Diane Sadoff observes, in these "fantasies" the father and daughter are often displaced:

These iconographic moments resemble the unconscious and repressed material in Freud's exposition of the father-daughter bond. The fantasy of being beaten by the father - verbally or sexually abused and gratified - represents the daughter's humiliation and deprivation at the hands of the father she loves. As Freud points out, this desire becomes conscious only through the language of the unconscious, by linguistic transformation and narrative interpretation. (1982: 135)

The Hare family's love/hate relationship culminates in the father's violent death by drowning in a cistern. Norbert Hare's death appears to be precipitated by his paroxysms of hatred and violence. The novel is ambiguous as to whether the death is attributable to Norbert's suicide or to Mary's negligence in her failure to rescue him. Mary herself feels she is "two beings" (RC: 57), as her father screams for pity and mercy from her: "'Mary! Don't! Have some pity! For God's sake! Run!'" (RC: 57). That Mary feels divided into "two beings" reveals the conflict between her desire to save her father, and the urge to take revenge for his habitual and unrelenting cruelty to her. Norbert Hare's death is also a dramatisation of Mary's phantasised aggression towards the parental object. According to Klein, the child reacts to Oedipal phantasies of the parents giving each other those gratifications which s/he desires, by increased aggressive

feelings and phantasies. "The parents in [the child's] phantasies will be attacked by all the aggressive means at his [sic] disposal and they will be perceived in phantasy as being destroyed" (Hanna Segal 1988: 104). Most of Mary's childhood experiences reveal Oedipal conflicts: the father's drunken fondling of her while he mumbles about the Chariot, the displaced violence against her in shooting the chandelier, and the ultimate suicidal or murderous drama in the well, are all tinged with Oedipal connotations, culminating in the actual, physical destruction of the father.

The Hares' family life is one of mutual hurt and disappointments. The (m)other who was disappointed in Mary's lack of conventional beauty and social graces "was in the end supported by her disappointments" (RC: 48). When her (m)other's death occurs, Mary, like Theodora Goodman before her, cannot mourn her (m)other's passing. "So she mourned life, instead, such as she herself suspected it of being, from sudden rages of the sky, and brown gentleness of young ferns" (RC: 49). It is worth noting that Mary's perception of nature in its rages and gentleness is a metaphoric representation of her relationship with the (m)other.

The figure of the dead (m)other sitting in her chair, is said to look quite "natural" (RC: 48), because even when her (m)other was physically alive, she was emotionally dead to Mary. The only semblance of parental love offered to

Mary during her emotionally deprived childhood is by her servant, Peg, a maternal surrogate. "She remained an admirable companion. Mary Hare loved Peg" (RC: 49). It is with Peg's passing that the enormity of her isolation is brought home to Mary. "Then she knew, at last, she was, indeed, alone" (RC: 49). Most of Mary's relationships are displacements of the relationship of the self with the (m)other. With the death of her "human" parents, Mary transfers her need for nurturing to her pet goat. The death of her pet goat, by fire, is one of a continuing series of traumatic separations for Mary and is probably the most deeply felt by her: "How she herself survived the holocaust of her discovery, Mary Hare could never be sure" (RC: 52).

The death of the goat has elicited mixed reactions from the critics. According to Bliss, the goat's death is the direct result of Mary's "too possessive love" which prompts her to tether it too tightly in a shed, immobilising it when the fire occurs (1986: 90). Peter Wolfe, who sees Mary as riddled with faults and "capable of doing evil", considers her to be indirectly responsible for the death of her father, because of her physical ugliness, and directly responsible for the death of her goat. As such, he considers her a "dangerous intimate". He accuses her of having "burned her pet goat to death" (1983: 129). But this is not substantiated by the narrative. On the contrary, the text indicates that she nurtures and cherishes the goat, afraid only that some danger might befall it:

So much so, the woman's love began to conflict with her reasoning, and she grew quite frantic that something might happen to the animal: some disaster to follow those which she had been permitted to outlive, or, simply, that it might decide to leave. (RC: 51)

However, what most critics overlook, and what is important to our discussion, is that the goat is a displacement of a maternal object. Given Mary's affinity with nature, and rejection by both parents, for the unloved Mary Hare, the goat is a loving and loved surrogate (m)other:

She lived for it. In time her mind grew equal to the tranquil wisdom of the goat-mind, and as she squatted in the evening to milk her doe, after they alone were left, their united shadow would seem positively substantial. (RC: 51)

Mary takes whatever comfort she can by identifying or merging with surrogate maternal objects, in this case, the pet goat. She is obsessed by the goat and lives in fear that "her love might...have vanished in the course of some devilish conjuring act". But the goat was ever constant. It was to her all that her (m)other never was. "The amber eyes pacified her fears, and the long lip would move in what she knew was sympathy" (RC: 52).

Although the death of the goat is a relatively minor incident in the novel, it has particular significance from a dual vantage point. On the one hand it is another in a series of deaths and separations, a "disaster" which follows "those which she had been permitted to outlive" (RC: 52). And on the other, she considers the death of the goat a "holocaust" which refers obliquely to the

"holocaust" of the Jews, and also prefigures the destruction of Himmelfarb, the Jewish Other and Society's scapegoat.

The goat's death drives Mary into a three-day retreat of mourning and interment in the woods, as a preamble to her spiritual rebirth. There is a certain Biblical resonance in the description of Mary's mourning, reminiscent of Christ's death and burial and three-day interment before the Resurrection. "Leaves were laid upon her face. The earth was soft to her trembling knees" (RC: 54). And, like Christ, who is physically dead and spiritually resurrected, Mary feels that spiritual revelation is immanent:

Eventually I shall discover what is at the centre, if enough of me is peeled away.

Never in her life, she felt, had she reasoned so lucidly. (RC: 52)

This signals the beginning of Mary's sublimation of her emotional frustrations, Oedipal and otherwise, into a quest for the transcendental, which is represented by her fleeting, sporadic visions of the chariot.

Although he is a minor character in the novel, William Hadkin, the family retainer, has significant psychological and social functions. He serves as a double for Mary's negating, punitive father. Furthermore, as a member of the servant class, he is also Mary's Other. The groom and his empty harness, no longer in use, and the macabre dance of the beheaded rooster, serve as gory metaphors of hegemonic class relations. Not only does the embittered servant

offer Mary no consolation, but he also hurls a veiled and sinister accusation at her. Calling her class a "race of pretenders" (RC: 50) he insinuates that Mary may have been responsible for her father's death. Mary, for her part, may be seen as projecting her own sense of guilt on to the Other:

'The way I see it, you are a murderer,' accused Mary Hare.

'What! to kill a cock for you to eat?'

'There are ways and ways of killing.'

'That is something you should know.'

'How? I?'

'Ask your dad.' (RC: 51)

Mary is surrounded by hostile and punitive parent figures. In recounting various details of her life to Mrs. Jolley, Mary experiences a return of the repressed, as the evil (m)other, Mrs. Jolley, taunts her and eggs her on to relive her traumas. Mrs. Jolley's petty cruelties towards Mary recall her mother's cruelties. Mrs. Jolley's hate reaches a climax in the "lethal" dance which she substitutes for a "real weapon loaded with infallible lead," or "a knife which would finish cleanly yet cruelly" (RC: 84). The narrative does not distinguish between omniscient narration, character's thoughts or the retaliatory phantasies of one caught in the throes of Oedipal conflicts. Nevertheless Mrs. Jolley's cruelties, whether they are imagined by Mary or otherwise, resemble the persecutory anxieties of the Kleinian child. Watching Mrs. Jolley's grotesque arabesques, Mary relives her childhood tortures.

Like Le Mesurier before her, who relives in his delirious poetry the phantasies of sado-masochistic tortures of his childhood, Mary, the adult woman, is traumatised by the return of her repressed memories:

Never had the music from Sydney broken more brilliantly under the chandelier. Never had the conversation opened deeper wounds...

It was terribly sad in the great tatty brilliant rooms, in mirror and memory. (RC: 86)

The recurring figure of the chandelier becomes an emblem of Mary's suffering at the (m)other's hands.

Mrs. Jolley's dance with Mary is a *danse macabre* dramatising the conflict between good and evil, the "elect" (Mary), and the "damned" (Mrs. Jolley), the persecuted and the persecutor, the innocent daughter and the bad (m)other; and symbolically represents the confrontation between the Riders and society at large. It also foreshadows the more gruesome encounter between Blue and Himmelfarb. As the *grande finale* to the sinister performance, Mrs. Jolley hurls her secret weapon at Mary - the knowledge of Mary's vision of the Chariot, which she experiences in a trance induced by what appears to be an epileptic fit. In fact, Mrs. Jolley projects her own sense of evil on to Mary: "'Who is not wicked and evil, waiting for chariots at sunset, as if they was taxis?'" (RC: 88).

The Chariot, like Oedipal desire, is Mary's secret phantasy, which is now exposed. Fleeing the barbs of her persecutor, Mary seeks refuge in the decaying orchard, where she meets Himmelfarb. By introducing Himmelfarb subtly into



the narrative, without announcing his name, or even acknowledging that someone is encroaching onto Mary's private and secret preserve, the narrative manoeuvres the character's and the reader's acceptance of his appearance, without question. "He stood outside the tree waiting for her, though it was nobody she had ever seen" (RC: 89). That he was "waiting for her" adds a sense not only of familiarity and intimacy, but also one of inevitability and fatefulness. It seems almost natural for Mary to flee from the evil clutches of Mrs. Jolley, out to the orchard and Himmelfarb who, providentially, happens to be standing there, "waiting for her".

The meeting between Mary and Himmelfarb is reminiscent of the meeting between Theodora and Holstius. "She was filled with such contentment of warmth and light" (RC. 89). But whereas Holstius is used for syncretisation and reintegration of various aspects of Theodora's fragmented life, Himmelfarb serves as an inspiration and catalyst to Mary, who becomes a fellow traveller in the search for the elusive Chariot.

The language depicting their meeting has deeper connotations of a marriage or union of kindred souls. Mary advances towards Himmelfarb with outstretched arms. "no longer begging for rescue, but in recognition" (RC: 89). Her approach to Himmelfarb under "their canopy" which is formed by the tree, is evocative of a bride approaching her groom in a traditional Jewish marriage

ceremony. This scene appears as a re-enactment of the actual marriage ceremony between Himmelfarb and Reha (RC: 126). Reference to the canopy as "their" canopy, not "a" or "the", further suggests their union. The language and imagery used are also suggestive of proliferation, abundance, life and continuity. They meet in a "flowered tent" amidst "masses of the orchard", birds' nests and a "litter of young rabbits":

It was perfectly still, except that the branches of the plum tree hummed with life, increasing, and increasing, deafening, swallowing them up. (RC: 91)

These are metaphors for a fruitful union. Mary is excited about Himmelfarb and at notions of intimacy with a man, but is filled with confusion at the prospect and displaces her love on to all living things. The guilty secret she discovers may be the stirrings of her own sexuality:

The confusion and profusion of rather wiry, once-black hair excited her love for all living matter, while she felt as guilty as though she had discovered the secret a respected friend had not attempted to conceal. (RC: 92)

References to Mary's guilt coupled with her memories of her father's "moments of intimacy" (RC: 92), and the fact that Himmelfarb feels "old and feeble" in her company (RC: 156), suggest that Himmelfarb is a father figure, emphasising Mary's Oedipal tendencies.

As a member of the privileged class in Australia, Mary is not acquainted with Jews, who are considered to be outsiders by this group. Her only fleeting contact with them is utilitarian - an old Jew is "useful" to her father as a piano

tuner (RC: 94). The Jew appears to be depersonalised and seen only in terms of his usefulness or productivity. Thus Himmelfarb, the Jew, is Other to Mary's upper-class Anglo-Saxon heritage and position in the hegemonic class structure. He is also Other in his masculinity, which is in opposition to Mary's femininity. Sussman, in an interpretation of the Lacanian Other observes:

There are thus ancestral, social, sexual and political equivalents to this Other: the gender we may perhaps never experience from the inside; the class identification that has been effaced in us. In certain senses, then, the feminine can function as the unconscious to the masculine; the awareness of the working class as the unconscious of the ruling class. The Lacanian unconscious is free to emerge wherever ineradicable schisms have been drawn. (In Feldstein and Sussman 1990: 144)

But as a psychologically and socially alienated person, she too is an outsider like Himmelfarb, and thus the Other of society. To Mary and to Himmelfarb, this makes them "mathematically and morally...equal" (RC: 94).

Familiar patterns resurface in White's novels, such as cruel parents, emotionally deprived and fearful childhoods, and reluctant heterosexual lovers: "This mad, botched creature might subject him to the thumbscrews and touch him with feathers at one and the same time, the Jew suspected" (RC: 94). Mary Hare, like Laura before her, is cast in a feminine, nurturing role: "With her hands she would try to ease the air of some difficulty they were experiencing together, or wrestle with impending terrors" (RC: 96). Himmelfarb, like Voss, is repulsed by the notion of intimacy. He is ambivalent towards Mary, both desiring and resisting contact with her (RC: 95). His fear of intimacy leads him

to see her as "some animal or not even that. He remembered seeing fungi which suggested existence of the most passive order" (RC: 96).

Himmelfarb's mental denigration of Mary is two-dimensional. On the one hand, it serves as a defence against intimacy and, on the other, it equalises their status as "Others" of society. He recognises in her a kindred soul, an outsider:

With the result that the Jew was ashamed of the momentary feeling of revulsion she had roused in him. Nor was his remorse unrelated to a sensation experienced on somewhat similar occasions, when, for usually superficial reasons, his own feelings caused him to reject inwardly a member of his race. (RC: 95)

Himmelfarb, the victim, becomes if only fleetingly, and in phantasy, the victimiser. Nevertheless, their meeting is momentous. Together the newly united bride and groom sit on stones which take the place of cushions in a traditional marriage ceremony, as they prepare to embark on a journey of spiritual discovery. They take "a last look at those familiar forms which further experience might soon remove from their lives" (RC: 91).

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Mordecai Himmelfarb's life story is hypodiegetic, a story within a story, and is unfolded to the reader as it is narrated to Mary Hare, a fellow isolate and Rider. The events of his early life are past events, occur off stage, and are reported by

ulterior narration or analepsis. This serves to distance the reader from the character. But the distantiation also invests Himmelfarb with an almost fairy tale or mythic quality, and to a certain extent serves to undermine the reader's emotional shock response to his ultimate crucifixion. While distancing may reduce the reader's emotional involvement, it also works toward mythologising Himmelfarb's life and death, and lends a certain amount of credibility to the religious symbolism surrounding his death. His name, Himmelfarb, meaning "heaven colour" in German, symbolically represents his mythical or religious destiny.

As two persecuted individuals, their conversation borders on the morbid. Himmelfarb draws attention to the fact that the hare, Mary's namesake, is a sacrificial animal in some societies, and their talk of scapegoats suggests a premonition of things to come and foreshadows Himmelfarb's death.

Oedipal tensions underlie the surface conformity of the Himmelfarb familial interactions. But, unlike the Hares, who appear more volatile on the surface, the German Jewish Himmelfarbs appear to be more controlled and discreet. Moshe Himmelfarb, Mordecai's father, is one of White's stock characters, a weak man and passive father who avoids involvement and shuns confrontations "not from lack of sympathy, but because he was a sensitive man. Any such crisis disturbed him so severely, he preferred to believe it had not

occurred" (RC: 96). Having a weak father who is an ineffectual role model for a male child is an impediment to the resolution of Oedipal conflict and is conducive to mother fixation.

Early in Himmelfarb's life story it is stated that "the boy was closer to the mother", and that the father-son relationship is based on a sense of duty, bought with material gifts. There is an ironic tone in the depiction of their relationship, which, in White's fiction, is usually reserved for materialists:

Of course, the boy loved and honoured his good father, and would laugh and chatter with him as required, or listen gravely as the beauties of Goethe or the other poets were pointed out. So that Moshe was delighted with his son, and would bring expensive presents: a watch or a brass telescope, or collected works bound in leather. (RC: 99)

The Mordecai marriage, like the Goodman's, is one of convenience and duty rather than love, and quite early in their marriage, Moshe gives up trying to convince himself that he loves Malke, his wife, and accepts the fact that "he ceased to love, while continuing to honour" her (RC: 102). Malke, for her part, while she puts on a stern manner and demure clothing for her husband and the public, unbends and frolics with her son in private, to the point of his embarrassment. Oedipal elements are discernible in their relationship:

Alone with her son, she would often unbend, even after he was grown. She would become quite skittish in her private joy, with the result that the boy was sometimes ashamed for what appeared unnecessary, not to say unnatural, in one of natural dignity. (RC: 102)

The adolescent Mordecai's sexual repressions produce physical symptoms. He is often suffocated and "would struggle for breath" (RC: 108). His mother "noticing his dark eyelids and the colour of his skin, prescribed a tonic and, after only half a bottle, he slept with a whore called Marianne" (RC: 108). It is significant that the whore is called "Marianne", a derivative of "Mary", the archetypal mother, and that the (m)other's prescription acts as an aphrodisiac. Mordecai's foray into sexuality with Marianne is a displacement of union with the original forbidden object, the (m)other.

Himmelfarb's childhood and adolescence comprise elements similar to those of James Joyce's Stephen Dedalus: the disaffection and disappointment with the father, the strong ties to the (m)other, the conflation of the spiritual and the erotic, and the ultimate breaking away from family and country in life-long, and self-imposed exile. In a letter to Ingmar Björkstén White acknowledged Joyce's influence on his writing. "I don't know about influences: Joyce and Lawrence, yes, at the time when I began to write" (in Marr 1994: 409). Like Joyce's adolescent Stephen Dedalus, the adolescent Himmelfarb also haunts the forbidden flesh pots of his neighbourhood and loses himself temporarily in orgiastic frenzy with prostitutes. The fact that the prostitutes are German Gentiles makes them "Others", and as such they are forbidden to Jews. Himmelfarb's inter-racial sexual encounter is also form of religious

miscegenation. It is forbidden by his society, and represents his rebellion against the prevailing social order:

He had an insatiable appetite for white flesh, of pale complaisant German girls, pressed against stucco, or writhing in the undergrowth of parks, beside stagnant water in a smell of green decay. (RC: 110)

His sexual escapades are distorted, magnified and reflected back to him as he witnesses his father's nocturnal drunken excursion with the Gentile prostitutes, which is a grotesque displacement of the primal scene. Moshe's transgression of the Jewish law reflects his son's, thus blurring the boundaries between father and son, making them psychological doubles or mirror images of each other.

That his own desires were similar, that he had breathed on similar smeary faces, of similar sweaty girls and fumbled at the scenty dresses, made the incident too familiar and more intolerable. (RC: 113)

While both father and son have sexual intercourse with Gentile prostitutes, Himmelfarb's sexual interloping represents a double transgression. On the one hand, it represents a transgression of the law forbidding the Jew to have sex with Gentiles, and on the other hand, it is to a certain extent, a transgression of the incest taboo, because the representative prostitute, by virtue of being his father's sex partner, assumes for Himmelfarb, the (m)other's position.

Moshe's sexual foray with the German Gentile prostitutes gains added impact and significance when viewed in conjunction with Mordecai's similar



encounters. In his essay "Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming" (1908) Freud discusses the means writers use to manipulate the emotional reactions of their readers. He posits that, just as the day dreamer hides his phantasies from others so as not to repel them, so too does the creative writer use bribes and disguises in offering a formal, aesthetically pleasing phantasy. This allows the reader to participate in the phantasy without reproach or shame (SE IX: 141-153). By replacing Mrs. Himmelfarb, the (m)other, with the representative German Gentile prostitutes, who have sex with both the father and the son, the reader's reaction to the violation of the implied incest taboo is softened. Torn by violent emotions, Himmelfarb, a would-be Oedipal Hamlet, glares malevolently at his father's "scraggy reprehensible neck" debating whether he should "plunge his knife" to avenge his mother for his father's cheating ways, but opts instead to be a Judas, as he kisses him goodnight (RC: 113) and in effect, goodbye, as it widens the emotional chasm between them.

Moshe's conversion to Christianity is politically and personally expedient as his defection from the Jewish faith buys him some measure of protection during the ensuing persecution of the Jews. He himself is aware that the "advantages of every kind are enormous" (RC: 115). What is more, it gives him a sense of personal freedom from the restrictive "thicket of Jewish self-righteousness" (RC: 115). For the first time in his life, he feels he is truly free to

satisfy his own instincts. His marriage to a much younger German Gentile woman is a form of legitimised prostitution. For Moshe, it is a "last frenzy of consenting flesh", and for the young girl, the old man represents a meal ticket - "because she could not bear to feel hungry" (RC: 120). Furthermore, the marriage is symbolically incestuous. By marrying someone of his son's generation, Moshe repeats the Oedipal pattern of sexual transgression, as the young woman is in the position of his daughter.

The Oedipal metaphor takes on an additional twist when the new living arrangements for Himmelfarb with his father and stepmother convey innuendoes of a potentially incestuous *ménage à trois*. Both Himmelfarb and his "practically innocent stepmother" are relieved when he leaves to take up a position at the University (RC: 120).

What White is depicting here is the failure of "phallogocentrism" which is a conflation of "phallogocentrism" and "logocentrism". This term suggests, in Terry Eagleton's words, that discourses "can yield us immediate access to the full truth and presence of things" (1983: 189). Eagleton offers a rough translation of this combined term as "cocksureness, by which those who wield sexual and social power maintain their grip" (1983: 189). The father's philandering with the Gentile prostitutes and his apostasy and defection from his faith represent a tarnished and tottering "phallogocentrism", and indirectly

represents the ineffectiveness of such a system. The Name of the Father is sullied as is dramatised by Moshe's defection from his faith, his transgression of the marriage vows, his symbolic violation of the incest taboo, and the resultant breakdown of traditional family relationships.

The deterioration of the nuclear family has implications for Himmelfarb, the individual, and for society at large.

It did seem for the first time that his own brilliantly inviolable destiny was threatened, by an increased shrivelling of the spirit in himself, as well as by the actions of the those whom he had considered almost as statues in a familiar park. Now the statues had begun to move. Great fissures were beginning to appear, besides, in what he had assumed to be the solid mass of history. (RC: 116)

Moshe's apostasy, his transgression of Jewish religious and social laws, has disastrous effects on the son, Mordecai:

If he himself had dried up, there had always been the host of others, and particularly parents, who remained filled with the oil and spices of tradition. And now his father's phial was broken; all the goodness was run out. One corner of memory might never be revisited (RC: 116).

Moshe's "badness" is a projection of Mordecai's own "badness" which is then re-introjected and internalised as aspects of a "bad" parent.

The conflicts within the self are reflected in the conflicts within families and between societies. And these assume global proportions as the world teeters on the brink of war. Like Theodora, in The Aunt's Story, Himmelfarb's insecurities are reflected in his nightmares and distorted mirror images. But for

Himmelfarb, ontological insecurities seem to be more clearly linked to metaphysical preoccupations:

But once he was roused from sleep, during the leaden hours, to identify a face. And got to his feet, to receive the messenger of light, or resist the dark dissembler. When he was transfixed by his own horror. Of his own image, but fluctuating, as though in fire and water. So that the long-awaited moment was reduced to a reflection of the self. In a distorting mirror. Who, then, could hope to be saved? Fortunately, he was prevented from shouting the blasphemies that occurred to him, because his voice had been temporarily removed. Nor could he inflict on the material forms which surrounded him, themselves the cloaks of spiritual deceit, the damage which he felt compelled to do. (RC: 136-137)

Mordecai's inner world, or world of internal objects, is profoundly affected by his internalisations of the images of the "bad" parent, Moshe. Mordecai becomes a "distorted mirror" which reflects his father's "badness" and "spiritual deceit". The self both constructs the object and is constructed by it.

Like many others who seek solace in hasty marriages in time of war, Himmelfarb marries Reha. By contracting a marriage Himmelfarb ostensibly conforms with patriarchal law and relinquishes his desire for the primordial object of desire, the (m)other. In actuality, the marriage is no more than a ritual and does not appear to be consummated. The marriage remains childless, which suggests this. However, their marriage does constitute a spiritual, if not a physical, union. Like Voss and Laura before them, Himmelfarb and Reha attain a metaphysical union:

So the souls of the united couple temporarily abandoned their surroundings, while the bodies of the bridegroom and bride continued to stand beneath the canopy enacting the touching and simple ceremonies in which the congregation might participate. (RC: 126)

Reha may be seen as what Winnicott calls a "transitional object", which enables the child to cope with separation from the (m)other. Generally, this object is a soft teddy bear, doll or blanket, the use of which "soothes and facilitates the infant's recognition of reality, and soothes the child in the experience of becoming self-sufficient" (in Edward, et al 1991: 348):

He could not bring himself to speculate on how dependent that soft and loving, yet secretive and unexpected creature might be. Instead he found himself depending on her. He would touch her sometimes for no immediately apparent reason. (RC: 146)

His marriage to Reha is both a spiritual and psychological union which acts as a security blanket and eases the pain of childhood separations and adolescent traumas and acts as a catalyst towards maximising his potential as a "Just Man" or *Zaddik*:

Himmelfarb's obsession with Kabbalistic mysteries and mystical ecstasies grows in proportion to his academic distinction and the marriage itself serves to launch the bridegroom into the religious phase in his life (RC: 127). There is a tender moment, when Reha, with freshly brushed hair, and an almost diaphanous night dress, tries, without success, to entice him to the conjugal bed. But Mordecai, engrossed in mystical introspection, is oblivious to her desire (RC: 135). Himmelfarb's lack of interest in the marriage bed or conjugality is an indication of his fixation on the (m)other. The juxtaposition of the refusal of the marriage bed with Himmelfarb's absorption with images of the Chariot suggests

a connection between the two incidents. It may be perceived as Himmelfarb's rejection of the one for the other, or displacement or sublimation of conjugal, erotic or Oedipal desires into matters religious or Kabalistic.

'I was scribbling,' he said. 'This, it appears, is the Chariot.'

'Ah,' she exclaimed softly, withdrawing her glance; she could have lost interest. 'Which chariot?' she did certainly ask, but now it might have been to humour him.

'That, I am not sure,' he replied. 'It is difficult to distinguish. Just when I think I have understood, I discover some fresh form - so many - streaming with implications. There is the Throne of God, for instance. This is obvious enough - all gold, and chrysoprase, and jasper. Then there is the Chariot of Redemption, much more shadowy, poignant, personal. And the faces of the riders. I cannot begin to see the expression of the faces.' (RC: 135-136)

Like Laura who is internalised as a part of Voss, so Reha is internalised as a part of Himmelfarb. Himmelfarb internalises Reha as an aspect of the "good" (m)other. In his phantasies, she "did remain to protect him more closely, with some secret part of her being" (RC: 136). He even persuades himself that "she had accompanied him on that inward path" (RC: 136).

In the height of the war, while Himmelfarb shelters with Konrad, he rationalises that his wife is always with him. Nevertheless, within the "actuality" of the novel, Reha physically remains at home unprotected. Himmelfarb's absence allows the Germans to kidnap Reha from her home. Himmelfarb's guilt over the kidnapping catapults him into his Messianic role of expiation of his own sins and the sins of others. However, his path towards spirituality is not without its temptations. Like Christ before him who was tempted by the Satanic

offer of bread during his fast in the desert, Himmelfarb is tempted by the German Gentile flesh of his friend's wife, Ingeborg. Torn by conflict between the "good" and the "bad", his spirituality and his sensuality:

So he comforted her, by putting his arms round her almost naked body - she had been preparing herself for bed; he soothed and caressed and strengthened. So that she was soon made warm and young again. And some of his own youth and physical strength returned. In the short distance from the spirit to the flesh, he knew he would have been capable of the greatest dishonesty while disguising it as need. (RC: 165-166)

In White's fiction mirrors often appear to reflect hidden realities rather than offer comforting illusions. Unlike the Lacanian mirror which offers the infant a premature and mistaken sense of unity, White's mirrors, like Dorian Gray's mirror, reveal secrets of the soul. In The Aunt's Story the mirror reflected Theodora's tenuous sense of selfhood. In Riders in the Chariot the Stauffers' mirror exposes Himmelfarb's dishonesty and adultery. While Himmelfarb tries to assuage his guilt under the cloak of Ingeborg's need, the mirror reflects their mutual disgust:

He saw the expression of Ingeborg Stauffer...Whose disgust was not less obvious for being expertly concealed. As for his own face, it was that of an old, inept man. Or Jew. (RC: 166)

Since Himmelfarb's friend, Konrad, is like a brother to him, the sexual encounter between Himmelfarb and Ingeborg is symbolically incestuous. Furthermore, sex with Ingeborg is forbidden, because she is German, other, and married to his friend, and therefore suggests a displacement of forbidden Oedipal union with

the (m)other. The description of Himmelfarb after his sexual transgression, as an "old inept man. Or Jew" evokes memories of Moshe as a ridiculous "old Satyr", a "Jewish clown" (RC: 116) and reinforces the notion of sexual transgression.

Ingeborg's abduction by the Nazis re-enacts Reha's abduction, and Himmelfarb experiences a return of the repressed. As John Colmer observes, this may be seen as "a psychological projection of Himmelfarb's guilty feelings of desertion, since most minor characters and incidents in White's novels serve as projections of the fragmented psyche of the main protagonists" (1978: 28). In his dream, he yearns to gaze once more on his wife's face. But she weeps tears of blood, and withdraws from him, "directing his vision towards the other, unknown faces" in a bottomless pit of darkness (RC: 167). This is a signal for Himmelfarb to subsume the personal into the social scheme. Accordingly, he comes out from hiding, and turns himself over to the authorities, ostensibly because he is a Jew, but in reality to embark on his journey of atonement for his own sin and the sins of others.

Caught in a bombing raid, he has a blinding vision of the Chariot and is miraculously saved:

Then wheels were arriving. Of ambulance? Or fire-engine? The Jew walked on, by supernatural contrivance. For now the wheels were grazing the black shell of the town. The horses were neighing and screaming, as they dared the acid of the green sky. The horses extended their webbing necks, and their nostrils glinted brass in the fiery light. While the amazed Jew walked unharmed beneath the chariot wheels. (RC: 170)



This miraculous escape prefigures his last minute escape from the gas chambers of Auschwitz. While thousands of Jews are sent to horrendous deaths, he is portentously singled out and saved, thereby ratifying his role as Messiah. But he remains haunted by the horrible memories of his desertion of Reha. The gruesome destruction of the Lady from Czernowitz is a repetitive psychological projection of Himmelfarb's anxiety and guilt over Reha's fate.

Again, a minor character, The Lady from Czernowitz, is a condensed symbol of the women in Himmelfarb's life, his wife and (m)other. Her death recalls Reha's death, but her coquettishness recalls that of his (m)other who was "skittish in her private joy" in his company. White's use of dramatic irony heightens the impact of her flirtations. The reader is aware that the Jews are on a death train, but The Lady from Czernowitz is oblivious of this fact, which makes her flirtations appear grotesque and macabre in the face of her impending death. She "anoints" herself as she hums a merry tune (RC: 177); she acts coy, flirts and titters and "ejects" an appearance of mirth as she provocatively pats and glances down at her "floury breasts" (RC: 178); she protests like a coy young girl about having to "undress in public" (RC: 181); and is conscious of Himmelfarb's "man's voice" (RC: 182) even as she is dragged away to certain death. In light of her coquettish interchange with Himmelfarb, the Lady's torn veil may be read as a Freudian symbol for the deflowering of a virgin. But

because Himmelfarb is a Christ-like figure, the torn veil also calls to mind the rending of the veil of the temple after Christ's crucifixion and death, signalling a premonition of Himmelfarb's immanent crucifixion.

The savagery surrounding the persecution of the Jews is eroticised. There are references to "bestial moments" and graphic descriptions of the Germans with "genitals bursting from the cloth which barely contains them" (RC: 180), the "ancient scar" on the Lady from Czernowitz, where her "dug" had been, the savaged belly and thighs. These can be read as destructive Kleinian phantasies or projections emanating out of Oedipal conflict.

Himmelfarb, The Lady's "human counterpart", responds to her call, falling to the ground as "the funnels of a thousand mouths" are directed upon him, covering his body with "a substance he failed to identify" (RC: 184). There is an eerie sense of erotic *jouissance* surrounding Himmelfarb's suffering. Significantly, he loses his spectacles and consequently his sight (RC: 185), a classic symbol of castration anxieties as Freud points out in his essay, "The Uncanny" (SE XVII: 217-253).

The narrative suggests the birth of a new, spiritual life for Himmelfarb after the Nazi bloodbaths, using metaphors of emerging butterflies. But this burgeoning spiritual life is a sublimation of Oedipal desire:

Friedensdorf was enclosed in a blood-red blur, or aura, at the centre of which he lay, like a chrysalis swathed in some mysterious, supernatural cocoon. Other forms, presumably, though not distinguishably human, moved on

transcendental errands within the same shape, no longer that intense crimson, but expanding to a loose orange. (RC: 184)

Like Christ before him, Himmelfarb's spiritual rebirth occurs three days after his brush with death. There is Biblical resonance in the description of his passage to a new life. He is laid on a stove amidst animals and straw, women come to dress his wounds, and he himself rests "in the bosom of his Lord" (RC: 186). The metaphor for his new spiritual life is the recovery of his sight. Equipped with a brand new pair of spectacles, "Himmelfarb recovered his sight, and something of his own identity" (RC: 187).

Behind the grand design of spiritual quest and atonement, familiar and familial patterns may be discerned. The original Oedipal triangle of the Himmelfarb family and of his childhood years gives way to a larger triangle of his adult years. The law of Moshe, Mordecai's biological father, is replaced by the law of the social paternal authority of Nazi Germany. The love for the mother which is forbidden by the father is displaced and sublimated into love for the religion of the mother, which is forbidden by the societal law of the Nazis. To take the religious-maternal metaphor a little further, Nazi Germany then emerges as the forbidding father. As Ellie Ragland-Sullivan points out

because law actually dwells in some third position apart from mother and father alike, never equal to itself, yet seemingly attached first to a family structure and then to a social one, the signifier for law always appears to be attached to familial requisites. Freud called it the internalized superego and saw it as necessary to social functioning. (In Feldstein and Sussman 1990: 79)

Forbidden union with the (m)other, in this case, the Jewish religion, Himmelfarb flees from Germany to the Promised Land to atone for his own sins and the sins of others.

Often in White's novels, roles confer a sense of identity. Theodora, in The Aunt's Story, drew whatever sense of identity she had from her roles of daughter and aunt, and Himmelfarb's identity appears to be reinforced by his Messianic role. His wounded hands and forehead pierced by barbs create a Christ-like image (RC: 185). His redemptory role is bestowed on him by others and is willingly assumed by him as can be seen when his brother-in-law Ari remarks: "'You, I seem to remember, Reha had decided, were to play the part of a Messiah'" (RC: 192).

His brief sojourn in Jerusalem is a repetition of his fleeting marriage to Reha. Both are not totally conducive to his search for Agape, as both have in them the temptations of Eros. Renouncing the latter, Himmelfarb leaves Jerusalem, refusing "the freedom of that golden city" (RC: 189) for Australia, a harsh land which promises and metes out the punishment and destruction he seeks. In an imitation of Christ, Himmelfarb, as once before in Germany, delivers himself unto his enemies (RC: 171). His ultimate destruction in Australia is metaphorically foreshadowed by the pillar of fire which is reminiscent of the fire which destroys Sodom and Gomorrah. "He had, in fact,

already been received. As the heat smote the tarmac, there appeared to rise before him a very definite pillar of fire" (RC: 194).

Himmelfarb's train ride through Sydney recalls to some extent, Christ's donkey ride into Jerusalem, because both rides are preludes to crucifixion and death:

The train was easing through the city which knives had sliced open to serve up with all the juices running - red, and green, and purple...The neon syrup coloured the pools of vomit and the sailors' piss...The blue-haired grannies had purpled from the roots of their hair down to the angles of their pants, not from shame, but neon, as their breasts...roundly asserted themselves, like chamberpots in concrete...The kiddies would continue to suck at their slabs of neon, until they had learnt to tell the time, until it was time to mouth other sweets....

Sodom had not been softer, silkier at night than the sea gardens of Sydney. The streets of Nineveh had not clanged with such metal. The waters of Babylon had not sounded sadder than the sea, ending on a crumpled beach, in a scum of French letters. (RC: 391-392)

The description of Himmelfarb's train ride into the Sydney suburbs has resulted in some accusations of misanthropy and misogyny against Patrick White. White himself was aware of this and lamented such an accusation: "I read constantly that I am a misogynist....Of course my women are *flawed*, because they are also human beings, as I am" (FG: 252). However, Giffin locates White's discourse in a Postmetaphysical realm, and argues that in this kind of discourse "White's excremental vision...the products of his literary flatulences, viscosities and voidings are all part of a discourse about the nature of creation and the relationship between humanity and God" (1993: 9).

More significantly, these images recall phantasies associated with the Kleinian version of the early Oedipus complex. Hanna Segal explains that there is a connection between the relationship to the breast and Oedipal problems, and that the influx of Oedipal envy and jealousy triggers attacks on the combined image of the breast and penis (1988: 103). These images are prevalent in Himmelfarb's phantasies during his train ride, emphasising the persistence of Oedipal tensions.

Returning to his humble shack, Himmelfarb immerses himself in Jewish religion and ritual "not so much in the hope of being rescued, as to drive the hatred out" (RC: 393). As Eagleton observes, the Oedipus complex also represents "all forms of religious and social authority. The father's real or imagined prohibition of incest is symbolic of all higher authority to be later encountered" (1983: 156). Eagleton goes on to explain that the Oedipus complex "is not just another complex: it is the structure of relations by which we come to be the men and women we are. It is the point at which we are produced and constructed as subjects" (1983: 156). Most of the Riders do not completely overcome or successfully negotiate their Oedipal conflicts, but instead sublimate these conflicts into quests for transcendental meaning, which is represented by their visions of the Chariot.

In the final part of the novel the forces of good and evil, inherent in the process of splitting, confront each other, as in Armageddon, outside a bicycle factory in Sydney. The *dénouement* is set in the Sydney suburb of Barranugli, even though Himmelfarb himself lives in the nearby suburb of Sarsaparilla. Critics such as Bliss have commented on the connotations of the name of the town, Barranugli, (bare-and-ugly or barren-ugly), and have likened White's use of this site to Faulkner's use of Yoknapatawpha County (1986: 84). To this may also be added R. K. Narayan's imaginary town of Malgudi in India. The elect, but vulnerable Himmelfarb, faces the accumulated forces of evil in this portentous setting. The law of the Father, replicated in the law of Society, is enforced by the Satanic *doyennes* Flack and Jolley who instigate and mobilise the drunken Blue and his mates to crucify the unresisting Himmelfarb.<sup>1</sup> Some critics, such as J. F. Burrows, protest that Flack and Jolley are insufficiently motivated to instigate and perpetrate such a crime. However, Burrows concedes that Mrs. Flack's implied responsibility for her husband's death and the insinuation that Blue is her illegitimate son may make the motivation plausible, even though he remains adamant that this motivation is detrimental to the novel as a whole (in Wilkes 1970: 66). Coincidentally, the crucifixion of the Christ-like Himmelfarb takes place on Good Friday. "Mr. Himmelfarb, too, has died on the Friday" (RC: 439). Chris Wallace-Crabbe observes that "events come to a

head on Good Friday because that is the day when dormant anti-Semitism might be expected to bubble over" (1961: 35).

Like the play within the play of Hamlet which re-enacts the murder of the King, in Riders in the Chariot, a circus clown proleptically enacts Himmelfarb's hanging. (RC: 404).<sup>2</sup> That Himmelfarb does not protest, not even feebly, suggests that he welcomes his fate. Thanatos, the death drive, is the other side of the coin of Eros:

For the Jew did not resist. There was, on one side, the milling of the righteous, even to their own detriment. On the other, the Jew, who did not flinch, except that he was jostled. His expression remained one almost of contentment. (RC: 409)

Himmelfarb's lack of resistance may be seen in a dual light: in his Messianic role, he desires to atone for his own sins and for the sins of the world. From a psychoanalytic angle, his desire for death represents a regressive desire for nirvanic fusion with the (m)other. As Benvenuto and Kennedy observe, "non-being" becomes, paradoxically, the origin of "being", the focus of "desire":

Death becomes the origin of the subject's life - not of the imaginary life of the ego, for which death merely represents a danger, but of what desire strives after. Death is the 'beyond' of desire, the forbidden, i.e., death is equivalent to enjoyment, jouissance. The unconscious strives to express what is forbidden to the speaking subject - jouissance and death. (1986: 180)

For Himmelfarb, ultimate union with the (m)other in the form of religious absorption and expiation has retaliatory castration and annihilation built into it, as is seen in his almost inescapable crucifixion and death.<sup>3</sup> From the point



of view of Jewish belief or Merkabah mysticism, Himmelfarb's non-resistance, his look of contentment and "his mouth was not even set to endure suffering, but was ever so slightly open, as if to receive further bitterness" (RC: 410), are in keeping with his role as *zaddik* or holy man. He and others believe that as a *zaddik*, Himmelfarb is destined to expiate the sufferings of his generation. It also suggests satisfaction in the attainment of a goal - consummation of union with the religious (m)other. Kristeva calls this "*jouissance*", which is "sexual, spiritual, physical, conceptual at one and the same time" (in Roudiez 1982: 16).

Himmelfarb, the "good" Jew, is counterpointed by Rosetree, the "bad" Jew and pseudo-Christian. From Rosetree's point of view, Himmelfarb is the repressed Other. In his dreams, Rosetree experiences a return of the repressed, in which his gilded carriage of materialism turns into a nightmarish pumpkin. The omniscient narrative is merciless in the depiction of the Rosetrees' predicament:

And at times the Rosetrees would cling together with almost fearful passion. There in the dark of their texture-brick shell, surrounded by the mechanical objects of value, Shirl and Harry Rosetree were changed mercilessly back into Shulamith and Haïm Rosenbaum. *Oy-yoy*, how brutally the Westminster chimes resounded then in the hall. A mouse could have severed the lifeline with one Lilliputian snap. While the seekers continued to lunge together along the dunes of darkness, arriving nowhere, except into the past, and would excuse themselves in favour of sleep, that other deceiver. (RC: 209)

Rosetree plays Judas to Himmelfarb's Christ, betraying him to his enemies. The Rosetrees' "mechanical objects of value", their electronic gadgets

are evocative of Judas's thirty pieces of silver. And, like Judas, overcome by guilt at Himmelfarb's crucifixion, Rosetree commits suicide.

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Ruth Godbold is the third of the Riders. In her family life, as in Himmelfarb's and Mary Hare's, there are vestiges of Oedipal triangulations of desire. Ruth, like several of White's female protagonists, Theodora, Laura and Mary before her, appears emotionally entangled with her father. Ruth herself is aware of the illicit nature of her affections: "But there was my dad...I loved him...It is wrong to love a person too much. Sinful in a way" (RC: 261).

On her mother's death, Ruth assumes the maternal function in the household and hopes to replace the (m)other in her father's affections. However, she is quickly displaced from the privileged maternal position by her father's new bride, Jessie Newsom. Jessie's suggestion that they "share the duties of family life" (RC: 239) clearly applies to household chores and not to the man's affections. The marriage proposal she receives from an "elderly gentleman" is a projection of Ruth's own Oedipal desires. Subconsciously aware of this, she turns him down, because "it would have been silly, not to say wrong, to let

herself accept" (RC: 240). Other members of the family are also aware of Ruth's inordinate affections for her father. Her stepmother feels she is "intruding" on Ruth's territory by marrying her father, Joyner. The father himself asks Ruth to "forgive" him: (RC: 239-240).

But she did not answer. In her misery, she was afraid she might have fetched up a stone. Nor did she dare touch, for she could have buried herself in her father's chapped lips, and been racked upon the white, unyielding teeth. (RC: 240)

Deprived of an empathic, bonding relationship with her mother because of the parent's premature death, and feeling rejected by her father by his subsequent remarriage, Ruth's self esteem flounders. She feels unloved and unworthy:

There was some talk of the eldest girl studying to be a teacher when she reached a certain age, but that was silly. She would hang her head whenever the possibility was mentioned, as if it was a joke against her. She was not intended for any such dignity. Nor was she really bright enough, she herself was ready to admit, and felt relieved when the matter was dropped. (RC: 234-235)

Since she is from a working class background, and so deprived of the benefits of education, the only option available to Ruth is to be farmed out as a domestic. (Mary Hare is also deprived of an education but that appears to be due to parental neglect rather than societal discrimination). Ruth is acutely aware of her status, as she watches her prospective employer's daughters in their "lacey" finery, shoot arrows at targets:

How the arrows pierced the desperate, wooden girl. She was that perturbed for considering what might become of *her* children once she had entered the great lady's demesne. (RC: 235)

Self and (m)other merge, and in Ruth's phantasies, her (m)other's children, her siblings, are *her* children.

According to Karen Horney, there are three main ways in which the child, and later the adult, can move toward overcoming feelings of helplessness and isolation, and establish the self in a threatening world. The three ways are: to adopt a compliant or self-effacing attitude and move towards others; to develop in an aggressive manner and move against people; or to become detached and move away from people (in Paris 1986: 45). Ruth Godbold chooses the compliant, self-effacing solution in a life of service to the Other, whether she is paid for it, as in her service to Mrs. Chalmers-Robinson, or abused for it as in services rendered to her husband, or whether she delivers her service *gratis* as in her ministrations to Mary Hare, Alf Dubbo and Himmelfarb. She tries to overcome her basic anxieties and lack of self esteem by gaining the affection and approval of others as a result of her obsessive sense of service.

Ruth's obsession with service to the Other, while it may appear to be altruistic, has a hidden motivation - the need to assuage the guilt she feels at her brother's death. This guilt is only attributable to Ruth in her role of (m)other to the child, and is therefore linked with Oedipal tensions. The image of the precocious *Mater Dolorosa* carrying her dead brother through the streets is evocative of *La Pieta*, has mythic resonance, and foreshadows her later

ministrations to the mangled and crucified Himmelfarb. While the narrative does not specifically incriminate Ruth, Mr. Joyner appears to blame her: "She brought the body to their father, who did not look at her straight, she saw, then, or ever again" (RC: 238).

Images of wheels are interwoven into the horror of her brother's death, symbolically linking her brother's death with the quest of the Chariot: "the wheel of minutes ground.... the wheel of the cart trundled, lurched" (RC: 237-238). Her brother's death serves as a catalyst to launch Ruth, like Himmelfarb after his wife's death, on a journey of expiation. Ruth assumes the Biblical Martha's role in assisting those, like Himmelfarb, who are enmeshed in a grander scheme. Himmelfarb's vision of salvation unfolds on a large public scale, while Ruth confines herself, or is confined to, the domestic, with occasional glimpses of transcendental grandeur:

The organ lashed together the bars of music until there was a whole shining scaffolding of sound. And always the golden ladders rose, extended and extended, as if to reach the window of a fire. But there was no fire, only bliss, surging and rising, as she herself climbed upon the heavenly scaffolding and placed still other ladders, to reach higher. Her courage failed before the summit. (RC: 236)

Ruth's rapture in the organ music in the cathedral recalls Theodora's experience at Moraïtis' concert. Both women experience a manner of *jouissance*, but while Theodora in her phantasies believes she has a love child, Lou Parrot, as a result of this momentary metaphysical union, Ruth Godbold subsequently

"actually" has a brood of children of her own. Her marriage to Tom is, to a certain extent, a displacement of her relationship with her father. In both cases she becomes a household drudge, looking after a brood of children. Both men reject her emotionally - her father for another woman who becomes Ruth's stepmother, and her husband rejects her for "beer, sex and the trots, in that order" (RC: 230).

The narrative paints a bleak picture of women's lives. They are treated as objects of desire, or commodities for barter, or tools of employment or abuse. In Ruth's interview for a job as a domestic, she is reduced to the level of a tool or machine - she remains silent or is silenced, as her father and Lady Aveling negotiate the prospects of her indenture. However, distinctions due to money and social status supersede gender differences. Because of her privileged position, Lady Aveling assumes a masculine power position over the working class Joyners. As a poor woman, Ruth is doubly victimised, by the upper class and by the significant men in her life - father and husband. On the other hand, Mrs Chalmers-Robinson is "bought" like a commodity by her husband, who quickly tires of her and prefers the company of men (RC: 243). But since Ruth is plain-looking and from a working class background she is not "bought" by her husband. Paradoxically, her very plainness which disqualifies her as an object of desire allows her a measure of freedom. It is she who takes the initiative in the

courtship with Tom. She offers to sew on a missing button for him (RC: 256), proposes marriage to him (RC: 262) and offers to bear his sins (RC: 263). An exemplar of the alienated and abused woman, who has no one to confide in, her life story sounds like a litany of mishaps:

She would have liked to talk to somebody about the past, even of those occasions which had racked her most, of emigration, and miscarriages, not to mention her own courtship. (RC: 233)

The marriage quickly disintegrates into one of emotional abuse and physical violence. Ruth, like Himmelfarb and Mary before her, sublimates her emotional frustrations into a quest for transcendental meaning. There is a horrible description of domestic violence in the Godbold relationship:

'This is what I think of all caterwaulin' Christians!'

He caught his wife across the ear with the flat of his hand, with the result that the room and everyone in it rocked and shuddered for her, not least Tom Godbold himself.

'And Jesus,' he hurtled on, as much to deaden his own pain, 'Jesus sticks in my guts! He sticks that *hard!*'

In fact, he had to deal his wife a blow in the belly with his fist, and when she had subsided on the floor, against the table, a kick or two for value. (RC: 232)

By associating Tom's wife bashing with his repugnance for Christianity, the narrative conflates two separate issues and masks the magnitude of the violence against the woman. Bringing religion into the domestic *fracas* insinuates that Ruth's faith is the reason for his abuse. She has replaced the original rejecting father by a similar relationship with her punitive, rejecting husband. Rejection by her husband, as by her father before him, launches Ruth on her search for the

ultimate parent, God the Father. Ruth's punishment at her husband's hand for her involvement in religion foreshadows and reflects the more horrendous violence Blue perpetrates on Himmelfarb. Ruth's penchant for suffering, like Himmelfarb's, is masochistic: "her nature, of course, denied her the opportunity of flight. She had to suffer" (RC: 231).

Tom is ambivalent towards Ruth. On the one hand, he rejects her and, on the other, he resents her immersion in religion. With Tom's death, Ruth loses her sense of self. She was to him, wife, (m)other and punching bag. Sado-masochistic though the relationship is, it gives her a sense of being even as it consigns her to a life of suffering. To her he was "the token of her lost half" (RC: 287). Without him "she herself must accept to be reduced by half" (RC: 287). White's protagonists such as Theodora, Laura and Voss, and now Ruth Godbold, often experience the (m)other as part of the self:

Mrs. Godbold's self was by now dead, so she could not cry for the part of her which lay in the keeping of the husband she had just left. (RC: 288)

Because of her deeply impaired self esteem, Ruth is unable to experience Tom as "other", but only as a missing part of her self. However, with her husband's death, she is freed from the entanglements of the flesh, and launches on an errand of compassion towards all. She weeps for the condition of all human beings, for her father, her daughters, her former mistress, for the people on the



street, "her fellow initiates, the madwoman and the Jew of Sarsaparilla, even for the blackfellow" (RC: 288).

There is tension in the narrative between Mrs. Godbold's do-good attitude and her concept of her fellow human being. At Mrs. Khalil's brothel in the midst of her Good Samaritan act, she is surprised to find herself solicitous about Dubbo's comfort "as if he was a human being" (RC: 283) and in her vision of global compassion, she includes "even for the black fellow" (RC: 288). Mary Hare, another illuminate, also thinks about Dubbo as an anonymous Other, "a certain blackfellow" (RC: 24). The prostitute, Mrs. Khalil, does not dispense sexual favours to blacks such as Dubbo. This is more understandable, because she is not depicted as "good" or as one of the elect. But it comes as more of a surprise when the narratorially endorsed or "chosen" think of him as an anonymous "black", displaying discrimination against the Other. Dubbo appears to be discriminated against by good and bad alike. He is the perennial Other and is considered to be sub-human. Adam Shoemaker perceptively comments that

White courageously shows the essential differences between Black and White Australians and highlights the societal forces which separate the two groups, but his vision of spiritual unity between the four "riders" does not imply or reflect increasing harmony between European and Aborigines in the general sphere. It acts instead to give succour and strength to those individuals whom society metaphorically crucifies through its rigidity and intolerance. The Aboriginal theme is subsumed by White's exploration of cosmic illumination...through isolation and rejection. (1989: 97)

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Alf Dubbo, the last, but not least of the Riders, is yet another victim of familial and social conflicts. His identity is split because of his mixed racial origins, his Aboriginal roots and his white adoptive parents. Alf is a hybrid, born to "an old black gin" (RC: 314) and an unidentified white man on a reserve. Thus he is Other to both the white and the black race. It is ironic that the white society which removes him from his Aboriginal roots discriminates against him and consigns him to the margins of society forever. White is not unique in depicting the disastrous effects of white appropriation of the Aborigine. Similar instances are seen, for example, in Colin Johnson's Wild Cat Falling and Thomas Keneally's The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith.

David Hodge and Vijay Mishra observe that the text emphasises Dubbo's excessive thinness negating his physicality and suggesting a "non material solidity" (1990: 63). They argue that society's "averted eye...eliminates him from the visual field, to exist only as the taboo Other" (1990: 63). He is presented to the reader as a non-person, an almost ethereal character flitting about the edges of society. He represents more an abstract concept of the Aborigine, rather than an individual. He does not appear to be given full recognition and is not even acknowledged directly by some of the white women who "lowered their eyes as he passed", or "smiled knowingly, though not exactly at him" (RC: 201).

The imposition of the white patriarchal cultural framework on an Aboriginal mentality exacerbates the vicissitudes of Dubbo's individuation. When the young Dubbo paints the picture of his life, in phantastic images of his "mother's tits, black and gravelly", of the "white worm stirring and fainting" in the Reverend's pants, and of Jesus, in what is hinted at in a compromising posture, Mrs. Pask, his foster mother is horrified, calling it madness. She insists he "must not think this way...It is dirty! When there is so much that is beautiful and holy!" (RC: 326).

The well-meaning Mrs. Pask and the Rev. Calderon impose western religious and artistic principles on the Aborigine, Dubbo, stifling his own artistic and mystical heritage. As Anne-Marie Willis observes: "when a dominant culture, with varying degrees of knowingness, imposes its ethnocentric norms on a less powerful culture, the process of ethnocide is set in train" (1993: 94). Ethnocide is the ultimate in "Othering". And Anthony Elliott explains that racism may be understood as a "displacement of the self's internal otherness, lack, and fragmentation onto this Other, an enemy which functions as an external container of anxiety" (1992: 267).

Not only is Dubbo split off from the mainstream of white society, and represented as the Other, he is also discriminated against by those who live on the edges of society. At Mollie Khalil's establishment, the local whore-house, he

is denied the services of a prostitute, because it "is a decent place. No love for blacks!" (RC: 279). There is implicit irony in this incident, because Mollie remembers that she herself had been in a *defacto* relationship with a Syrian whom she considers "black".

Dubbo is born to "an old gin" by "which of the whites she had never been able to decide" (RC: 313). The anonymity surrounding Alf's white paternity indicates that his mother, the "old gin" as society's Other, was habitually sexually used and abused by any or all of the white men on the reserve. Dubbo's genetic origins are therefore surrounded by mystery and are similar to Freud's (1959) version of the quest for identity which he calls the "family romance"<sup>4</sup> which revises the actual circumstances of a child's origin and birth, and replaces them with imaginary parents of higher social standing. The Rev. Calderon and his sister, Mrs. Pask, who are both of higher social standing, are substituted for Dubbo's biological parents. The revisionary strategy of the family romance which replaces natural parents with those of higher social standing sometimes has disastrous effects on the moral and psychological development of the child. Alf, like Hurtle Duffield in The Vivisector, is seduced by one of the new parents.

Freud argues that when a child is old enough to know the sexual facts of life, his family romance will show evidence that *pater semper incertus est*

whereas the mother is *certissima*. Freud goes on to say that this romance takes on an erotic orientation, motivated by curiosity about the mother's sexual activities, which are often thought to be illicit (SE IX pp. 235-244). Since Joe Mullens, his mother's lover, is neither Alf's father nor Maggie's husband, their sexual relationship is considered to be illicit.

Soon the boy's memory was lit by the livid jags of the metho love the two had danced together on the squeaky bed. Afterwards his mother had begun to curse, and complain that she was deceived again by love. (RC: 321)

The effect of this scene on Dubbo's inner world is devastating: "But for the boy witness, at least, her failure had destroyed the walls" (RC: 321). Watching the primal scene, Dubbo feels deprived of love from the (m)other:

And love, very sad. He would paint love as a skeleton from which they had picked the flesh - an old goanna - and could not find more, however much they wanted, and hard they looked. Himself with them. He would have liked to discover whether it really existed, how it tasted. (RC:326)

The phantasy of the combined parents in sexual intercourse is an important part of the child's early Oedipal complex. This phantasy occurs when the infant becomes aware of the mother as a "whole" object, but does not fully differentiate the father from her; the penis and/or the father are phantasised as part of the (m)other. "At the same time the child's aggression aroused by the intercourse is projected onto this figure. The parents in hated intercourse become a hatefully threatening monster. It is this terrifying figure which often forms the

core of children's nightmares and delusions of persecution" (H. Segal 1988: 108).

Dubbo's painting reveals poignant and terrifying primal scene and Oedipal phantasies. His mother's sex partner "strikes again and again with his thighs as though he meant to kill", while Dubbo himself feels threatened with death, the ultimate castration. In his phantasy, a "blue wire tautened round his own throat" as he "dissolved into a terrible listlessness" (RC: 326). Denied union with the (m)other, Dubbo submits to the sexual advances of Rev. Calderon, his adoptive father, who is depicted as a paedophile and pederast (Dubbo is not yet thirteen at the time of seduction). The novel hints that Calderon's relationship with Arthur Pask was homosexual, and also points to the Reverend's transvestite inclinations as seen in his delight at dressing as a lady in a play (RC: 328). Both topics, homosexuality and transvestism, are explored more fully in a later novel, *The Twyborn Affair* (1979). The narrative does not totally censure Calderon. He is depicted as a confused and pathetic figure as "the past, the future, the appearances of things, his faith, even his desire could have been escaping from him" (RC: 330-331). But more importantly, the sexual encounter between him and Dubbo is both homosexual and Oedipal, since Calderon is a father figure.

What White is depicting here is an erosion of familial relations and societal laws, transgression of incest taboos, and the disintegration of the patriarchal system: the father figure seduces the son, and the very foundations of phallogocentrism appear to totter. Family relationships are reduced to debacles.

It was a warm-cold morning in autumn. It was a morning devoted to regret rather than fulfilment. They lay together on the honeycomb quilt. Pleasure was brief, fearful, and only grudgingly recognized. Very soon the boy was immersed in the surge of words with which his lover lamented his own downfall. (RC: 331)

Because of Oedipal and religious implications, the sordid affair brings guilt and fear rather than fulfilment. That Dubbo thinks of Calderon as "his lover" suggests the mutuality of their desires in the form of the negative Oedipus complex. Klein explains that, for the boy child, the process of escaping a "mother fixation" is both inhibitory and promotive of homosexual tendencies or the inverted Oedipus attitude (1986: 232). This offers a plausible explanation for Dubbo's relationship with the Rev. Calderon.

There is narrative ambivalence in the depiction of the seduction episode. The text exposes the weak Rev. Calderon as a hypocritical representative of organised religion and at the same time portrays his all too human vulnerability, fear of old age and tenuous faith. The depiction of the fumbling homosexual activities which are furtive and lead to mutual embarrassment rather than fulfilment is a concession to the times and social climate in which the novel was

written and set. This is in contrast with the more assured, rollicking treatment of homosexuality and transvestism in The Twyborn Affair, published almost twenty years later, in 1979, in a changed social climate, where these matters may be more openly discussed.

Despite Calderon's shortcomings and failures as Dubbo's adoptive father, he lavishes all he can on his *protégé*: "fatherly love and spiritual guidance to say nothing of Latin verbs, and the dates of battles" (RC: 313). In the course of his instruction, he introduces Dubbo to a painting of the Chariot:

In the picture the chariot rose, behind the wooden horses, along the pathway of the sun. The god's arm - for the text implied it was a god - lit the faces of the four figures, so stiff, in the body of the tinny chariot. The rather ineffectual torch trailed its streamers of material light. (RC: 320)

This is the first of Dubbo's fleeting, intermittent images of the chariot which is eventually captured in his painting. His first exposure to the Chariot is juxtaposed with his memory of the primal scene when the half-caste and his mother grappled in a dance of metho love (RC: 321). For Dubbo, from now on, spiritual and carnal experiences exist side by side and battle for supremacy.

After Dubbo's expulsion from his pseudo-Eden, the Recto's household, he has a series of entanglements with whores, pimps and transvestites who eventually rob him of his life's work, his paintings. His sojourn and sexual relationship with Mrs. Spice, who is an older woman, is further evidence of Dubbo's Oedipal conflicts. Mrs. Spice is also a whore, who befriends him, and



infects him with a sexually transmitted disease. Alf, a forerunner of Eudoxia, Eddie and Eadith in The Twyborn Affair, is inculcated into bisexuality, which is complicated by Oedipal dimensions. Because of his sexual relationship with both father and mother figures, it would appear that Dubbo suffers from the positive as well as the negative Oedipus complex.

As David Marr comments, Dubbo's life is a continuous conflict or split between "physical squalor and depravity, and his devotion to his gift" (1990: 354). White himself feels that Dubbo's "gift would have been the less if he had not experienced the depths. (I am convinced of that in my own case)" (in Marr 1990: 354). But Marr also goes on to point out that White himself had never met an Aboriginal:

Dubbo the black painter is entirely White's invention. At Walgett he had no more than distant contact with the Aborigines who lived along the river. He had never *met* one. For the portrait of Dubbo he drew on books, newspapers and the Withycombes' grim stories of the blacks round Barvon Vale. In Australian fiction the Aboriginal had been shown as artist/mystic or squalid fringe dweller. Dubbo was both. (Marr 1990: 360)

Although meeting an Aborigine is no guarantee of successful fictional representation, the fact that White was not personally acquainted with Aborigines may partially account for the fact that the Aborigine, Dubbo, appears as the archetypal Other. He is presented in the stereotypical image of the alienated artist. To cite Hodge and Mishra again: "Aborigines can rightly object to the authenticity of Dubbo as the carrier of their social meaning in White's

fiction". They quote Mudrooroo Narogin: "He's not a bloody Aborigine!" (1990: 63). What the narrative depicts, as White states in a letter to James Stern, is that "the Australian Aboriginal in contact with western civilization is a very squalid creature" (in Marr 1994: 196). Western civilization then is seen as the corrupting influence.

Dubbo may well be perceived as the projection of the European white male artist onto a black Aboriginal image. The reader is offered a hybrid of white or Eurocentric conception of the Other, the Aborigine, combined with the romantic image of the alienated artist. But the essence of Aboriginality, like the Chariot, appears to be elusive. Dubbo remains the elusive Other, but exists as White's "phantasy", if you will, of the creative artist, who represents an integration of both the aesthetically sublime and the physically squalid.

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Despite the signposts throughout the novel alerting the reader to the inter-relationship of the Riders, and despite their intermittent visions of the Chariot which serve to link them together, the actual meetings of the Riders are but rare occasions, and the Chariot scenes themselves are few. Each Rider experiences

the Chariot alone, in phantasies, visions or hallucinations, rather than as positive, conscious acts of faith. The image of the Chariot is more forcefully realised in

Dubbo's painting than in the characters' experiences. As Peter Wolfe observes:

Though each rider is fascinated by the chariot, none has a firm hold or full picture of it. One mumbles about it in a dream or trance; another is moved by a painting of it; a third learns of it from some Kabbalistic lore; it comes to the fourth as a hymn. None see it clearly, none discovers its purpose. (Wolfe 1983: 126)

However, Dubbo the artist, drawing on his phantasies, infuses the Chariot image with meaning: "the Chariot was shyly offered. But its tentative nature became, if anything, its glory, causing it to blaze across the sky, or into the soul of the beholder" (RC: 458). He also captures the essence of the Riders, conveying the solidity of Mrs. Godbold, Mary Hare's affinity with nature, Himmelfarb's suffering and persecution, and his own "whirling spectrum" (RC: 458) of a head. Somewhat along these lines, Bliss considers that Dubbo paints Ruth Godbold as the eternal woman and mother, whose breasts are overflowing with milk that never dries. "In other words, Ruth is revealed as the Magna Mater, Mary as the archetypal child, whose unborn innocence derives from her instinctual, animal being". Himmelfarb is the Christ of the Deposition and "is seen to be both god and man (as Laura Trevelyan knew all men were)". Dubbo "completes the quartet by depicting himself as a figure constructed out of bleeding twigs and spattered leaves" (1986: 160).

If accession to transcendence is the ultimate or major goal of the Riders, then in the painting, as in the narrative, the riders "had surrendered their sufferings, but not yet received beatitude" (RC: 459). Bitude, like desire, may be forever deferred. What the narrative suggests then, is that the search for transcendental meaning is an integral part of life, an on-going process, rather than a realisation.

Reintegration in the novel, which suggests resolution of Oedipal conflict, is realised by each of the protagonists. Himmelfarb, in his death-bed phantasies, reintegrates various split-off segments of his life, religious, personal and psychological:

Again, he was the Man Kadmon, descending from the Tree of Light to take the Bride. Trembling with white, holding the cup in her chapped hands, she advanced to stand beneath the *Chuppah*. So they were brought together in the smell of all primordial velvets. This, explained the cousins and aunts, is at last the *Shecchinah*, whom you have carried all these years under your left breast. As he received her, she bent and kissed the wound in his hand. Then they were truly one. (RC: 430)

Like Voss and Laura before him, Himmelfarb is reunited with Reha, his spiritual counterpart. Like Voss, Himmelfarb integrates various conflicting aspects of his personality in his death-bed phantasies. He accepts his physicality and becomes "truly one" with Reha, which is in contrast to his earlier marriage to her, when the bridegroom "seemed to have entered on another phase"; he was "morose" (RC: 127). Himmelfarb "could see now the rightness and inevitability" of his relationship with Reha; he agrees "unreservedly that Reha should become his

voice and hands" (RC: 427). Ethnic, religious and racial differences are also reconciled in his phantasy: "sometimes the faces were those of Jews, sometimes they were gentile faces, but no matter" (RC: 437). This reintegration is triggered by a desire for reparation towards the damaged parent figure, which signals the resolution of Oedipal conflict. Images of destruction give way to the conciliatory Himmelfarb's father, Moshe, flickers "longingly within the acetylene nebula" (RC: 526), and he accepts feelings of ambivalence - of being "loved and tormented" by his father: "always separate during the illusory life of men, now they touched" (RC: 426).

Mary too experiences wholeness in union with Himmelfarb: "Their most private union she held in sheets of silence" (RC: 438). She phantasises about "courtship" and "love" and the "dancing demons" fly out of her life as she experiences her "final ecstasy (RC: 438-439). "She was all but identified" (RC: 440).

Ruth Godbold, for her part, also articulates the reintegration and reconciliation of all differences between Jew and Gentile as she recites her manifesto to Rosetree:

'Men are the same before they are born. They are the same at birth, perhaps you will agree. It is only the coat they are told to put on that makes them all that different. There are some, of course, who feel they are not suited. They think they will change their coat. But remain the same, in themselves. Only at the end, when everything is taken from them, it seems there was never any need. There are the poor souls at rest, and all naked again as they were in the beginning. That is how it strikes me, sir. Perhaps you will remember, on thinking it over, that is how Our Lord Himself wished us to see it.' (RC: 445)

In her mind, Himmelfarb is Our Lord Himself. When Rosetree protests that Himmelfarb is a Jew, she counters with: "So they say, was Our Lord and Saviour who we have buried too" (RC: 446).

Similarly, as Dubbo, *alias* Peter, watches the brutality of the crucifixion scene, he experiences a moment of epiphany:

All that he had ever suffered, all that he had ever failed to understand, rose to the surface in Dubbo. Instinct and the white man's teaching no longer trampled on each other. As he watched, the colour flowed through the veins of the cold, childhood Christ, at last the nails entered wherever it was acknowledged they should....So he understood the concept of the blood, which was sometimes the sick, brown stain on his own pillow, sometimes the clear crimson of redemption. (RC: 412)

As he witnesses Himmelfarb's persecution and crucifixion Dubbo integrates, in his phantasies, the various fragments of his life. He realises the significance, albeit "troubling", of "love in its many kinds", the sexual fumbling of the Rev. Calderon. Mrs. Spice's "putrefaction in the never-ending dance of the potato-sacks", the prostitution of Hannah, the transvestism and hermaphroditic antics of Norman Fussell (RC: 413).

For Dubbo, as always, the spiritual and the carnal coalesce. He accepts the Western patriarchal notion of Christ even if he "portrayed the Christ darker than convention would have approved" (RC: 456). But the dark-hued Christ signifies acceptance of ambivalence, the integration of Eurocentric notions of the Redeemer into his own cultural and racial idiom. He attempts to repair the damaged maternal image of the (m)other by lovingly touching with paint the

cheeks of Ruth Godbold, the First Mary, while the "smell of milk...stole gently over him, for the breasts of the immemorial woman were running with a milk that had never, in fact, dried" (RC: 454). She is the eternal (m)other, "the Mother of God waiting to clothe the dead Christ in white" (RC: 454). The tension experienced earlier in the narrative of the brothel scene, where Ruth Godbold, despite her ministrations, considers him to be less than human, is now eased as Dubbo realises "she had already testified her love" (RC: 436).

Nevertheless, aggressive tendencies toward his own unloving (m)other linger and Dubbo experiences difficulty in totally reintegrating the maternal image in the painting of Ruth Godbold. "If he had known opulence, he might have been able to reconcile it with compassion. As it was, such riches of the flesh were distasteful to him, and he began to slash. He hacked at the paint to humble it" (RC: 454). Elizabeth Wright explains that the creative act can take place in the context of either of the two Kleinian positions:

The schizoid-paranoid position is one swing of an oscillation between identification with the breast and separation from it, which initiates, according to Klein, all objectifications. This accounts for two kinds of experience - one which one might see as harmonizing, the other as rebellious. (Wright 1984: 85)

The reintegration suggested by Dubbo's painting oscillates between the two positions. Klein theorises that the resolution of the Oedipus complex is subsumed by integrative processes. Dubbo captures his numinous moment by

reintegrating various split aspects of self and (m)other, in the paintings of the Deposition and the Chariot, signalling the resolution of Oedipal conflicts. In the painting of the Deposition, in particular, all conflicting elements, religious and social, are accepted and included: the two Marys, the battered Christ, the Jew of Sarsaparilla, and "the Godbold children, as he sensed them, some upright with horror for the nightmare into which they had been introduced, others heaped, and dreaming of a different state. There were the workers, too, armed with their rights, together with doubts and oranges" (RC: 455).

For the first and last time in the novel, all four Riders are present together at the Deposition. But even then Dubbo, the Aborigine and alienated artist, remains on the periphery, framed by a window, standing on the outside, looking in, which denotes his separateness from mainstream white society. He is Other, observer, spectator, not a participant in the rituals surrounding Himmelfarb's death. Like Dugald in Voss, Dubbo, the Aboriginal, remains, as always, segregated, rather than integrated into society. He is "the abo half-caste who did not exist for any of member of it" (RC: 413).

In the painting of the Chariot he reintegrates the four Riders. Dubbo thus serves as a trope for the artist, his creator, who reintegrates the various split-off fragments into a "whole" which is symbolised by the position of the four Riders within the Chariot. According to Ehrenzweig, the creative artist "prepares, as it



were, in his work a receiving 'womb', the image of a benevolent mother figure, to contain and integrate the fragmented material" (1993: 192). Dubbo, the artist, reintegrates the various split segments of self and of society in the receiving maternal womb of the Chariot. Jew and Gentile, Anglo-Saxon and Aboriginal - are all brought together within the "Chariot sociable" (RC: 458). As Beatson observes, "the main symbols work centripetally, drawing the lives of the four chief characters together giving them a corporate identity that allows them to transcend the boundaries of self" (1977: 161).

As Hanna Segal explains, in the depressive position the developing child experiences a desire to restore the loved internal and external objects which in his phantasies he has destroyed by his aggression. The desire for reparation is the basis for sublimation and creativity. These reparative activities are directed towards both the object, the (m)other, and the self. "The infant's longing to recreate his lost objects gives him the impulse to put together what has been torn asunder, to reconstruct what has been destroyed, to recreate and to create" (1988: 75). The reparative urge is dramatised in Dubbo's paintings of the Deposition and the Chariot.

According to Melanie Klein, the reparative urge also signals the resolution of the early Oedipus complex, which is "subsumed and consequently redefined in terms of depressive anxiety and the attempt to restore the mother as

a whole object" (Doane and Hodges 1992: 11). Concomitantly, the developing ego reintegrates previously split aspects of the self. However, Klein also alerts us that "the integration achieved is never complete". She uses the term "position" to imply "specific configuration[s] of object relations, anxieties and defences which persist throughout life" (Segal 1988: ix). Negotiation of the early Oedipal complex serves as the developing protagonist's rite of passage to the next phase of development - of adult sexuality and notions of sexual and gender identity, which are the themes explored in the next novel to be considered, The Twyborn Affair.

## V FEMININITY, MASCULINITY AND ANDROGYNY IN THE TWYBORN AFFAIR

I would like to think of myself morally justified in being true to what I am - if I knew what that is. I must discover. (The Twyborn Affair: 63)

The real E. has not yet been discovered and perhaps never will be. (The Twyborn Affair: 79)

Androgynous: 1. both male and female in one; hermaphroditic. (Webster's New World Dictionary: 1980)

There are almost as many opinions, viewpoints and reactions to The Twyborn Affair and to the Eadith Trist section in particular, as there are critics. For instance, Manning Clark observes that E. Twyborn is a "twicer" both in his sex life and in his search for a lifestyle unavailable to him in Australia (1979: 20); Anne McCulloch sees Eddie as "neither redeemed nor damned" (1983: 185-186), and Manly Johnson argues that "because White is a reflexive writer, there is profit in reading one of his works biographically - provided the parallels lead up to the "autonomous level of art". Accordingly, Johnson claims that "White's real life is an extrapolation [sic] of Eddie's fictional life which ended in 1940" (1981-82: 160). Johnson continues: "The Twyborn Affair is a fictionalized retrospective over his life, a pause in the summoning up of materials out of the depths of the subconsciousness for fashioning into worlds inhabited by characters of his own invention - as close to an autobiography as we are apt to

get from White". But Johnson also warns of the dangers of psychobiography and the risk of reductionism (1981-82: 161).

While all of these positions add to our interpretation of the complexities of White's fiction, for purposes of this thesis it is more relevant to see the Eadith Trist section as E.'s integration of dichotomous feminine and masculine aspects of the self in her progress towards psychological development and maturity.

There are some critics who would consider that The Twyborn Affair is about homosexuality, and indeed that it is an open statement about White's own homosexuality.<sup>1</sup> While homosexuality does appear in The Twyborn Affair, the novel is more expressly about the quest for a sense of identity, than an exploration of homosexuality *per se*. There is ample textual evidence that as Eadith Trist, E. abstains from sexual intercourse, except for one occasion, and even that is depicted not so much as a homosexual encounter, as in the form of a ritual of initiation into some deep mystery. The protagonist herself ultimately eschews all manner of sexual contact, turning down an ardent suitor, to remain asexual. The question of sexuality, heterosexuality and homosexuality is subordinate to or incidental to the quest for an authentic sense of self in The Twyborn Affair. By the end of the novel, E.'s sexuality is not only incidental, it is non-existent.

White himself speaks to this issue. In the early seventies, Ingmar Björkstén asked White why he did not write a novel about a homosexual. White replied: "If I had wanted to...I should have written it...But that is a theme which easily becomes sentimental and/or hysterical. It is, anyway, rather worn" (in Marr 1991: 583). And in Flaws in the Glass White writes that "I sometimes wonder how I would have turned out had I been born a so-called normal heterosexual male. If an artist, probably a pompous one, preening myself in the psychic mirror for being a success" (1983: 154). White imaginatively explores various possibilities for himself in other roles. He continues that as a woman he might have been "an earth mother", passionate and jealous while "churning out" children "Or I might have chosen a whore's life for its greater range in role-playing, greater than that offered an actress....Or else a nun....dedicated to her quasi-spiritual marriage with the most demanding spouse of all" (1983: 154). White argues persuasively that what is subtle in the Australian character comes from "the masculine principle in its women, the feminine in its men" (EG 1983: 155). This is the subtlety of character he explores in the person of E., the protagonist.

The Twyborn Affair is neither a public confession nor an autobiography, but a vivid exploration of various hypothetical possibilities in the quest for selfhood, and ultimately, an argument for the concept of androgyny. Chris

Wallace-Crabbe comments on White's long standing interest in "the multiplicity of possible selves", and specifically, in androgyny. "The Voss-Laura axis showed how division could be used to dramatize the age-old dream of the androgynous self: as in Plato's parable they appeared as fallen male and female principles, each incomplete without the other" (1986: 7). Wallace-Crabbe continues that in "The Twyborn Affair White took androgyny to the point where the central character could live out successive male and female identities" (1986: 8). The protagonist disports herself as a woman, the Empress Eudoxia, then as a man, the Australian jackeroo, Eddie Twyborn, and again as a woman, who is the abbess, actress and whore mistress, Eadith Trist. In The Twyborn Affair White explores the interpsychic and intrapsychic conflicts arising out of the woman in a man and *vice versa*, which is a continuation and culmination of the search for an authentic sense of self which reverberates through all the novels under review.

Patrick White's protagonist has progressed from initial attempts to separate the self from the (m)other in The Aunt's Story, through splitting and reintegration of aspects of self and (m)other in Voss, through the Oedipal phase in Riders in the Chariot and on to adulthood and notions of femininity, masculinity, gender identity and the vagaries of adult sexuality in The Twyborn Affair. The acquisition of a sense of identity is influenced by interactions of the

self and the (m)other during the early phases of development. Earlier novels such as The Aunt's Story, Voss, The Solid Mandala, tentatively explored concepts of gender identity and of androgyny. Theodora, the protagonist of The Aunt's Story displayed both masculine and feminine characteristics; and the novels suggested that Voss and Laura in Voss, and Waldo and Arthur in The Solid Mandala, personified the masculine and feminine principles of an integral character. These explorations of gender and identity culminate in the explicit dramatisation, in The Twyborn Affair, of the protagonist's multiple personalities in the form(s) of Eudoxia/Eddie/Eadith, and his/her struggle towards the acquisition of a cohesive gender identity and fulfilment in adult sexuality. As Hena Maes-Jelinek observes, in the earlier novels, notably in The Solid Mandala, White suggests that human beings can be part of one another. In The Twyborn Affair he explicitly "presents for the first time a protagonist who, potentially, can contain them all and be part of them all" (1984: 171). The protagonist's experimentation with various forms of love and sexuality - homosexuality, heterosexuality, and voyeurism, are rooted in the quest for an authentic sense of self, and are various reflections of the relationship of the self with the (m)other. For instance, E.'s homosexual relationship with Angelos, the ageing Byzantian Emperor, is a displacement of his desire for such a relationship with his own parents, Judge and Eadie Twyborn, and Eddy's

heterosexual encounter with Marcia Lushington is evocative of a regressive journey back to the womb. In order to follow E.'s shifting roles and identities, the pronoun "she" will generally be used for the Eudoxia section, "he" for the Eddie section and "she" again for the Eadith section of the discussion.

In The Twyborn Affair White challenges traditional splits and oppositions of masculinity and femininity and offers instead the concept of androgyny. In discussions of literary representations of androgyny, Virginia Woolf's Orlando (1928) generally comes to mind. Woolf suggests that her protagonist undergoes physical metamorphosis. According to Sandra Gilbert, Orlando is a work which is nominally about a transsexual and depicts transsexualism through sardonic costume changes rather than through actual physical transformations. So much so, she argues, that Orlando's "costumes are selves and thus easily, fluidly interchangeable" (1980: 404-405).

Defining androgyny is not easy. How can male and female be one? Is this oneness physical or emotional and psychical? Considering the advances in medical technology and in the study of psychology the answer to this question appears to be that it can be either physical or psychological or both. In the word "androgyny" the Greek roots for man (*andros*) and woman (*gyne*) exist side by side.



In The Twyborn Affair, Eudoxia/Eddie/Eadith's androgyny is emotional or psychological, rather than physical. The costume changes dramatise or are projections of E.'s masculine and feminine aspects. The reader is made privy to Eudoxia's agonised diary entries in which she confides her troublesome quest for selfhood and identity:

I would like to think myself morally justified in being true to what I am - if I knew what that is. I must discover. (TA: 63)

As Peter Wolfe observes, The Twyborn Affair is "a book about borderlines and frontiers. Eddie prefers to walk the edge, rather than settling into a dreary inland sameness". Wolfe continues that Eddie's mother, Eadie Twyborn, also walks the edge, "protesting against uniformity by corking on a mustache [sic], putting on her judge husband's checked trousers, and dancing with Joanie Golson at the fashionable Australia Hotel". This breaching of barriers, according to Wolfe, extends from the individual to the social. "Roderick Gravenor, a member of the peerage, crosses both social and legal barriers to help run Eadith Trist's brothel; his sister marries a man their father's age" (1983: 217).

And Eudoxia plays the role of the wife of the Emperor, Angelos, a man her father's age. The reader encounters the protagonist in various feminine and masculine roles: as the Empress Eudoxia in France, as Eddy, the jackeroo, in the Australian Outback, and as the Eadith Trist, the Bawd of Beckwith Street in

London, only to discover ultimately that they are one and the same "androgynous" person.

Joyce Trebilcot offers a paradigm for androgyny in which biological sex is not a basis for judgements about the appropriateness of gender characteristics; one in which an individual exhibits both feminine and masculine personality traits and actions, thus transcending gender demarcations: -

According to this view, all alternatives with respect to gender should be equally available to and equally approved for everyone, regardless of sex. Thus, for example, a female might acceptably develop as a completely feminine sort of person, as both feminine and masculine in any proportion, or as wholly masculine. (In Vetterling-Braggin, 1982: 163)

For instance, as a contrast to the androgyne, E., Mrs. Tyrrell, the perennial mother, with her "football team of sons" appears as a "completely feminine sort of person". In a study of androgyny in literature. Carolyn Heilbrun treats androgyny as an ideal. It is described as

a spirit of reconciliation between the sexes; it suggests a full range of experience open to individuals...it suggests a spectrum upon which human beings choose their places without regard to propriety or custom. (1973: 7-8)

The Twyborn Affair presents just such a varying range of sexual experience and gender identification for the protagonist/s Eudoxia, Eddie, Eadith, culminating in a reconciliation and integration of sexual differences. And indeed, it is hinted at the end of the novel that E.'s progression along a continuum of the sexual is ultimately sublimated into the spiritual.

In previous novels various shifting and merging constellations of self and (m)other were perceived mainly as projections and identifications of the protagonists. In The Twyborn Affair the masculine and feminine protagonists, Eudoxia, Eddie, Eadith, are initially seen as split-off projections of the self and as identifications of the self with the (m)other. But by the end of the novel the protagonist accepts and integrates these various aspects of the self. Previously split-off projections are introjected, internalised, integrated and accepted as conflicting aspects of an "androgynous" self. E. recognises the self as both "good" and "bad", desirable and undesirable, masculine and feminine. Simultaneously, E. acknowledges that the self is separate and distinct from the (m)other, and that the (m)other is also both "good" and "bad".

In Flaws in the Glass White argues that to be unequivocally male or female is potentially limiting. He goes on to state that androgyny, on the other hand, opens up endless avenues of possibilities and insight into what it is to be both male and female, father and mother, whore and nun. "Ambivalence has given me insights into human nature, denied, I believe, to those who are unequivocally male or female...I would not trade my halfway house, frail though it be, for any entrenchments of those who like to think themselves unequivocal" (EG: 154). This sentiment is not only dramatised, but on occasion, explicitly echoed by E., the protagonist of The Twyborn Affair.

The novel is split into three short novels, and ultimately reintegrated into a "whole", miming the splitting of the protagonist into three *personae* representing versions of masculinity and femininity, who are ultimately integrated into an androgynous "whole" person. In Part One, Eudoxia assumes a feminine role, in Part Two, E. appears as the masculine Eddie Twyborn, and Part Three begins with E. in feminine garb, but concludes with E. in a mixed costume - wearing a man's suit, and the heavy make up of a whore, symbolically suggesting his/her essential androgynous qualities. Trying on identities as she tries on names, Eudoxia/Eddie/Eadith the "expatriate masochist and crypto queen" tries to piece together the scattered "jigsaw" of his/her being (IA: 146) and to find his/her place in the world. The opening line of the novel metaphorically suggests this journey of self-discovery: "Which road this afternoon, madam?" (IA: 11).

The road to selfhood takes "E.". this "pseudo man-cum-crypto-woman" (IA: 298) on an international highway across France, Australia and England within the time frame of two world wars which symbolically represents E.'s psychological battleground. Jim Davidson calls the splitting of the protagonist and the novel "a rich and enigmatic triptych" (1979: 54), with its three parts set in three different continents.

In the first section, in the hedonistic ambience of the French Riviera, the flamboyant E. struts her feminine wares as Empress Eudoxia. Self and (m)other fuse and merge as she becomes concubine, wife, hetaira and (m)other to the ageing Byzantine Emperor, Angelos Vatatzes. As Joan Kirkby observes, their relationship is one of "voluptuous immersion in corporeality and lust". Eudoxia repeatedly offers herself in prostration to her dilapidated, deteriorating and masochistic lover (forthcoming). Music and sticky "half-dried semen" (IA: 37) are frequently recurring motifs in their life together.

Despite the orgiastic revelry in the Eudoxia section of the novel, there is a sense, as Leonie Kramer observes, that there is a "submerged subject,...the mystery of family relationships and often painful connections between father, mother and son" (1980: 67). However, Kramer concludes that "The Twyborn Affair, whatever its subject, comes nowhere near the heart of the matter" (1980: 67). On the contrary, this thesis will demonstrate that the novel does indeed explore "the heart of the matter", which is resolution of what Kramer calls "the problem and mystery of family relationships" (1980: 67).

For instance, even in her life of sexual abandon with Angelos in France, the adult Eudoxia is beset by recurring childhood nightmares of a

giant emu's head and neck tormented by the wind. As its plumage is ruffled and tossed, its beak descends repeatedly, almost past the useless shutter, almost into the room where I am lying in my narrow bed, fright raised in goose-pimples, when not dissolving into urine.

Last night, to make this dream more disturbing, my father came in....he was standing beside me, after the shutter had burst open and the beak

of the giant emu was threatening to descend into the room, to tear me open as I covered on my narrow, sodden mattress....

'Is anything wrong?' he asked, 'darling?'....

Then, incredibly, he bent and, whether by accident, kissed me on the mouth. (IA: 33-35).

For centuries giant birds, eagles, vultures and kites have been associated with homosexual desires. In his essay, "The History of Male Homosexuality from Ancient Greece Through the Renaissance: Implications for Psychoanalytic Theory", Robert Liebert discusses Michelangelo Buonarroti's "The Abduction of Ganymede" in which a powerful eagle rapes an athletic youth. He observes that Michelangelo's gift of this drawing to his close friend, a young nobleman Tommaso de' Cavalieri, was a "manifest expression of more private [homosexual] communication" even though that passion may not have been sexually consummated (in Fogel, Lane and Liebert 1986: 199).<sup>2</sup> Similarly, in The Twyborn Affair, E.'s dream of a giant emu which threatens to "descend into the room, to tear [him] open as [he] covered on [his] narrow sodden mattress" of hair (IA: 34) may be viewed as symbolising a manifest expression of private homosexual desire. The emu, like the eagle, stands for desired homosexual encounter. Because the father figures prominently in E.'s dream, and in light of E.'s homosexual relationship with the ageing Angelos, a father-figure, the desire latent in E.'s dream may also be seen as Oedipal. There is no mistaking the phallic imagery in the dream. Since the father and the emu are closely

associated, the dreamer's fear and trembling, suggest castration anxieties over Oedipal desires. The father's goodnight kiss is more than paternal as it lands on the child's mouth. Like Theodora, in The Aunt's Story, who attempts to seduce her father into tarrying longer by her bedside, E. too is "the spinner of threads trying to entangle him more irrevocably than his tentative sortie into loving could ever bind me" (TA: 35). Images of Angelos are interwoven with images of E.'s father, emphasising the Oedipal nature of both relationships. However, it may be argued that E.'s desire for union with the paternal object is a displacement of the original desire for union with the primordial object of desire, the (m)other.

E.'s dream is reminiscent of Freud's account of Leonardo da Vinci's dream in his essay "Leonardo da Vinci and a memory of his childhood" (SE XI, pp. 59-138). In Leonardo's dream/phantasy a vulture came down to his crib and opened the child's mouth with his tail and "struck [him] a few times with his tail against [his] lips". Peter Fuller observes that in subsequent literature, the vulture is referred to as a kite - but argues that the idea conceals a reminiscence of sucking, or being suckled, which has been transformed by the adult into a disguised homosexual fantasy (1980: 38-39).

Freud is explicit about Leonardo's homosexuality, but the sex or gender of the child dreamer in the Eudoxia section is never made explicit, which adds to

the deepening sense of mystery in the novel. Eadie Twyborn's note to her lesbian lover, Joanie Golson, also fails to mention the gender of the child which at once depersonalises and reifies the child. "The child atrocious all afternoon. Threw tantrum after tantrum....Don't know why intuition didn't warn me against conceiving" (IA: 68). There is ample textual evidence that despite the homosexual or Oedipal nuances discernible in E.'s dream, and in the Byzantium relationship, they may more appropriately be perceived as displacements of a yearning for nurture by an emotionally and often physically absent (m)other.

The enigmatic E. indulges in primal scene phantasies and Oedipal desires as she "wondered what sexual solace my parents were able to offer each other" (IA: 35), aware that she is speaking of her parents in the past tense, which signals patricidal or matricidal wishes. However, E.'s Oedipal and aggressive phantasies are subsumed by persecutory anxieties caused by rejection by the parental object. To E. her parents "seemed indestructible; it was their child who died, one of the premature suicides" (IA: 35).

Like most of the children in White's fiction, E. grows up as an emotionally neglected, rejected and unwanted child. E. senses that to her mother s/he is an unpleasant duty, a "tiresome child" (IA: 38) to be disposed of in a hasty bedtime ritual of duty rather than of love and nurturing which is conducive to bonding of the self with the (m)other. Consequently, the adult E.'s erotic



dream elements may be viewed as permutations of earlier, fundamentally non-erotic, non-incestuous feelings and needs of the child for a cold and rejecting (m)other. E.'s need for nurturing, coupled with separation anxieties, is revealed in her phantasies of Joanie Golson's "globular breasts," (TA: 38), a displacement of the breasts of the original, frustrating (m)other.

E.'s mother herself is a problematic and transvestite figure in E.'s life and an inadequate role model for the child's sexual development and gender identity: "She was dressed in a pair of check pants and a coat which could have belonged to my father....Mummy had corked on a moustache" (TA: 38). E. dreams of the (m)other's breasts like "charmeuse melons parting and rejoining, parting and rejoining" as "having done their duty by Eadie's tiresome child, the couple left" for a night out on the town (TA: 38).

Joanie Golson's unposted letter to her friend and lover, Eadie Twyborn, like Le Mesurier's poetry in *Voss*, is a depiction, in phantasy, of the protagonist's projected needs and desires. But where Le Mesurier's poetry reveals persecutory anxieties generally associated with childhood, Joanie's letter articulates projections of sexual desires which may originate in infancy but may focus on a later phase of development. Joanie's phantasies are both sublime and profane and are the result of idealisation. In her letter she talks of an incestuous trinity of (m)other, lesbian lover, and child:

We might have made an *à trois*, as they say....To lie with this divine creature, breast to breast, mouth to mouth, on the common coverlet, listening to the activity of the street below, flowing by gaslight over the wet cobbles. (IA: 128)

As already mentioned, Klein suggests that in the early phase of the Oedipus complex the developing child engages in phantasies of a combined parental figure in continuous intercourse. In the child's phantasy this combined figure is generally comprised of the father and the (m)other. Klein writes that in this early phase of development the growing child cannot properly differentiate father from (m)other. In E.'s case, since Eadie Twyborn, in the child's phantasy, dons masculine attire, she represents a phantasy of the combined parents. Both Joanie Golson and Eadie Twyborn are in parental positions to E, and the phantasy of the incestuous and Oedipal *ménage à trois* therefore incorporates both Oedipal desires and a regressive desire for union with the parental object.

Eudoxia's tentative feminine gender identity is constructed out of frippery and stereotypical images of femininity. She lacks a coherent sense of herself and is an object of desire, a subject-in-process constructed by Angelos, a parental figure, who has

created the aesthetic version of me - so different, far more different than he could ever understand. For all his languages he could never understand the one I speak. (IA: 77)

She is described as a "fruitless" woman, the "flower of his decadence" (IA: 25), playing with "spangled fan" and "pomegranate shawl", or making a "womanly

scene" (TA: 27-28), in a "crimson cottage" (TA: 31). In a role reversal, Eudoxia nurses Angelos, the father-figure, and calls him her "dotty 68-year old child" (TA: 33).

The Vatatzes' life and relationship is split between what are generally considered to be the "masculine" public and the "feminine" domestic spheres. While the ageing Byzantine Emperor, Angelos, postures and pontificates in public, Eudoxia is assigned stereotypically feminine duties. She spends her time making her ageing, decadent lover burnt offerings of food, busying herself with trays and serving drinks in dainty glass thimbles (TA: 102), and hiring and firing the servants. Angelos deals with life on a grand scale in the masculine, public sphere. As "Emperor of all Byzantium (Nicaea thrown in for good measure - Mistra too)" he also worries about "the Colonies" (TA: 32) and has "too much on his mind" (TA: 32-35), while Eudoxia holds sway over the private, domestic sphere. Jean Bethke Elshtain's feminist discussion of the complexities of love and domination which maintains all "splitting and binary oppositions: public and private, universal and particular, rational and empathic, subject and object" (in Benjamin 1988: 217), is an apt description for the Eudoxia-Angelos relationship. Elshtain refers to the feminine world as a private "little world" of "joys and tragedies" (in Benjamin, 1988: 208). Nevertheless this split between the worlds of Angelos and Eudoxia, the public and the private, is implicitly

ironic, since Angelos's vast domain is actually entirely private, ineffectual, is composed of phantasy, and exists entirely and perhaps exclusively in his own mind. The narrative does not differentiate between what is "phantasy" and what is "reality". Whether or not Angelos and Eudoxia are a couple of *poseurs* - one assuming royalty and rank, and the other a counterfeit or bogus feminine *persona*, is inconsequential. What is important for our discussion is that they live out a life of "phantasy" and wish fulfilment.

E.'s limited role is a function of her assumed gender identity. In her feminine role, she is not only besotted by Angelos, but is also dominated, subjugated, sequestered and imprisoned, as are all his other women, who are displacements of the original object of desire, the (m)other: "'They shut her in a tower. My wife Anna. Or was it my mother? Or my concubine? Or the Empress Eudoxia?'" (IA: 39).

The "good" versus the "bad" dynamic has also been noted by other critics in other critical contexts. Eudoxia is the "bad" woman and Angelos's dead wife, Anna, was the "good" woman. As Bliss observes, Angelos taunts Eudoxia with the split but "complementary spectres of her own perversity and the saintliness of his departed wife" (1986: 170). E. subjects herself to sado-masochistic imprisonment because "the tower usually materialises as a prelude to tenderness" (IA: 65). According to Kristeva, the masochist is also a

"homosexual soul", a "soulosexual", who, like the Christian martyr, undergoes a "martyrdom in order to maintain the fantasy that there exists a power as well as its masochistic obverse - passivation, total feminization":

Masochism, which, we are told, is essentially and originally feminine, is a submissiveness to the Phallus that the soulosexual knows well and can assume until death in order to become the "true" woman - passive, castrated, nonphallic - that his/her mother was not. (In Roudiez, 1987: 78)

Angelos constructs Eudoxia as his Pygmalion and binds her to himself by "fate and orgasm - never love" (TA: 36). Images of imprisonment abound in "gilt cages" (TA: 51), "injured birds" (TA: 52) and Eudoxia herself feels "incarcerated [in] the cancerous tower of a dying human relationship" (TA: 40), suggesting that there is a hidden E. struggling to get out. As Eudoxia, E. is imprisoned in a restrictive feminine form. Nevertheless, her relationship with Angelos is interwoven with dreams and phantasies of desire, hate and revulsion. In the mirror of his predatory lust, E.'s femininity is "made articulate by this persuasive Greek" (TA: 27). Angelos is E.'s Lacanian mirror in which s/he can "appear consecutive, complete, and can enjoy [her] reflection in the glass, which he [Angelos] has created, what passes for the real one with devices like the spangled fan and the pomegranate shawl" (TA: 27). But like the Lacanian mirror image, Eudoxia's image of femininity or physical and psychic wholeness is a *méconnaissance*. E. confides her ontological insecurities to her diary: "Nothing of me is mine, not even the body I was given to inhabit, nor the disguises chosen

for it....The real E. has not yet been discovered, and perhaps never will be" (TA: 79).

In Flaws in the Glass White talks about the homosexual's struggle towards identity as "the darkness in my dichotomy", and "the inevitably painful search for the twin who might bring a softer light to bear on my bleakly illuminated darkness" (FG: 35). And David Marr comments that all of White's fiction explores "the territory of pain that lies between sensuality and its expression, between lust and love" (1991: 600). He argues that in The Twyborn Affair White explores overtly, for the first time, the "distress, self-disgust, loneliness and self-pity" of the homosexual (1991: 600). In White's novels and especially in The Twyborn Affair, the exploration of homosexuality is not an end in itself. That is to say, the interest does not lie in the representation of the phenomenon of homosexuality *per se*, but rather in matters of identity. Heterosexuality and homosexuality are modalities within which the protagonist's quest for an authentic sense of self takes place.

The protagonist engages in constant soul searching, as is revealed in her diary entries such as: "I would like to think myself morally justified in being true to what I am - if I knew what that is. I must discover" (TA: 63); or again, "the real E. has not yet been discovered, and perhaps never will be" (TA: 79). She is engaged in an on-going struggle with dichotomous masculine and feminine

aspects of personality, and the conflict between heterosexuality and homosexuality: "The difference between the sexes is no worse than their appalling similarity..." (TA: 63). This struggle, represented by E.'s attempted but failed engagement to an Australian woman, the involvement and decoration for bravery in the war, the *liaisons* with masculine and feminine others, the ethos of problematic family relationships, and the ultimate repression and sublimation of erotic desire, generate reader sympathy towards the protagonist.

As Mark Williams observes, in The Twyborn Affair clothes are related to sexual identity. "By altering our dress we give signals to others about our sexuality". Williams argues that "those who cross-dress assert that we are not born simply male or female: we have the capacity to make - or invert - our own gender". But more importantly, Williams concludes, the "transvestite cannot escape the knowledge that implicates us all: that the reality of selfhood behind the fictive masks we adopt is always shifting and elusive" (1993: 143).

Eudoxia is an enchanting, but ambiguous creature, desired by male and female alike: by the domineering, yet childish and declining Angelos, the scopophilic (or voyeuristic) Joanie Golson, and the masturbatory M. Pelletier. Joanie Golson "could have eloped with her", while M. Pelletier, inspired by E.'s "poetry of movement" (TA: 74), and "naked flesh as white as marble, or perhaps ivory overlaid with the palest gold leaf" (TA: 73) loses himself in onanistic

frenzy, convinced that "the unidentifiable figure" at the edge of the sea "could only be a woman" (TA: 73-74). Ashamed of his spontaneous and public masturbation, M. Pelletier rationalises that

in one sense disgusting, his regrettable act of masturbation seemed to express a common malaise, his own and that of the swimmer headed for the open sea, as well as a world despair gathering in the sea-damp newspapers. (TA: 76)

Eudoxia's diary entries reflect both her individual and world malaise:

"Writing about oneself at night is a "release of a kind, but no more than of a kind - like masturbation" (TA: 33). Kristeva calls this form of writing in which "the metaphor and the metamorphosis through which the pangs of love become a condition of writing", an "emptying out - or infinitization, or indefinitization of perversion".

Would metaphor be, on the near and far side of angels and satans, the successful discourse of an amorous pervert who, out of his unstable objects, produces a cloud of meaning, and thus transfers his solid, suffering, and parceled body to the scented *sublimation* of a language in the throes of condensation? (In Roudiez 1987: 340)

There is something macabre in the juxtaposition of M. Pelletier's masturbation with E.'s flirtation with suicide. Thanatos is the other side of Eros. E.'s suicide attempt is eroticised and may be perceived as a regressive desire for fusion with the (m)other, who is metaphorically represented by the ocean. Drugged with a surfeit of sex and music, E. phantasises about regression into eternal, deathly, union with Angelos "walking beside me, far more exposed than I, his old testicles swinging in the grey light, towards fulfilment by immersion"



(TA: 80). The image of this unorthodox couple seeking union in death is vaguely reminiscent of another, more celebrated couple, Romeo and Juliet. In commenting on the representation of the union (in death) of William Shakespeare's lovers, Romeo and Juliet, Kristeva states that:

Without the representation of the lovers' union, sleeping in each other's arms, erotic expenditure is a race toward death. The sleep of lovers, moreover, merely refills a stock of imaginative energy that is ready, at the wakening, for new expenditures, new caresses, under the sway of the señses. (In Roudiez 1987: 233)

Angelos and E. sexually and emotionally spent, fall asleep "locked together" (TA: 65), ready at the awakening for new expenditures of love and lust.

The sacred and the profane are intricately intertwined in E.'s royal relationship, in the "smells the feel of a monk's clammy hands, candle wax sweat verdigris" (TA: 40). Angelos is idealised as a "Byzantium saint" (TA: 118); Joanie Golson's trespass into their Edenic hideaway is called a "Visitation" (TA: 22), and a "Second Coming" (TA: 33), and the smell of her old man described as "such a compost" (TA: 52), hints at psychological or spiritual rebirth, by its connotations of fertilising.

The Holy Ghost, like the protagonist, is of indeterminate sex, a "He, She or It" and is said to preside over their (homosexual) marital union (TA: 78), thus sanctifying it. The idealisation of their union in terms of royalty or spirituality indicates a desire to validate and justify their "enduring marriage as authorised

by our version of the Holy Ghost" (TA: 80). Nathalie Schraepen points out that Angelos and Eudoxia are often referred to as A. and E. which suggest Adam and Eve (in Hena Maes-Jelinek, 1984: 174). Joanie Golson is the serpent in their Edenic garden who sets the lovers to flight. Their escape by train through the South of France is evocative of the train ride of another Whitean protagonist, Mordecai Himmelfarb, through the suburbs of Sydney.

Train rides in White's canon are tropes for communicating death and/or rebirth. We have seen how in Riders in the Chariot Himmelfarb's train ride through Sydney signals the death of Himmelfarb, the private citizen and the actualising of Himmelfarb as a Christ-like figure doomed for crucifixion. Similarly, the Vatatzes' train ride ultimately takes Angelos to his death but holds promise of rebirth and another incarnation for E. as Eddie Twyborn, a projection or *avatar* of Eudoxia.

There is a marked difference in White's narrative attitude from the dismal, and revolting images surrounding Himmelfarb's train ride, with its evocations of Sodom and Nineveh (TA: 392) to the train ride in The Twyborn Affair. Himmelfarb's train ride, even though it actualises his potential as a *zaddik* carries him to certain physical death. In The Twyborn Affair the change in narrative tone and attitude augurs well for a more hopeful future for the protagonist. The Vatatzes' train ride is surrounded by images of nature, nurture

and a sense of plenty. The moving landscape is a "flackering [sic] of vines and recurring gashes of red soil" (TA: 117); fellow passengers seem "over-provisioned", with "crusty bread...hunks of salami to be sawn at, and rounds of cheese smelling of goat"; and "gobbets of truffled *pâté de foie* conveyed by fingers as refined as the bread on which the stuff lay, the flesh dimpling with a diamond or two, the bosom on which the crumbs tumbled as black as the inlay of truffle itself" (TA: 117). A fellow traveller is compassionate and offers Angelos a "couple of fingers of Evian" (TA: 118). Their journey is peaceful: Angelos "dozed a little, watched over by his tender companion" (TA: 118). The eloping lovers sit "knee to knee...facing each other, beatified" (TA: 119), until they arrive at sunset in a town "heavy with dust and a scent of carnations....The obstructions and frustrations of the journey were at once erased" (TA: 119). This is in sharp contrast with a "very definite pillar of fire" which greets Himmelfarb as the "heat smote the tarmac" (RC: 194).

The benign surroundings of the Vatatzes and the hostile environs of Himmelfarb presage positive and negative encounters respectively for the protagonists. Himmelfarb's harsh environmental reception foreshadows his violent death in Australia, and the Vatatzes's mellow surroundings herald a peaceful end for Angelos and a *rite de passage* for Eudoxia into another incarnation.

Monsieur Vatatzes was lying, chin raised, his nightshirt open on a wisp of scruffy hair which his wife was stroking with one hand while holding with the other a bundle of yellow bones. (TA: 126)

The death of the ageing Emperor, when it finally comes, is as peaceful as King Arthur's passing in *Morte d'Arthur*: "I have had from you, dear boy, the only happiness I've ever known" (TA: 126).

Considered in terms of the development of the protagonist, Himmelfarb's violent death suggests the incomplete resolution of Oedipal conflicts. On the other hand, E.'s gentle separation from the parental (if Oedipal, homosexual) object, Angelos, is conducive to progress towards further psychological development and what the novel suggests is ultimate reintegration of split aspects of masculinity and femininity into an androgynous "whole".

Angelos's last words pull the reader up short, demanding a re-reading. An instinctive reaction for the first time reader is to dismiss A.'s confusion of E.'s sex as the ramblings of an old and dying man when he refers to E. as "dear boy". Indeed, E. encourages such a view: "Poor man, he is out of his wits! Last words can often be amusing, as you, madame, will no doubt have found" (TA: 126). This reaction is further supported by the reader's knowledge that Angelos customarily oscillates between illusion and reality, fact and fiction, to the extent that even Eudoxia doubts her own reality: "I am the one shut in a tower more

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fatal than those experienced by his other fictions - his Eudoxias and Annas. I bet even Anna the wife is a fiction" (TA: 65).

Geoffrey Tout-Smith calls the novel a "maze of uncertainties of sexuality, morality and artistry" (1978-79: 65), and wonders whether the uncertainties of White's prose has artistic purpose or whether the reader is being offered merely a "display of virtuosity" (1978-79: 65). He accuses White of playing a trick on the reader who is seduced by the fatuous Mrs. Golson's response to E. which invests the image of Eudoxia with a "seductive vitality as is the tormented vivacity of her mind, presented through her diaries". The reader constructs his or her own "fantasy figure" and allows himself to be seduced by it. "To find at the end of the section that one has been ignoring the liberally-strewn hints that Eudoxia is not what she seems. is to find that one's sexual defences have been breached" (Tout-Smith 1978-79: 65).

The reader recalls numerous instances where the enchanting Eudoxia is described in terms which are not in keeping with her otherwise stereotypical femininity such as: the firm handshake (TA: 55); or her description as a "strapping young female" (TA: 69); with "hackles rising from the ridges of her great toes" (TA: 102), as she "thumped across the floor" with ungainly movements (TA: 109); E.'s equivocal figure on the beach, and her specific references to her many "disguises" (TA: 79). Not only is the reader embarrassed

at having missed these leading clues to E.'s ambiguous gender and sexual identity, but the reader also feels unsettled on realising that s/he found this sexually ambiguous creature attractive. Like Honore de Balzac's Sarasine, we are duped by White's Zambinella-Eudoxia:

I shall forever think of this imaginary woman when I see a real woman....I shall always have the memory of a celestial harpy who thrust its talons into all manly feelings, and who will stamp all other women with a seal of imperfection! (1974: 252)

The figure and role of Eudoxia is an acting out of E.'s phantasies of the idealised (m)other which is the result of splitting. Eudoxia is the perfect lover, mistress, whore (as the name "Doxy" which is a slang word for "whore" suggests") and Empress to Angelos. She is also a better (m)other to Angelos than E.'s mother ever was to her. This idealised image is an attempt to compensate for or protect from the persecutory (m)other of childhood phantasy, articulated so well by Joanie Sewell (note the pun in see-well): "I have nothing to prove anything, except those extraordinary eyes reflecting the fears of a small child, seen by night light, years ago" (TA: 129). As Joanie writes to Eadie, the mystery surrounding E. "concerns you more than anyone else" (TA: 129).

E. inherits a legacy of cross dressing from her (m)other, whose escapade in male masquerade with Joanie Golson has been noted earlier. E.'s impersonation of the (m)other, and appropriation of female clothing is an attempt to identify with the (m)other. However, in identifying with her (m)other,

E. also attempts to take the (m)other's place in relationship with the father. Angelos is a displacement of E.'s actual father, the Judge. Thus the desire for union with the father is, ultimately, a displacement of desire for union with the original object of desire, the (m)other.

Angelos's death sets Eudoxia adrift, but free to unearth the real, buried self she fretted about in her diaries. E.'s psychological development may be viewed in terms of Margaret Mahler's subphases of the Separation-Individuation process. Mahler writes that having differentiated self from (m)other in the formative years, the infant "practices" moving away from the (m)other, but returns periodically to the mother, "seeming to need her physical proximity and refuelling from time to time" (1972: 336). E.'s sojourn in France with Angelos is along the lines of "practising" living away from the (m)other, Eadie Twyborn.

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E.'s return to Sydney signals a need for her mother's "physical proximity and refuelling" of psychic energy in her quest for an authentic or integral self. Angelos's death catapults E. into another incarnation. In Sydney the feminine Eudoxia is transformed into the masculine Eddie Twyborn who has



distinguished himself in the war. E. returns home to the (m)other as Eddie Twyborn, who is now

'tired of dressing up...' Not only in the carnation robe, the pomegranate shawl, but the webbing, the mud-leggings, and starting out through the carnival of gunfire and Verey lights. (TA: 137)

"Tired of undressing too" (TA: 137), and "suffering from the old accidie", Eddie, the Prodigal Son, returns to the homeland and to the (m)other for solace. But rather than successfully discard his past, Eddie encounters a return of the repressed, when (m)other and son mutually recognise that

the son with whom she had wrestled, perhaps even tried to throttle in the agony he had caused while forcing his way out of a womb where he was not wanted in the first place, had become the mirror-figure of herself (TA: 149)

They thumped up the stairs together, bumping shoulders "hands locked in sisterhood" (TA: 149). "Eadie=Eddie" (TA: 150). They are mutually interchangeable because Eddie has not completely separated the self from the (m)other. To E., Eadie is "himself in disguise" (TA: 150). Eddie "had not yet learnt to accept that he was Eddie Twyborn, the son of Mr. Justice Twyborn - the incalculable factor" (TA: 150).

Even though Eddie, in his masculine role, has distinguished himself and been decorated in the war, he quails at the thought of meeting his father, the Judge, the representative of the Law. Positive and negative Oedipal desires and

castration anxieties surface as Eddie realises that "mere blood relationship never ruled out a bloodbath" (TA: 156).

Oedipal conflicts and persecutory anxieties fuse and merge in the adult Eddie's phantasies as he relives the horrors of a childhood tonsillectomy. Eddie's fears associated with the snipping of his tonsils are a displacement of castration anxieties. There is a poignant image of a frightened young boy, facing impending surgery, disappointed with the careless gift of a "child's illuminated pencil-box" (TA: 154). "'You wanted a pencil-box didn't you, Ed?' 'Yes, but I thought it'd be a double-decker'" (TA: 154). The single decker pencil box is a symbol of thoughtlessness and emotional neglect by the parental object. What the child and the grown man Eddie Twyborn craves and needs is love and attention from the parental object which is metaphorically represented as a double-decker pencil box. The surgery is experienced as persecution, threatening him with losses associated with the bad (m)other: loss of primal trust and of the sense of continuity it fosters, and, ultimately, loss of identity. The pre-Oedipal fear of separation and attack is represented in the form of a "lint funnel as you were sucked down it, down down, through a scent of pale green fur" (TA: 154).

Identifying with the good (m)other, Eddie turns towards his father, both in inverted Oedipal desire and as a compensatory measure for the shortcomings of an unloving (m)other:

'Do you remember - Father....you took me with you when a court was sitting at - Bathurst I think it was. We shared an enormous iron bed with a honeycomb coverlet on it....The moonlight, I remember, was as white as milk. It was hot. I pushed the bedspread off. It lay on the floor against the moonlight'. (TA: 158).

Eddie's lascivious reminiscences earn paternal and patriarchal revulsion. The father "he had wanted to impress and comfort...was looking as though he had a moron for a son, or worse, some kind of pervert" (TA: 159).

On the subject of homosexuality, Jonathan Dollimer writes that "masculine identity requires masculine ratification". He posits that within a heterosexual economy there is a profound barrier between identification and desire. The male is required to identify with other males, but not to desire them. Conversely, those whom he is supposed to desire, namely women, he is forbidden to identify with: that would mean effeminacy. "In this scenario...homosexuality may doubly transgress if and when desire of the male includes identification with the feminine" (Dollimer, 1991: 305). Dollimer goes on to argue that the

erotic imagining of the usurping male is not the eruption of repressed homosexual desire so much as the fantasized, fearful convergence of identification and desire, precipitated by an actual convergence of their respective objects. (1991: 305)

Kristeva's analysis of Don Juanism is equally apt for Eddie's negative Oedipal desires: "What does the seducer want? - Paternal punishment" (in Roudiez 1987: 97). Bearing in mind the sado-masochistic nature of E.s relationship with Angelos, the father-figure, it may be seen that Eddie desires and derives erotic pleasure from his actual father's revulsion at his sexual and incestuous, Oedipal innuendos. Kristeva calls this an attempt at reconciliation, "an introjection if you wish. a botched communion, this scene may be understood as revealing paternal punishment as the ultimate object of seductive passion" (in Roudiez 1987: 97). To borrow Kristeva's pun, Eddie's homosexual and inverted Oedipal desires towards his father is another side of perversion (*père - version*) because it is forbidden by the Symbolic Order (in Roudiez 1987: 97).

Spurned and rejected by both parents - a mother whose "therapeutic touch was that of a sledgehammer" (TA: 153), and a father who is repulsed by his son's lascivious reminiscences, and who therefore "condemns" him (TA: 153) - Eddie makes a desperate, but manful attempt to identify with the patriarch, and not to desire him. Like a modern day Don Quixote, Eddie sets off in quest of, for him, an impossible dream - the acquisition of a stable masculine identity. His tussle with Mrs. Tyrrell, the maid on Bogong estate, to carry his own valise is more than a denial of class differences. It is a struggle to maintain

a masculine facade: "He clung on desperately, as though possession of it were his only means of self-assertion" (TA: 180).

Impressed by the manager's, Don Prowse's, "overtly masculine back" (TA: 180) and trying to imitate his "ostentatious virility" (TA: 211), Eddie "stood with his hands on his hips as he had seen men do" (TA: 181), and drank whisky with Don Prowse because "it made him feel more masculine" (TA: 186). These are also attempts "to [make] credible to others the new moleskins and elastic sides" (TA: 183) because

people were more ready to accept material facade than glimpses of spiritual nakedness, cover this up with whatever you will, pomegranate shawl and spangled fan, or moleskins and elastic sides. (TA: 183)

In his masculine role, Eddie attempts to come "to terms with his body. He has begun to live in accordance with appearances" (TA: 201), and joins the stockman in a cavalcade on the Bogong land. His entry into the masculine world is a rebirth which is suggested metaphorically: "an anus opened and disgorged, a vulva split and gushed" (TA: 193); "a sawdust puppet dragged" (TA: 202). Eddie is initiated into the masculine world

under this feverish green sky, curlew calls, cushions of bobbing grey-white scum, the gobbets of a horse's vegetable dung, flow of blood, of water, of blood. Of the burst puppet. Fading into the green white. Downed in crimson... (TA: 202)

Eddie is what Kristeva would call a "wounded, pierced, bleeding Self that attempts to stave off its losses, or overcome its losses through eroticizing its parts or its rage" (in Roudiez 1987: 340). According to Kristeva this

eroticization of waste and sadomasochism - then proposes its screen of *abjects*, fragile films, neither subjects nor objects, where what is signified is fear, the horror of being *one* for an *other*". (In Roudiez 1987: 340)

Eddie's struggle is with being one for an other, a struggle of the self with the (m)other. Even in his masculine role, the feminine aspect intrudes:

Eudoxia, deposed empress or current hetaira, would have liked to thank, or in some way reward, the sweaty brute who had carried her halfway across the Bithynian plain. She might even have allowed him to ravish her in one long painful orgasm. Instead, after being lumped on the tray of the vibrating Ford runabout, beside a coil of fencing wire, several spanners, a jack, and a spare can of petrol, Eddie Twyborn fainted. (IA: 203)

His hold on the masculine world is precarious. Thrown off his horse, the outwardly stalwart Eddie regresses momentarily to the fragile, feminine Eudoxia, as "Eddie Twyborn fainted" (IA: 203).

The masculine Eddie's sexual encounter with Marcia Lushington has Oedipal undertones, because she is the wife of a benevolent and unsuspecting father-figure, who is also in a position of authority, as Eddie's employer. She is, by displacement, Eddie's (m)other, "his mother whom he should have loved but didn't, the girl Marian he should have married but from whom he escaped" (IA: 222). However, more significant for our analysis are the paranoid-schizoid fears which surface in Eddie's phantasies. Marcia becomes a "great downy moth

irrationally involved in an obscene but delicious cannibalistic rite; in which she must involve some other being for his initiation or destruction" (TA: 219-220).

Their union, when it occurs, suggests a nostalgic journey backwards into Eddie's pre-Oedipal childhood, and ultimately, to the (m)other's womb:

He was won over by a voice wooing him back to childhood, the pervasive warmth of a no longer sexual, but protective body, cajoling him into morning embraces in a bed disarrayed by a male, reviving memories of toast, chilblains, rising bread, scented plums, cats curled on sheets of mountain violets, hibiscus trumpets furling into sticky phalluses in Sydney gardens....She was ready to accept him back into her body; she would have liked to imprison him in her womb, and he might have been prepared to go along with it. (TA: 222)

It is clear from the narrative that his attraction for and towards Marcia Lushington is not the spontaneous love or lust of two consenting adults in a heterosexual encounter. Eddie uses her to ratify his new-found masculinity. This "use of Lushington's wife in an attempt to establish his own masculine identity" (TA: 223) does not have the desired effect, and results instead in ontological insecurities, and anxieties over separation from the (m)other. In his phantasies self and (m)other merge as "images of Eadie his mother and Joan Golson joined forces with that of Marcia Lushington, who had, incredibly, become his *mistress!*" while Eudoxia Vatzes clings to Eddie Twyborn's side, assaulting his fragile sense of masculine identity (TA: 223).

This also signals the beginning of the process of reintegration of split-off, conflicting aspects of the self and the (m)other. It is the dawning of recognition

that Eadie Twyborn, Joanie Golson and Marcia Lushington are various aspects of the (m)other, and that Eudoxia and Eddie Twyborn are aspects of the emerging self.

In his relationship with Angelos the feminine aspect dominated, and E. also became the (m)other of Angelos, the older man. In his liaison with Marcia Lushington, the masculine self struggles to emerge. However, in "whichever sexual role he had been playing, self-searching had never led more than briefly to self-acceptance" (TA: 223). Like Rosetree after Himmelfarb's crucifixion and death, or Jackie after decapitating Voss, Eddie's growing sense of dis-ease as he stumbles through a "false dawn" (TA: 223) implies a sense of guilt at having betrayed both self and (m)other in his heterosexual, but symbolically incestuous, coupling with Marcia.

The narrative suggests that Eddie's quest for selfhood and/or sexual identity is imbued with a quest for transcendental significance. The transcendental is not generally a concern of psychoanalysis, except as it represents sublimation. Eddie accepts that his

salvation most likely lay in the natural phenomena surrounding those unable to rise to the spiritual heights of a religious faith: in his present situation the shabby hills, their contours practically breathing as the light embraced them, stars fulfilled by their logical dowsing, the river never so supple as at daybreak, as dappled as the trout it camouflaged, the whole ambience finally united by the harsh but healing epiphany of cockcrow. (TA: 223)



Eddie's epiphany may lie in the realisation that heterosexual relations do not fulfil him. "Accused by the child in Marcia's womb", he contemplates his "candidacy for fatherhood" (TA: 294), but "could only cower and try to assemble an acceptable identity" (TA: 295). His sexual relationship with Marcia is depicted in terms of stereotypically aggressive masculinity:

Never in his life had he felt so aggressive, or masculine, or so impelled by the desire to fuck this coarsely feminine woman. He deliberately thought of it as *fucking*. (TA: 281)

The child of their union, like Eddie's temporary masculinity, is short-lived.<sup>3</sup> The death of their child becomes a symbol for the death of his masculinity. Kirkby calls their acts of coitus "acts of separation rather than union". She argues that living as a male without female clothing, Eddie is locked into Kristeva's borderliner's tower. He longs to "escape the tyranny of conventional masculinity". Because he is prevented by masculine gender from acknowledging abjection and corporeality, he is the "involuntary devotee of the abject," always looking for what Kristeva describes as the "desirable and terrifying, nourishing and murderous, fascinating and abject inside the maternal body!" (Kirkby: forthcoming). He is drawn to Mrs. Tyrrell, the eternal (m)other, with seventeen children, one of those women "whose wombs have been kicked to pieces by a football team of sons" (TA: 159); is fascinated by Denny's gutting of trout (TA: 248); imagines Marcia's "migraine or monthly" (TA: 281); is

transfixed as he watches an ewe momentarily "torn between the instincts for self-preservation and motherhood" resume "licking at the gelatinous envelope containing a lamb recently dropped" (IA: 254); is even aware that he picks the "daggier" sheep to snip "at the dags of shit, laying bare the urine-sodden wrinkles with their spoil of seething maggots, round the sheep's arse" (IA: 279); and waits "for what comes shooting out, finally, like milk, or sperm" as he writes a letter to his mother (IA: 241). Eddie's psychological conflict is revealed by the sperm and milk imagery associated with his letter to his (m)other. The shooting sperm signals a desire to take the place of the father in relationship with his (m)other, and the milk suggests that the feminine part of him identifies with the (m)other.

According to Kirkby, E.'s obsession with abjection indicates Eddie's strong desire to be a woman. He not only wants to fuck the (m)other through Marcia, he also wants to become the (m)other. Like Waldo in The Solid Mandala, Eddie needs no guidance in "entering the labyrinth of gold thread and sable" of Marcia, his (m)other's dress:

He stormed at the dressing-table, roughing up his hair, dabbling with the beige puff in armpits from which the heavy brocaded sleeves fell back, outstaring himself feverishly, then working on the mouth till it glistened like the pale, coral trap of some great tremulous sea anemone....Eudoxia Vatatzes lay palpitating, if contradictorily erect, awaiting the ravishment of male thighs (IA: 282)

Eddie's "ravishment" by the thighs of the "male animal", Don Prowse, is an overdetermination fuelled and accompanied by many mixed and violent emotions, psychic energies and physical and verbal abuse. "A queen! A queen! A fuckun queen!...You asked for it - you fuckun asked..." (TA: 284-285). Because Eddie and Don Prowse both engage in sex with Marcia, the (m)other figure, their homosexual encounter is symbolically incestuous and laden with Oedipal configurations of desire. While in his relapse to the feminine position, Eddie may desire "the ravishment of male thighs", the sexual encounter with Don Prowse has all the elements of exploitation and violent rape. Don is the station manager and is therefore in a position of power over Eddie, the jackeroo, who is in the feminine position of submission. Eddie is described as a passive "victim" who allows Don Prowse, "the male animal" to "have his way" (TA: 285). Eddie is also a scapegoat, and Don violates him instead of Kath, Don's errant wife. Eddie sobs "not for the indignity to which he was being subjected, but finally for his acceptance of it" (TA: 284).

In many ways Don Prowse, the *macho* Australian male of "masculine strength and native brutality" (TA: 259), is Eddie's double, or a projection of his phantasised desires and anxieties. However, Don's virility, like Eddie's, is a facade, an abreaction to a fragile sense of masculine identity. Like Le Mesurier's poetry, which articulates Voss's infantile phantasies of grandiosity and

persecution, Don's photograph album reflects Eddie's secret fears and vulnerabilities. Eddie's propensity for cross-dressing is reflected in the photograph of the child, Don, who is attired as a "frocked moppet with abundant curls" (TA: 259), revealing, what Stoller, in a discussion of transvestism, describes as "the powerful feminizing effect of the woman who dressed him or otherwise scorned his maleness", causing a "disturbance in his sense of identity, in his taken-for-granted feeling of wholeness as a male" (cited in Gilbert 1980: 215).<sup>4</sup> In his dream/phantasy, Eddie reveals his real self or ambiguous identity to the photograph of Don's child:

*'I'm Kim who are you? I'm nobody. You must be someone everybody's somebody. You're right there Kim I'm my father and mother's son and daughter...'* (TA: 261)

In his continuing phantasy they "grapple each other in a common desire related to childhood and despair" (TA: 261). Their child's play is eroticised and sexually tinged. In E.'s dream generational and sexual boundaries blur as Kim whispers "Ed I love you in her father's voice" (TA: 261), "before her mother broke in through the disapproving rustle of a screen door" (TA: 261), disrupting the Oedipal entanglement. Because he is of Don's generation, Eddie occupies a father's position towards Kim. But their "common desires" and childhood despair reduce them to peers of each other.

Though brief and phantasmic, their exchange is a conglomerate of heavily laden emotions. Self and (m)other merge as Eddie, Kim, Don and Kath, Don's wife, exchange symbolic positions of desire and prohibition. As Don's contemporary Eddie oscillates from the positions of Kim's symbolic father, to child and playmate, and back to Oedipal father. Kath slides from the forbidding Oedipal mother to jealous wife of Don, Eddie's homosexual lover. As the lover of Don, who is Kim's father, Eddie also symbolically occupies the precarious position of Kim's (m)other, and finally, Kim's desire for the father figure is also a displacement of Eddie's own Oedipal desires.

Eddie's dream recalls that of Norbert Hanold in Wilhelm Jensen's Gradiva. Freud reads Hanold's dream as an allegory of the mental process of repression and the re-emergence of childhood experiences through association with a work of art (SE IX pp.1-96). Similarly, as E. leafs through Don's photograph album, which is a work of art, he experiences the re-emergence of what the masculine Eddie represses. Just as Le Mesurier's poetry in Voss revealed Voss's self-idealisation and anxieties of persecution by the (m)other, so also Don's photograph album reveals "snaps of Eddie Twyborn as he had most surely never looked in innocence or wantonness" and one of Eudoxia Vatatzes in pomegranate shawl and spangled fan, causing Eddie to "put up a hand to ward off the photographer" (TA: 272).

In his dream he is also one with "Helen of the Harelip", who is an incest victim. As they gaze in unison at the clear water of a pool, Eddie is afraid that even his breathing might disturb the placid surface of the water and reveal "some ugly and disturbing pattern" (TA: 273). Helen, who is raped and impregnated by her father, may be perceived as a projection of Eddie's own desires to have a child from the parent. The narrative makes clear that Helen's and Eddie's desires for each other and for the parental object originate in their need for nurturance, rather than for Oedipal encounters. They themselves are "united by an understanding as remote from sexuality as the crystal water in the rock basin below" (TA: 273).

Terry Goldie comments that the narrative enables Eddie to try two potential definitions of traditional views of Australian masculinity. In one, as heterosexual lover of a woman who is said to be "of the land" and as father of her child, he is "potentially and potently - positioned as a squatter". In the other, he is the homosexual "mate" of the "complete bushman, Prowse". Goldie argues that while the latter may not seem to be traditional, the dearth of women in the outback is met by "an almost symbiotic one-to-one relationship between a man and his mate" which is "covertly or overtly homosexual" (1993: 160). Ostensibly, in raping Eddie, Don Prowse is "tearing at all that had ever offended him in life", but at the same time he is also revealing "all that he had never

confessed, unless in the snapshot album" (TA: 284). Masculine clothing is for Don, as for Eddie, "the disguise which didn't disguise" (TA: 285).

Terry Goldie states that "rather than the usual heterosexist metaphor of the nation, in which the female land is met by a male son or lover", White's overtly "homoerotic text offers variant choices":

The Twyborn Affair depicts a transsexual alternative, in which the quintessential Australian is a combination of perception and receptivity, never blinded by the absurdities of the macho Australian dream but also not defeated by the vaunted superiority of refined Australian masculinity. (Goldie 1993: 161)

Joan Kirkby argues persuasively that "the reciprocal rapes (Prowse and Twyborn) are acts of separation that highlight the limitations of conventional masculinity, the constraints placed on tenderness and feeling" (forthcoming).

Eddie's subsequent retaliatory rape of Prowse is fed by many emotional currents. It is tinged with "feminine compassion which had moved him to tenderness" and is equally based on a desire for male revenge both for Don's rape of Eddie, and for Don's relationship with Eddie's lover and mother figure, Marcia, and ultimately for Don's rejection of him in favour of Marcia. His humiliation had developed to its utmost: "the humiliation of jealousy, more of Marcia than Don" (TA: 290).

Death and rebirth are inextricably intertwined in E.'s journey towards individuation and acquisition of sexual and gender identity. Angelos's death

ends the Eudoxia segment and was the catalyst which launched E. towards exploring a "masculine identity"; and the death of Eddie's child marks the end of his masculine role. To quote Bliss, "his fragile sexual and emotional self now in shreds, Eddie can only indulge his urge to run, leaving Marcia to have, lose and bury his child" (1986: 175). In an ironic twist self and (m)other merge as Eadie, Eddie's mother and would-be lover or other to Marcia, now occupies the position of (m)other to Marcia, because she is Eddie's lover. Eadie comforts Marcia, as one grieving and bereaved *Mater Dolorosa* to another: "losing a child in death is so much better than losing a grown - what shall I say? *reasoning* child, to life. As happened to me for the second time" (IA: 301). White's use of dramatic irony deepens the sense of intrigue. Eadie Twyborn is unaware that Marcia's child is her own grandchild.

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Despite Eadie Twyborn's maternal lament over the loss of her son, a "second time" (IA: 301), she is oblivious to the part she may have had to play in bringing about this loss. When we next meet Eddie Twyborn, he is reincarnated as Eadith Trist, *madame* of a brothel in London. Peter Wolfe comments on some



similarities between the Twyborn domicile and Eadith's bawdy house, adding that "conformity threatens him everywhere. Not only are his parents called Eadie and Edward; their maid is also called Etty, and Eadith Trist's *chargée d'affaires* in Chelsea answers to Ada". Wolfe argues that "standardization of modern life has infected the family, the short hop from Etty to Ada reflecting the corruption of the home into a whorehouse". Wolfe concludes that "this decay bespeaks a general moral malaise. The novel starts less than six months before the outbreak of World War I and ends in a bombing raid during World War II" (1983: 216).

The nominal similarities cited by Wolfe are interesting, and war as metaphor for the psychological battleground within the individual and within the family is persuasive, but his argument that the "short hop from Etty to Ada" reflects the "corruption of the home into a whorehouse" is somewhat far-fetched. On the contrary, I would argue that Eadith longs for home and (m)other. Her home is not converted into a whorehouse, but rather, she tries to convert her whorehouse into a home. Despite her role as entrepreneur, E. adopts a maternal attitude to her "girls", and, in her mind, even the "Duke's children", Gravenor and Ursula, see her in terms of "Nanny". Even while running a brothel, Eadith longs to "adopt a child", wondering all the while what sort of questions the child would ask her.

As the flamboyant Eadith Trist, E. is now "too disgusted with herself, and human beings in general, ever to want to dabble in sex again, let alone aspire to that great ambivalence, love" (TA: 311). But despite her overt bravado and offhand dismissal of love and sex, she admits she is very lonely. "For a time her only friends were trades-people and servants, who offered her a comforting reality" (TA: 311). Like Dickens, White's use of names is revealing. The name "Trist" suggests both sadness, because of its similarity to the French word "*triste*", and hints at an assignation because of its similarity to the word "tryst".<sup>5</sup> The implied assignation is for the purpose of discovering the true E., or an authentic sense of self.

The sadness associated with Eadith Trist's name is akin to the sadness and mourning inherent in what Klein calls the "depressive position" in development, which precedes integration of split aspects of the self and the (m)other. As Cashdan comments:

The depressive position constitutes a significant maturational advance over the paranoid-schizoid position. For one, the child is able to integrate split perceptions of the mother and combine them into a whole. Depressive anxiety, though unpleasant, comes to replace persecutory anxiety and paves the way for more mature interrelating. Finally, the capacity for reparation comes to the fore, suggesting the potential for establishing relationships based more on caring and preservation than on destruction and loss. (Cashdan 1988: 8)

Viewed in these terms, the sadness inherent in "Trist", the name of the protagonist, is a clue that the protagonist's depressive anxiety is replacing

persecutory anxiety, which suggests imminent reintegration of the self and of the (m)other.

Helen Tiffin draws a parallel between E.'s phases of development and the Hindu idea of various progressive life stages. She points to specific resonances in the title of the novel to the Brahmin concept of "twice-born", in which the Brahmin, after going through the "sacred thread" ceremony, is confirmed as "twice-born", and is expected to pass through three or four stages, which, for Hinduism, constitute human life. In the first stage, as a student, the individual lives away from home under the tutelage of a religious teacher; in the second, he returns home and assumes the role of a householder, marries, prospers, and is actively involved in the material world. In the third stage, the "twice-born" withdraws from worldly involvement, and prepares for the fourth and final stage, severing all ties of family and place which bind an individual to the material world. In this last stage, the individual retires to a forest or becomes a wandering ascetic (in Nightingale 1986: 27-28). Parallels between E.'s life and the Hindu notion of stages of development are easily discernible. According to Tiffin, White

seriously adopts and ironically undercuts these traditional stages in the life of his central character - Eadith Trist is a detached recluse while fantastically engaged in the business of brothel keeping, just as Eudoxia is the spiritual (and physical) disciple and partner of Angelos in Section one....(in Nightingale, 1986: 28)

E.'s bawdy house interlude with its evocation of the convent, stage and prison, is closer to the third or preparatory stage than to the fourth stage of human development cited by Tiffin.

In this third section of the novel Eadith is elaborately constructed as a mauve extravaganza in "full panoply" at which "strangers stared, barbarians commented aloud and small boys hooted" (TA: 310). Eadith as art object and the novel as a work of art coalesce. The self-conscious narrative emphasises the artificial construct of her life: the lives of Eadith unfurl between the "false dawn and the real" in a "novelette she enjoyed living". Her "self" is created, like a piece of fiction, and decked out in baroque attire with "encrustations of amethysts and diamonds, the swanning plumes" which are said to be "poetic as opposed to fashionable or naturalistic" (TA: 310). The theatricality of the Eadith Trist section reflects the artifice of Eadith's own personality. To quote Louis Montrose: "If the world is a theatre and the theatre is an image of the world, then by reflecting on its own artifice, the drama is holding the mirror up to nature" (in Dollimore, 1991: 291).

Eadith directs her prostitutes like a bevy of actresses or like an abbess who commands her "lubricious sisters" (TA: 323-324) reminiscent of Sydney's "sisters of perpetual indulgence". Eadith is ever conscious that "an artist must guard against the tendency to sentimental indulgence, an abbess resist threats to

a vocational ideal. The inspired bawd has in her a little of each" (TA: 323). Like Jean Genet's prostitutes in The Balcony, Eadith's girls, as projections of herself, cater to the exotic needs and phantasies of a depraved society.

Eadith is an artist who moulds herself and others to meet the voracious "depravity of men - her own included" (TA: 329). Her keen artistry and insight into the needs and foibles of her customers, male and female, originate in her sense of androgyny and out of experiences in both masculine and feminine roles. Like Wilson Harris's artist, (s)he is "both feminine and masculine....fashioned internally, seized internally by the women of all ages and climates that he creates or attacks....in his fictions or sculptures or paintings" (1983: 22-23).

One is reminded of Jean-Paul Sartre's introductory comments to Jean Genet's other play, The Maids. Like the adolescent boys who act as prostitutes in this play, Eadith also has a malleable personality. Sartre observes that "these fake women were the truth of the adolescent boys who embodied them, for Genet, like all homosexuals, is able to discern a secret femininity in the most male of men. As in psychodramas, his actors play what they are" (in Genet 1954: 15), thus challenging the concept of a stable sexual or gender identity. Like the actors in The Maids, Eadith is a hybrid creature. As Jean-Paul Sartre describes them:

these fake women who are fake men, these women-men who are men-women, this perpetual challenging of masculinity by a symbolic femininity and of the latter by the secret femininity which is the truth of all masculinity,

are only the faked groundwork [sic]. Upon this evanescent foundation there appear individual forms. (In Genet, 1954: 15)

Despite the permutations and complications of her ambiguous identity or dual lives, Eadith protests that she

did not covet the confidence, the 'strength', the daguerreotype principles of even the most admirable one-track male, nor, on the other hand, those mammary, vaginal, ovarian complications, the menopausal hells of a sex pledged to honour and obey. (TA: 328)

While on the surface Eadith may appear as an older, more mature edition of Eudoxia in her flamboyant representation of femininity, there is a significant difference between them in that where the young Eudoxia thrived on love and lust, Eadith remains (with one exception) celibate. She not only abstains from sex, but is determined that she would never allow herself to "fall from the trapeze into the trampoline of love" (TA: 316). Love would remain for her an "abstraction", an "algebra" (TA: 311). She vows that she would rather die by "an act of God and not from the wounds of human love" (TA: 323).

Her afternoon *sorties* with her "spring flowers", her "vernal nuns", are aimed at cultivating the girls and creating in them "that effect between the tremulous and the static which the flowers in an expensive florist's window derive from artificial dew" (TA: 324). Her erotic teasings are prompted by financial desire or greed, rather than by her own sexual desires. Greed, according to Klein, is an infantile oral trait. Fully clothed, she titillates the girls,

"caressing tender flesh with her tongue...almost making music as she combed youthful skin with her brittle crimson talons" (TA: 325), preening and priming them for her customers.

Like Joanie Golson in the Eudoxia section Eadith now lives vicariously, voyeuristically, with the aid of a concealed peephole to each of her girls' "cells". She appropriates through her omniscient gaze all the "secret hopes and frustrations...the thrust and recoil, the acts of self-immolation, the vicious spinsterly refinements which shape the depravity of men - her own included" (TA: 329), until "favoured by images and orgasm", she drops off to sleep (TA: 324).

Eadith's voyeuristic activities and transvestite costume are evocative of the hermaphroditic Tiresias myth. In the Greek myth, Tiresias spies on Athene at her bath and is punished by being struck blind and transformed into a woman.

And I Tiresias have foresuffered all  
 Enacted on this same divan or bed  
 T. S. Eliot. "The Wasteland"

At the same time, Tiresias is endowed with prophetic insights. Gilbert points out that although "androgyny - or more accurately, hermaphroditism - of the sort Tiresias possesses is not quite the same as transvestism, metaphorically speaking the two are close indeed" (1980: 401). The Tiresias myth does not offer an exact parallel for Eadith's metamorphosis. However, Eadith's transvestism, it is argued, is a

metaphor for his/her essential androgyny. Eadith does not have a specific moment of epiphany, nor prophetic vision, but there is an indication at the end of the novel that Eadith forsakes her brothel for the pursuit of higher ideals: "My frivolous self will now go in search of some occupation in keeping with the times" (IA: 427).

In her bawdy house E. functions as a spectator, voyeur, and perhaps coach and tutor, but generally refrains from active participation in sexual activity. Her sexual reticence is a result of internalisation of the forbidding parental figure. As Gravenor suspects, Eadith is a split personality: "You know, Eadith, I believe you have a savage nymphomaniac inside you, and a stern puritan holding her back. It's this unattractive mentor who forces you to look for consummation in the lusts of others" (IA: 344). Eadith's girls are projections of herself, overtly engaging in heterosexual activities she does not. They are "fragments of a single image", herself (IA: 336). The other side of this projection is that Eadith, as a biological male, psychologically identifies with the feminine gender of the (m)other, and thus, by displacement, participates vicariously in sexual encounters with male clients. Her scopophilia, projection and cross-dressing ultimately provide her with vicarious pleasure derived from both the homosexual and heterosexual positions of an androgynous being.



In a tongue-in-cheek conversation with the Lady Ursula, Eadith protests that she did not choose the life she wanted to lead, and "never felt anything but chosen" (TA: 358). The clever use of irony adds mystery to E.'s personality. The conversation is ostensibly about the traditional role of marriage *versus* E.'s break with tradition in running a whorehouse. Lady Ursula's Eurocentrism is evident in her statement that "I'm told...you're from one of the - Dominions, which no doubt made it easier" (TA: 359). What is implied is that E.'s flagrant commerce in sexuality, like Bertha Mason's sexuality in Jane Eyre, is attributable to her racial Otherness. However, it would be safe to argue that Eadith, in talking about "being chosen" is referring obliquely to her penchant for homosexuality.

Nevertheless, despite the bravado, E.'s search for an authentic sense of self is a life-long, slow, painful and honest endeavour.

Eadith's overt role of (m)other to her troupe of prostitutes also acts as a shield against the timorousness which stems from her own childhood fears and anxieties. Confronted by a persecutory undercover agent, she overtly rationalises that "all of us - even those you consider corrupt - I'd like to think of as human beings" (TA: 334), but covertly she reverts to a frightened child who longs for the idealised image of "night lights of childhood dipping and swimming in their chipped saucers on the borderline between sleep and waking" (TA: 335).

In the Eadith section, E. displays traditional feminine characteristics, referring to Gravenor as her "protector" or looking for "reassurance as she crossed a desert plain", and registering annoyance at the "downright absurd" idea that people would "imagine she was less the woman they recognised" (TA: 337). Her capacity for gender duality is underscored by her obsession with grooming, "hair still kempt and naturally black except for a faint frosting of silver", her delicate use of "mauve powder" and "immaculate lips" (TA: 337). Eadith's cross-dressing symbolises her androgynous potential.

Rejecting what might be a false love relationship with Gravenor, she nurtures a deep friendship with him instead. She is convinced that "'true friendship,...if there is anything wholly true - certainly in friendship - comes, I'd say, from the woman in a man and the man in a woman'" (TA: 360). In fact, this sexual ambiguity, "the masculine principle in its women, the feminine in its men", White argues, adds to "the little that is subtle in the Australian character" (FG: 155).

As the "man in a woman" Eddie Twyborn is both self and (m)other. Eddie's psychic conflict and blurring and merging of self and (m)other is graphically presented in a dream in which "Eddie Twyborn was pestering his sibling". The sibling symbolically represents both the (m)other and the feminine aspect of Eddie. She resists his advances, but "was taken over, replaced. She was

relieved finally to have the freedom of this other body, cropped hair bristling on a strong nape" (TA: 375).

In order to achieve a coherent sense of self and consolidate a sense of identity E., as the evolving Whitean protagonist, must ratify separation of the self from the (m)other, and then proceed to accept ambivalence and reintegrate split aspects of self and (m)other. Finally, s/he must successfully negotiate and resolve Oedipal conflicts to ensure a cohesive sense of self. To a certain extent, separation, splitting and reintegration, and resolution of Oedipal conflict are accomplished in the earlier novels, The Aunt's Story, Voss, and Riders in the Chariot, respectively. The Twyborn Affair briefly revisits these themes on the way to stabilisation of gender and identity. It remains for E. to negotiate Oedipal conflicts and the permutations of adult sexuality to acquire and consolidate a cohesive sense of self. To a large extent this is accomplished in the Eadith Trist section.

For example, while returning from a visit to an ageing prostitute, Eadith experiences a return of the repressed. She stumbles on a woman who "had collapsed, and was lying on her side moaning and panting" on the street (TA: 364). The woman happens to be Joanie Golson, the woman who, at earlier times, had not only desired Eudoxia, but also her mother before her, and who had also rescued Eudoxia when she hurt her ankle and her foot in France. It is

significant that both women suffer injuries to the foot or ankle, Oedipal insignias,<sup>6</sup> which suggest the transgressive or incestuous nature of their desires. Appropriately enough, Joanie Golson is now almost blind, since blindness is often associated with castration for Oedipal desires (TA: 366). In his essay "The Uncanny", Freud explicitly makes such an association (SE XVII pp. 217-252).

Their second meeting, however, reverses and echoes their earlier encounter in France. In this meeting Eadith is the Good Samaritan, and rescues rather than seduces the (m)other. Both Joanie Golson and Eadith Trist are drained of all desire, and Eadith's thoughts of epitaphs and tombstones, her own and Joanie Golson's, metaphorically suggest the death of Oedipal desire. The notion of the resolution of E.'s Oedipal desires is made more explicit in her refusal of the "consummation of her desires" (TA: 336) with Gravenor, a father figure.

With almost formulaic repetition, the narrative links death and rebirth. At "Wardrobes", Gravenor's sister's fun house in the country, Eadith hears of her parents' whereabouts - her mother is touring London and the Judge is dead. The news of her father's death sets Eadith scuttling away, followed by images of an "invisible bird throbbing and spilling like blood or sperm", evoking memories of the giant emu of E.'s childhood nightmares. In his childhood phantasies, it was Eddie, the "child who died, one of the premature suicides" (TA: 35). This

phantasy of death in childhood coincided with his new life as wife and mistress to the Emperor, Angelos. Now Judge Twyborn's death resurrects "Eddie Twyborn to the surface" (TA: 391), replacing Eadith, the Bawd of Beckwith Street. E. skitters across the lawn, "the brutally illuminated terrace, into the house, in his ridiculous drag, the wisps of damp-infested cocks' feathers, trailing skirt, stockings soaked with dew" (TA: 391), recalling another poignant image: the barefoot young Eudoxia, heartbroken over the death of another father figure, Angelos, "wearing a long black cloak over the nightdress with the openwork yoke" who escapes into the night, her gait "long, loping, ungainly" (TA: 126-127). After Angelos's death Eudoxia forsakes the transvestite garb and launches into a new life as Eddie Twyborn. Now, with the death of her father, Eadith forsakes her life as the whore-mistress. Milestones and highlights of E.'s life flash into memory like a

collage of fantasies: her profitable whorehouse, her love for Gravenor, the romantic dresses, the elaborate jewels. On the other hand she could still practically feel the calluses got by crowbar and shears, experience the voluptuous ease of entry through the gateway of Marcia Lushington's things, the agonies of Don Prowse's thrust, hillocks of chaff crumbling around a salt-stricken mouth, pure contact with the Judge under the honeycomb bedspread of a circuit hotel. (TA: 392)

The "collage of fantasies" of her life suggests the commencement of acceptance of various conflicting aspects of the self. These split images or part objects of Kleinian "phantasy" indicate that integration of self and (m)other as whole and separate entities is imminent, but still some distance away. With "the ex-lovers,

the ex-husbands, the ex-lives" weighing heavily on her mind, Eadith returns to her whorehouse to set her affairs in order (TA: 392).

She makes one last concession to sexual dalliance in the episode with the blushing young man, Philip Thring, which is depicted more in terms of a swan song, a parting ritual than an indulgence - and an initiation of the young disciple, Thring, into the order that Trist was leaving. The older, wiser, more compassionate Eadith recaptures for a fleeting moment, with Philip, the pleasures of yester-year with Angelos. They are "tremulous mirrors" of each other, reflecting their mutual sympathy:

They were shown standing together at the end of a long corridor or hall of mirrors, which memory becomes, and in which they were portrayed stereoscopically, refracted, duplicated, melted into the one image (TA: 400)

Eadith takes the young man by the hand, as Ada "closing the door on the celebrants", continues on some mundane business of the bawdy house (TA: 400). After this initiation ceremony, Eadith herself passes into *aphanisis*, or the loss of all sexual desire. As Peter Wolfe observes, "the many comparisons between brothel-keeping and running a convent show that, as Eadith Trist, bawd of Beckwith Street, he has renounced flesh for spirit". Wolfe concludes that "Eddie doesn't know whether his identity as Eadith represents discovery or escape from self" (1983: 222).

War itself becomes a paradigm for E.'s psychodrama as selves blur and merge. The narrative carefully links past, present and future, self and (m)others, "phantasy" and "reality", as escaping from "what was no longer a hiding place", surrounded by bombshells and conscious that "escape can also mean extinction", E. jumps from a window into the waiting arms of his father as "hand in hand they slipped between alternate slats of moonlight and shadow". But "it was not the Judge's hand, too freckled, the joints too pronounced, the skin too squamous" (TA: 376). It was Gravenor, "forcing him down almost lying on him to protect him from the inevitable. Not poor Edward Eadie's husband. Tears were falling for the past the present for all hallowed hell on earth" (TA: 376).

Hena Maes-Jelinek comments that the expression "hallowed hell on earth" epitomises the conjunction of "redeeming and daemonic forces as well as contradictory instincts at play in the novel". Maes-Jelinek argues that to Eadith, Gravenor is both "saviour" and "evil genius". So also is Angelos, whose name is a variation of angel. "Both designate characters who are "monsters of a kind" (1984: 172).

With meticulous attention to detail, the narrative knits together diverse loose ends of plot in its repetitive patterns, leading towards an emotionally charged *dénouement*. In his essay "Freud's Masterplot", Peter Brooks suggests

that instances of repetition are circumscribed by the repetitious nature of narrative *per se*. According to Brooks:

Narrative must ever present itself as a repetition of events that have already happened, and within this postulate of a generalized repetition it must make use of specific, perceptible repetitions in order to create plot, that is, to show us a significant interconnection of events. (1977: 288)

Passages like the one cited above, where Eddie earns his D.S.O. as he escapes from death in the war, make use of repetition to link the various significant Others in E.'s life, who, by virtue of their nurturing, protective roles toward him, are also, in effect, his (m)others. The description of the Judge and Eddie walking "hand in hand" links the Judge with Angelos. It is a repetition of the phantasy in which Eddie and Angelos, the other father figure, walked hand in hand toward the ocean in a sort of lovers' suicide pact of union and immersion (TA: 80). The freckled hands, "the joints too pronounced, the skin too squamous" (TA: 336, 376), belong to Gravenor, and the "alternate slats of moonlight and shadow" link this incident with E.'s homoerotic reunion scene with the Judge. Tying these various plot points together, E.'s phantasised jump from the window is heavily laden with significance. It suggests that the "extinction" E. fears yet leaps toward is also an "extinction" of prohibitive Oedipal entanglements. But it is also a leap towards the next phase of development and the possibility of rebirth as an autonomous and perhaps androgynous person.



E.'s journey towards androgyny is metaphorically depicted in a dream/phantasy in which s/he enters through a passage into a room, the "details of which were lost in a timeless blur". The "cocoon" in the centre of the room is the symbol of an emergent self. The "voice calling to her", the familiar kneeling figure of a "young woman, her face softened by the light", bathing a new-born babe, the "most radiant of all children" (TA: 352), a male child, with "the little blond comma neatly placed between the thighs" (TA: 353), in a "benign light" (TA: 352), resonates with Biblical associations suggesting that this is not merely indicative of E.'s impending psychological metamorphosis, but elevates and sanctifies it as a vocation or spiritual calling. However, persecutory anxieties resurface as the dreamer is repulsed and attacked by the young woman "till finally the fleece on which both are kneeling turned to grit, stones, road-metal" (TA: 352). The (m)other who "seemed to have invited collaboration", now turns into a ferocious rival, and in a Kristevan version of abjection of a "subject-in-process"

dishwater, sewage, putrid blood were gushing out of the faceless mother from the level at which her mouth should have been. The intruder was desolated by a rejection she should have expected. (TA: 352)

Eadith's dream of the beatific mother and child is a displacement of her own desire to become the (m)other. A subsequent dream is more explicit. Eadith herself becomes, as Kirkby notes, "both maternal and abject" (forthcoming). The

room in the dream is a symbol for E.'s womb and the "light falling around her could only have been shed from within, yet from no visible light fittings" (TA: 413), signalling recognition of her essential androgyny. As an androgynous person, in dream and phantasy, she experiences childbirth:

Throughout this flesh-coloured, infra-natural light, she became aware of a fluttering of the bird-voices, moth-like hands, of a brood of children she did not attempt to count. They were too many and too unearthly, also too frightening, in particular the eyes and mouths, which were those of flesh-and-blood children, probing, accusing the room's focal point, herself.

She understood by degrees that the children wanted out; the safe, windowless room (its walls even upholstered, she noticed) was the cause of their distress and she the one they held responsible for their unreasonable imprisonment.

'But my darlings,' her voice sounded as odd as her use of a term she had always tended to avoid, 'here you'll be safe, don't you see?' (TA: 413-414)

But her experience of motherhood appears to be one-sided. The children persecute her rather than acknowledge her maternity. In a vignette reminiscent of Christina Rossetti's "Goblin Market", E.'s phantasised children, like the children in "Goblin Market", claw and batter her:

the children continued battering with flat hands on the unresponsive walls, a drumming to which was added, she could hear, sounds of gathering confusion outside, as of wind rising, waves pounding, and worse, human voices screaming hatred and destruction as some monstrous act, explosive and decisive, was being prepared.

She, too, had begun screaming as she tore free from the hospital sheets pinning her down. 'Can't I make you realise?' She lunged among the milling children, trying to gather them into her arms as though they had been flowers. 'Safe - as you'll never be outside'. (TA: 414)

In Hadith's dream, separation anxieties coalesce with fear of persecution by retaliatory objects as a result of projection and introjection:

Almost all of them eluded her. Only one little crop-headed boy she succeeded in trapping. She was holding his pink head against her breast, when he tore

the nightdress she was wearing, and it fell around her, exposing a chest, flat and hairy, a dangling penis and testicles. To express his disgust, the pink-stubbed boy bit into one of the blind nipples, then reeled back, pointing, as did all the children, laughing vindictively as their adult counterparts might have, at the blood flowing from the wound opened in the source of their deception, down the belly and thighs, gathering at the crotch in such quantities that it overflowed and hid the penis. The dripping and finally coagulating blood might have gushed from a torn womb. (TA: 414)

The hidden penis signifies both castration anxieties and a desire to take the place of the (m)other, the one who is without a penis.

In discussing the significance of the birth-giving scene in Louis-Ferdinand Céline's writing, Kristeva argues:

When Céline locates the ultimate abjection...in the birth-giving scene he makes amply clear which fantasy is involved: something *horrible to see* at the impossible doors of the invisible - the mother's body. The scene of scenes is here not the so-called primal scene but the one giving birth, incest turned inside out, flayed identity. Giving birth: the height of bloodshed and life, scorching moment of hesitation (between inside and outside, ego and other, life and death), horror and beauty, sexuality and the blunt negation of the sexual. (In Roudiez 1982: 155)

E. of course is not witnessing or phantasising the horrors of abjection in the (m)other's birth scene, but rather making them his own. According to Kirkby, in E.'s birth-giving scene, he is no longer the male experiencing abjection vicariously as a female. "he is the male experiencing abjection as a male". She likens E.'s "bleeding and bloody body" to the "abject corporeal wounded and bleeding Christ" who Caroline Walker Bynum and others associate with "female bleeding and feeding". Kirkby argues that this image of abjection is of great significance because E. "has embraced the experience most

often displaced onto women - for which they are reviled and punished. It is an image of reconciliation" (Kirkby: forthcoming).

Reconciling various conflicting aspects of the self, Eadith must still reintegrate various split aspects of the (m)other. What is more, she seeks recognition and validation of the "androgynous" self by the (m)other. The narrative blends Kristevan religiosity and evocation of the Christian idea of forgiveness with Melanie Klein's notions of reparation. Eadith leaves the brothel in the care of Ada, her trusty acolyte who is a "brown-habited imitation of the dedicated nun" (TA: 427), with her "rustle of her bunch of keys, if not her rosary", as she wanders in and out of the "individual cells under her charitable control" (TA: 419).

Forsaking her past life, Eadith goes in search of her mother, roaming the neighbourhood in the early morning dawn, "the hour of forgiveness" (TA: 392), stalking her (m)other in the Churches of St. Clement's, St. Martin's, St. James's, twisting her "penitential rings" (TA: 394), hoping "to see the eye of God" (TA: 394). Her attempt at reparation and reintegration of the self and the (m)other culminates on a bench outside an old Church. In the painful separation of self from (m)other, and the recognition and acceptance that each is a whole and discrete entity, Eadith, with "tears coming into her eyes", sits by her (m)other, as a "stranger beside a stranger" (TA: 421).

In Playing and Reality D. W. Winnicott theorises about the crucial importance of "potential space" for psychological development. "Potential space" is an intermediate space which provides a "third area of human living, one neither inside the individual nor outside the world of shared reality" (1974: 110). Within this terrain, the child learns to play and to be

alone in the presence of someone...on the basis of the assumption that the person who loves and who is therefore reliable is available and continues to be available when remembered after being forgotten. (Winnicott: 1971: 47-48)

The proximity of her mother, in London, facilitates the process of E.'s separation and individuation. It provides Eadith with Winnicott's "potential space" in which she can begin to grow and develop as an autonomous being, discrete and separate from the (m)other, while at the same time being aware of the comforting presence of the (m)other nearby to validate and accept her individuation. In their poignant reunion scene as separate individuals

Eadith was offered this tremulous scribble, and read, 'Are you my son Eddie?'....

Eadie Twyborn read when the book was handed back, 'No, but I am your daughter Eadith'....

The two women continued sitting together in the gathering shadow.

Presently Eadie said, 'I am so glad. I've always wanted a daughter.'

The searchlights had begun latticing the evening sky. (TA: 422-423)

The integration of formerly split aspects of the self and (m)other is metaphorically suggested in the "latticing" of the searchlights. More importantly, according to Winnicott, in this potential space, the parental object

"is felt to reflect back what happens in the playing" (1974: 48). Eadie, of course, echoes and reflects back to Eadith the recognition and acceptance of her androgynous apotheosis when she says: "'I am so glad. I've always wanted a daughter.'" (TA: 422-423). E. is finally endorsed and accepted by her (m)other as "Eadith Eddie no matter which" suggesting the tolerance of ambivalence and acceptance of conflicting masculine and feminine aspects of self.

Gravenor also intuitively and accepts E.'s various "costumes of the mind", to borrow Gilbert's term, (1980: 391), and his/her intrinsic androgyny, when he says that "men and women are not the sole members of the human hierarchy to which you and I can also claim to belong...I shall continue to accept you in whatever form your puritan decides you should appear" (TA: 426). The forbidding, judging paternal figure of Edward Twyborn is thus displaced by the loving, accepting father figure of Gravenor. Gravenor's love is like the love of God, the ultimate father: "'Love' is an exhausted word, and God has been expelled by those who know better, but I offer you the one as proof that the other still exists" (TA: 426).

Because E. has successfully separated the self from the (m)other, and has integrated dichotomous aspects of the self, s/he can now reintegrate conflicting aspects of the (m)other, and repair the damage done by splitting. E. now perceives the previously vilified and persecutory mother of the "sledgehammer"

hand in more benevolent terms. She is now a woman with a "soft white-kid face" (TA: 422) and "no longer alcoholic, but dotty, glittering eyes, who was also her mother" (TA: 424). E.'s integration of conflicting aspects of self and (m)other is a sign of her psychological maturation. She accepts the "anachronisms of most kinds" that her mother is both "personal and remote" (TA: 424).

E.'s final costume represents metamorphosis of self into an androgynous figure. In earlier incarnations as Eudoxia, Eddie and Eadith, E. resorted to cross-dressing and donned female and male costumes and displayed feminine or masculine characteristics appropriate to the *persona*. E.'s final costume combines aspects of male and female attire, symbolically suggesting integration of previously split-off masculine and feminine characteristics. S/he is dressed in a man's suit, while retaining the elaborate facial make-up of the whore of Beckwith Street. Conflicting aspects of gender and sexual identity now appear to be reconciled and reintegrated in E.'s last androgynous image. What is more, s/he sports a "pepper-and-salt tonsure" (TA: 427) as s/he goes "in search of some occupation in keeping with the times" (TA: 427). S/he is a "scapegoat...in search of a sacrifice" (TA: 428). The reference to "sacrifice", "tonsure", "monastic scalp" and E.'s search for a suitable "occupation in keeping with the times" (TA: 427), and Gravenor's allusion to the "God is love" axiom, all

suggest that E. renounces the flesh, sublimates her desires, and embraces the spirit as s/he embarks on a priestly mission of service to suffering humanity.

Priests, as representatives of Christ, are also androgynous figures - in their flowing robes, tonsures and dedication to the spiritual and corporeal works of mercy.<sup>7</sup> The novel's end hints that Eddie's ultimate costume because it includes a hint of the religious, also represents a conversion of sorts.

Hanna Segal writes that "the process of sublimation and symbol formation are closely linked" (1988: 75). "As integrative processes initiated in the depressive position continue, anxiety lessens and reparation, sublimation and creativity" tend to replace splitting (1988: x). The reintegration of E.'s various *personae*, Eudoxia, Eddie, Eadith, and the acknowledgement and acceptance of ambivalence towards the (m)other is reflected in the convergence of the three sections in the conclusion of the novel. What is of particular significance for our discussion is that this reunion is not symbiotic. It is the reunion of a mature and knowing Self, the Whitean protagonist, with the (M)other, while each recognises and accepts the Other as a separate autonomous adult. Nor is their reunion experienced in a moment of madness as in The Aunt's Story, or death-bed phantasy as in Voss, nor yet in symbolic painting as in Riders in the Chariot. Instead it is articulated in a conscious dialogue between the Self and the



(M)other, evidencing the psychological maturation and development of the protagonist over the course of the novels.

The close of the novel is such that it suggests a harmonious reunion of self and (m)other with assurances that "the evening light began establishing a harmony between them" (TA: 421) and "their harmony by now was a perfect one" (TA: 423). The novel barely stops short of sentimentality. In a melodramatic *finalè*, Eddie, on his way to meet his mother in his/her new priestly role, is killed by bombs. Despite its rejection of a "happy ever after" ending the narrative offers the reader a sense of closure. E.'s death is final, but there is a sense that the protagonist has travelled a long way towards individuation and integration of self, along with awareness and acceptance of the self as distinct from the (m)other. As Adrian Stokes comments:

art of whatever kind bears witness to intact objects even when the subject-matter is disintegration. Whatever the form of transcript the original conservation or restoration is of the mother's body. (In Wright 1984: 85)

The completed art object, the novel, The Twyborn Affair, is a symbol of reintegration of previously split aspects of Self and (M)other. The ultimate reintegration of the self challenges and subverts traditional concepts of gender and identity, and proffers instead the notion of androgyny.

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As a coda to the main action of The Twyborn Affair one might note that the relationship of the self with the (m)other has broader implications, such as for post-colonial relationships based on the self and (m)other paradigm. Like another of White's rejected children, Theodora, in The Aunt's Story, E. journeys to Europe to find the real E. who has not been discovered and who, it is feared, may never be discovered. Both novels have affinities with the classic *bildungsroman* tradition, and in each the protagonist is seeking an authentic or coherent sense of self which seems unobtainable, at least at home and in Australia. Both protagonists hope that other, more fulfilling relationships with substitute parental objects - E. with Angelos, and Theodora with General Sokolnikov for instance - will confer and consolidate a sense of self.

As Australians journeying to Europe in search of an authentic sense of self, they serve a symbolic or allegoric purpose. Helen Tiffin points out that "the need for such an other land, the sense of the missing real world, is a feature of the adult colonial psyche" (1982: 328). The (m)other land is, of course, in a position similar to that of the individual (m)other, and the journey to Europe of these protagonists follows the pattern of "practising" and "rapprochement" described by Mahler as the "growth and functioning of the autonomous ego apparatuses in close proximity to the mother. During this phase of individuation

the mother is needed as a stable home base to fulfil the need for physical and emotional refuelling" (1972: 335).

The Eudoxia/Angelos relationship in particular is multivalent, and may also be described in Edward Said's terms of "filiation" and "affiliation". Filiation suggests bonds of kinship, and a sense of belonging at home and in the nation. Affiliation, on the other hand, arises from failed filiation, and denotes allegiance to a compensatory person, place or order (1983: 20). In E.'s case, this includes replacing his unsatisfactory relationship with his parents by a more rewarding relationship with Angelos, a parent figure, and also includes discarding compulsory heterosexuality inherent in his engagement to an Australian woman, for a more permissive homosexuality with Angelos. E.'s escape from the social and sexual restrictions of Australia to the permissive ambience of the French Riviera is analogous to an escape from a rejecting parent to an idealised and accepting parent. Nevertheless, viewed in Said's terms, the Australian E. is in an "Oriental" or feminised and subordinated position in relation to the Byzantine Emperor Vatatzes. Because Angelos is also in a paternal position *vis-à-vis* Eudoxia, their relationship is Oedipal, homosexual and an example of what Parminder Kaur Bakshi calls "sexual colonialism" (in Brown 1990: 151-177).

As Helen Tiffin points out, on the surface there is little overt relation between the "sexual disintegration the novel explores, and postcolonial

fragmentation". She argues that the connection between the two may be made through Joanie Golson or Eudoxia/Eddie/Eadith, as "Australians of ambivalent colonial inheritance and sexuality - obviously the connection is metaphoric, not causal". Tiffin observes that the connection is also made "on a thematic level through the ideas of inheritance, impersonation and recognition" surrounding the Tichborne Affair of the 1870's, "as if it were in some ways a paradigm of the colonial fate itself" (1986: 22-31).

E.'s ultimate improvisation of self in a man's suit and the garish make-up of the whore of Beckwith Street, however farcical, is a phantasy of integration of previously split aspects of femininity and masculinity into an androgynous "whole". This final image may also be seen as hybrid. As a post-colonial symbol, hybridity "reverses the formal process of disavowal so that the violent dislocation, the *Enstellung* of the act of colonization becomes the condition of colonial discourse", revealing what Homi Bhabha calls a "metonymy of presence". While Bhabha's notion of hybridity refers to cultural hybridity, the term offers a useful analogue for the androgynous being. Both hybridity and androgyny are seen as positive terms of empowerment. The splitting and reintegration of the androgyne *qua* hybrid, suggests not an either/or distinction between self and (m)other, but a possibility for maximising the potential

inherent in internalising and integrating earlier split-off aspects of self and (m)other.

Patrick White's fiction depicts the vicissitudes of separation of the self from the (m)other, and symbolically, of white Australia from the (m)other country. Concomitantly, White's fiction dramatises the potential for reintegrating conflicting aspects of the self and the (m)other and symbolically of European and Australian heritage in a pluralistic, post-colonial society.

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## VI CONCLUSION

The four novels explicated - The Aunt's Story, Voss, Riders in the Chariot and The Twyborn Affair - traced the psychological development of Patrick White's protagonists across a representative sample of his major works. Characters in White's fiction move in a world of phantasy, peopled, as Joan Riviere writes in her discussion of Kleinian Object Relations, by a "world of figures formed on the pattern of persons we first loved and hated in life, who also represent aspects of our selves" (1955: 346).

Each of the novels tells a story about a different, progressive moment of self-definition in the psychological development of the protagonist, linking the body of work examined into a corporate "whole". The development of the Whitean protagonist during the course of the novels selected is traced along the lines of the psychological pattern of the subject's origin in and separation from the mother-child dyad, through the contentions of the mother-father-child triad in the domestic domain, leading to initiation into the realms of society, adult sexuality and spirituality.

Tracing the development of White's protagonist in the course of these novels links them as various complementary parts of a "whole". The basic unity of this "whole" is reflected in the similarity of themes in the various phases of the essential relationship of the self with the (m)other. It is within this totality

that a clearer picture of the Whitean protagonist develops. This complementary unity is particularly pronounced in The Twyborn Affair where seemingly independent stories only when taken together offer a total picture of the protagonist.

The Aunt's Story depicts the protagonist's losing struggle for individuation or for an authentic sense of self. Separation anxieties reverberate throughout the novel, culminating in a moving, phantasised ideal state of self in symbiotic union with the (m)other. Ultimately this state is regressive, rather than progressive, and demonstrates that the protagonist is fighting a losing battle for separation of the self from the (m)other. Nevertheless, the attempt by the protagonist, successful or otherwise, to separate the self from the (m)other is recognised as the first and essential step towards development.

The character of Voss evolves out of a complex series of splittings and phantasies of omnipotence, idealisation and persecution. These phantasies originate in separation anxieties and eventuate in the destruction of numerous aspects of the self and (m)other. Nevertheless, along the way, the titular protagonist makes psychological progress in integrating, however sporadically, various conflicting aspects of the self. At certain points in the novel, Voss demonstrates the ability to introject and act out Judd's propensity for human kindness, Palfreyman's humility, and even comes to terms with Turner's

sexuality when, in his death-bed phantasy, he accepts Laura's maternity, and thus indirectly, the notion of his (human) fatherhood. Phantasies of idealisation of the self as God now give way to the acceptance of the self as human. The novel suggests that Laura, a co-protagonist and feminine aspect of the titular hero, articulates the reintegration of various conflicting factions of the self. The symbol of this integration is the child, Mercy.

In Voss it appears that the focus of conflict, of splitting and reintegration, revolves mainly around aspects of the self. The narrative, on occasion, specifically states that the other characters are emanations of Voss. The struggle of the protagonist/s in Voss represents not so much a struggle to separate the self from the (m)other as a struggle to accept good and evil as co-existent within the self. However, as Rogers notes, "the psychological entities described in Object Relations theory *self* and *other* cannot truly be considered apart from each other, except for analytical purposes, so that in the strictest sense, what are always being dealt with are matters of intersubjectivity" (1991: 110). To this extent, then, Voss represents progress in the development of the protagonist. This implied integration signals some measure of psychological maturation and has a positive influence on the resolution of the Oedipal complex in our next novel, Riders in the Chariot.



In Riders in the Chariot Oedipal patterns emerge in the protagonists' literal, figurative and symbolic confrontations with parental figures which provoke desire and threaten prohibition. These Oedipal patterns transcend the domestic domain and come to configure in the social and spiritual spheres. According to Melanie Klein, Oedipal conflict is "subsumed and redefined in terms of depressive anxiety and the attempt to restore the mother as a whole object. At Klein's developmental turning point, she emphasizes depressive anxiety rather than castration anxiety" (Doane and Hodges 1992: 11-12). This attempt at reparation and the reintegration of previously split aspects of self and (m)other is represented through conscious symbolisation in the art work of the Aboriginal protagonist, Alf Dubbo. The form of reintegration becomes progressively more convincing in successive novels - from integration in the protagonist's "madness" in The Aunt's Story, to hypnagogic, death-bed phantasies in Voss, and symbolisation in art form in Riders in the Chariot.

The Twyborn Affair, to a large extent, combines the major themes of the earlier novels - dealing as it does with matters of separation and individuation, splitting and reintegration of aspects of self and (m)other, and ultimate resolution of Oedipal conflicts as a mark of psychological maturation and development of the protagonist. It also explores notions of gender and sexual identity to a degree unparalleled in White's earlier work. Despite the overt focus

in this novel on matters of adult sexuality and gender identity, these issues are ultimately permutations of earlier childhood interactions of self and (m)other and resonate with meaning in an Object Relations context.

Most of the earlier protagonists experience degrees or versions of integration of aspects of self and (m)other, through the medium of madness, phantasy, madness or the art of painting. In The Twyborn Affair, within the plot of the novel, E., the protagonist, not only successfully separates the self from (m)other, but integrates conflicting aspects of masculinity and femininity into an androgynous "whole", subverting conventional notions of gender and offering instead the concept of "androgyny" as an ideal. What is more, the sane, conscious and psychologically mature protagonist engages in active dialogue with the (m)other, recognising that each person is a separate, autonomous, adult entity. Furthermore, the (m)other reflects, confirms and ratifies the newly developed "androgynous" self.

As Doane and Hodges observe, "psychoanalysis inevitably posits a tale of development" (1992: 10). White's protagonist has developed from the ontological insecurities of Theodora who utters: "I cannot say with conviction that I am I", to the point where E., an androgynous being, not only ultimately successfully separates from the (m)other, but as the novel suggests, can also say with a measure of confidence: "I am your daughter Eadith", as conflicting

aspects of self and (m)other "experience harmony at last" (TA: 432). The image of the cold, rejecting and punitive (m)other of earlier novels is salvaged and repaired as Eadie Twyborn reflects and approves of her developing child. "I am so glad. I've always wanted a daughter." (TA: 423). This signals not only the psychological development of the protagonist, the self, but significantly, and perhaps consequently, an amended, positive perception of the (m)other beyond the punitive (m)other of earlier novels. Nevertheless, the death of the protagonist at the moment of apotheosis suggests that this vision of integration, of androgyny, of mutual acceptance of self and (m)other in a harmonious world, for all of its positive resonance, is still more of an ideal, a potentiality rather than a liveable reality which can be sustained. But what is significant for this thesis is that the vision of the integration and psychological maturation of the protagonist has been realised, even if it is not maintained.

My thesis also demonstrates that there is a synergistic interplay between art and Object Relations. Phantasy, splitting and reintegration, which are the communication modalities of Object Relations are also essential features of White's characterisation. The creative act, according to Ehrenzweig, is a symbolic replication of the initial separation of the self from the (m)other and the subsequent splitting and reintegration of aspects of the self and the (m)other. This symbolisation is the basis of sublimation and of creativity. The implied

reintegration of previously split aspects of the protagonist, seen in terms of relations of the self with the (m)other, generally coincide with the integration of various split segments of the novel, suggesting that the one is a symbolisation of the other.

This thesis has approached White's fiction from one perspective, the psychological, which is complementary to Formalist or religious-philosophical readings by other critics.

The Object Relations model of development finds confirmation and resonance in the realities of adult phantasy as expressed in the representative literary texts explicated. It adds depth and psychic complexity to the existing body of literary criticism on White's fiction. Furthermore, it opens up as many avenues as it explores, and offers a basic theoretical framework which may be used to underpin other approaches, such as, for instance, a feminist psychoanalytic reading of relations between self and (m)other, a Bhaktinian reading of the dialogical self, or an extended post-colonial study of Australia's relations with the (m)other country.

The value of White's fiction as explored in Object Relations terms lies in the aesthetic rendering of a model development. As an artist White has depicted universal human experiences of separation and individuation in which many can share.

## NOTES

### I INTRODUCTION

1. This is not to say that other approaches such as the sociological, historical or linguistic are not equally important in enriching appreciation of White's fiction. Nor is the psychological approach adopted an attempt to reduce the novel to these patterns, but to point to some psychological nuances in the work that may be compatible with and can complement others.
2. This is a departure from the way the term is used in traditional psychoanalysis. "In Freudian theory, an object is the target of libidinal drive. It consequently is 'created' by dint of the fact that psychic energy becomes attached to it. An object does not have to be human or even animate. It can be a piece of clothing or a work of art. An object needs only to possess a potential for discharging energy. Thus the term 'object' as it is used in 'Object Relations'..is a vestigial byproduct of traditional psychoanalysis." (See Cashdan 1988: 4)
3. In psychoanalytic literature, "'introjection' is usually seen as a relatively primitive form of internalization, in which the attributes of others are more or less swallowed whole and not effectively made one's own. 'Incorporation' is also used to label this... process." (See Johnson 1991: 202)

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## II THE AUNT'S STORY

1. See for instance, J. F. Burrows: "Jardin Exotique:" The Central Phase of The Aunt's Story. In G. A. Wilkes Ten Essays on Patrick White pp. 85-108; John and Rose Marie Beston "The Black Volcanic Hills of Meroë. Ariel. V.3. No.4, October 1974, pp. 33-42.
2. Narcissistic wounds are caused by the failure of maternal love.
3. In psychoanalysis "primal scene" is a term which "denotes that the child has come to realise the parents engage in intercourse. The child may have witnessed or formed a fantasy about the parents' sexual life. Children feel painfully excluded from their parents' lives by this new awareness." (Arlow 1980 in Edward, Ruskin and Turrini 1991: 77).
4. Studies indicated "that there were certain crossroads of the separation and individuation process, nodal points in structuralization, maturation and development at which certain events are particularly traumatic". It was also found that the primal scene observations probably accentuated castration anxieties. (Mahler in Edward, Ruskin and Turrini 1991: 77-78)
5. Hypnagogic visions occur in the twilight state between dreaming and waking. (See Wright 1984: 85)
6. Theodora is among the first of many hermaphrodites or androgynous protagonists in White's fiction. Some others who follow are: the Brown twins in The Solid Mandala who are depicted as two halves of a "whole" character, Laura and Voss in Voss, who are depicted as the masculine and feminine principles of each other, and Eudoxia/Eddie/Eadith of The Twyborn Affair who are all aspects of an androgynous protagonist.
7. This term is used extensively by Ehrenzweig who borrows in turn from Piaget. For both men "syncretism" refers to more than simply putting together or synthesizing: It refers to a mode of early thinking in which visual objects are not broken down into component parts, but are rather seen inclusively as wholes. (See Ehrenzweig 1993 The Hidden Order of Art: 6-12, 16-20)

### III VOSS

1. Much has been written about the connection exists between the character of Voss and historical figures. Some of this material is cited by Bliss (1981: 215)
2. And in Flaws in the Glass White writes: "The real Voss, as opposed to the actual Leichardt, was a creature of the Egyptian desert, conceived by the perverse side of my nature at a time when all our lives were dominated by that greater German megalomaniac. (1983: 152)
3. Additionally, there are those who, like Angela Smith, view this journey as "metonymic of colonialism". She argues that this is suggested through the pervasive irony and the reference to the journey as "some spiritual droit de seigneur" into the interior of Australia. In her view, Voss's enterprise is "misconceived and is the product of white phallogentric culture" (in Capone 1991: 159).
4. Shirley Paolini draws some interesting parallels to Voss's journey of self-enlightenment. She argues that it recalls Jesus' temptation in the desert, the Christian hermits' meditative sojourns, the exodus of the Jews, Augustine's Confessions and Dante's Divina Commedia and T. S. Eliot's The Waste Land. (See Paolini, 1990: 87-91)
5. Veronica Brady sees Laura as the chief protagonist and the heroine of Voss. She sees Laura as the "ultimate centre of value", and as "one who not only shares Voss's quest with him" but reaching its goal, "survives to translate it into terms of life rather than death" (See Brady 1975: 16-33).
6. Veronica Brady's argument is contrary to that of John and Rosemarie Beston. The Bestons contend that although "Laura is a dominating character, she nevertheless does not succeed in shifting the focus away from Voss to herself" (See John Beston, 1974: 99-114).
7. This incident is suggestive of a parody of the seduction scene in Thomas Hardy's Tess of the d'Urbervilles.



8. Another view of Voss's murder is offered by Peter Wolfe, who views this incident in mystical terms. He points to "the coincidence of Voss's arrival in the Aboriginal camp where he later dies and the appearance in the heavens of a spectacular comet. The comet symbolizes the patriarch in the Aboriginal pantheon who consider that the Great Snake, who is the grandfather of all men had come down from the north in anger. Wolfe argues that "because Voss's arrival in their camp coincides with the sighting of the comet, the Aboriginals equate the two phenomena. (See Wolfe 1983: 118)

#### IV THE OEDIPAL METAPHOR IN RIDERS IN THE CHARIOT

1. Some critics such as J. F. Burrows argue that there is insufficient motivation for the evil instigated by Mrs. Flack and Mrs. Jolley (in Wilkes 1970 pp. 64-65. Others such as John Colmer argue that these women's actions are credible (1978: 42).
2. Carolyn Bliss and Patricia Morley discuss the significance of the procession and the hanging of the circus clown more extensively. (See Bliss 1986: 86-87 and Morley 1972: 181)
3. Brian McFarlane argues that in Riders in the Chariot White "goes beyond the making of discriminations...to the delivery of elitist pronouncements. It becomes almost a matter of How To Be A Rider Without Really Trying, since human effort is of no consequence; you're either of the elect or not, and if not, you might as well hang yourself....White's brutal discriminations are clearly bound up with his horrifying obsession with what is grotesque and maimed and disgusting about human life". (1977: 24-41)
4. This term first appears in Otto Rank's *Der Mythos von der Geburt des Helden* (1909) where Rank incorporates Freud's ideas into his own argument. (See S. Freud "Family Romances" (1909) in Strachey, Standard edition of the Complete Psychological Works. Vol. IX. pp. 235-244. London: Hogarth 1959).

## V THE TWYBORN AFFAIR

1. David Marr implies that in The Twyborn Affair, as in his earlier novels, White is writing about homosexuality, and perhaps, about White's own homosexuality. Marr traces the evolution of the homosexual in White's novels, and argues that in his writing as in his life, White worried about the label 'homosexual'. He seemed only able to speak of this in fiction - overtly in Twyborn for the first time (1991: 600).
2. Robert Liebert notes that "Tommaso de' Cavalieri remained Michelangelo's close friend and companion for 32 years until Michelangelo's death. Scholars are divided with respect to the question whether Michelangelo actually engaged in overtly sexual relationships with young men during his adult life. There seems to be uniform agreement that the relationship between the artist and Tommaso was never sexually consummated" (in Fogel, Lane and Liebert, 1986: 181-210).
3. As a matter of general interest, David Marr notes that one of Marcia Lushington's children is born on Patrick White's birthday and dies on the birthday of Manoly Lascaris, his life-long partner (1992: 575).
4. Robert Stoller's discussion of transvestism may throw additional light on this aspect of The Twyborn Affair: According to Stoller, the transvestite's sense of maleness or wholeness is damaged by his mother. The transvestite also feels that women are considered to be biologically and socially inferior, and that he has a propensity toward being reduced to this state. Therefore, he denies that such creatures exist and invents "phallic" women. When he dresses up as a woman, he can claim that he is a whole person, since he is the living proof that there is such a thing as a woman who has a penis" (cited in Gilbert 1980: 391-417).
5. Peter Wolfe also explores the connotations of Eadith's surname, drawing attention to its implications for "*triste*", "*tryst*", "*Tristan* and "*trust*" (1980: 223-4).

6. According to Greek mythology, Oedipus was "fastened by the ankles" and discarded on a barren, trackless mountain. See Sophocles The Three Theban Plays. *Antigone, Oedipus the King and Oedipus at Colonus*. (Trans. Robert Fagles, 1982: 201).
7. Joan Kirkby quotes Caroline Walker Bynum's allusion to the body of Christ as both male and maternal; in other words, an androgynous figure: "According to Caroline Walker Bynum, Christ's bleeding was frequently associated with 'female bleeding and feeding': 'Not only was Christ enfleshed with flesh from a woman, his own flesh did womanly things: it bled, it bled food and it gave birth to new life.'" (Caroline Walker Bynum, 'The Female Body and Religious Practice in the Later Middle Ages', *Fragments for a History of the Human Body, Part One*, edited by Michael Feher, Zone, New York, 1989: p. 176 cited in Kirkby forthcoming).

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