Implications of the Themes of the "Living" and the "Dead" in Four Decades of Patrick White's Novels

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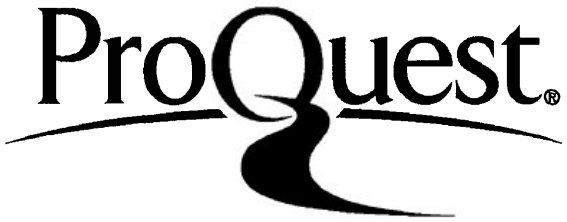

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The fact is that in most cases an author does not understand all the meaning of his work. Archaic exmbolisms reappear spontaneously, even in the works of "realist" authors who know nothing about such symbols. . . . Symbols and myths come from such depths: they are part and parcel of the human being, and it is impossible that they should not be found again in any and every existential situation of man in the Cosmos.

Mircea Eliade

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Dedication

To "Big" Erica

who first introduced me to Patrick White's novels.

Acknowledgements

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Abstract

A lifelong search into the very nature of reality and the soul has led Australian Nobel Prize-winner Patrick White to investigate some of the explanations which man has been attempting to provide since time immemorial. The scope of his interests encompasses the perspectives of Plato and the Neo-Platonists, mediaeval alchemy, Jewish mysticism and the Cabbala, Christianity and Buddhism, and Jungian depth psychology. White's sensitivity has put him in touch with the primaeval archetypes and myths; aspects of each of the areas of White's interest lend themselves to interpretation through both archetypes and myths. As a result, it is possible to detect three basic and related themes which pervade all White's work. The first of these themes is the dichotomy expressed in the title *The Living and the Dead*. This dichotomy has been chosen as the title of this thesis not only because, as one of life's basic dichotomies, it underlies all his work, but as well because the two other themes are so intimately involved with dichotomies. Another fundamental dichotomy is that of *Physis* and *Nous*. In order to be among the "living," White's characters must draw from both sides of this dichotomy. The physical must be tempered with the spiritual and vice versa. Likewise, reason must be tempered with imagination, and the "living" must suffer some kind of spiritual or symbolic death. There are moments in life when inklings into the meaning of these dichotomies are vouchsafed. If one profits from these moments, one can begin the process towards becoming whole. These special moments occur when the spiritual and physical worlds come closest together. Thus, dichotomies underlie the second of the two themes--the process of becoming. The myth of rebirth is the third related theme. This

myth stands as an analogy for the enlightenment or wholeness which all White's "living" characters eventually achieve. Their enlightenment may be apocalyptic, or it may be gradual; it may come with death,or it may come before. Whatever the case, it is always preceded by some kind of spiritual or symbolic death which shows how closely related is this theme to the dichotomy of the "living" and the "dead."

The intent of this thesis is to show how these three themes, investigated through a variety of perspectives, are represented in four major decades of White's work. For this purpose, four main novels have been chosen for detailed study: *The Living and the Dead* (1941), *Voss* (1957), *The Solid Mandala* (1966), and *The Eye of the Storm* (1973). The 1980's, beginning with the autobiographical musings, *Flaws in the Glass*, have shown White's continued interest in these questions; as an illustration, a less detailed study of *Memoirs of Many in One* is included in the conclusion of this thesis.

Introduction

The Living and the Dead, first published in 1941, is the second of Patrick White's published novels. White himself, however, has prevented the republishing of *Happy Valley*, his first novel. This places *The Living and the Dead* at the head of a line of eleven important novels; and, in this position, it is of great interest, not only in terms of White's development as a novelist, but also in terms of the recurrent themes of the "living" and the "dead" which continue to have precedence in subsequent novels.

Three central and related themes recur time and again in the White canon. They are: the dichotomies which everyone encounters in life and the juxtaposition of these opposites; the process or "religion" of becoming; and the myth of rebirth, through which the dichotomies are eventually resolved into wholeness. These three themes, of course, are intimately related and are inseparable from White's concept of the "living" and the "dead." There can be no rebirth, no resolution of the opposites if these dichotomies are not first recognized. Once recognized, they seem to play upon a person's unconscious until he becomes more and more aware of their need to be resolved. This is the process, the "becoming" or journey into the depths of the unknown which precedes the rebirth.

The constant renewal of the seasons and of plant life from year to year is at the origin of the myth of rebirth. Man's need to understand this process has caused him to re-enact and re-tell it in drama and

legend. The myth of rebirth is so basic to man's need to understand life that it is considered to be an archetype. It is those who are reborn or are being reborn who belong to the "living." Nevertheless, the "living" need to see themselves in relation to the "dead" in order to realize the necessity of the search for wholeness. The "living" and the "dead" form one of life's basic dichotomies, and thus these three themes are intimately interrelated.

Writers from Plato to the present have expressed man's need to unite his spiritual and physical natures, to know himself thoroughly, to find within himself a satisfying wholeness. Mircea Eliade, who has written extensively about myth and reality, explains this urge as an attempt to rediscover the meaning behind "the cosmic rhythms--the alternation of day and night, for instance, or of winter and summer." He believes that this rediscovery brings man "to a more complete knowledge of his own destiny and significance."[1]

Jung, too, has much to say about man's search for his true self. He uses the analogy of a cave--an image that White himself uses in *The Eye of the Storm*:

> Anyone who gets into that cave, that is to say, into the cave which everyone has in himself, or into that darkness that lies behind consciousness, will find himself involved in an--at first--unconscious process of transformation. By penetrating into the unconscious he makes a connection with his unconscious contents.[2]

Those who are alive to the various experiences which bring the unconscious close to the surface will be able to be transformed, or reborn. This transformation can occur within anyone; it is not reserved exclusively for the intellectually oriented searcher. Indeed, the

latter may have greater difficulty than others.

White classes himself among non-intellectuals. Certainly, in his novels, he has travelled extensively along the paths of transformation. In his autobiographical comments in *Flaws in the Glass*, White states: "I don't set myself up as an intellectual. What drives me is sensual, emotional, and instinctive."[3] In his novels, enlightenment begins when his characters become aware of the significance of these "sensual, emotional, and instinctive" moments. Speaking about these characters in an interview in 1969, White said: "They are largely something that rises up out of my unconscious. ."[4]

The significance of the title, *The Living and the Dead*, is endemic to all White's novels. However, its importance does not lie, as many critics have implied, merely in the simple dichotomy between the "living" and the "dead." Rather, the concept is of great archetypal importance. The "dead" and the "living" are not merely the "before" and "after" of rebirth, or those who are not aware and those who are, but they also represent the material and the spiritual worlds which are to be conjoined. Nor is the concept of the "living" and the "dead" a static one; it is a process--the mythological process of spiritual rebirth, or, in Jung's terms, transformation. All White's characters strive--with a varying degree of consciousness--for some sense of the reality that lies beyond the everyday physical surroundings of this world. It is through the process of rebirth that the "living" achieve some understanding of a transcendent reality, although, paradoxically, often this understanding does not occur until the moment of death.

Although the terms the "living" and the "dead," when juxtaposed as they are in this title, might seem to narrow the scope of the author's outlook, such is not the case. On the contrary, the scope of White's outlook is incalculably broadened. The use of these terms, explicitly in this particular text, and symbolically in subsequent novels, does not restrict his books to a straight-jacketed either/or situation where some mysteriously chosen "elect" win, and all others lose. Those critics who accuse White of elitism in this regard seem to me to be in error.[5] Indeed, these terms open wide the horizons of interpretation, and the scope of White's twelve novels testifies to this. In the end, the "dead" do no more than exist. And this, not because of some authorial whim, but because they *choose* not to see. They choose not to benefit from the moments of enlightenment which everyone experiences at one time or another in his life. These moments may be grandiose ones, such as Ruth Goldbold's experience in the cathedral (*Riders in the Chariot*) or Elizabeth Hunter's in the storm (*The Eye of the Storm*). On the other hand, they may be seemingly insignificant, as Elyot Standish's relationship with Onkle Rudi or Julia Fallon's delight in simple objects (*The Living and the Dead*). Because of their variety, these moments are accessible to all kinds of people from the simple Arthur Brown or Mary Hare, to the intellectual Himmelfarb or Basil Hunter.

Anaïs Nin has underlined the danger of rejecting moments of enlightenment. She says such rejection leads to an alienation which "comes from a denial of the *meaning* of life. The day we cease to take nourishment from the underground rivers of the psyche, we feel life is *empty*."[6] These spiritually "dead," or psychically undernourished,

suffer, as Peter Beatson aptly phrases it, from "listlessness, flaccidity, fear, indifference, and apathy."[7] Nevertheless, every one of them has the potential to join the world of the "living," if only he can grasp the opportunities that life offers. This is shown very clearly in *The Living and the Dead*. Unfortunately, Beatson goes on to say that White does not place this theme at the centre of his subsequent books. It is my contention that this subject is the very essence of all White's novels, and that each one approaches it from a different combination of perspectives.

The "living" and the "dead" are one of the basic dichotomies in White's work. These dichotomies must be resolved in order for rebirth to take place. The "living" must suffer the existence of the "dead," just as the spiritual must join with the physical. Final wholeness cannot come about without the conjunction of both sides of the coin. This is one aspect of the "living" and the "dead" in White's work. The other is the final opposition of those who "live" because they are reborn and those who, like Muriel Raphael in *The Living and the Dead* and Waldo Brown in *The Solid Mandala*, remain forever among the "dead," never having taken up the challenge life presents to all. The conviction that the opportunities for enlightenment are open to everyone underlies all White's novels and is essentially a Jungian one. Notwithstanding, many critics refuse to see this, and, thus, it must be emphasized. David Tacey elucidates this point in a perspicacious essay in *Patrick White: A Critical Symposium*:

> Those who are spiritually dead in White's world are not dead for any lack of soul-activity--that goes on anyway, in spite of them--they are dead because they fail to make any meaningful connection with the soul. Those who are spiritually alive are such because they have sensitized themselves to the inner world and have married their consciousness to it.[8]

He continues:

> Despite what critics have said there are no Chosen Few in White's novels, rather there are the few who have chosen to respond to the demands of the soul and attempt to unite with it.[9]

The awareness of that impetus towards the spiritual is not necessarily based in organized religion. White himself does not find it so, though he does feel that there is some "religious" or spiritual feeling involved:

> My spiritual self has always shrivelled in contact with organized religion, whether externalized in that grizzly museum Westminster Abbey, the great rococo bed for an operatic courtesan in St. Peter's Rome, or the petulant Orthodox communities of Mount Athos. I have come closest to what I always hoped for in Ayia Sophia, Constantinople, alone in the Parthenon on winter afternoons after the Germans had been driven out, in the Friends' Meeting House at Jordans, Bucks., in a garden full of birds, in my own silent room. All of them moments which remain inklings rather than confirmations.[10]

On this same subject he has also said:

> Religion. Yes, that's behind all my books. What I am interested in is the relationship between the blundering human being and God. I belong to no church, but I have a religious faith; it's an attempt to express that, among other things, that I try to do. Whether he confesses to being religious or not, everyone has a religious faith of a kind . . . . I think there is a Divine Power, a Creator, who has an influence on human beings if they are willing to be open to him . . . . I wouldn't say I am a Christian; I can't aspire so high . . . . I can't divorce Christianity from other religions. The Jewish, for instance, is a wonderful religion--I had to investigate it very thoroughly for *Riders in the Chariot*. In my books I have lifted bits from various

> religions in trying to come to a better understanding; I've made use of religious themes and symbols. Now, as the world becomes more pagan, one has to lead people in the same direction in a different way. .[11]

If one looks at Patrick White's own description of himself and the areas of interest he cites, one can see an essential dualism implicit in most of the adjectives he uses: "a lapsed Anglican egotist agnostic pantheistic occultist existentialist would-be though failed Christian Australian. ."[12]

White, like Jung, indicates that the path to wholeness is not an easy one. Once a person becomes even vaguely aware that these dichotomies exist, he begins the long and arduous journey towards self-knowledge or the apocalyptic awareness of rebirth. White sometimes refers to this process as a kind of peeling off of layers to get to the core. He does not immediately label it the "religion of becoming."[13] However, as early as *The Living and the Dead*, he declares what the process is about, albeit in somewhat different terms: "It's happening inside. It all happens from the inside out."[14]

The search for enlightenment leads to a growing awareness of the important dichotomies of physical and spiritual, although such awareness is not always voiced by White in these terms. Nevertheless, it is not necessary to wait for *The Solid Mandala*, written soon after White had plunged enthusiastically into Jung's *Psychology and Alchemy* to see the *leitmotifs* of archetypal opposites, or the unifying mandala which comes with rebirth. White himself admits in an interview with Herring and Wilkes[15] that many of his symbols derive from the unconscious. Jung's work has made people more aware of archetypal opposites and their unity in the mandala. Jung said that "the unconscious produces a *natural*

symbol, technically termed a mandala, which has the functional significance of a union of opposites"[16] (italics mine). The final outcome of this search for enlightenment or wholeness in the work of Patrick White, however, is not a sterile metaphysical search. Rather it is a living, growing process, culminating in one form or another of rebirth.

In this study my intention is to show how this interpretation of the "living" and the "dead" can be seen in a number of White's key works. I believe that the three related themes, which derive from White's concept of the "living" and the "dead," underlie all his fiction. However, for reasons of space, I have decided to deal with one novel from each of the major decades of his career, ending with a brief reference to his latest novel, *Memoirs of Many in One*. *The Living and the Dead*, written in 1941, stands naturally at the beginning of my list. White's fifth novel, *Voss* (1957), his seventh, *The Solid Mandala* (1966), and the ninth, *The Eye of the Storm* (1973), are the other novels which will be examined.

As do his other novels, these four clearly show White's constant search for the truth, or self-knowledge, that comes with the resolution of life's opposites. However, his writing is not spoiled by dogmatic or theoretical overtones. After all, White is himself searching. Indeed, truth is often clouded by what he refers to as "my still incalculable shadow."[17] Even in 1981 in *Flaws in the Glass*, he is unwilling to state categorically a systematic belief; it is still in process:

> What do I believe? I am accused of not making it explicit. How to be explicit about a grandeur too overwhelming to express, a daily wrestling match with an opponent whose limbs never become material, a struggle from which the sweat and blood are scattered on the pages of anything the serious writer writes? A belief contained less in what is said than in the silences. In patterns on water. A gust of wind. A flower opening.[18]

Comments like those about his beliefs, have encouraged critics to link Patrick White with D.H. Lawrence. And since the word "living" is significant for both, the association of these two authors is all the easier. For Lawrence "[a] thing isn't life just because somebody does it [that] is just existence. By life we mean something that gleams, that has fourth dimensional qualities."[19] It is the fourth dimensional quality which concerns White, and which adds to the tapestry that is his work. By his own admission, his faith in things spiritual was the result of a very gradual process and probably "develop[ed] in [his] unconscious" quite early.[20] By the time he was writing *Flaws in the Glass*, he had developed the "conviction that the spiritual is here around us on earth."[21]

White's richly textured writing gives much aesthetic delight. Much of the pure delight comes from the magnificent language that White uses. His command of English to do his bidding is phenomenal. As George Dutton says:

> the colours of the illumination, the gargoyles and the dark corners are all deliberate. White can write plain prose if he wants to, but he clearly thinks that the novel, or his sort of novel, needs something more than plain prose, something that will give the novel the range of reference with which poetry is acquainted.[22]

White's sensitivity has put him in touch with the archetypes which give meaning to life. And being in touch with these archetypes adds

immeasurably to the rich texture of White's writing. He has frequently denied using symbols deliberately. At the same time, however, White himself admits that his "conscious self can't take full responsibility"[23] for his novels. Another element that adds to the rich texture comes from White's view of truth as many-sided.

In *Flaws in the Glass*, White states: "to me the refractions from that many-sided crystal, truth, are diverse."[24] This multifaceted or "particoloured" vision of truth leads him to search for it in many different guises. The quest for self-knowledge and wholeness is universal, and thus it is not surprising to discover similarities among several different metaphysical interpretations of reality: major world religions--Christianity, Judaism, and Buddhism; ancient myths; mediaeval metaphysical systems such as the Cabbala and alchemy; and modern Jungian depth psychology with its insistence on the importance of archetypes. White investigates all these paths to wholeness, sometimes alone, sometimes in conjunction one with another.

White's lifelong search for enlightenment begins in earnest with *The Living and the Dead*. In this novel White investigates various paths. Myth, the unconscious, instinct, mandalas, alchemy, as well as nature itself, are all probed in an attempt to reach beyond the mundane and the crassly physical. However, it is the mythical which stands out most prominently. Elyot Standish experiences the myth of rebirth *per se*. He descends into the depths of his past, experiences a symbolic death, and re-emerges solidly on the path towards wholeness. *Voss* is perhaps the most complex of the books in this study. And although White's concentration here is on the alchemical and the mystical, all

paths are explored in considerable detail. Its title places *The Solid Mandala* securely on the Jungian path, but here too other paths are touched on, particularly the alchemical and the Christian. Of all White's novels, *The Eye of the Storm* is the most precisely mythical. In it the primordial archetypes are re-enacted in everyday life.

The world of White's novels, then, is a vital and fascinating one, one which awakens readers to the importance of the world within and without, and the need of every human being to strive for ultimate truth. He helps to provide what many consider so necessary to human well-being, especially in this disturbing twentieth century of ours. Anaïs Nin puts it thus:

> He [man] needs a spiritual island where he can renew his strength, his shattered values, his traumatized emotions, his disintegrated faiths. It is the lack of such labyrinths of the psyche which brings despair, pessimism, hysteria. An inner life, cultivated, nourished, is a well of strength. To confuse this with the much persecuted ivory tower is to lack understanding of the inner structure we need to resist outer catastrophes and errors and injustices.[25]

The reality that Patrick White seeks is the reality of the "living," the fulfilled soul or psyche which is found in the ultimate wholeness of "*les principes simples*."[26] Indeed, the necessity of the search for this wholeness is the only dogmatic statement White makes about his beliefs, and this he stated as early as 1958: "Certainly the state of simplicity and humanity is the only desirable one for artist or for man. While to reach it is impossible, to attempt to do so is imperative."[27]

Introduction

Notes

[1] Mircea Eliade, *Images and Symbols: Studies in Religious Symbolism*, trans. Philip Mairet (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1969), p. 35.

[2] C.G. Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, trans. R.F.C. Hull. eds. Sir Herbert Read *et al.*, Vol. 9, Pt. 1 of *The Collected Works of C.G. Jung*, Bollingen Series 20 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), p. 135.

[3] Patrick White, *Flaws in the Glass* (Harmondsworth, Mddx.: Penguin Books Ltd., 1981), p. 80.

[4] Patrick White, quoted from an interview in *In the Making*. eds. C.McGregor *et al.* (Melbourne: Nelson, 1969), p. 219.

[5] For example, in his article "Inhumanity in the Australian Novel: *Riders in the Chariot*," *Critical Review*, 19 (1977), Brian McFarlane states that the four riders in the chariot are presented under "conditions that alienate the four from their worlds" (p. 33). In "Themes and Imagery in *Voss* and *Riders in the Chariot*," *Australian Literary Studies*, 1.3 (1964), Gloria Gzell sees all White's protagonists as "heroic" and "their separation from other people exaggerated. ." (p. 181)

[6] Anaïs Nin, *The Novel of the Future* (New York: Macmillan, 1968), p. 15.

[7] Peter Beatson, *The Eye in the Mandala* (London: Paul Elek, 1976), p. 53.

[8] David Tacey, "'It's happening inside': The Individual and Changing Consciousness in White's Fiction," in *Patrick White: A Critical Symposium*, eds. R. Shepherd and K. Singh, intro. J. Barnes (Adelaide: Centre for Research in the New Literatures, 1978), pp. 36-37.

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 37.

[10] White, *Flaws*, p. 74.

[11] White, interview, *Making*, p. 218.

[12] White, *Flaws*, p. 102.

[13] This phrase does not occur until *The Eye of the Storm*.

[14] Patrick White, *The Living and the Dead* (Harmondsworth, Mddx.: Penguin Books Ltd., 1974), p. 326.

[15] Patrick White in G. Wilkes and T. Herring, "A Conversation with Patrick White," *Southerly* 33.2 (1973):140.

[16] C.G. Jung, *Psychology and Religion: West and East*, trans. R.F.C. Hull, eds. Sir Herbert Read *et al*, Vol. 11 of *The Collected Works of C.G. Jung*, Bollingen Series 20 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), p. 90.

[17] White, *Flaws*, p. 22

[18] *Ibid.*, p. 70.

[19] D.H. Lawrence, *Selected Criticism*, ed. Anthony Beal (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1955), p. 111.

[20] White, interview with Herring and Wilkes: 136.

[21] White, *Flaws*, p. 167.

[22] Geoffrey Dutton, *Patrick White*, Australian Writers and their Work, gen. ed. G. Johnston (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 9.

[23] White, *Flaws*, p. 187.

[24] *Ibid.*, p. 151.

[25] Nin, pp. 12-13.

[26] Epigraph to *The Living and the Dead.*

[27] Patrick White, "The Prodigal Son", *Australian Letters* I (1958):3.

Chapter One

The Living and the Dead

In his autobiographical work *Flaws in the Glass* Patrick White said, "I have never liked *The Living and the Dead*. Perhaps it should never have been written."[1] Had it, in fact, never been written, the loss would be his readers', not only because *The Living and the Dead* is in itself an interesting story, but also because it sows most of the important seeds that flourish in White's later work. White's three themes, delineated in the introduction, are incipient in this novel; the title itself, of course, indicates the underlying importance of the first.

The first of these three themes is found concretely in the title of *The Living and the Dead*, as well as in the epigraph. The second, the "religion of becoming," though not actually named until *The Eye of the Storm*, is prefigured in *The Living and the Dead* when the protagonist's mother says "It's happening inside. It all happens from the inside out."[2] The third is clearly seen in the cyclical structure of this novel which, in effect, takes place over one night, ending with the hero's real and metaphorical awakening in the morning. It is through the process of spiritual rebirth that the protagonist and others "become" transformed. Recognition of the patterns of life, a step which initiates the process of "becoming," is a vital part of the transformation.

Because of the seminal nature of the idea of the "living" and

the "dead," both in itself and in its relation to the themes of becoming and rebirth, the novel with this title is of supreme importance in the White canon. In order to see how these three themes are bodied forth in both the form and the content of the novel, it is necessary to begin with a short summary of the action.

As *The Living and the Dead* opens, the protagonist, Elyot Standish, is returning from Victoria Station to an empty house, after having seen his sister Eden off to Spain to offer herself to the Republican cause in the Civil War. As he bumps his way through the crowd, he recalls the last few moments before the train's departure. Outside it is dark and raining. Details become dissolved in the rain; indeed, Elyot "might have been merged with the drunk" (p. 9) he sees stumbling on the kerb. He feels compelled to associate himself with the drunk, and yet, at the same time, is unable to, since "there was no contact" (p. 10). The anonymous drunk falls in front of an oncoming bus and dies. At the moment of the fall, Elyot feels some guiding purpose has brought them together on the pavement. For a brief second after he has been knocked down, it seems that Elyot has in some way died with the drunk:

> for that second of connexion on the kerb that broke too easily. You stood there, half attentive to the far-off voices. . . . A keen spasm to be added to the sum total of everybody's individual sensation. (p.11)

Exhausted and sick, Elyot returns home. Sitting in the empty house, he begins to think, or more probably, to dream about his life, the house and all the various circumstances that have worked together to bring him to that particular point in his life. He feels that the

aspirations of those who have lived there or have been associated in some way with it come together in him like two Chinese boxes:

> They were two receptacles, he felt, the one containing the material possessions of those who had lingered in its rooms, the other the aspirations of those he had come in contact with. Even that emotional life he had not experienced himself, but sensed, seemed somehow to have grown explicit. It was as if this emanated from the walls to find interpretation and shelter in his mind. So that the two receptacles were clearly united now. They were like two Chinese boxes, one inside the other, leading to an infinity of purpose. Alone, he was yet not alone, uniting as he did the themes of so many other lives. (pp. 17-18)

This picture of the Chinese boxes leads very nicely into the beginning of Elyot's dream or retrospection. In fact, because of what Elyot has said about the lives of those who had lived in the house, we do not feel it at all odd that this section begins with the youth of his mother, Kitty Goose, or, more precisely, at the moment of her first visit to the parents of Willy Standish, Elyot's father. The story continues more or less chronologically from Kitty's marriage and the birth of her two children. Various episodes are highlighted. These episodes include the time both children spend in Somerset during World War I where they meet another evacuee, Connie Tiarks, Elyot's year in Germany, and his life after coming down from Cambridge. Eden's story includes her affair with Norman Maynard and her subsequent abortion. The lives of Elyot and his sister encompass relationships with various other secondary characters besides Connie Tiarks who re-emerges after Elyot returns to London. Elyot has become a dry academic and his friends reflect this "dead" aspect of his life. He frequents the Blenkinsops and their friend Muriel Raphael. We also meet a certain

Wally Collins who brings some life into Mrs Standish's existence just prior to her death. The most important relationship of the second part of the book, however, is that of Eden with Joe Barnett, the political activist. It is her love for Joe and his death in Spain that finally bring the novel full circle by precipitating Eden's departure for Spain--the reason for Elyot's being at the station at the beginning of the book. The novel itself, then, forms a full circle, a mandala, or symbol of wholeness, which comes as a result of rebirth. The fact that a thread from the circle, in the shape of Elyot himself, leads out and on into the unknown enables one to look on the form also as an expression of the "becoming," the ongoing process of spiritual renewal.

Thus, the form of the book itself is of prime importance to the understanding of the three themes. White underlines the circular technique he has used by two explicit devices. On the night of Eden's departure Elyot leaves Victoria Station wandering homeward, "but in a sense directionless" (p. 9). The following morning he emerges from the house and begins to walk along the street again "guided by no intention" (p. 357). Nevertheless, this is not the aimless wandering of the previous night which preceded the reliving of the pertinent episodes of his life. Now he takes "the direction offered" (p. 357). This direction has been indicated to him by the symbolic death he suffered in his association with the drunk killed by the bus, and the rebirth that followed the subsequent night's descent into his personal unconscious. As a result, Elyot begins to see the pattern of which he had hitherto been oblivious. White's beliefs, even at this early

stage, already have a strong teleological underpinning. Gradually, as Elyot relives these episodes, he begins to realize the purpose hidden in them and the meaning of this pattern for his salvation.

An even more emphatic device than this reiteration with a difference, however, is the incorporation at the end of the novel, word for word, of the paragraph from the beginning quoted above, about the Chinese boxes--the paragraph that initiated the night-long reminiscences. Peter Beatson explains the rôle of this repetition:

> The technique White uses is not just the literary device of the flashback. It is an organic part of Elyot's experience, serving a psychotherapeutic function, allowing him to probe the springs of his own nature, bring the hidden traumas to consciousness, and see in its totality the pattern that has emerged from his life.[3]

The cyclical form of the book is also allied with the apocalyptic nature of White's thought. Apocalyptic revelation, whether conscious or unconscious, is the ultimate goal of all White's heroes and heroines. The end is prepared for in various ways during their lives, and, of course, it is only those who profit from the experiences vouchsafed them who can expect any kind of final revelation. The apocalyptic revelation results from the process of rebirth, and as such is to be found in almost all White's novels. In an article entitled "Apocalypse: Theme and Variations," M.H. Abrams explains that there are two essential elements in all apocalyptic thought. The first element is the polarity, especially of good and evil; the second is the presence of the end in the beginning, albeit with a difference. This is usually apparent in the form of a spiral or a circle, as the Garden of Eden prefigures the final Kingdom of Jerusalem. This theme is

touched on in *The Living and the Dead* by Eden while walking with Joe under the mandalic gasworks. She comes to the conclusion that the "expression of rightness" was "the beginning in an end, rather than the end of a beginning" (p. 312). The polarity of opposites and the circular form are both highly evident in *The Living and the Dead*. More specifically, Abrams says:

> all process departs from an undifferentiated unity into sequential self-divisions, to close in an organized unity, which has a much higher status than the original unity because it incorporates all the intervening divisions and oppositions.[4]

Thus the themes of dichotomy and spiritual rebirth are very closely linked. Indeed, it is virtually impossible to discuss the one without the other. Both the myth of rebirth and the idea of a unity formed from opposites bring us very quickly to Jung and his perception of the mandala. Although the mandala in itself is less important in this book than it is in several of White's later novels, the idea of a unity of opposites that it encompasses is, in fact, basic to *The Living and the Dead*. Jung is explicit about the makeup of the mandala; in *Psychology and Religion* he calls it "a natural symbol,"[5] and in *Psychology and Alchemy* he states that the self, that is the individuated, self-knowing self, "is a union of opposites *par excellence*."[6]

That White was thinking along these lines is obvious, given the epigraph from the eighteenth-century French *philosophe,* Helvétius, which he used in this book:

> Je te mets sous la garde du plaisir et du douleur; l'un et l'autre veilleront à tes pensées, à tes actions; engendront tes passions, exiteront tes

> aversions, tes amitiés, tes tendresses, tes fureurs; allumeront tes désirs, tes craintes, tes espérances; te dévoileront des vérités, te plongeront dans des erreurs; et après t'avoir fait enfanter mille systèmes absurdes et différentes de morale et de législation, te découvriront un jour les principes simples, au développement desquels sont attachés l'ordre et le bonheur du monde morale.

The paired opposites of "*plaisir*" and "*douleur*" are just the polarities that both Abrams and Jung are talking about; the "*principes simples*" that unify them are the mandala, symbol of approaching apocalyptic enlightenment. However, in a discussion of *The Living and the Dead,* it is the dichotomy, the polarity of opposites, that is of greater import. This, of course, is not to say that the mandala does not figure in this novel. The greater importance placed on the dichotomy, however, is neatly underlined not only in the epigraph, but also in the title. Beatson puts it very succinctly:

> An extremely important aspect of White's world-view . . . is the idea of antinomy. No principle, emotion, action or image is unambiguous in its implications. There is an ambivalence in everything, so that redemption or disintegration can flow from the same source. This antithetical quality is itself part of the purpose of God. Joy and suffering, life and death, good and evil, and love and hate work together to a higher end. Neither side is sufficient in itself.[7]

Discussion of the polarities expressed in the epigraph to *The Living and the Dead* also leads directly to the myth of spiritual death and rebirth. The critic Barry Argyle indicates the importance of myth in *The Living and the Dead* when he states that the result of Elyot's reliving of his life is to understand some of its mystery. He reminds readers that man's traditional way of unravelling life's mystery has been to turn to myth.[8] The specific myth in question here is that of

rebirth. Elyot Standish is a physical manifestation of this myth when he dies symbolically with the drunk at the beginning and is finally reborn at the end. Indeed, White leaves the reader with a very specific indication of Elyot's rebirth. Changed by his experiences, Elyot is on a bus though as yet in a quasi-dreamlike state. Nevertheless, he is very definitely on the reawakening side of sleep. A tangible indication of his change is that he can reach out and seem to touch those around him. Up to this point in his life, he has been almost obsessively aware of the difficulty of communicating with other human beings. At the same time, he is fully aware of the necessity to his well-being of communication with others. On several occasions, Connie Tiarks and others make him aware "that he did not know how to touch" (p. 151). Eden too makes him realize his separateness: "There was seldom very much said. You continued on different paths in the same words" (p. 15). The morning after the accident all is different for Elyot:

> It was enough to feel a darkness, a distance unfolding . . . to touch these almost sentient faces into life, to reach across the wastes of sleep and touch into recognition with your hand, to listen to the voices of people who wake and find they have come to the end of a journey, saying: Then we are here, we have slept, but we have really got here at last.
>
> He yawned. He felt like someone who had been asleep, and had only just woken. (p. 358)

Although Elyot is not himself aware of participating in the myth of rebirth, White does use this myth to show the change in Elyot and to explain the nature of his nocturnal experience.

Apart from the apocalyptic form of the book, which in itself indicates a closeness with primeval archetypes, various other elements

indicate the closeness of the text to mythology. These include the importance White gives to simple things, and being in touch with them; the insistence on the almost amorphous faces in the background which form a kind of sea or unconscious; and the importance of water, particularly at prime moments such as when the drunk is killed. In an introduction to one of his discussions of this topic, Jung says that "[r]ichness of mind consists in mental receptivity, not the accumulation of possessions."[9] This "richness of mind," an attribute of the "living," is what Elyot acquires when he frees himself from the "accumulation of possessions." Through his rebirth, he has amalgamated what is good from each of the Chinese boxes, thus opening the communications to others, symbolized by the "infinity of boxes" (p. 375). These boxes no longer enclose, instead they "opened out" (p. 357). They reveal to Elyot not the stultifying cocoon of "[s]o much bric-à-brac" (p. 14) that Mrs Standish built around herself, or the box-like room where Elyot works on his notes behind his closed door, but rather the positive nature of simple things such as is revealed both to Julia, who has "an unconscious respect for the substance of things" (p. 59), and to Joe, who can sense the nature of the wood he works on through his hands.

During Elyot's overnight experience of rebirth he begins to see the import of experiences he has not profited from before. He can now rise above the "dead," or the "little" as Jung calls them:

> He who is truly and hopelessly little will always drag the revelation of the greater down to the level of his littleness, and will never understand that the day of judgment of his littleness has dawned. But the man who is inwardly great will know the long

> expected friend of his soul has now really come . . . to seize hold of him . to make his life flow into that greater life .[10]

As Elyot emerges in the morning, he does merge "his life into that greater life.

Before he encounters the drunk, Elyot is aware that there are certain "secret places" in Eden's life that he has no right to touch on. These mysteries are linked, by way of the unlikely problem of why Eden wore a pair of old black gloves for travelling, to the mysteries of his own life. Black, the colour of earth or the *nigredo* of the alchemist, is the colour of "germination in darkness" and "wisdom which stems from the Hidden Source."[11] Eden's trip to Spain is symbolic of her blossoming forth, represented, we see, by "one of her fingers showing white through the black glove" (p. 9), as her face withdraws "down an infinite tunnel" (p. 9). Elyot feels

> he [will] never understand the motive behind the wearing of the gloves. . . . His mouth moved towards a question. It took courage from a moment earlier that evening, when for the first time in his life he had approached his sister without explicit words. But even this, remembered, could not launch him in pursuit of the motive behind the gloves. He failed, deliberately. Because this was something he must not touch on. It was one of the secret places, of which Eden's life was full. (p. 8)

Finally though, his re-experiencing of "the bay, smooth, almost circular, the glistening of red and periwinkle stones" (p. 356) enables him to see that there are moments, "the moments on railway platforms, when there are no barriers to recognition" (p. 356). At first, however, the gloves are "threads from the so many threads of the mystery you had to accept. The whole business was either a mystery or else meaningless, and of the two, the meaningless is the

more difficult to take" (p. 9). At the beginning, "in spite of a chance moment of illumination [the] night dissolved without bringing you closer" (p. 10). However, the return to the station at the end indicates that as Elyot emerges on the other side of his experience, such "chance moment[s] of illumination" will not be left fallow.

The presence of water in the form of rain and wet pavements is important in the mythological structure of the book. Water is the primeval substance in which rebirth occurs and is hence closely associated with rebirth:

> The Waters symbolize the entire universe of the virtual; they are the *fons et origo*, the reservoir of all the potentialities of existence; they *precede* every form and *sustain* every creation.[12]

That night the rain seems to dissolve all detail into a "confused sea" (p. 7) into which Elyot must descend before he finally emerges reborn. He feels "with satisfaction the drizzle on his face" (p. 10). The sensation seems to point to his experience: "because with it [came] a sense of still being there, the bones and flesh, heading homeward to bricks and mortar, and bread and cheese in the kitchen" (p. 10). These are the simple things he must eventually understand. He is gradually being led into the unconscious pool of archetypes, or as Elyot himself expresses it, "the sum total of everybody's individual sensation" (p. 11). At this point White elaborates on the title:

> There was a pecular dead feeling in the house. At the moment he hadn't the power to restore a pretence of life. This had ebbed with the people who had lived there, the positive people, Eden, his mother, Juliet Fallon. Sometimes he decided, in moments of uncomfortable honesty, that he began and ended with

> these positive lives, their presence or flight, that he had no actual life of his own. And tonight he was convinced, there in the kitchen, beside the symbols of the positive life. This may have ceased till morning, withdrawn in nightly anaesthesia, but its symbols remained, the apron on the chair-back, the cup with its pool of reddish tea, the old pair of blue satin mules that Julia wore about the house. (p. 12)

To some extent Elyot's feelings will be resolved in the morning when he reawakens wondering how long it had been "since the station, in the empty house? A queasy drunk sidled uneasily along the carpet's edge. You accepted him now. It got to being part of yourself. (p. 357) The dead feeling he had had the night before has been exorcised by his experience, by the effect of the positive lives on him, especially Julia's. There seems to exist some kind of correspondence between her and the objects she comes into contact with. This almost spiritual presence of Julia precipitates Elyot's rebirth. After all, Julia has "woven her own theme in and out of their concerted lives"; she has "intuition and lack of rational understanding" and thus becomes "a thermometer of everything [Elyot] wish[es he] didn't feel" (p. 13). It is through Julia, whose presence in the house forms a "kind of recitative that mingled the past and the present with the future" (p. 54), that Elyot is able to relive the past as if it were the present and thus discover the previously unseen patterns and meanings that will change the future. Julia is connected very specifically with physical things, but in an intuitive way.

In later novels, White will be much more conscious of the physical and the spiritual, and the necessity for the spiritual to merge with the physical before a final enlightenment can occur. In *The*

Living and the Dead it is only hinted at by the presence of the physical house in one box, and the spiritual presence of those who had been connected with it in the other. As Elyot enters the house, he senses a "peculiar dead feeling" (p. 12). The house has become a kind of mausoleum in the manner of the elder Mrs Standish's house. Nevertheless, like the Standish family itself, it has connexions with the "living"; it reflects the presence of those "positive people" who had lived there, though at the moment, Elyot does not feel that he belongs among them. This feeling of separateness, of not belonging, is enhanced when he sees his life as a scholar in terms of "devotion to the dust" (p. 17).

In spite of this, however, the introductory passage ends with the allusion to the Chinese boxes. The two boxes he begins with lead eventually to an "infinity of other boxes to an infinity of purpose" (pp. 17-18). And so the potential for Elyot's reaching out to the living becomes concrete. The boxes create a liberating unity between the polarities. Throughout most of Elyot's recapitulation of his life the box is a symbol of hermetic enclosure, but once the box becomes the series of boxes at the end, the symbol is reversed. Elyot seems vaguely aware of this dichotomy on his way home from Victoria. He contemplates the state at which he has arrived:

> It was so easy to substitute the dead for the living, to build a cocoon of experience away from the noises in the street. . . . This is what I am doing, he said, deliberately killing the noises in the street. Or the man, the drunk with the grey face scored suddenly with blood.
>
> A face returned to insist, to make some contact in a foreign world, from which you had purposely excluded it, out of an unwilling mind. (pp. 16-17)

Peter Beatson has called this state that Elyot is in "the last of these troughs before the breakthrough." He goes on to say:

> Such a period of spiritual or emotional depletion seems to be necessary to the regenerative process. In this fallow condition, the vital forces of the unconscious are active; as the last remnants of the old pattern are sloughed off in a moment of despair and detachment, a newness rises up to assert itself.[13]

Nevertheless, Elyot did not arrive at this state out of the blue. Throughout his life there have been ups and downs, but, even as a young child, he began to show his potential for belonging to the "living." His mother early confides to Julia that, "He understands too much" (p. 59). He understands the different comfort that Julia can give him, and prefers her to come to him in the night, as his mother's "voice didn't convince" (p. 71). Julia is visibly contrasted with Elyot's mother, whose hand hangs, almost in isolation, from the arm of a chair, a white hand that "smelt as white as lilies" (p. 75), almost like a still life. She talks to Elyot, but "In spite of her asking voice, she was not there" (p. 75).

The young Elyot also senses another contrast with his mother in his maternal grandfather, Grandpa Goose:

> When he spoke, the words exploded into the room. It made you surprised to hear anything so loud bursting into the drawing room. But you liked Grandpa Goose, in spite of the first strangeness in a voice. Leaning on his knees you soon felt very close.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> [But] soon they had gone, and the strange sensation of your hand in Grandpa Goose's hand was a rough tingling in the memory.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> There was a difference in Grandpa Goose, in his hands. (p. 77)

Later, this feeling that he has about Grandpa Goose is contrasted with the feelings that his paternal grandmother inspires in him. On receiving news that she has died he recollects that "touching Grandmother Standish's hands you were touching rings, her face beneath an official kiss was a stratum of firm bone, so that there was little death could do. " (p. 129) There is no possibility of any feeling passing out from this person.

The time spent in Somerset during World War I is another period when Elyot exhibits his potential for enlightenment. Here it takes the form of an empathy with nature. He is aware of a "continual humming

if you lay with your face amongst the grass, the whole world was a world of humming in a green afternoon glare" (p. 80). Indeed, his latent potential for life flowers here sufficiently for him to be associated with a mandala. At Ard's Bay, near the Macarthy home, Elyot has an epiphany, or sense of being at one with the universe. Although the full realization of its meaning is not felt until later, the importance of this experience is twofold. It is at Ard's Bay that he finds and collects the "smooth stones, red and mauve ones" (p. 101), and it is there also that he finds a cave. The smooth stones are a symbol of wholeness, and they bring to mind the Philosopher's Stone, especially since the colours red and mauve are those of the third step of the alchemical transformation of base metal into gold. As well, mauve or purple is frequently associated with spirituality, and red with the life-giving principle.[14] The cave Elyot retreats into and the security it provides can be compared to the womb, and thus it becomes important in this re-enactment of the myth of rebirth. In *The*

Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious Jung associates the cave with the unconscious and, as a result, with rebirth.[15] For Elyot, "standing on the rim of Ard's Bay, holding the rounded stones in his hand, everything felt secure and solid, the gentle enclosed basin of water, the sturdy trees that sprouted in the moist sand. At Ard's Bay everything was plain sailing. You looked at the water and saw the shape of things" (p. 102). In the cave he finds a secure and secret life he does not have to explain. At its mouth he gathers stones; on its walls he scratches designs of no particular shape. He sings. For Mrs Macarthy, who has almost literally become a part of the physical things in her house (she has grown to look like one of her plush cushions), his stones remain simply stones. During the night of his rebirth Elyot is reawakened to the psychic importance of these experiences. Indeed, while standing on the station platform at the end of the book, he recalls the circular bay and its stones, and he senses a certain recognition of his earlier experience. But one feels that even as a child this experience held some kind of mysterious significance for him.

Towards the end of his stay with the Macarthys, Elyot experiences another momentary feeling of being at one with the world, and again water is significant, yet this time the experience, when it occurs, is still-born:

> There was a fumbling out of his own body, as he walked against the sky, becoming as much wind as body, or when he lay on the shore and the sound of the water lapped across his chest, a blaze of sun shone between the bones. Later he began to wonder about this. Now he only accepted it in surprise. At night he would wake for a moment, to wonder, before

> he found it was too late, he was sinking in the sea of turned faces, just before or after the event. (pp. 112-13)

Before he goes up to Cambridge, Elyot spends a year in Germany with the Fiesels: Frau Fiesel, her daughter Hildegard, and Frau Fiesel's brother, Onkel Rudi. This is an important year in Elyot's life, as it is during this time that he seems to consolidate his potential for insight in such a way that the experiences he has had up until now, although in danger, are not closed hermetically to him forever. The import of the year is presaged by the experience Elyot has on his arrival. Again the sea, that "mediating agent between life and death"[16] is present:

> It swam up out of a green sea that was half the shimmer of reflected trees and half the blur of physical exhaustion. But none of the radiance of light, the melting colour in the sea of glass, concealed from the swimmer his own dejection. There are moments when the human mind admits its own shadowiness. And it was one of these.
>
> Leaving behind all sense of geographical ties at Aachen, Elyot Standish found himself floating, placeless, timeless, there was no end to his present or past fluidity, there was no connexion between himself and any of the intervening years. There were even few significant points, forming out of this void. An afternoon standing on the edge of an almost circular bay, fingering a smooth and reddish stone. The bay had dimension, the stone a certain solidity. Then the years flattened out into a general monotony of time, broken by a few twinges of pain, the transitory and intensely personal hells of school. (p. 116)

During his stay in Germany, Elyot enters upon two important relationships, one positive and the other negative. The negative one is with the daughter of Frau Fiesel, Hildegard. To begin with Elyot thinks he is in love with her. However, he is soon able to realize that there is a certain falseness in her, and that he has been enlisted

in "an illegitimate cause," which points to "an Elyot Standish as false as Hildegard" (p. 132). The full realization that he is free from her hold on him comes as he enters the living-room on Christmas Eve where the family is sitting like a "gaggle of old geese, that he could not help despising, he had to, he wanted to sing out above the cackle of old voices, because he was free, he was free" (p. 130).

On the other hand, Elyot's relationship with Onkel Rudi grows almost imperceptibly, as he becomes aware at the same time of Hildegard's falseness. Onkel Rudi is associated with a phrase from Bach which seems almost a *leitmotif*, in the manner of the *petite phrase* in Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu*. He "sat inside a palisade of Bach" (p. 128). As Elyot finds himself less and less willing to give "perpetual assurance" to Hildegard, he clings more and more "to a saving phrase of Bach" (p. 128), coming from Onkel Rudi's room. He soon realizes that in fact "there was a secret tie, an understanding between Onkel Rudi and himself" (p. 131). On the eve of Elyot's departure, Onkel Rudi's voice again "swelled into the phrase of Bach. You could hear it behind the closed door. It opened out in Onkel Rudi's room. And you suddenly felt firm behind the little picket fence planted by the voice, by the phrase of Bach" (p. 136). That phrase of Bach becomes a kind of touchstone for Elyot. It has "a purpose, a stability that translates itself into your hands perhaps even an ultimate pattern, woven partly from mistakes" (p. 136).

Although Elyot refers to this as a "dead year" (p. 136), he has at least come to the realization that "there is a kind of connexion between all positive moments," and that they "are also interchangeable"

(p. 135). The adjective "positive" is an important one for Elyot. In his mind it is closely associated with living. He has already used it at the beginning to refer to the "positive people" and the "positive lives" that were connected with the house in Ebury Street. He uses it again that last evening as he realizes that "the shadow in the glass" is yet to be explained, "in spite of the moments of positive experience that bring conviction" (p. 135).

The second important intuition that comes to Elyot that evening of rebirth is that of the pre-ordained pattern. The teleological impulse in White is manifest here and in several other places in *The Living and the Dead*. One senses that the pattern formed by life is part of White's "religion of becoming," each significant bit of one's life fits like a cog into the larger pattern, which, when one becomes aware of it, leads to the country of the "living." In this connexion Julia is again important because the "pattern that Julia made continued because of and yet apart from the lives of others in the house" (p. 145). Elyot is aware, at least to some extent, of the rôle of the pattern even as early as when Eden finishes school. He realizes she is somehow different, that she "had fitted herself into a fresh pattern" (p. 166). Connie Tiarks, who is eventually associated with the "living" is, on occasion, depicted in terms of a state of "becoming." Elyot "remembered her chiefly as a creature of transit. Her hands were always on the verge of reaching for gloves" (p. 149). As well, Connie sees the pattern of things: "I like to think things are inevitable, Elyot, she said" (p. 151). On the contrary, "dead" Maynard

"remained unchanged" (p. 153). Although he goes off to New York to start a new life, there is no "becoming" here.

Upon his return to England from Germany, Elyot goes up to Cambridge. From this point on he seems to forget all the insights he has had. At Cambridge he learns to enjoy his dusty scholarship and prefers the seclusion of his box-like room to the establishment of personal relationships. This is obvious even to his mother who tells her friends he is a scholar, that he has a "devotion to the dust" (p. 17). For Elyot, this attitude, once

> [a]dopted as a defence, becomes a habit. Like the intellectual puzzle as a substitute for living, which you chose deliberately. . . . Contact with the living moment that you watched in your shirt-sleeves from an upper window, the vague formless moments in the street made you recoil inside your shirt, too conscious of your own confused flesh. (p. 174)

He has, like Muriel Raphael, accepted "the dictatorship of the mind" (p. 221).

The relationships he does establish fail to develop. One of these relationships is with Muriel Raphael, with whom he falls in love, or at least thinks he does. The images surrounding Muriel are all hard ones. She is associated with the cold beauty of precious stones: "She froze at the shoulders in little sprays of crystalline flowers (p. 204); her dress has a "steely texture" as it moves "with her body, metal-plated" (p. 209); later she sits "straight and lacquered, lacquered all over like her hat, altogether brittle" (p. 222). She frequently produces "the flash and snap of a metallic smile" (p. 260). On one occasion, when Elyot has visited Muriel's flat, she becomes "busy among her possessions. He had become one of these possessions,

inanimate on a field of black glass. " (p. 267) Both here and earlier, eating at the Café Vendôme with Muriel, Elyot has been associated with black, the colour of prime matter, signifying "the soul in its original condition."[17] Elyot has yet to progress beyond the primal state, though it is clearly within his reach. Personal relationships are, for Muriel, practical arrangements; she keeps "emotion at a distance" (p. 293). After making love with her, Elyot finally becomes disgusted with himself. He is not quite sure why, although he seems to see a light moving just out of reach at the end of a dark perspective, and "the face remembered from a dream" (p. 268). As he leaves her flat, "his hands trembled for something, for a mystery behind the wall, that was still untouched. The days were full of objects that hinted at a correspondence" (p. 168). Muriel typifies the "dictatorship of the mind"; for her there is no "mystery behind the wall" since

> she had proved the superiority of the objective, the intellectual approach. Mozart had become a neat mathematical pattern that stimulated without disturbing. . . . There was nothing unexplained. A Mozart symphony left Muriel clear-eyed, satisfied. It was, she felt, a triumph of accomplished intellect. (p. 292)

This "mathematical pattern" is not the same as the teleological pattern of life which is anything but mathematical. Elyot becomes frustrated. When he thinks he has penetrated to her core he finds only glass--hard, brittle, impenetrable glass, not the clear glass of openness. This glass has a "passive elegance" which Elyot would fain have broken in an attempt to "rouse an element of fear or surprise, some sigh of the spontaneous" (p. 293). Elyot's insight shows that he is gradually

working towards his rebirth. It is interesting to note the hint at antinomy here: the "pattern" and the glass, both of which have two different meanings. White keeps his readers constantly aware of his three themes.

Elyot is finally able to break his relationship with Muriel when he discovers that the little glass box that he had been convinced she sent him was not in fact from her at all, but from Connie Tiarks. The discovery is like the "discarding [of] an illusion [and] recovering part of yourself" (p. 295). At this point her voice shrivels, and "Muriel Raphael and all that she implied was dead little more than a lingering disgust" (pp. 295-96). The clue of the face from the dream which he had earlier seems to indicate that this insight is the product of Elyot's night-long journey into his unconscious, uniting the incident with the theme of rebirth, as well as with the other two themes of opposites and "becoming."

By now, even though he has not yet completed the process of becoming which ends with his rebirth as he emerges from the house at the end of the novel, Elyot has begun to realize that Muriel as well as the Blenkinsops, whose friend she is, are not the company he should seek. Adelaide Blenkinsop, we are told, "spoke with the mouth of death" (p. 305). A Spaniard whom Elyot met at the Blenkinsops once referred to their society as "an elaborate charade that meant something once, a long time ago" (p. 214). Elyot has an inkling that he should be trying to find "a substance for which the symbols stood" (p. 214). Later he recalls a conversation he had with the Spaniard:

> As if the Spaniard were presenting the choice of the two ways, the living or the dead. You wanted instinctively to close the eyes, like Adelaide and Gerald, like Muriel, or the ranks of red suburban houses, smothered in a plush complacency. Because the alternative, to recognize the pulse beyond the membrane, the sick heartbeat, or the gangrenous growth, this was too much, even at the risk of sacrificing awareness and the other moments, the drunken, disorderly passions of existence, that created, but at the same time consumed. (p. 305)

Already, in this paragraph, we can see the awakening awareness of the new Elyot Standish in his attempts to resolve some of the opposites by which he is surrounded. The following paragraph, with its reference to the epigraph from Helvétius, underlines this incipient awareness:

> This morning it was as clear as a glass, if the choice no less bewildering. To recognize sickness and accept the ecstasy. He could not walk far enough, hold the miles between himself and what he saw. Standing still the muscles quivered, not altogether with the distance. (p. 305)

The "sickness" and the "ecstasy" are the "*douleur*" and the "*plaisir*" of Helvétius. Perhaps the "*principes simples*" of resolution are not far away. At least by this point Elyot knows "there is something that ha[s] to be faced" (p. 305).

Both Elyot's loves have been unsuccessful, not only because he chose people who were not able to reach out to him, because dead themselves, but also because he has not yet fully realized his potential as a human being. The biggest advance he has made up to now is the breakup with Muriel. Elyot's blindness about Muriel is the reason that he has not been able to reach out to Connie Tiarks and her message of love, the glass box.

While Elyot is at Cambridge, Connie has re-established herself as a family friend. At the Macarthy's she has already been seen as a

potentially "living" character. Finding themselves "both close together against the sky," she and Elyot share an exhilarating experience at the top of a mulberry tree. "Their silence was mutual

[Connie] was quite content, because she was Connie Tiarks, with the mere privilege of existence" (p. 105). However, Elyot now finds it hard to talk to her, even though her presence in Ebury Street has become almost a ritual. She has become a companion and spends her life writing letters about other people's lives. Nevertheless, as with Elyot, the love and emotion within her are not entirely stifled. Connie's problem is that she is "frightened of her own body, still desiring to give when nobody would take" (p. 225). Connie has begun spending certain Sundays at Ebury Street. After a particularly uncomfortable dinner where the conversation centres around lost causes, Elyot retreats upstairs. He becomes "isolated, in the lit box of his own room" (p. 301). The fact that the box is lit shows the beginning of enlightenment on Elyot's part. However, in spite of this, all the emotions and frustrations that he has poured into the room go "no farther" (p. 302).

> You remained intact. You could not speak the language of their emotions, share the mass sympathies and fears. You had no relationship with these. (p. 302)

Here Elyot falls asleep and his dreams become "the allegory of waking" (p. 302), anticipating his later reawakening amongst the "living." The sleep also has the allegorical function of representing his lack of insight, his sojurn among the "dead." In his dream he sees that there are many roads to the clarity of the glass:

> he was walking in the field which was where he lost, beyond the white cocoon, when others asked a priest or went to Spain, there were many roads out of the field of sleep, the difficulty was to choose . . . and the sleeping figures, your own, lay in the white cocoon . . . it was a destruction of the superfluous, either the priest or the glass box . . . the necessity, if I do not do this you said, if not the singing priest the no more love . . . and losing the face, it was the face of Joe, they had lopped the tree, it lay in blood, you could not touch, because the eyes, your eyes, because the mirror that moved too clearly to, that saw too clearly right down to the heart . . . it was the clearness that revolted, that you didn't want to see, you put up a hand to hide your own bones and a transparent fruitless egg. (p. 302)

The clarity achieved in the dream is, to a degree, maintained the next morning. Elyot is surprised to discover that the sounds of the house and the street "were no longer irritating, not like the times he ground his fists against his ears to make for himself a layer of silence against the outer world" (pp. 302-2). He continues in this enlightened vein:

> Either you begin to accept the insignificance of your own activities inside a larger pattern, or it was just plain indifference. Or not this. Indifference implied an end, and this was a period of waiting. You could feel the waiting. For a cataclysm perhaps. All round you there was pointed evidence of your own anachronistic activity. But of temporary anachronism like the livid moments that were gathered together again in sleep, into one vast anachronism of behaviour. It was also, in a way, a summing up, but without the finality of this. There was always the prospect of morning. (p. 303)

The "anachronistic" behaviour seems to indicate the reliving of the experience itself. Most of the experiences Elyot relives occur at two different time levels simultaneously: the moment of the original experience as well as of the relived one. Elyot's perception grows as he progresses through his life, and the incidents are related with a

growing sense of understanding, ending just prior to his reawakening with his return to the station where there are "no barriers to recognition."

On this particular morning as Elyot leaves the house, water is profusely evident:

> He went outside. There were the streets he took, past water, chimney and water and the little pools of mist that lay still in Battersea, close to earth or water. The world was partly soluble . . . . and the gardeners in their shiny gumboots bedding out plants in full bloom. Water wound about the paths. Close to his face a dampness of leaves. . . . So much was going on what was perhaps pertinent to yourself, as to other people, it was the same story, the same desire, that linked Joe Barnett and the saxophonist in the night club voice. No more love she sang. It settled like the mist on water. It became the unconscious comment of a conscience. It ran in syncopated undertone, behind the personal aspiration . . . . And under a spring sky, the chimneys pointed at an illusion of their own solidity and greatness. (p. 304)

The mention of the unconscious in conjunction with water indicates the importance of this passage in Elyot's progress. Water is frequently a symbol of the unconscious, where the beginnings of enlightenment must be found. The chimneys too seem to be important. Pillars of one kind or another are often found at the point of the mystical Centre, joining the physical and material worlds. This is a concept that becomes much more important in later works, especially *The Eye of the Storm*. If the symbolism of the chimneys does not extend here to include the mystical Centre, the chimneys themselves certainly indicate a striving upwards towards enlightenment.

In spite of Elyot's apparent lack of interest in her, Connie does not give up. Her feelings towards him culminate in one "moment of elation" (p. 231). Convinced that he will know who has sent it, she buys a glass box for Elyot and sends it to him anonymously. However, Elyot assumes it is from Muriel. The association of Muriel with a closed box is not an unnatural one, but this box is translucent. It is a box from which the outside world is not essentially hidden. When the truth finally comes to light, Elyot is distraught and cannot reach out and help Connie. He is experiencing one of the many troughs in the pattern of wave-like crests and troughs that lead up to his rebirth. He rejects her even as she pleads with him that she could help, "We're not meant to live in isolation. We're--I could love you, she gasped" (p. 341). Elyot's rejection is too much for her: "Connie Tiarks died in the silence that she left" (p. 342). However, Elyot's rejection does Connie some good. She has not been able to love Harry Allgood because of her love for Elyot. Now that she has been brutally rejected by Elyot, she is "sucked into the vortex of Victoria" (p. 343), experiencing her moment of symbolic spiritual death. Like Elizabeth Hunter in a later novel, Connie finds herself at a mystical Centre, the "vortex." After waiting "for a sign, the waiting that became a window opening in a midland morning" (p. 343), she emerges "altered by the sudden storm a different person" (p. 344). She goes to a phone booth full of clear glass which is just like the little box she has sent Elyot. She phones Harry and presses Button A, opening up communication with him.

Later, thinking of his mother lying dead upstairs, Elyot begins the rise to another crest. He becomes aware that:

> outside there was a cracking, a splitting of the darkness, that dismissed the two alternatives. He still failed to grasp, but beyond the rotting and the death there was some suggestion of growth. He waited for this in a state of expectation. He waited for something that would happen to him, that would happen in time, there was no going to meet it. (pp. 344-45)

Other characters in the novel besides Elyot and Connie slide back and forth on the ladder of the "living" and the "dead." One of these is Elyot's mother, Mrs Standish. When we first encounter her, at the beginning of Elyot's reminiscences, she is Kitty Goose, daughter of the Norfolk saddler who has sensitive hands and who, in his simple way, is aware of the polarities of this world and man's need to incorporate both the physical and the spiritual. He reminds Kitty that "there's a belly as well as a soul" (p. 24). Up until her marriage, Kitty seems to fall very much on the side of the living. She is intelligent, sensual and has "potentialities as an individual" (p. 26). She is exhilarated by motion and wind. Her first visit to Willy's house firmly establishes the Standish family, on the other hand, on the side of the "dead." On entering the house, Kitty immediately feels "like a thief" (p. 37). She feels like an "intruder" amongst all the silver. Mrs Standish wears a "slate-coloured dress. She was grey and distant

> Her teeth seized a word and worried it. There was a perpetual killing of words. " (p. 34)

Once married, Kitty becomes not just Mrs Standish, but Catherine

Standish. She herself is aware that her "mind had always been something of a double exposure" (p. 218). Thus it is not surprising that her life reflects the conflicting aspects of the "living" and the "dead." Nor is it surprising in this context to note the importance of the name change, a shift frequently underlined by White. Names are important for him: Kitty Goose is light and lively as a goose; Catherine Standish is not. Indeed, the name Standish sounds static, all the more so when one realizes that the word "standish" itself means a kind of container or enclosure. Whenever there is some insight on the part of Catherine Standish, White refers to her as Kitty, or Kate. Gradually she succumbs to a persona that is begun almost deliberately after her marriage. Life becomes a game for her, "You played the charade for all you were worth, ignoring the moments of uncertainty" (p. 37). She begins to associate more and more with her house, "assuming the character of Mrs Standish, the possessor of an empty house" (p. 40), and she determines "not to look backward into her mind" (p. 41). This process is momentarily interrupted by her pregnancy. When she realizes she is pregnant, "she was a shimmer of phosphorescent green" (p. 41). The presence of life within her causes her to return to the more positive attitudes of Kitty Goose. She can see herself for what she has become:

> Kitty looked at her, or this Mrs Standish, with her freshly acquired importance, looked at all the Maudie Westmacotts and decided in one swoop that she disliked her sex. All the artifices, telephones and otherwise, were only coatings to this dislike. Now she sat back. She could afford to. If only it had happened before, if only she had had the courage to admit. (p. 45)

Even her friend Aubrey Silk tells her that "[h]aving a child improves you" (p. 48). However, once Elyot is born, "Mrs Standish resumed the building of a protective cocoon inside the reduced body of her house

subtle layers of its cocoon" (p. 63). By the time Eden is born, Mrs Standish is rather awed by her children who seem to be growing away from her as separate entities beyond her restricted reach. At times she feels she would like to "pull the veil away from [her] children's faces" (p. 139), but at the same time as wanting to, she is unable to.

However, towards the end of her life a coincidence gives her one more chance to return to the land of the "living." This coincidence is closely connected with the glass box Connie sends to Elyot. The moment of elation that Connie had experienced the day she bought the box is soon dissipated as she inadvertently leaves the box behind, in an addressed package, while buying some oranges. It is found by the person who will come closest to restoring Catherine Standish to Kitty Goose before her death. This person is Wally Collins, an American saxophonist. Buying some oranges on an impulse, he finds the package and decides to deliver it. In this way he meets Mrs Standish. The first description of Wally walking down the street before coming upon the fruit barrow links him unconditionally with the "living." Things could bore him, but he is alive to the sensual in his surroundings. He finds

> a sense of well-being in the gaudy streets, a kind of oxygen absorbed. Just to walk down a pavement under neon, his hat, the brim curled like a leaf, stuck at the back of his head, the elbows cocked, swaying at the hips. Just to walk down the King's Road on a certain afternoon this was renewal, just to

> feel the hustling of the air, it was a kind of blank content. (p. 232)

As Mrs Standish gets to know Wally better, she becomes more and more aware of how the cocoon she deliberately built around herself has separated her from "the sensual details among which she felt herself at home" (p. 239). At the same time, however, she is aware that "these had been removed by the laws of nature to a point that was almost beyond her reach" (p. 239).

Wally is a "simple creature" (p. 243) and it is the simple, non-intellectual, non-rationalizing people in White's fiction who are closest to the core of their being. When Wally plays his saxophone he feels "sexually satisfied without sex [with] that warm throbbing in his belly, and in his genitals, a kind of numb urgency. The veins in relief upon his neck, the fixed eyes, could not give too much in concentration to some supreme, orgasmic moment in the music. He floated. " (p. 258) This open, communicative person always keeps the doors of his flat symbolically ajar. Nevertheless, in spite of the tingling she feels in her skin when Wally makes love to her, Catherine cannot quite reach far enough inside herself. She hopes that "somewhere, something, out of all this she would grope towards her self, just not lost, pick it up with the discarded clothes. To lose yourself. This was the ultimate but ineffectual aim" (p. 281). However, she senses her "imposture" (p. 283); realizes it is late, and that Wally's benefit, in the end, will be "ineffectual." It is significant that although Wally calls her Kate, he never does go so far as to call her Kitty.

During her final meeting with Wally, at a party, she does, in fact, get drunk and suffer a descent into the utterly physical, the simple: "She was the frayed end of a cigarette, the greenish-yellow olive stone, these were the remains of Catherine Standish, if only they would cremate these, she felt" (p. 326). These images belong to the core of her being. She has some insight when she feels it is "happening inside. It all happens from the inside out" (p. 326). Finally, she "pitched forward, a red and golden meteor that was past directing, even if this had been desired" (p. 326). Nevertheless, in spite of seeming a "red and golden meteor," colours that symbolize insight and the transformation of the base metal into gold, and in spite of the pervading symbol of the carved elephants on the mantle which indicate the "power of the libido"[18] as well as wisdom and pity, she is still "past directing"; it is too late for her.

From this time on she is more or less bedridden, dying from cancer; she has moments of revelatory hallucination when whe walks "with her hands empty in a world that was too full" (p. 330). She suffers "endless agony" (p. 131). For White, one of the prerequisites of insight is suffering. Although it is not clear, perhaps Mrs Standish does reach some final insight on her death. Her illness has definitely "peeled away the outer skin. She could watch things beating through a final membrane" (p. 331). Although to the end she remains Mrs Standish and does not become Kitty, she is, nevertheless, "not herself" when she does die:

> Too poignant or too irrelevant the physical world,
> reduced, like the golden blur on the window sill.
> Mrs Standish opened her eyes. Her body drifted in

> the stream that was not herself, gentle and inevitable. (p. 335)

Mrs Standish's life forms a contrast with her son's. As Elyot relives his experiences, suffering through them again, to rise finally on the other side, more in touch with himself than ever, so his mother is caught in a "downward spiral."[19] Her emotional shallowness prevents her from profiting completely from the archetypal experiences she encounters in her life, in spite of the headstart she had. She fails in all her rôles. Beatson believes that her lack of appropriate emotional response destroys her much as the cancer destroys her physically. I cannot entirely concur with this verdict. Nevertheless, although her cancer can easily be taken as symbolic of her spiritual disease, it seems to me that the fuller realization that she gleans at the end of her life has brought her closer to this insight. After all her experience with Wally "was like living again" (p. 256). When she listens to him play she does feel the "tonal undergrowth" (p. 256); but, nevertheless, the operative word in all this is "like." She cannot respond in full; and, indeed, she does die as Mrs Standish and not as Kitty.

Like her mother Eden starts her life with a full potential for understanding. Her name, like the name Kitty Goose, has significance with its obvious association with creativity and purity in the Christian mystical Centre of the Garden of Eden. Eden is able to recognize that the "most important things only happened in a flash" (p. 144), and on hearing a Welshman sing in the street she hears "not so much in her ear, as right inside her. " (p. 146) But, like

Elyot and her mother, she cannot always reach out: "Sometimes she could not lift a hand, she felt she would go to the grave like this, the hand unlifted" (p. 148). At this point she is on a "downward spiral," caught up in her disastrous affair with Maynard, who "enjoys" music intellectually, not "right inside" him. In addition, with Maynard, Eden's "life had divided into three distinct and unrelated zones. " (p. 155) Later in the same paragraph, we see that Eden equates her own breathing with the fragility of the "Bavarian music box" in her room. The presence in the same paragraph of a box and the three very different zones of Eden's life is not insignificant. Here the boxes are separate and distinct. Here there is no "infinity of boxes". The affair ends with a trip to Dieppe which parallels her mother and father's trip there years before. It has the same effect on Eden as it had on Catherine Standish. Eden feels the same suffocation in Dieppe as her mother did: she feels surrounded by "the disgusting, the nauseating aspect of the human ego" (p. 160). She seems almost to have reached the nadir of her experiences. But it is not enough simply to break with Maynard. She has become pregnant and must suffer the mental and physical agony of an abortion. The abortion is a symbol of death. But at the same time it also rids her of the association with the stolid, "dead" Maynard. However, the result of the trip to Dieppe for Catherine was that she "she resumed the building of a protective cocoon " (p. 63) around herself. Not so with Eden. After her trip and the abortion which is a direct result of it, she walks, "her strange new feet testing the pavement, entering a fresh phase" (p. 171).

Convalescing from the experience of the abortion, Eden spends some time on the Continent with the Blenkinsops. Her "new phase" emanates so obviously from her that even Adelaide, "more by chance than by insight, [says that] if you touched Eden you might get burnt" (p. 180). *The Burnt Ones* is the title of a collection of White's short stories. In it the "burnt ones" are the "living."

Eden is now ready for her relationship with Joe Barnett, Julia's cousin. Joe is a down-to-earth person in touch with the simple reality of things. "He took pleasure in familiar things, the clear grain of wood planed in his workshops. ." pp. 193-94) Joe is immediately seen to be the opposite of Maynard:

> It was strange. It was a silence between you that you did not know how to break. You waited, hoping for some communicative language. Then you began to know. It was not so much from remarks. But you knew. You knew that this was a familiar presence . . . . It was like pitching straight into what was already a common life. (p. 188)

This is the "common life" of the "living," the "burnt ones." Joe feels that Eden is "connected with the right side of things, the moments inside you that made you know rightness must predominate. It was a state where there was no fencing off of things" (p. 195). Eden and this simple carpenter find that they can communicate "in their own silence, in more than words" (p. 252). But most important, "he believed in the living as opposed to the dead" (p. 270). As it grows, their relationship is overlooked by mandalas, particularly in the form of the two gasometers that watch over many of their walks and talks. In the light at the foot of these gasometers, Eden tells Joe she wants "to unite those who have the capacity for living to oppose them to

the destroyers, to the dealers in words, to the diseased, to the most fatally diseased--the indifferent. "(p. 254) Because, as she has just said, "[w]e were not born to indifference. Indifference denies all the evidence of life" (p. 254).

Yet Joe, too, even as closely allied to the spiritual as he is, must share in the disgustingly physical. On a walk they come across a dead dog, its guts hanging out, frozen. Joe must make himself look; he must come to grips with it. That night they spend together at a small inn. Contrary to the emotionally sterile night spent with Maynard, this night is fraught with mandalas: the name of the house--Mon Repos; the Hovis sign hanging in the window; the half-crown; the "air of a vault" (p. 274) that overhangs the house; the dome of coloured sand; the certificate for bell-pulling; the glass cruet. Eden realizes that her relationship with Joe gives "her life a form, a substance, she could touch it, touch herself, in a way she never could with Maynard or any of the others" (p. 274). Thus Eden goes forth, perhaps into the darkness, certainly to "an intenser form of living," and is not, as Robert Johnson thinks, "defeated, or at least severely thwarted by forces outside [herself] and by forces inside [herself]."[20] After all, as we have seen, she has already concluded that there is a "beginning in an end" (p. 312).

Joe is a very important character. He has a profound effect on Elyot as well as on Eden. Not long after Eden meets Joe, Mrs Standish sends Elyot on an errand to Julia's. When he arrives he finds that Julia is not there. Instead, he is taken to Joe's workshop. Their greeting is a silent one. Elyot immediately feels this meeting is

"satisfying, like arriving from abroad after a long time. (p. 201) The meeting is significant not only because of their silent recognition of a positive relationship, but also because it brings to Elyot's mind important past incidents. Recollection of these moments represents a step upward on the path of rebirth. Each step may, as Beatson reminds us, be followed by a trough, but, nevertheless, each one goes a bit beyond the previous one. As with each of these significant episodes, here too we find the presence of water:

> He remembered also occasions in a country lane walking against the sky . . . . there was a mystery of juxtaposition abroad which Elyot Standish had forgotten to suspect. He had begun to arrange his life in numbered pages. He had rejected the irrational aspect of the cramped houses, the possibility of looking inward and finding a dark room. Just as he had forgotten how he lay on the sand at Ard's Bay, feeling a blaze of sun in his dissolving bones. (p. 198)

Not only is the life-giving water of Ard's Bay present in this recollection, but also the open vault of the blue sky, as well as the golden sun. The sun, of course, is life-giving. Its colour is that of the end product of the alchemical transformation. In Jungian terms blue represents the thinking side of nature and the gold or yellow of the sun--the intuitive side. The juxtaposition of both these opposites is as necessary to man as the fact that their opposition must be in some way resolved.

One day Joe goes to visit Julia in Ebury Street when Elyot is working upstairs. As Julia goes up to take Elyot his tea, Joe recalls the evening when Elyot came to his workshop as "the moment of understanding" (p. 248). This comment is followed by a description of

Elyot working on his recalcitrant notes. He is trying unsuccessfully to shut out the outside (and hence, paradoxically, the inner world). He is distracted by "a distant shore, on which the hands pressed, the wave of sound swept, the voices that he wanted to trace, to walk out, to follow some thread of sound in the street on which no one could impose a limit" (pp. 248-48). On learning who has arrived, he invites Joe up. Upstairs in Elyot's box-like room their meeting is more tentative than the previous one. However, at last, the "fresh smell of glue reached out. They began to exchange words" (p. 250). In spite of this tentative communication, though, the atmosphere of Elyot's room imposes:

> It was an occasion of words or embarrassment. There was no alternative. As if there ever was, Elyot felt. Or else there was something else in Eden's reach that was beyond his own. There were the two countries of different moons, the different languages, intuitive and reasoned. He touched the lid of the glass box. It had become a symbol. It was like the words, the symbols you exchanged, Elyot Standish and Muriel Raphael, the symbols of finite knowledge. The moment in Crick's workshop was, after all, no verge of discovery, passing from his closed hands. (p. 250)

Here too the intuitive and reasoned are juxtaposed. Nevertheless, when Joe goes to leave, Elyot wants to cry out to him that it is possible for them to communicate: "if only this, the universality of two people, surely Joe Barnett, it is possible to learn" (p. 250). This latent link which has been established between them becomes concrete when Joe comes again to visit Elyot to tell him that he has to leave almost immediately for Spain. This time Elyot feels they are "closely united. The distance of the carpet was cancelled out" (p. 306).

Tensely he waits for Joe to tell him "because something was also happening in yourself, a stirring, had been going on all day" (p. 307). Joe tries to express his love for Eden, but there is not much to say: "It was something that you knew. It was in your bones" (p. 308). As Elyot contacts Eden on the telephone to tell her of Joe's decision, the circular mandala is again present, this time in the form of the "little white disc the white enamel circle" (p. 309) of the clock dial. When he meets Eden to tell her the news, they walk out into the street, "associating their bodies, making a relationship" (p. 310).

It is significant that, just prior to Joe's visit, Elyot has been musing about the Blenkinsops and the conversation, already quoted (on p. 36 of this study), that he had with the Spaniard about the choice between the way of the "living" and the way of the "dead." This passage is closely linked with one that is found two pages further on where Elyot realizes something has been going on that day which has to do with his accepting emotions, both the "sickness" and the "ecstasy," which, in their turn, both create and consume.

The announcement of Joe's death in Spain leads directly to Eden's decision to follow him there, and hence the return, full circle, to the station. This decision is Eden's final surge into enlightenment. Joe's death might be seen by some as futile, but "the many Joe Barnetts the drops that fill the bucket" (p. 354), as she tells her brother will, one feels, in the end, be significant. Elyot recognizes that

> Eden had already undergone some process of physical destruction. She was convinced of the rightness of this, just as you were convinced there was some other way, not so very different perhaps, the means different, if not the end. You were aware of the same end. The archetypal enemies were the stultifying, the living dead. The living chose to oppose these, either in Eden's way, by the protest of self-destruction, or by what, by what, if not an intenser form of living. (p. 354)

Eden's route is not Elyot's, but now, oat the station, he is ready to go forth in his way into an "intenser form of living" [b]ecause in a minute, standing on a station platform you could relive a whole existence" (p. 355). Elyot now realizes there are "moments on railway platforms, when there are no barriers to recognition" (p. 356).

The mandalic circle of the novel is complete as Elyot muses again about the Chinese boxes and the paragraph from the beginning is repeated. The following morning as Elyot boards a bus, the darkness is still there, but there are "threads that moved across the darkness, joining its component parts. There was no end to darkness, but there was no end also to its unity. " (p. 358) It is not significant, as Thelma Herring contends, that we do not see him experiencing this intenser form of life. She believes that "nothing in the novel leads us to believe him capable of it."[21] I have tried to show that, on the contrary, much of Elyot's life has prepared him for an "intenser form of living," and that it is his overnight descent into his unconscious, reliving these significant experiences, which does most definitely lead him into the realm of the "living" and their intenser form of life.

The nature of the experience in *The Living and the Dead* depends upon Elyot's ability to work his way back to the core of his being

himself, in the "world of hidden answers" (p. 75), "into some distant country where there were answers" (p. 175). Early in his dream-like reliving of his past, he realizes the essentially solitary nature of this search: "You begin to feel it was you that mattered, it was only you, not prayers, or Julia, that paved the way to morning" (p. 79). Morning for Elyot brings some unity in the darkness, some unity between the paradoxes expressed by Helvétius. It is actually not surprising that White dealt with these opposites in this early work. In his autobiographical musings, *Flaws in the Glass*, he says, "In early manhood I began to see that the external world was no other than the dichotomy of light and darkness I sensed inside me."[22] Even in this early novel, the resolution must be found, but as yet the profounder unity of body and soul, physical and spiritual, conscious and unconscious mind, does not take paramount precedence over other more worldly dichotomies, though Grandpa Goose does hint at this to his daughter. To say that the symbols of unity are as mundane as a gasometer or a half-crown piece is not to say that they are any the less significant. In his study of images and symbols, Mircea Eliade says:

> In order to survive, the Images take on 'familiar' shapes. They are of no less interest for all that. These degraded images present to us the only possible point of departure for the spiritual renewal of modern man. It is of the greatest importance, we believe, to rediscover a whole mythology, if not a theology, still concealed in the most ordinary, everyday life of modern man; it will depend on himself whether he can work his way back to the source and rediscover the profound meanings of all these faded images and damaged myths. But let no one object that these relics are of no interest to modern

> man, that they belong to a 'superstitious past' happily liquidated by the nineteenth century.[23]

This quotation is significant in terms of *The Living and the Dead*, a novel which does not display many of the highly archetypal or anagogic meanings of White's later work, but which, nevertheless, leads in this direction. In *The Living and the Dead*, being able to reach out and touch the inner reality of another human being--to love in the fullest sense of the word--is important. Nevertheless, as both Joe and Eden demonstrate in the end, this love must be sacrificed to a final unity. Beatson reminds us that

> Love for the individual, with the promise of individual happiness that accompanies it must be sacrificed, in the last stage of the cycle, for love of something impersonal that exists on a higher plane.[24]

Although the idea of sacrifice is much more closely associated with White's later thought, it is, nevertheless, significant here. Eden, who sacrifices both her unborn child and her love for Joe, has already become aware of this. On returning from a Sunday in the country, she passes a tinkers' camp from which emanates a feeling of life lived "too fully." She stops and rests her head on the wet bark of a tree: "Out of this world you could feel a purpose forming" (p. 330). Part of this purpose is sacrifice:

> The stripping of the bough was a sacrifice. To dictate this to the heart, impress it on the mind, is necessary, she felt . . . . it is the only way, I must blot out all memory of touch, or the more intimate moments of silence. (p. 330)

Joe is vitally committed to the political ideas of freedom. He believes in these ideals and, in the end, he sacrifices human happiness with Eden to them. Connie Tiarks sacrifices her love for Elyot and

this act enables her to reach out to Harry Allgood. Elyot himself sacrifices his dusty notes and the security of the self-contained box of his room for the "infinity of purpose" of the Chinese boxes, enabling him to see himself as "uniting the themes of so many other lives" (p. 357).

For Elyot, as for his mother and other White protagonists to come, the road to enlightenment is "from the inside out" (p. 326). The pattern of the "religion of becoming" is gradually formed, led perhaps in this case by those "red threads that move across the darkness, uniting its component parts" (p. 358). In realizing his connexions with other human beings, dead and alive, Elyot "realizes himself as a whole universal being."[25] These words come from Eliade, but apply directly to the new Elyot. Eliade continues in a vein that is eminently applicable to Elyot:

> Even his sleep, even his orgiastic tendencies are charged with spiritual significance. By the simple fact that, at the heart of his being, he rediscovers the cosmic rhythms, the alternations of day and night, for instance or of winter and summer, he comes to a more complete knowledge of his own destiny and significance.[26]

Thus Elyot's sleep during the night that covers the actual time span of the book is "charged with spiritual significance." The "cosmic rhythms" that Eliade refers to are in themselves dichotomies. White adds his own "cosmic rhythms" to the list: the "*plaisir*" and "*douleur*" of the epigraph, the "living" and the "dead" of the title, and the "ecstasy" and "sickness" of the text. The culmination of the process of rebirth is the uniting of these dichotomies in "*les principes*

simples," in a unifying, mandalic wholeness. Thus the three seeds of White's thought--opposites, becoming, and rebirth--inextricably intertwined as they are, are unmistakably sown in *The Living and the Dead*.

Chapter One

Notes

[1] White, *Flaws*, p. 77.

[2] Patrick White, *The Living and the Dead* (Harmondsworth, Mddx.: Penguin Books Ltd., 1967), p. 326. All subsequent references to this novel in this chapter will be noted in the text.

[3] Beatson, *Eye*, p. 6.

[4] M.H. Abrams, "Apocalypse: Theme and Variations", in *The Apocalypse in English Renaissance Thought and Literature*, eds. C.A. Patrides and Joseph Wittreich (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1984), p. 347.

[5] Jung, *Psychology and Religion*, p. 90.

[6] Carl Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*, trans., R.F.C. Hull, Vol. 1 of *The Collected Works of C.G. Jung*,; eds. Herbert Read *et al.*, Bollingen Series 20 (New York: Parthenon Books, 1953), p. 19.

[7] Beatson, *Eye*, p. 21.

[8] Barry Argyle, *Patrick White* (Edinburg: Oliver and Boyd, 1967), p. 18.

[9] Carl Jung, *Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, trans. F.C. Hull Vol. IX Pt.1 of *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, eds. Herbert Read *et al*, Bollingen Series XX (New York: Parthenon Press, 1959), p. 120.

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 121.

[11] J.E. Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, trans. Jack Sage (New York: Philosophical Library, 1971), p. 57.

[12] Eliade, p. 151.

[13] Beatson, *Eye*, p. 55.

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 54.

[15] Jung, *Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, p. 135 ff.

[16] Cirlot, p. 281.

[17] *Ibid.*, p. 6.

[18] Beatson, *Eye*, p. 54.

[19] *Ibid.*, p. 54.

[20] R.K. Johnson, "Patrick White and Theodora Goodman: Two Views of Reality," *Explorations* 6.2 (1979): 22.

[21] Thelma Herring, "Odyssey of a Spinster: A Study of *The Aunt's Story*," *Southerly* 25.1 (1965): 10.

[22] White, *Flaws*, p. 34.

[23] Eliade, pp. 18-9.

[24] Beatson, *Eye*, p. 48.

[25] Eliade, p. 35.

Chapter Two

Voss

Voss is the third book Patrick White published after *The Living and the Dead*. The two intervening books, *The Aunt's Story* and *Tree of Man*, are concerned respectively with madness and an epic view of the early settlement of Australia. Yet, intrinsically, both books deal with the themes introduced in *The Living and the Dead*: the juxtaposition of opposites, the religion of becoming, and rebirth. *Voss*, although based on historical fact, is, as Beatson points out, an intensely spiritual work, whose broad spiritual nature "permeates all characterization and action, controls the structure and finds conscious expression in poems, letters, dialogue and visionary outbursts".[1] Voss's character, his journey, and his relationship with his spiritual counterpart, Laura, are closely integrated with the visionary nature of the novel. Indeed, *Voss* seems to initiate White's more specific voyages of discovery by encompassing virtually all the paths to enlightenment found in the later novels: Neo-Platonism, Christianity, the Cabbala, alchemy, Jungian depth psychology and archetypal symbols, and myth. Each of these ways of thinking about life shows certain similarities with the others. White's interests are prolific and thus it is not surprising that he has found ideas that are congenial to him from such a wide range of material.

The plot of *Voss* is a very simple one, as befits the spiritual, indeed, mystical, work that it is. It involves the journey of a fictional Johann Ulrich Voss, German explorer of the nineteenth century, into the interior of Australia. It begins with the preparations for the journey in Sydney under the auspices of Mr Bonner in whose house Voss meets the woman who will "save" him, Laura Trevelyan. Voss's story is based on the real-life explorations of Ludwig Leichhardt. In interesting articles, both J.F. Burrows and Marcel Aurousseau have explored the relationship between the fictional Voss and his real-life counterpart.[2] In terms of this study, however, this relationship is of little significance.

In the main part of the novel, the growing relationship between Laura and Voss is described in chapters, or parts of chapters, that alternate between Sydney and the desert. Voss's journey involves the gathering together of the party which will finally comprise seven white men and two natives; the final preparations at the last posts of civilization, Rhine Towers and Jildra, and the progress towards final disaster. The chapters that cover life in Sydney tell of Laura's journey of the mind: her relationship with the pregnant maid, Rose Portion, whose orphaned child Laura adopts; Laura's illness and recovery; and her job as headmistress of a small girls' school. Some critics find the mystical and psychic relationship of Laura and Voss very difficult to accept. Notwithstanding, it seems to me that the strange marriage between Laura and Voss is completely believable on a

realistic level; indeed, their relationship is closer than that of many "real" marriages. Thus the novel functions on a real, or novelistic, level as well as on a metaphysical one.

John Colmer notes the "simple authenticity of the earlier descriptions"[3] which establishes from the beginning a believable novelistic environment. Everyday life and its preoccupations, social events and concerns in colonial Sydney come alive for the reader, and, indeed, the realistic descriptions of the preparations for the voyage, the increasingly difficult conditions encountered by the explorers in the interior, and the deteriorating relationships among them make the actual events of the novel readily acceptable. Nor does White forego his keen eye for social satire. Mrs Bonner's reaction to Rose's "problem" and her seeming inability to deal with it is one example. Another is her horrified reaction to the news that Laura has put this emancipist into the best room to have her baby. Names, too, are used satirically. The rich, fastidious, society doctor who is called in during Laura's illness is called Dr. Kilwinning!

The picnic with the Pringles is a marvel of satire. At the same time and without jarring, it sets Laura and Voss apart from the others as creatures of the air who seem to listen to the very presence of the others, and yet are dissociated from them. They are opposed in particular to the men "with leathery skins and isolated eyes"[4] who think and talk of nothing but sheep, the English packet and the weather, whose conversation is a "dialogue of almost mystical banality " (p. 61), and who, like Mr Bonner, when confronted with a choice between the "demonic

words" (p. 64) of the German and the sheep, side "finally with the sheep" (p. 64). The word "mystical" as it is used here at once sets the settlers irreparably apart from Laura and Voss who are the true mystics, showing, at the same time, in just what way they are different. Laura and Voss have a truly "mystical" relationship, united as they are at the picnic by the mandala symbols of pebbles and the sun. At one point Voss throws up a pebble "which had been changing colour in his hand, turning from pale lavender to purple, [catching] it before it reached the sun" (p. 62). Later they walk together "with their heads agreeably bowed beneath the sunlight. " (p. 68) However, this picture of union has already been prefigured at their very first meeting when they find themselves in "almost identical positions, on similar chairs, on either side of the generous window" (pp. 11-12). Thus, the unequivocal combination of real and mystical is established early and continues throughout the novel. Brissenden makes the point emphatically:

> [I]t is a book in which the author's idiosyncracies of style and his particular preoccupations all seem to work together to produce a richly harmonious and satisfying effect. *Voss* is a luminous work, in which the allegorical implications shimmer. The meaning, in short, even when most baldly stated, never seems imposed upon the narrative. [5]

Let us turn now to the presence of each of the three themes in *Voss*. In this novel there are many pairs of opposites that need resolution. The paradox of the "living" and the "dead" is presented early. At the Bonners' picnic Laura and Voss walk together through the trees: "The trees were leaning out towards them with slender needles of

dead green. Both the man and the woman were lulled with living inwardly " (p. 69) The phrases "dead green" and "living inwardly" exemplify very neatly the basic paradox of both main characters. Laura lives a mainly inward, seemingly "dead" life. In reality, however, it is just the opposite. For in the end she influences all those around her who have recognized their potential for "living". Moreover, green, the colour of life, is one of her favourite colours. Voss's fate is to die physically, yet to live on in his spirit that permeates the desert and affects those who are troubled by it. Thus both characters exemplify the combination of "living" and "dead" qualities found in the phrase "dead green."

Many other dichotomies are waiting for resolution in *Voss*. The precarious civilization of Sydney is opposed to the wilderness of the Australian interior. This paradox is resolved first in Laura who lives within the confines of Sydney society, but who has travelled into the "country of the mind" with Voss. The lush and somewhat mysterious garden of the Bonner's house is opposed to the dry, uncompromising desert into which Voss travels. The masculine Voss and the feminine Laura are joined in the symbolically androgynous spinster "mother" that Laura becomes. Laura's spiritual side finds its resolution in association with the very physical, earthy Rose Portion and her child, Mercy. Voss's spiritual nature finds itself embedded in the disgustingly physical when he tends LeMesurier through all the phases of his illness. The two groups that the expedition breaks into--Judd with Angus and Turner, and Voss with LeMesurier and Harry Robarts--are

described as oil and water which "will not run together" (p. 254). In one sense these two groups can be seen as representing respectively the ego and the psyche held together tenuously by Palfreyman.[6] That Palfreyman is the necessary link between the two groups is made clear by the fact that it is just after his death that the two groups split up, Judd's group intending to return to civilization. Beatson summarizes very succinctly the main dichotomies in *Voss*:

> *Voss* . . . clearly shows the constant dialectic between these opposite principles. On the one hand there are all the affirmations of life: roses, pregnancy, the beauty of the land under the transforming power of light, the glowing textures of parties, picnics and dances which are almost magic rites, and the presence of children in the closing paragraphs. Balancing these, however, are the *momenti mori* images of rock and bone, grey ash and cinders, skulls, sepulchres, cemeteries, gothic vaults, saints on slabs, rotting flesh and corpses. As the characters wind deeper into their suffering, this sepulchral atmosphere deepens. The *momenti mori* of European Catholicism and their gothic resonances blend with the death cults of the desert--the burial platforms, the spiritistic eschatology and the aboriginal Dreamtime--to evoke a new and extremely powerful Australian death mystery.[7]

In addition to these manifest dichotomies, the theme of marriage that pervades the book illumines not only the presence of opposites but the eventual real or psychological union of these opposites. The dichotomies that have to do with the relationship between Laura and Voss are frequently expressed as paradoxes. The *spiritual* union between Laura and Voss is almost *tangible*. As well, these two grow closer and closer spiritually as the actual physical distance between them increases. Marriage is seen in several guises in *Voss*, but all the different examples only serve to underline how very different the

spiritual marriage between Laura and Voss is from all the other types of union presented in the book. We first see the union of habit and affection that exists between Mr and Mrs Bonner; then we see the romantic union of two different personalities in the marriage of Belle and Tom Radcliffe. Towards the end, we are given a glimpse of the materialistic, self-seeking marriage of Una Pringle and her husband. On the other hand, the relationship between Laura and Voss is both real and symbolic. While at Rhine Towers, Voss writes to ask Laura to accept him, and Laura replies that she "would be prepared to wrestle with [their] mutual hatefulness" and that she hopes that "on this level [they] may *pray together* for salvation" (p. 186). The effect of Laura's letter on Voss is almost euphoric, and it leads to their first psychic or telepathic meeting. The last letter Voss writes to Laura, which never arrives, ends thus: "I send you my wishes and venture by now also to include my love, since distance has united us thus closely. This is the true marriage. " (p. 217)

Though on first glance Laura and Voss seem quite similar, theirs is really a union of opposites: the obsessive masculinity and sun-oriented images of Voss and the femininity and moon-oriented images of Laura. This opposition of masculinity and femininity leads to another interesting aspect of the union of opposites as expressed in *Voss*: the emphasis on a hermaphroditic union of male and female. The many psychic meetings of Laura and Voss represent the constant seeking of the halves of the hermaphrodite to reunite. There are several allusions to this state in *Voss*. The first specific suggestion that

Laura and Voss are two halves of a whole comes from one of the sailors at the dock as Voss is about to leave for the north. Two sailors are discussing Laura, and one says to the other: "'This lady will have some gentleman, with which she will fit together like the regular dovetails. It is the way you are made'" (p. 102). Another even more specific allusion comes after Voss receives Laura's first letter. He floats off into a dreamlike state in which he and Laura are "swimming so close they were joined together at the waist, and were the same flesh of lilies " (p. 187) Much later, and not long before Voss is assassinated, Laura comes to him once more, "they were drifting together. They were sharing the same hell, in their common flesh" (p. 364).

Another point of interest in connexion with the desire of the two halves of the hermaphrodite to reunite is the rôle of the Bonners' garden. As the place where Laura and Voss's relationship really begins and where they "flounder into each other's private beings" (p. 90), and as the place of Laura's symbolic impregnation, it is a symbol of creativity and rebirth. Hence, it partakes of at least some of the symbolism of the Garden of Eden. Edward Edinger not only identifies the garden as an important mandalic symbol but also compares it to Plato's round man (itself a mandala), the original androgynous being which split into two halves that constantly seek to reunite.[8]

Spiritual rebirth is treated in a highly mythopoeic manner in *Voss*. Voss himself finds enlightenment only at the moment of his physical death. Nevertheless, the journey is part of his preparation,

an advance "into chaos" (p. 211) which, because of the heat and thirst the men suffer, can easily be equated with Hell. The journey itself is not enough for the excessively proud, ego-centred Voss; he also needs to be united with Laura, his *anima* in order to be reborn. Laura, who suffers with Voss in her own delirium, emerges on the other side of a symbolic death "overflowing with a love that might have appeared supernatural, if it had not been for the evidence of her earthly body

" (p. 445) But just as Laura lives on to suffer more and grow in love, so too Voss lives on, but symbolically. At the very end Laura tells the little group gathered around her that "'Voss did not die

He is still there, it is said, in the country, and always will be. His legend will be written down eventually by those who have been troubled by it'" (p. 448).

Other characters, too, illuminate the myth of rebirth: even before entering the desert, Judd has experienced a symbolic death through his penal servitude; LeMesurier has similar experiences as well in the cathartic action of writing his prose poems. That spiritual rebirth is important in *Voss* is indicated by the great number of actual physical births in the novel. Mrs Pringle, a friend of the Bonners, seems to be continually pregnant. She has at least eleven children, one of whom is the potentially "living" Willie. The down-to-earth Belle is also prolific. More important still is the pregnancy of the servant Rose Portion. Her child, Mercy, becomes the spiritual offspring of the marriage between Laura and Voss. Although this marriage is physically unconsummated, Laura undergoes a kind of impregnation in a highly

symbolic scene with Rose in the Bonners' garden. The passage is so central to the whole theme of rebirth and its apocalyptic revelations that I shall quote it in its entirety:

> Laura Trevelyan had given much consideration to the question of Rose Portion, but the answer to it was withheld. She did not fret like her aunt, although it concerned her personally, she sensed, even more personally. For personal reasons, therefore, she would continue to give the matter thought although her faith in reason was already less. She would prepare her mind, shall we say, to receive revelations. This preoccupation, which was also quasi-physical, persisted at all times, though most in the overflowing garden, of big, intemperate roses, with the pregnant woman at her side. At such times, the two shadows were joined upon the ground. Heavy with the weight of golden sun, the girl could feel the woman's pulse ticking in her own body, and was, in consequence, calmer than she had ever been, quietly joyful, and resigned. As she strolled towards the house, holding her parasol against the glare, though devoured by the tigerish sun, she trusted in their common flesh. The body, she was finally convinced, must sense the only true solution. (p. 160)

This scene in a garden "overflowing" with life redounds with mandala symbols: the "big, intemperate roses", the "golden sun", the "parasol." This symbolism is made even more important by the inclusion of the "tigerish sun." In Chinese mythology, the yellow tiger is the last and most important of five coloured tigers and, according to Cirlot, is a symbol of the mystical Centre.[9] That the act takes place in the rose garden with the servant Rose is also vital. According to Northrop Frye, the rose in Western thought has "a priority among apocalyptic flowers [especially as it is used] as a communion symbol in the *Paradiso*."[10] Cirlot adds that the rose is a symbol of "completion

Hence, accruing to it are all those ideas associated with these qualities: the mystic Centre, the heart, the garden of Eros, the

paradise of Dante. When the rose is round in shape, it corresponds in significance to the mandala."[11] We note that in these surroundings Laura is ready "to receive revelations," that her preoccupation was "quasi-physical," and that not only is the pregnant Rose at her side, but their "two shadows were joined together upon the ground." One must remember, too, that it was in the garden that Rose became pregnant in the first place. Also worthy of note are the number of phrases that intimate the sense of fulness and growth: "Heavy with the weight," Laura feels "the woman's pulse in her own body," making her "calmer . quietly joyful and resigned," and finally there is "their common flesh." This image of pregnancy is carried forward in subsequent paragraphs. We read that successive "days *swelled* with that sensuous beauty that was already inherent in them" (p. 163) (Italics mine). The words "heavy," "ripe," and "flesh" proliferate soon after the incident in the garden. The next visionary meeting of Laura and Voss which follows immediately upon this scene is permeated with images of fecundity. They ride together among green hills, through "feathers of young corn," surrounded by the air and the "resilient cries of birds," while the metal stirrups were "twinging together." Green, the colour of growing vegetation frequently symbolizes creation, birth, and growth. Air, too, is frequently associated with the breath of life, and both birds and feathers are closely connected with air.

Finally, after all the many occurrences of death and birth, both real and symbolical, we are left at the very end with a symbol of creation. On being questioned by a sceptic about how Voss's legend can

give an answer, Laura replies simply that the "air will tell us" (p. 448). Besides being associated with light and therefore illumination, air, like water, is associated with creation, or the breath of life.

Although not mentioned specifically by name, the "religion of becoming" is seminal in *Voss*. As LeMesurier says to Voss in a lucid moment during his fever, the "mystery of life is not solved by success, which is an end in itself, but in failure, in perpetual struggle, in becoming" (p. 271). Failure is closely related to the suffering that White has already shown to be necessary for salvation or rebirth. However, more important even than this is what Laura says to Dr Kilwinning just before her fever breaks:

> 'How important it is to understand the three stages. Of God into man. Man. And man returning into God. Do you not find, Doctor, there are certain beliefs a clergyman may explain to one from childhood onward, without one's understanding, except in theory, until suddenly almost in spite of reason, they are made clear. Here, suddenly, in this room, in which I imagined I knew all the corners, I understand.' (p. 386)

After thoroughly confounding the society doctor, she carries on as Dr Kilwinning is progressively more embarrassed: "'When man is truly humbled, when he has learnt that he is not God, then he is nearest to becoming so. In the end he may ascend'" (p. 387). These two passages show just how seminal is the idea of "becoming" in *Voss*. The threefold form of Laura's statement underlies not only the progress of certain main characters, but also the form of the book itself which divides neatly into three progressive stages: the preparation, the journey, and

the aftermath. Thus, the three parts of this triptych, as Beatson calls it, create a form for the novel that neatly conforms to its content. Beatson goes on to say that the central panel on its own is also "dominated by a sense of 'becoming' .[where] past and future, truth and legend, mind and matter, God and man are woven together by the willing descent of the spiritual explorers." [12]

The two passages cited above have the greatest application to Voss in his spiritual journey. When we are first introduced to Voss, he believes he is God. Indeed, he remains at this stage during most of the book. He is not ashamed of his attitude and on several occasions willingly associates himself with God. On his way to see Judd's farm while staying at Rhine Towers, he sings for joy and White comments: "It had become quite clear from the man's face that he accepted his own divinity. If it was less clear, he was equally convinced that all others must accept" (p. 144). At this point Voss knows that he must suffer "further trial," even "immolation"; indeed, this is the "rational" reason why he undertakes the expedition in the first place. This may be a beginning, but he will have to suffer more than he expects. It is especially important that this suffering be spiritual if he is to reach the second stage. Part of this suffering is the humbling experience of tending LeMesurier in all the nauseatingly physical aspects of his illness. It is not until much closer to his own death that Voss is able to tell Harry Robarts that he is no longer his "Lord," that he is simply "man." It is later still before he can admit that he has no plan, "but will trust to God" (p. 379). He is now ready, after

receiving a symbolic communion in the form of a wichetty grub from one of the blacks into whose hands they have fallen, to "ascend," or in the terms of Laura's tripartite progression, to "return into God". The reader is given a glimpse of Voss's approach towards the third stage in the presence of the Comet whose almost noumenous light presides over Voss's final days.

Although Voss's progress towards enlightenment is marked by a series of peaks and troughs, spiritual rebirth does not occur for him until just before he dies. It takes the form of a series of apocalyptic revelations.

The ups and downs of his progression are witnessed mainly in terms of his relationship with Judd. Voss is not predisposed to like Judd because of Judd's seemingly natural ability to accept suffering, and because of the latter's humility. This attitude is exacerbated by the fact that when the expedition arrives at Rhine Towers, it is Judd who humbly ministers to the fainting Palfreyman. There are moments, such as the one when Voss visits Judd's homestead, when Voss does suspect he has some affinities with the emancipist. At other moments, however, such as when Judd makes Voss feel he must kill the dog Gyp rather than show compassion, especially to an animal, Voss feels an intense irritation with Judd. He is irritated because he feels it would be humiliating for him to show the same affection and devotion that animals show. He is not yet ready to be humbled. By killing the dog who is devoted to him, Voss is, in fact, trying to repress compassion because he is still afraid of accepting the feminine element in himself, the ability to give

and receive love. These vacillations in attitude illustrate Voss's early steps towards rebirth. But no major change occurs until after Palfreyman's death and Judd's departure with his two supporters.

LeMesurier's prose poems, particularly the one entitled *Conclusion*, mirror the changes that Voss has undergone or will undergo: that is, a descent into the physical which involves suffering but which leads to love and humility. These excerpts should suffice:

> Fevers turned him from Man into God.
>
> II
>
> . . . I am looking at my heart, which is the centre. My blood will water the earth and make it green. Winds will carry legends of smoke; birds that have picked the eyes for visions will drop their secrets in the crevices of rock; and trees will spring up, to celebrate the godhead with their blue leaves.
>
> III
>
> As I grow weaker, so I shall become strong.
> . . . . . .
> My skull was split open by the green lightning.
> Now that I am nothing, I am, and love is the simplest of all tongues.
>
> IV
>
> Then I am not God, but Man. I am God with a spear in his side.
> So they take me, when the fires are lit, and the smell of smoke and ash rises above the smell of dust
> . . .
> O God, my God, I pray that you will take my spirit out of this my body's remains, and after you have scattered it, grant that it shall be everywhere, and in the rocks, and in the empty waterholes, and in the true love of all men, and in you, O God, at last.
> (pp. 296-97)

This prophetic poem does not in the least inspire Voss when he reads it. "'Irrsinn'" he comments, relegating the poem to the thoughts of a "sick man." He is affected by the words, but his will, that "royal instrument" (p. 297), forces him to see the poem as the result of mere physical exhaustion. And when Laura appears to him she remains "powerless in the man's dreams" (p. 298).

He has the same reaction to what his instincts are trying to tell him after Palfreyman's death. As Palfreyman moves toward the group of black men who will shortly kill him, he and they seem to be "gathered together at the core of a mystery. The blacks would soon begin to see inside the white man's skin, that was transfigured by the morning " (p. 342) After Palfreyman's death every survivor is affected by this "mystery" and feels that a part of him has died symbolically. But Voss will not let himself accept the messages of his subconscious. Again Laura appears to him and again he drives her away speaking irritably. He is not yet ready to have his persona stripped away, as he and his two faithful followers, LeMesurier and Harry Robarts, along with the black boy, Jackie, continue their progress through hell, escorted by columns of natives. Yet again Laura comes to him and touches him, "[l]aying upon his sores ointment of words" (p. 363), but Voss will not "look at her for he [is] not yet ready" (p. 363). Laura keeps trying against difficult odds:

> Then they were drifting together. They were sharing the same hell, in their common flesh, which he had attempted so often to repudiate.

> They had come to a broad plain of small stones, round in shape, of which at least some were apparently quartz, for where the swords of the sun penetrated the skin of the stone a blinding light would burst forth. These flashes of pure light [were] of such physical intensity. (p. 364)

Finally, this scene with both its mandalic symbols and flash of transcendence seems to prick through his armour. Although Voss protests that it is not possible for him to be killed, he does admit that "his cheek was twitching, like a man's" (p. 365). This is one of the first indications of any certainty that Voss has reached the second of Laura's three stages. Then, as the black men insist the party go with them, "Voss bowed his head very low. Because he was not accustomed to the gestures of humility" (p. 365). Subsequently, when Harry asks him, "'Lord, will you not save us?'" Voss's reply is "'I am no longer your Lord, Harry.'" (p. 366). Voss has finally been stripped of all his egotistical associations with divinity. "His woodenness was falling from him, and he was launching out into fathoms of light" (p. 378). He tells LeMesurier he has no plan but to trust to God. Just before Laura's final appearance to him at his death, Voss experiences the apocalyptic realization that:

> he loved this boy and with him all men, even those he had hated, which is the most difficult act of love to accomplish, because of one's own fault. (p. 382)

After his death, Voss's spirit will be free to live on in the desert, or the "country of the mind." Just as Laura helped him, he will be helping others who are themselves in the process of joining the living. Through tempering in the alchemical furnace, the base metal has rendered up its gold, as the half-asleep Voss floats on "the grey

light [which] was marvellously soft, and flaking like ashes " (p. 383) This time when Laura appears to him, "at once he was flooded with light and memory" (p. 383). The process is complete.

Laura, on the other hand, does not undergo a final apocalyptic rebirth after which all is "light and memory." Her progress is more one of gradual becoming. While Voss dies in order to live and inspire, she lives on to inspire in her own way.

Although more gradual, Laura's progress still follows the three stages laid out during a lucid moment in her fever. Laura is first seen as a proud spinster, a rationalist and an atheist who denies the value of the purely physical. Even by the time Voss retires with Mr Bonner to discuss the forthcoming trip, Laura fears that she "might have sunk deeper than she had at first allowed herself into the peculiarly pale eyes" (p. 19). Voss's visit to the Bonner house at the outset of the novel is bathed in mystical overtones. Their first meeting also establishes the psychic relationship between them, a relationship that takes on greater and greater significance as Voss travels into the interior. The dichotomies of light and shadow pervade the room in which they are seated. It is a room where:

> The masses of mellow wood tended to daunt intruding light, although here and there, the surface of a striped mirror, or beaded stool, or some object in cut glass bred triumphantly with the lustier of those beams which entered through the half-closed shutters. (p. 8)

These palpable dichotomies prefigure the intangible dichotomies within Laura and Voss. The colours they wear are also significant in this

respect. Laura is dressed in a very deep blue, Voss in black. Voss's black links him closely with the base metal put in the alchemical fire which will eventually render him into gold. Laura's blue anticipates the piety she will eventually attain. The dark blue will gradually be en-lightened. Blue is also a heavenly colour and is connected in its associations with wisdom. It is from the sky that light shines forth, just as Voss is finally enlightened by the light that shines from Laura. As well, blue encompasses within its symbolism a dichotomy, implying both depth and height. Reflexions in mirrors and water are mentioned more than once in this first scene. Eventually both Laura and Voss will not see through the glass darkly as they do now. Like that of the colour blue, the symbolism of the mirror is ambivalent, since a mirror both reproduces and absorbs images. The mirror is often given magical qualities and is connected with the feminine element implicit in moon symbolism. It can also take on mythical overtones as a door through which the soul passes. But discussion of this preparatory meeting would not be complete without mentioning the presence, in her dress of "brown stuff," of Rose who has already beeen seen as an earthy antithesis to the more spiritual Voss and the rational Laura. Thus, the opening paragraphs set the scene for Laura's rebirth through a process of gradual "becoming," and which follows her own three stages.

Three specific episodes mark the turning points in Laura's process of becoming. The first is the symbolic conception in the rose garden, immediately preceded by Laura's deliberate humiliation by embracing Rose. The second is Rose's death and funeral. The third is the fever

Laura suffers which comes to its climax in the enlightenment that shows her the truth of the process of man's descent and subsequent ascent. The significance of the first and the third of these episodes has already been described (pp. 69-71). Let us turn now to the second.

At Rose's funeral, Laura experiences feelings of being at one with the world, an experience of the mystical Centre. Later, as she describes these feelings to Voss in a letter, they become more tangible for her. The day of the funeral is a stormy one. Wind and rain often accompany an experience of this sort, since these elements frequently occur as harbingers of messages from heaven or from the subconscious; thus the funeral is established as a vital experience of enlightenment for Laura. We are first told that "it was Laura Trevelyan who saw clearest" (p. 234). Then:

> While the thin young clergyman was strewing words, great clouds the colour of bruises were being rolled across the sky from the direction of the ocean. There was such a swirling and whirling that the earth itself pulled loose, all was moving
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Only Laura Trevelyan appeared to stand motionless upon a little hummock.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> But Laura was calm. . . . After the first shock of discovery, it had been exhilarating to know that terrestrial safety is not assured, and that solid earth does eventually swirl beneath the feet. Then, when the wind had cut the last shred of flesh from the girl's bones, and was whistling in the little cage that remained, she began even to experience a shrill happiness, to sing the wounds her flesh would never suffer. . . . It appeared that pure happiness must await the final crumbling, when love would enter into love, becoming an endlessness, blowing at last, indivisible, indistinguishable, over the brown earth. (p. 235)

This is the most apocalyptic of Laura's experiences. It participates in the theme of rebirth as well as indicating a stage of becoming. The death is actually Rose's, but Laura participates symbolically in it, just as Elyot Standish participated in the death of the drunk. The two women have been joined in the rose garden, and at the funeral Laura's flesh has been torn from her bones by the wind. She is reborn when she has "resumed her body" (p. 235). The experience also forms an integral part of the theme of "becoming" as it is a major step in Laura's progress towards the state of the "living." It is only after this experience that Laura, having been stripped of all the outward encumbrances of her persona, will be able to lead Voss to his rebirth. However, "the final crumbling," the final joining of the two souls, must await Voss's death, paralleled by the climax of Laura's fever.

Before the funeral Laura has been putting off writing to Voss in answer to his request for her hand in marriage. With the enlightenment gained at the funeral she can see that even now they are already joined on the road to the "Throne." She associates herself with the mysterious properties of the feminine moonstone--she is Voss's *anima*, which he must accept totally before becoming truly whole. For her part, Laura has already benefited from the imagination of Voss, his propensity for things of the spirit. The complicated and paradoxical relationship between them is necessary for each of them. If Laura had not benefited as she did from her meetings with Voss, she, in turn, would not have been able to help him. The rational, atheistic Laura we met at the

beginning has not yet discovered the latent and mysterious femininity that she needs to realize in order to help Voss.

In her long, soul-revealing letter to Voss, she describes how she now realizes what a necessary part of her he has become. This realization is almost intuitive, as was Rose Portion's knowledge of things. Even though Laura cannot distinguish his form as he appears on the edge of her dreams, she knows it is Voss. She is overwhelmed by this new sensation, the "immensity of simple knowledge" (p. 238). She then describes her experience at the funeral, which, although only the experience of a moment, contains the same elements as Voss's subsequent moments of enlightenment before his death: the stripping of the soul, the presence of death accompanied by the illumination and a sense of great intensity of being:

> . . . as I stood, the material part of 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, so that I no longer feared the face of Death as I had found it on the pillow. (p. 239)

This insight enables her to know that Voss must be humbled too, that the opposite elements of their two personalities must be joined, for as she writes: "*Two cannot share one throne,*" they must "serve *together*" (p. 239).

Laura lives on after Voss's death to impart her insights to those around her who are potentially alive and can understand her and be affected by her. The group who joins her at the end of the book at Belle's party includes "the invertebrate Willie Pringle" (p. 445), Topp,

the musician with whom Voss had lodged in Sydney and who is dubbed "a failure, who would continue to pulse, nonetheless, though the body politic ignore his purpose" (p. 446); and a young girl in tarlatan who had been affected to such a great extent by Laura's eyes that she "altered her course immediately and [went] out into the garden [where] she was swept into a conspiracy of involvement, between leaf and star, wind and shadow even her own dress. Of all this, her body was the struggling core" (p. 438). These are the people who will be "troubled" by Voss's legend.

Judd, too, to a certain extent, follows this same path. Before the book begins, he has committed some crime for which he has been sent to do penal service. This surely constitutes the first stage of pride or quasi-divinity. By the time we meet him, he has already been freed and the scars on his back attest to the extent of his suffering. Throughout most of the novel he exhibits the second of the three stages. He is a humble man fully in tune with simple things--the smell of his wife's breasts, the stars, his land. By the time we meet him again at the end of the book, he has suffered more, having spent years in the wilderness with the blacks. His lapses into irrationality, such as when he confuses the circumstances of Palfreyman's death with those of Voss's, really show flashes of enlightenment, for as White shows his readers in *The Aunt's Story*, and again in *The Solid Mandala*, insanity is a state when wholeness can exist.

Thus the three themes of *The Living and the Dead* are present even more emphatically in *Voss* than in the earlier book. Yet, at the same

time, the plot does not suffer from the stresses of unalloyed allegory. The two levels co-exist peacefully, neither detracting from the other. Form and content dovetail almost like the two halves of Plato's round man.

Having isolated the presence of these themes in *Voss*, it behoves us to investigate in some way the various paths that White uses to approach them in this novel. Beatson has indicated that the "fountain" for much of White's metaphysics "is probably Plotinus."[13] This brings us immediately to the Neo-Platonist elements. Reese's *Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion* explains that Neo-Platonism is a way of interpreting Plato's doctrines that associates

> God with the principle of unity, making Him completely transcendent, and related to the world by means of a series of intermediaries, who (or which) derive from the One by a principle of emanation . . . [whereby] reality is a graded series from the divine to the material, and man, who has in him some part of the divine, longs for union with the eternal source of things.[14]

This explanation in itself approximates the "religion of becoming" and Laura's three stages. As well, the word "emanation" occurs frequently in *Voss*. Plotinus, who was probably the first to expound this interpretation of Plato, lists as the second emanation the World Soul. Again Reese explains: the World Soul "is a principle of life," and "Man combining in himself the material and spiritual orders, is in an uncomfortable position. He has a longing for the eternal forms and for the One, and yet he is caught within a body."[15] Here we have not only the sense of "becoming," but also the principle of union of opposites.

Of all White's books, *Voss* is particularly concerned with the soul. Indeed, it is seen both in the shape of an almond and in the form of a bird. Its presence, thus, is almost tangible. The cardboard figures of the British officials who come to bestow their good wishes on the expedition have their "souls tied to them, temporarily, like tentative balloons. " (p. 113) Souls are tangible in that they are "more woundable than flesh" (p. 267) and are often "elliptical in shape" (p. 388). When Jackie, the young native, describes the ascent of the aboriginal soul, "he place[s] his hands together, in the shape of a pointed seed, against his own breast, and opened them skyward with a great whooshing of explanation, so that the silky, white soul did actually escape, and lose itself in the whirling circles of the blue sky" (p. 243). The simple Harry Robarts sees both the aboriginals' souls and Mr Palfreyman's as white birds.

Critic J. Coates sees the Neo-Platonic elements mainly in terms of Jacob Boehme's thought. He feels that Boehme's Neo-Platonism accounts "for White's somewhat paradoxical view of the world; dark yet capable of redemption from within by the spontaneous conflict of spiritual principles."[16] Besides this connexion with Boehme, Coates points out three others: the "spiritual androgyny of man,"[17] Boehme's concept of the double Fall, and woman's rôle in the salvation of man by bringing him to communion with the Maiden Sophia.[18] Laura is best seen as the Maiden Sophia just as Voss's death draws near. She appears to him in a vision and her "greyish skin was slowly revived, until her full, white, immaculate body became the shining source of all light" (p. 383). In

this connexion it is important to note that though Laura and Voss are spiritually married, and Laura has a spiritual child, she is, in fact, still a virgin or "maiden." The early description of her and her rôle in the Bonner household are sufficient to affiliate her with Sophia. She is the one with the educated Italianate handwriting, the one to whom Mrs Bonner refers questions requiring a knowledgeable answer. With regard to the "spiritual androgyny of man," it is interesting to note what Hirst has to say of Boehme's ideas. She tells the reader that Boehme believed that before the Fall, man resided in a paradisical rose garden which was a "Virginall Centre," and contained within himself the feminine element.[19] Hirst goes on to explain Boehme's idea of the double Fall. The first stage was a fall into matter and the division of the sexes. The second involved disobedience, the pride that saw Adam and Eve expelled from the Garden of Eden.[20] Coates explains that this second part of the fall is seen in Voss's pride and Laura's "inability to imagine spirituality."[21] Hirst concludes that Boehme saw a return to Paradise only through redemption in Christ. Here White no longer can be closely associated with Boehme's thought, as, although there are many Christian symbols in *Voss*, the novel is in no way an apology for Christianity.

This, of course, brings us quickly to the Christian elements themselves. Several critics try to show that Christianity is the philosophical basis for *Voss*,[22] but I contend that it is only one of several bases, all of which contain various areas of resemblance. It is

true that Christian symbols proliferate in *Voss;* nevertheless, I do not feel White is presenting a doctrinaire Christian message. The symbols are used more often than not in completely unorthodox ways: for example, Voss's final communion which he receives in the form of a wichetty grub from a heathen.

Of all the critics who claim a basically Christian interpretation for *Voss*, only Patricia Morley admits to other almost equally important elements. Nevertheless, she stresses Voss's return to Christ, sees Palfreyman as a Christ-figure, and emphasises the similarities between *Voss* and Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. No doubt these elements are present. However, they must be seen in their close relationship with all the other interpretations. As far as Christian symbolism is concerned, it is concentrated on four main areas: communion, sacrifice, suffering, and baptism.

Communion, or the eucharist, plays a significant rôle in various White novels, particularly those of his middle period; *Voss* is the first of these. The eucharist often occurs as a kind of seal on the beginning of the process of rebirth, or on the final apocalyptic enlightenment of those characters who die at the moment of rebirth, the moment of realization of one's humility. Beatson explains the rôle of the eucharist as follows:

> For White, the giving or receiving of Communion means always the generosity and acceptance of the questionable gift of carnality. To give of oneself without reservation, to be able to accept the passion and compassion--these are the marks of the true communicant.[23]

The symbolic eucharist that Voss celebrates just prior to his death is prefigured in a comment by Brendan Boyle of Jildra. Boyle feels that the way to the Centre of one's being is simply to peel off the layers of civilization. It is for this reason that he uses torn copies of Homer to prop up his table. Discussing with Voss their obsessions, Boyle says: "Why, anyone who is disposed can celebrate a high old Mass, I do promise, with the skull of a blackfeller and his own blood, in Central Australia" (p. 168). When it does occur, the eucharist Voss celebrates is somewhat reminiscent of the rather bizarre celebration suggested by Boyle. Nevertheless, White has contrived to make the difference significant. Boyle has not suffered and, in spite of having peeled off the veneer of civilization, has not really entered into the centre of his own being; hence, he would never be able to see the meaning of the communion Voss celebrates. By the time the blackfellow comes to Voss's hut, Voss's pride has reached its nadir: Voss sees his lost pride in terms of putrescence: "Grace lay only in the varying speeds at which the process of decomposition took place, and the lovely colours of putrescence that some souls were allowed to wear. For, in the end, everything was of flesh, the soul elliptical in shape" (p. 388). At this point the celebration of the eucharist takes place:

> Once, in the presence of a congregation, the old blackfellow, the guardian, or familiar, put into the white man's mouth a whole wichetty grub.
>
> The solemnity of the act was immense.
>
> The white man was conscious of that pinch of soft, white flesh, but rather more of its flavour,not unlike that of the almond, which is also elliptical . . . . at once the soft thing became the struggling wafer of his boyhood. (p. 388)

This solemn act takes place in "Gothic gloom beneath gold-leaf, and grey-blue mould of the sky, the scents were ascending, of thick incense, probably, and lilies doing obeisance. It would also be the bones of the saints that were exuding a perfume of sanctity. One, however, was a stinking lily, or suspect saint" (pp. 388-89). While this act of communion, which occurs in a place that recalls the German churches of Voss's youth, is obviously based on the Christian rite, and although it is deeply significant, it is equally obvious that these are not the words of a Christian apologist.

The concept of sacrifice, whether in Christian or in other terms, occurs frequently in *Voss*, particularly in its connexion with the letting of blood. As the expedition leaves Sydney, the members realize that they will be "offered up, in varying degrees. " (p. 96) This initial setting of the scene makes the reader aware of the number of times it recurs: Judd sacrifices sheep at Christmas and is splattered with the blood; LeMesurier dies like the sheep, having split his own throat; at the height of Laura's fever, the doctor lets her blood; after partaking of the communion, Voss is ready to be sacrificed. In the day or so that precedes Voss's death there is much that recalls Jesus' sacrifice on the Cross for mankind. But again this rite is couched in terms that are by no means entirely Christian. Voss is in a kind of delirium; he is frightened; he pictures arms reaching down from "the eternal tree," "tears of Blood" (p. 390). In the sky he sees "the nails of the Cross" (p. 391). At one point "the spear seemed to enter his own hide" and like Jesus, he calls out to the Lord to help him bear

it. Nevertheless, these Christian symbols of sacrifice are surrounded by the mythological archetypes of returning to the earth prior to rebirth, by alchemical symbolism, and by psychic mandala symbols. Brissenden explains why, in spite of certain evidence, Voss is not in the least a Christ-figure:

> Since Voss has . . . set himself so deliberately in the role of Anti-Christ it does not seem improper that the ritual of his death should assume some of the dimensions of a Christian. He is not that symbolic cliché of so much contemporary fiction, a Christ-figure; but the outlines of the Christian legend run like a luminous thread through the major incidents in his story. Because it is not over-stressed it genuinely illuminates. *Voss* always remains a novel, that is a convincing fictional representation of credible human beings, and it never hardens into the abstract over-simplifications of pure allegory.[24]

The need for suffering is a theme to be found in virtually all of White's books and is not necessarily connected to its Christian meaning. Just prior to the *Osprey*'s departure, Laura says to Palfreyman that "'One must not expect to avoid suffering. And the chance is equal for everyone'" (p. 107). Even before the book begins, Judd has suffered physically from the floggings he received as a convict; he will bear the scars forever. The members of the expedition, of course, suffer terrible physical and spiritual tortures the more they progress into the desert. For Palfreyman, LeMesurier and Voss, these bring them closer to eventual salvation. Laura too suffers greatly during her fever. LeMesurier catches the essence of this suffering in his prose poem, *Conclusion*: "As I grow weaker, so I shall become strong" (p. 296), and further on: "Now that I am nothing, I am. " (p. 297) But again, although he talks of God and love, LeMesurier tempers the strength of

the Christian element by including in his poem the pagan cave paintings, the green lightning, and the scattering of the spirit in the land.

The presence of water is almost ubiquitous in *Voss*. It is frequently associated with the resurgence of life, and thus baptism, but usually in an archetypal rather than a Christian way. Nevertheless, there are two particular occasions when water is somewhat more specifically associated with baptism. On the last evening of their stay at Rhine Towers, Voss goes down to the river. As on the day before, he feels so purged that he experiences some of the humility that Palfreyman extols. This feeling is recalled as he stands by "the brown waters of the friendly river as it purled and swirled over the stones" (p. 152). More specifically, just after the great river in the interior has been crossed (this in itself being a kind of baptism) after days of unending rain, the sun finally comes out. Here the sun seems to replace, or at least to represent, water as the medium of baptism. Voss goes to the mouth of the cave. The light has become liquid:

> The infinitely pure, white light might have remained the masterpiece of creation . . . . It was challenging water, and the light of dawn, which is water of another kind. (p. 282)

The continuous presence of ashes, Christian symbol of penitence and humility indicates a Christian outlook, except for the fact that again this symbol seems to have even deeper mythological overtones, especially on the various occasions when ashes accompany the psychic reunions of Laura and Voss. On one of these occasions Voss seems to float on a grey light, "soft, and flaking like ashes" (p. 383).

Christian symbolism, then, is present in considerable force. However, it is so entwined with other symbolisms that one would be hard put to give it the precedence that some critics do. Geoffrey Dutton dispels the myth very succinctly:

> There is a lot of talk in the novel about Christ, God and the Devil, which has unfortunately led some critics to attempt to abstract from the book a sort of Charterhouse or Benedictine liqueur of fictional Christianity. Some of them have thoroughly startled White by trying to make him into a Catholic mystic . . . . White has simply used Christian symbols to help him in his exploration of the nature of man, of the amount of God there is in man and man in God. Palfreyman, the professional Christian saint, is despised by Voss and finally dispatched to the martyrdom he deserves which solves nothing and in a way precipitates the final disaster. Judd's genuine Christ-like qualities make Voss acutely unhappy, especially when perceived by Palfreyman. Then Voss is kicked in the belly by a mule and nursed by Judd. Later Voss nurses Lemesurier, but not for Christian reasons.[25]

The doctrines of the Cabbala, which are used almost exclusively as a basis for *Riders in the Chariot*, are also closely related to White's three themes. Cabbalism involves the hidden realities of human life which are confined to an elite or chosen few. The association of the Cabbala with elitism and White's connection with Cabbalistic thinking have led many to accuse White of elitism. It is in this very aspect, however, that White differs from Cabbalistic thinking. It can be seen in virtually all of his books that the grace that leads to enlightenment is available to all, if only they would see it. It is not restricted to

the elitist Zadim. Nevertheless, the concepts of Cabbalism that concern us here are several.

Gershom Scholem, the best known authority on the Cabbala, tells us that, according to the Cabbalists, knowledge which is beyond the reach of reason, which comes by enlightened or apocalyptic revelation is "infinitely more real than all other reality. Only when the soul has stripped itself of all limitation and, in mystic language, has descended into the depths of Nothing does it encounter the Divine."[26]

This doctrine, of course, immediately reminds one of the myth of rebirth. Indeed, Scholem himself says that the "peculiar affinity of Kabbalist thought to the world of myth cannot well be doubted, or should certainly not be obscured or lightly passed over. ."[27] Of course, the whole idea of a descent into hell is seminal in *Voss*. In Cabbalistic thought this descent is to the Merkebah, or throne, from which man gets closest to the contemplation of the true nature of God. In order to reach the Merkebah, which is anticipated by the "blaze of revelation" (p. 337), man must descend through trials of fire and water. In *Voss* our explorers must certainly experience trials of fire in the form of excessive heat, and trials of water in the form of both rain and rivers. Descent is emphasized all through the expedition: the trip to Judd's from Rhine Towers is all "headed downward" (p. 143); as LeMesurier takes a messsage to Judd and his companions who have camped behind the others, he appears to have "just descended through the cloud" (p. 249); later on even the goats are described as "descending into Hell" (p. 277). The progress of the expedition through different parts

of the wilderness ranging from the almost paradisical Rhine Towers to the decay of Jildra and the many degrees of excessively lush, even rotting vegetation to desiccated barren land must certainly parallel the Cabbalistic descent through the seven heavenly palaces.

Apart from these similarities, one of Voss's letters to Laura makes much more specific mention of Cabbalistic doctrine. Towards the end of the letter, he says: "I am reserved for further struggles, to wrestle with rocks, to bleed if necessary, to ascend. Yes, I do not intend to stop short of the Throne" (p. 217).[28] Voss does indeed approach the Throne at the end, but only after he has first descended sufficiently--he is reborn after reaching the nadir of his personal will. The next paragraph of Voss's letter tells of Harry Robarts. He writes: "His simplicity is such, he could well arrive at that plane where great mysteries are revealed" (p. 217). The "great mysteries" are revealed when the Merkebah is reached. The last two paragraphs of the letter complete the reference. Voss explains why he has not bothered to give any detailed physical descriptions of the desert: "it is because all these details are in writing for those who will not see beyond the facts" (p. 217)--that is, those who cannot go beyond intellectual reason to that knowledge which does not rely on reason. He then describes his closeness to Laura as "the true marriage," the union of opposites. Finally, they must approach the Throne together, as one being, united or reunited, combining within itself the masculine and the feminine principles, the spiritual and the physical, the imagination and

the rational. As Laura tells him in a letter, "*Two cannot share one throne*" (p. 239).

There are other Cabbalistic doctrines that have relevance to White's work, and, in particular, to *Voss*. One is the doctrine of emanations or sparks, which relate a transcendent God to the world. A the party begins the first trek to Rhine Towers, the horses hooves strike "angry sparks" (p. 124) on the stones. Later, as they proceed into the interior, Harry Robarts stares at Voss because "the sun's rays striking the surrounding rocks gave the impression that the German was at the point of splintering into light, seeming "immaculate, but ephemeral, if he had not been supernal" (p. 246). In his prose poem *Conclusion*, LeMesurier feels his "skull was split open by green lightning" (p. 297). All these oblique references to emanations point to the later use of the word itself to describe the members of the expedition who are seen as emanations of their leader. Emanations of one kind or another flash through the whole expedition into the interior, until at the end they can be seen as the revelatory visions which anticipate the final vision of the non-rational truth. Indeed, the emergence of the Comet which heralds Voss's death is in itself a kind of emanation.

Another Cabbalistic doctrine that is related to this book is the belief in a primordial man, Adam Kadman, who contains the feminine principle within himself, and from whom, in a series of two falls, earthly man is derived. The two-fold descent or fall involved first the separation of male from female represented by the Adam of the Garden of

Eden and second by what Christian theology terms the Fall or Original Sin. The descent in *Voss* follows this pattern. The first stages are seen in terms of innocent happiness. The physical separation of Voss and Laura is followed by the sensual beauty of Sanderson's station at Rhine Towers. The second stage is seen in the departure from this earthly paradise into "chaos" and the desert. Earthly man must repeat this descent in order to return to the primordial state of union. Here the important references, both specific and oblique, are to hermaphrodites.

Yet another area of Cabbalistic thought is important to White's view: this is the existence of dualism in the universe--right and left, light and dark, male and female--and the fact that the pairs of opposites are constantly striving towards unity.[29] The mystical union of Laura and Voss is probably the greatest symbol of union in *Voss*. But there are many others: Voss is united with LeMesurier as he learns humility by tending LeMesurier during his illness; at Rose's funeral, Laura experiences the juxtaposition of life and death, she feels "destroyed, yet living more intensely than actual sunlight" (p. 239). This same uniting of life and death is seen at the end as the legend of the dead Voss seems to permeate the desert and to affect sensitive souls. Even the two opposite groups of characters, the "living" represented mainly by Laura and Voss, and the "dead" by the Bonners and the Pringles seem to come to some union through the intermediaries of Belle and Willie Pringle, and to a lesser extent Mrs Bonner. When Belle and Tom return for a year to what had been her parents' home, Belle

often loses herself in the garden. Kiernan notes that she "has grown through love into a harmony with the natural world."[30] Willie has become a painter (for White the artist has an important connexion with the visionary), but in the eyes of the unenlightened he is "ridiculous," and paints "what no one could describe as pictures" (p. 435). Other important dichotomies are to be found not yet resolved: the garden and the desert; civilized Sydney society and primitive aboriginal society, light and dark; the oil and the water among others. These dichotomies are not restricted to the Cabbalistic thought in *Voss*. As seen elsewhere, they are also part of the Neo-Platonic, alchemical, and psychological ideas in the novel.

We should note one further point of Cabbalistic thought before leaving the subject. In *Hidden Riches*, Desirée Hirst describes the two columns of Hebrew mysticism--Rigour and Mercy. The vision most people have of Laura the schoolmistress equates easily with Rigour. She is seen as diffident, encased in a shell--one interpretation of the word "rigour." But White in his fascination with words elaborates the analogy through the more common meaning of "rigour," since, by the time she is a schoolmistress, Laura has certainly undergone great hardships, or rigours. The second column, Mercy, is obviously represented by the child Mercy. In Cabbalistic tradition this column is topped by an olive branch. The most extensive picture we get of Mercy is through the eyes of her schoolmates. She emerges through the foliage in a dress of the same colour, carrying a green marble. Later, at Belle's party, an English visitor refers to Mercy as a "green girl" (p. 437). The

insistence on green here makes the connexion with this column and its olive branch two-fold.

Coates claims that Boehme's influence on White exceeds that of the Cabbala because Boehme is more in the main line of European thought;[31] however, Boehme himself seems to have been considerably influenced by Cabbalistic tradition. Notwithstanding what Coates says, it is difficult to deny the basic influence of the Cabbala on White, since he himself admits to having been interested in Jewish mysticism particularly when writing *Riders in the Chariot*, the book which immediately precedes *Voss*. It is not difficult to see that the interest flowed over into this work.[32]

The alchemical associations in *Voss* are seen mainly in the characters of Laura and Voss. They begin with the comment at the end of chapter one that Laura "was of the same base metal as the German" (p. 29). Burning, sulphur and ashes, as well as gold and molten metal are all common images in *Voss* as well as in the alchemical process itself. Just prior to Laura's revelation in her fever of the three stages, she opens her eyes "in her molten head" (p. 371). Even before this, after the enlightenment gained at Rose's funeral, Laura writes to Voss about her needlework which includes brown for the earth, but, most important, a blazing crimson so intense that she fears others will understand its significance, so she puts the work aside, to "smoulder" in a cupboard. The intensity of this smouldering red signifies the alchemical furnace where both Laura and Voss will suffer and learn

humility and love. Red represents the third step in the alchemical process. The image recurs just before LeMesurier's death. The day before Voss dies is "burning" (p. 389), and Voss is surrounded by natives the colour of ashes. One of White's ironies is evident in the unveiling of the bronze statue of Voss. Bronze, the colour of gold which is significant for those who have read the alchemical allusions throughout the book, is the closest the unthinking officials who erect the statue can come to Voss's true colour. Morley, who otherwise concentrates on the Christian imagery of *Voss*, recognizes that the alchemical imagery actually contains the theme of the novel.[33]

Northrop Frye identifies the rôle of the symbolism of alchemy in literature quite clearly:

> The symbolism of alchemy is apocalyptic symbolism . . . the center of nature, the gold and jewels hidden in the earth, is eventually to be united to its circumference in the sun, moon and stars of the heavens; the center of the spiritual world, the soul of man, is united to its circumference in God. Hence there is a close association between the purifying of the human soul and the transmuting of earth to gold, not only literal gold but the fiery quintessential gold of which the heavenly bodies are made.[34]

But not only is alchemical imagery simply apocalyptic. The process of purification can easily be related to White's "religion of becoming." As well, one of the basic alchemical images, the Philosopher's Stone, represents the *coniunctio*, or union of opposites. Thus, this imagery too represents all three of White's themes. Frequently Voss is associated with both rock and stone. The alchemical process as a whole is foreshadowed as Voss leaves Rhine Towers: he sits on his horse "possessing the whole country with his eyes. In those eyes the hills

and valleys lay still, but expectant, or responded in ripples of leaf and grass, dutifully, to their bridegroom the sun, till all vision overflowed with the liquid gold of complete union" (p. 155). In an interesting article, Jean-Pierre Durix explains that "[t]he moment of perfection perceived in this scene brings into play the traditional symbol of the alchemists and the concept of sexual fusion."[35] Alchemical and Christian symbolism are brought together with myth on an outing while the party is at Jildra. They pass some "mudpans, or lilyfields, from which several grave pelicans rose" (p. 172). The pelican is a frequent symbol for both Christianity and alchemy, and in the mediaeval bestiary it is closely associated with the myth of rebirth.[36]

The alchemical imagery returns after Voss receives Laura's letter. The paradox of gold itself, the end-product of the alchemical process, is seen: "gold is painful, crushing, and cold on the forehead, while wholly desirable because immaculate" (p. 187). It is LeMesurier who finally underlines for Voss the importance of the flames which make possible the fusion epitomized by the Philosopher's Stone. He tells Voss that "[i]n the process of burning it is the black that gives up the gold" (p. 361). Voss, at the begining in particular, is described as black. He wears a black suit and his coarse beard is "of a good black colour" (p. 11).

Belle, on the other hand, who seems to share the earthly goodness of Julia Fallon and Mrs Godbold, is constantly described in terms of gold. She is "honey-coloured" with "golden down upon her upper lip"

(p. 18). It is interesting to note, however, that at the end of the book, at her party, Belle reflects rather the moon than the sun: "She, who all her life had reflected the sun, was the colour of moonlight " (p. 433) She wears moonstones in her hair, so striking that one of the socialites says, "'The moonstones? The moon!'" (p. 434) It is also worthy of note here that Laura is frequently associated with the moon and moonstones. The moon is naturally associated with growth and maturation because of its periods of waxing and waning. It has the feminine characteristics of imagination and fancy. But the important aspect of moon imagery in alchemical associations is its transitory nature and its effect on things that change. In this light, those associated with it can be seen as a kind of catalyst, an important aspect of the alchemical process. The lustre of the moonstone's surface, too, suggests a mystical association.

Notwithstanding, the importance of alchemy in *Voss* lies mainly in the transmutation of Laura and Voss from base metal into gold, and in the resolution of dichotomies into the symbolic mandala of the Philosopher's Stone. In *Ego and Archetypes*, Edinger explains that "the Philosopher's Stone is a union of two contrary entities, a hot masculine, solar part and a cold, feminine lunar part. This corresponds to what Jung has demonstrated so comprehensively, namely, that "the self is experienced and symbolized as a union of opposites."[37]

This brings us to the final path in *Voss*: Jungian psychology and archetypal symbols. White himself supports the suggestion that he had Jung in mind when writing *Voss*. In *Flaws in the Grass* he records the

beginnings of the inspiration that came to him in hospital: "In my half-drugged state the figures began moving in the desert landscape. could hear snatches of conversation, I became in turn Voss and his *anima* Laura Trevelyan."[38] Of course, it is a well known fact that Jung was deeply interested in the similarities of alchemy and depth psychology. The transmutation of base metal into gold can easily be seen as a symbol for the individuation of the psyche. Indeed, the alchemical process seems to have had metaphysical overtones for the alchemists themselves. Thus this aspect of *Voss* is shared by these two paths.

However, Jungian psychology also involves the rôle of archetypes. Archetypal symbols have two functions: in their mandalic forms they represent the union of opposites; other archetypes are more closely associated with myth, in particular, the myth of rebirth.

The various mandala symbols that White uses here have been mentioned as they occurred in the different sections of this chapter. Apart from the rose, one of the most important in *Voss* is not the stone as in *The Living and the Dead*, but the circle either of light or of people. Before the expedition leaves Sydney, Voss and Laura are joined within the "luminous egg" (p. 80) of light in the Bonners' drawing-room. Voss reads poetry in an "egg of lamplight" (p. 81). Judd's association with the "living" is foreshadowed in White's description of the fountain at his homestead. As Voss looks at it he sees "[c]ircles expanding on the precious water [making] it seem possible that this was the centre of the earth" (p. 149). Circles of people are formed at the picnic, and on various occasions during the expedition, not the least of which is the

Christmas sacrifice of sheep. At the end, Laura is surrounded by a small circle of people who listen to her explain about Voss.

Jung stresses time and again the need, especially for modern man, to get in touch with symbolic life in order to be fully alive. In order to get in touch with these archetypes, it is necessary to strip oneself of the outer coatings of the personality, to reach the core. Voss himself seems to understand this even at the beginning. He says to LeMesurier, "To make yourself, it is also necessary to destroy yourself" (p. 34). He goes on to prefigure what will indeed happen to him:

> . . . in this disturbing country . . . it is possible more easily to discard the inessential and to attempt the infinite. You will be burnt up most likely, you will have the flesh torn from your bones, you will be tortured probably in many horrible and primitive ways, but you will realize that genius of which you sometimes suspect you are possessed (p. 35)

Archetypal symbols are many in *Voss.* The underlying paradox in the book is that of the garden and the desert. Cirlot tells us the garden is a symbol of consciousness,[39] whereas the desert, or wilderness is a "realm of abstraction," susceptible to transcendent matters[40] and thus clearly associated with the unconscious. Of course, as in all White's books, the various levels of meaning of the symbols create a rich texture of allusions. The garden and the desert both have strong biblical overtones. The garden at the Bonners' is where Laura and Voss come closest together; it is the place where Laura symbolically conceives Rose's child--the child that had actually been conceived in the same garden. Voss enters the wilderness both literally and symbolically. He must suffer physically and be stripped psychologically

in order to be reborn. Laura follows him symbolically. The two opposing symbols come together at the end as Laura tells her listeners how Voss's spirit has permeated the desert as they sit in the Bonners' living-room, and "through the doorway, in the garden, the fine seed of the moonlight continued to fall and the moist soil to suck it up" (p. 447), just as those "living" and potentially "living" listeners will "suck up" Voss's legend.

Closely connected to the garden is the symbol of the rose. Indeed, rose symbolism is profuse in the whole White canon. Roses abound in the Bonner garden. Laura loves to pick them and put them in vases in every room of the house. Of great significance, of course, is the fact that Mercy's mother is called Rose. White frequently uses the rose in its rôle as a unifying mandalic symbol. Both the servant and the roses in the garden are used this way. Significant too is the fact that the rose also embodies qualities of the mystical Centre[41] and Rose's rôle in the scene in Laura's bedroom when she and Laura stand together in the centre of the carpet and Laura begins to open "stiffly" (p. 76), much in the manner of a rose, is of this nature.

The lily is found throughout *Voss* as a symbol. As a Christian symbol the lily stands for purity. But in *Voss* there are many more layers to it than this. According to Cirlot, the lily stands for the feminine principle;[42] indeed, it is most often seen in relation to Laura. When Voss sees Laura in his visions, she usually floats on lily leaves. Early in the expedition, when Palfreyman explains to Voss the rare example of a lily he has found at Jildra, it becomes a symbol of

unity because of the shape of its seeds which appear like "testes, attached to the rather virginal flower" (p. 187). Just after this Laura and Voss swim "joined together at the waist, and were of the same flesh as lilies" (p. 187). The image recurs most significantly just before Voss's death when Laura appears to him: they pick some lilies which become a kind of manna or eucharistic wafer. The lily is also important because of its colour. White is associated with Christian purity, but it is also a colour associated with the second stage of the alchemical process towards unity. On another occasion when Laura appears to Voss her "full, white, immaculate body became the shining source of all light" (p. 383). The white light of transcendence expands to be associated with the white lily in other psychic meetings between the two. Cirlot corroborates White's use of both the rose and the lily as symbolic flowers: "the lily and the rose are essential symbols in all mystic though."[43]

Two symbols more closely connected with the Christian elements of *Voss* are blood and ashes--symbols of sacrifice and humility respectively. Many are the mentions of blood in *Voss* as we have seen above. Thus sacrifice and suffering as prerequisites to a spiritual rebirth permeate *Voss*. Indeed, not only blood but also other liquids--especially milk--symbolize sacrifice. Judd, who has suffered in the penal colony, is seen eating and preparing milky soups and in the deepest wilderness he remembers the milky smell of his wife's breasts.

But blood is not simply a Christian symbol. It is an ancient archetypal symbol of the sacrifice which must precede rebirth. Its

redness connects it with all the symbolism of that colour--life, suffering, love, wisdom--and with the symbolism of "the foremost red flower, the rose."[44] Blood also becomes associated with the Philosopher's Stone of the alchemist. In *Ego and Archetype,* Edinger quotes an alchemical text which connects the two symbolisms quite specifically. This text declares that the Philosopher's Stone

> has virtue by means of its tincture and its developed perfection to change other imperfect and base metals into pure gold, so our Heavenly King and fundamental cornerstone, Jesus Christ, can alone purify us sinners and imperfect men with His Blessed ruby-coloured Tincture, that is to say His Blood. ."[45]

Ashes seem to surround the few days before Voss's death where he finally learns true humility and can thus paradoxically join the "living" through his death. At one point the "grey light upon which [Voss] floated" (p. 383) flakes like ashes. The natives that surround him are the colour of ashes.

Throughout *Voss* the soul and the seed are seen in juxtaposition, particularly as the soul is most often represented as seed- or almond-shaped. The soul, once free of the body, is the epitome of all the symbols of unity, since now it unifies the opposite forces of spiritual and physical. The seed, apart from its obvious connexion with rebirth, also symbolizes the mystical Centre and in this the seed and the soul combine into an apocalyptic symbol of rebirth. The most emphatic expression of this conjunction of images is at the platform of the dead natives. Judd has just picked at some fruit to release the

seeds when Jackie is required to explain the meaning of the platform upon which the dead were laid so their souls would depart. To explain, Jackie places his hands together, in the shape of a pointed seed and then opens them skyward with a whoosh, indicating that the soul is released much as the seeds of Judd's fruit. The eucharist that Voss receives as a sign that he has reached the point where he may begin to ascend, is almond-like in shape and flavour. Rose Portion too is associated with this seed-like symbol of rebirth. On more than one occasion she puts her hands into an almond-shaped position. Indeed, this elliptical shape itself becomes a kind of mandala.

So many, in fact, are the symbols of either the unifying centre or of rebirth that to mention them all would be exhausting. The towers of Rhine Towers are important as a symbol of ascent in that the alchemical furnace was shaped as a tower to symbolize the ascent of matter from base metal to gold. As well, they partake of the symbolism of the ladder, linking heaven and earth; that is, the symbolism of the mystical Centre.[46] The appearance of the Comet which coincides with the end of the expedition *per se* and with Voss's death, is seen by the natives as the Great Serpent which represents the archetype of the "grandfather of all men" (p. 378), or author of all life and regeneration. Another aspect of its symbolism is implied when Jackie tells Voss "'Snake eat, eat'" (p. 378). Voss sees this as a positive indication, perhaps associating it with the Gnostic and alchemical symbol of the Ouroborus, the serpent which bites its own tail, creating a mandalic circle of wholeness.[47] For both Laura and Voss, the Comet is apocalyptic,

preceding as it does Laura's insight about God and the three stages of man's ascent, and Voss's physical death, after which his soul will permeate the desert. Voss feels the Comet "is too beautiful to ignore" (p. 378). Its appearance in the sky coincides with the time when he has reached the depths of his journey and will begin his ascent towards God. Laura has felt the presence of the Comet even before Mrs Bonner opens the curtains to show her. For her it is more closely associated with becoming. She realizes that the Comet in itself cannot save them. Nevertheless, she says "nothing can be halted once it is started" (p. 375). The process of rebirth in both Laura and Voss, once begun, is inexorable. For Laura, too, however, the apocalyptic meaning of the Comet is important. Its light "poured, and increased, and invaded the room and she was bathed at least temporarily in the cool flood of stars" (p. 376).

The butterfly which flutters around the members of the expedition from time to time is regarded by psychoanalysts as a symbol of rebirth.[48] As well, in later Greek mythology "psyche" is frequently represented as the beloved of Eros and is depicted with butterfly wings. The spider, which occasionally can be seen as a symbol of continuing or becoming as well as of the pattern which White sees in life, is mentioned more than once as the expedition wends its way through the desert. Other symbols include the knife, teeth, hair, bone--all symbols of initiation or progress towards a Centre; birds--in particular the eagle and hawk who soar--are apocalyptic symbols, here seen particularly in terms of the fulfilled soul, that union of opposites; water and air

are both frequent symbols of creation and rebirth. Nor must one forget the many other mandala symbols which occur throughout, from the pebbles that Voss picks up at the picnic at the beginning to the lozenge Laura wonders about at the end. These include the lesser symbols of eggs (pp. 80, 81), circles of light or of people and stones, as well as the more important and multifaceted ones of the sun and the moon, seeds, roses and the garden.

Thus *Voss* explores various paths to the experiences of rebirth (either an apocalyptic one as in Voss's case, or as a more gradual process for Laura) and the union of opposites. Laura's relationship with Voss unites the opposing elements of masculine and feminine, of physical and spiritual. Voss, at first egotistically concerned with his own divinity, is reduced to a human scale through his love for Laura and by his expedition. These humbling experiences truly enable him to ascend to God. And so, in death he joins the living and becomes a legendary part of the desert. On the other hand, Laura, at first too involved in the physical world, must experience the spiritual. Through her relationship with Voss and through her illness, she comes to have faith and to know that the air *will* give up its answer to those who are willing to learn. Indeed, for those "who anticipate perfection eternity is not too long" (p. 445).

Voss is a book of manifold symbols--alchemical, Christian, Neo-Platonic, and psychological. The symbols of each of these paths work together towards the apocalyptic union of opposites seen in the mandala with which the book ends. Laura wonders whether she has brought

her lozenges. The simple lozenge shape is an unobtrusive, yet highly important, mandalic symbol. As a representation of wholeness, it unites all the dichotomies of the novel. But, even more importantly, because its shape recalls the various almond-shaped symbols that are so prevalent in *Voss*, it unites as well all the various paths to that resolution.

Chapter Two

Notes

[1] Peter Beatson, "The Three Stages: Mysticism in Patrick White's *Voss*," *Southerly* 30 (1970): 111.

[2] J.F. Burrows, "*Voss* and the Explorers," *AUMLA* 26 (1966): 234-40. M. Aurousseau, "The Identity of Voss," *Meanjin* 17 (1958): 85-87.

[3] John Colmer, *Patrick White*, Commonwealth Biography Series, eds. M. Bradbury and C. Bigsby (London: Methuen, 1968), p. 35.

[4] Patrick White, *Voss* (Harmondsworth, Mddx.: Penguin Books Ltd., 1960), p. 60. All subsequent references to this the main text of the chapter will be noted in the text.

[5] R.F. Brissenden, *Patrick White*, Australian Writers and their Work, No. 190 (London: Longman's, Green and Co., Ltd., 1966), p. 29.

[6] The relationship of the two entities, ego and psyche, is discussed in depth in E. Edinger, *Ego and Archetype: Individuation and the Religious Function of the Psyche* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons for C.G. Jung Foundation for Analytical Psychology, 1972), pp. 3-7.

[7] Beatson, *Eye*, pp. 50-51.

[8] Edinger, p. 17.

[9] Cirlot, p. 343.

[10] Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1971), p. 144.

[11] Cirlot, p. 275.

[12] Beatson, "The Three Stages": 121.

[13] *Ibid.*: 113.

[14] W.L. Reese, *Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion: Eastern and Western Thought* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press Inc., 1980), p. 385.

[15] *Ibid.*, p. 445.

[16] John Coates, "*Voss* and Jacob Boehme: A Note on the Spirituality of Patrick White," *Australian Literary Studies* 9.1 (1979): 122.

[17] *Ibid.*: 120.

[18] In his article cited above, Coates quotes as his source for Boehme Desirée Hirst, *Hidden Riches: Traditional Symbolism from the Renaissance to Blake* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1964).

[19] Hirst, p. 93.

[20] *Ibid.*, p. 93.

[21] Coates: 121.

[22] Three critics in particular who stress a Christian interpretation of *Voss* are Patricia Morley, R. Edgecombe and James McAuley. In "The Gothic Splendours: Patrick White's *Voss*,"*Southerly* 25 (1965): 44, McAuley assumes a deliberate Christian framework for the novel and then finds he must fault White because this "framework of interpretation seems . . . to slip and become unclear" In "Faith, Pride and Selfhood in Patrick White's *Voss*," *English Studies in Africa* 27.2 (1984): 134, Edgecombe admits the large and complicated issues present in *Voss*, but claims White has "recourse to the elements of religious archetypes, and even to a somewhat rickety scaffold of quasi-Christian doctrine." For Morley's opinion, already stated in the text, see *Unity*, pp. 117-152, *passim*.

[23] Beatson, *Eye*, p. 108.

[24] Brissenden, p. 33.

[25] Dutton, pp. 25-26.

[26] Gershom G. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1954), p. 25.

[27] *Ibid.*, p. 22.

[28] There is apparently some confusion about whether the route to the Merkebah is by ascent or by descent. Scholem tells us that after about 500 A.D. the idea of a descent took precedence. The mystics who followed this route were called "Yorda Merkabah," or descenders to the Merkebah. The earlier Lesser Hekhaloth texts emphasize the ascent, and this concept is more closely associated with Ezekiel and the symbolism of the Four Riders in the Chariot that White borrows for his next book. Some translators apparently mistake "Yorda Merkabah" for Riders in the Chariot. In *Voss*, White seems to use the two interchangeably, descent also being associated with the Jungian, as well with the alchemical, and Christian interpretations. The latter two are also equally associated with ascent.

[29] Here I am indebted to both Gershom Scholem and W.L. Reese.

[30] Brian Kiernan, *Patrick White*, Macmillan Commonwealth Writers Series, ed. A.N. Jeffares (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1980), p. 62.

[31] Coates: 122.

[32] Patrick White, interview, *In the Making*, p. 218.

[33] Morley, *Unity*, p. 123.

[34] Frye, *Anatomy*, p. 146.

[35] Jean-Pierre Durix, "Natural Elements in Patrick White's *Voss*," *WLWE* 18. 2 (1979): 348.

[36] Cirlot, p. 252.

[37] Edinger, p. 275.

[38] White, *Flaws*, pp. 103-04.

[39] Cirlot, p. 115.

[40] *Ibid.*, p. 79.

[41] *Ibid.*, p. 275.

[42] *Ibid.*, p. 189.

[43] *Ibid.*, p. 60.

[44] Edinger, pp. 251-52.

[45] *Ibid.*, p. 252.

[46] Cirlot, p. 345.

[47] Cirlot, p. 287 and pp. 246-47. These passages relate to Ouroborus in particular, but of significance is the whole entry on the serpent, pp. 285-90.

[48] *Ibid.*, p. 35.

Chapter Three

The Solid Mandala

The fact that an author prefers one of his books over another does not mean that that book is necessarily his best. In the autobiographical *Flaws in the Glass*, White considers *The Solid Mandala* as one of his three best novels. Certainly this novel is structurally more cohesive than most of White's other novels. *The Solid Mandala*, *The Aunt's Story* (included in White's trio of favourites), along with *Memoirs of Many in One*, are White's shortest books, and all of them lack the "apparently" rambling structure of some of his other novels. In comparing this novel to the one that preceded it, *Riders in the Chariot*, Walsh writes that:

> the structure of this novel is more intimately related to its animating idea. The movement between idea and material is vital and unbroken, and there is no sense of supporting scaffolding. .[1]

However, this cohesion produces a novel that lacks some of that digressive, many-layered texture that makes novels like *Voss* and *The Eye of the Storm* so rich and vital.

As witnessed by the title itself, the route that White follows in this novel is that of Jungian depth psychology, in particular those aspects of it that are expressed in *Psychology and Alchemy*, and which, as White himself tells us "projected" him into work on *The Solid Mandala*:

> The painter Lawrence Daws had given me Jung's *Psychology and Alchemy* which had a great influence on me. It projected me into my *Solid Mandala*. Jung's teaching

> also bolstered me up during a wavering of faith on realizing I could not accept the sterility, the vulgarity, in many cases the bigotry of the Christian churches in Australia. . . . So evolved my non religious or mystic circus.[2]

Much of *Psychology and Alchemy* deals with the mandala and its symbolism, especially as the mandala symbolism underlies the whole relationship of psychology and alchemy: the Philosopher's Stone being the mandala symbol *par excellence*. Thus it is not surprising to find a quantity of alchemical allusions as well in this novel. This is definitely not the first time White has shown interest in the mandala as a symbol of the "*principes simples*," as we have seen from the very beginning of this study. Nor is it the first time he has manifested an interest in alchemy, since Voss's story is heavily influenced by it. In *Psychology and Alchemy* Jung explains how alchemy was seen by most of its exponents as a metaphysical, rather than a physical phenomenon. The alchemical process, according to Jung, is essentially a metaphor for the process of individuation. The purification of base metal into gold represents the soul's search for purity or wholeness. The rôle of the Philosopher's Stone in the alchemical process is equivalent to that of the mandala in the spiritual process. The focus in *The Solid Mandala* is most definitely on the psychological, and the rôle of the mandala as a symbol of wholeness or union of opposites. Nevertheless, indirect references to alchemy are to be found here, not only in the connexion of the Philosopher's stone and the mandala, but also in the considerable rôle given to the sun and the hermaphrodite, both important alchemical symbols. In terms of the three themes, the nature of the symbols in *The Solid Mandala* focuses the reader's attention on

the themes of dichotomy and rebirth, although, of necessity, the process of becoming is not neglected.

In another work Jung defines very specifically what the mandala means:

> The Sanskrit word mandala means 'circle' in the ordinary sense of the word. In the sphere of religious practices and in psychology, it denotes circular images, which are drawn, painted, modelled, or danced . . . . Very frequently they contain a quaternity or a multiple of four, in the form of a cross, a star, a square, an octagon, etc.[3]

A bit further on he adds that in representing a totality of the self, the mandala encompasses the dichotomies of light and dark, intellect and imagination, conscious and unconscious, left and right. This indeed is what the marbles, the solid mandalas as he calls them, mean for Arthur. He turns to them in times of stress when he is highly conscious of the dichotomies within him and they help him work towards wholeness. As Jung points out, it is those who try, no matter how, to understand the inner dichotomies who realize that there is something within the psyche that is worthy and that can grow. It is most interesting that at this particular point Jung says that Western civilization seems to care little for the health of the soul, leaving God wholly on the outside. In Jung's words "people who put nothing into their souls have 'all God outside.' (A little more Meister Eckhart would be a good thing sometimes!)."[4] And here, in a footnote, Jung uses the precise quotation from Meister Eckhart that White uses as his second epigraph to *The Solid Mandala*: "It is not outside, it is inside: wholly inside." He who has been in touch with the unconscious which wells up within us from time to

time, who has not rejected it, is of the "living," a fully "round," individuated personality. Indeed, on more than one occasion in *Flaws in the Glass* White has used the term "solid mandala" as an epithet for those of his acquaintances who fall solidly among the "living."

Another aspect of the mandala and one which is evident in *The Solid Mandala* is its association with quaternity symbolism. Edinger tells us that the "significance of the quaternity is basic to [Jung's] whole theory of the psyche, both as regards its structure and its developmental goal, the individuation process."[5] Both Colman and Morley point out the importance of the quaternity in *The Solid Mandala*.[6] The novel has four epigraphs and four parts; Arthur has four marbles and his mandalic dance has four corners; there are at least two groups of four closely associated people. The Brown family itself forms one, as does the Saporta family, but more important than either of these is the group of four formed by Arthur, Dulcie, Len Saporta and Mrs Poulter.

Although the mandala is a symbol of wholeness, this wholeness can emerge only from the union of opposites. In *The Solid Mandala* the emphasis is on the dichotomy between the "living" and the "dead." The "living," for whom the mandala has significance, are represented by Arthur. The "dead," for whom it is meaningless, are represented by his twin brother Waldo. Among the minor characters the same dichotomies are seen: between Mrs Poulter and Mr Poulter, betwen Mrs Poulter and Mrs Dun, and between Mr Allwright and Mrs Allwright. Of the three related themes that we are investigating, this one definitely has the limelight here. Even the structure of the book, with sections related from

diametrically opposed viewpoints, underlines the emphasis on dichotomies.

Nevertheless, the mandala is not disregarded in terms of the other two themes. The theme of "becoming" is best seen in Dulcie, who is associated with at least three mandalas--the actual solid mandala that Arthur gives her, the Star of David that Len gives her and, indirectly, the mandala in the centre of the carpet in Len's shop. Until her decision to marry Leonard Saporta she has vacillated, sometimes dangerously, between the opposites of the "living" and the "dead." This is her period of "becoming."

The theme of rebirth is treated less apocalyptically here than in *The Living and the Dead* or in *Voss*, perhaps because a psychological path to wholeness is often less obviously dramatic than a mystic or alchemical one. The two characters mainly concerned with the myth of rebirth are Mrs Poulter and Arthur. Here again the mandala plays a rôle: Arthur keeps four solid mandalas or marbles in his pocket and dances a mandala dance under the wheel tree in the circular bay of blackberry bushes; Mrs Poulter is given one of Arthur's mandalas and witnesses Arthur's dance. Both these characters, Arthur in particular, begin with greater potential than many of White's other characters. Indeed, they are closest here to Mary Hare and Ruth Godbold in *Riders in the Chariot* which immediately preceded *The Solid Mandala*. In subsequent novels White tends to return to the kind of character who, although manifesting a latent potential to be reborn, either has farther to travel along the road to wholeness or who, like Dulcie, vacillates between the two extremes. Nevertheless, both Arthur and Mrs Poulter

must suffer, delve into the physical, and go through a spiritual death prior to the experience of rebirth. Mrs Poulter, like Laura and Mrs Godbold before her and Mrs Hunter after her, carries on with her everyday life with, the reader feels, greater understanding and the potential to be a catalyst for someone else. On the other hand, the experience tips the "dill" Arthur over the edge of sanity and, like Theo Goodman, he is taken off to the insane asylum.

In all this we have hardly touched on Arthur's twin, Waldo. This is the first time White has given the reader a major character who obstinately rejects the possibility of grace or wholeness right to the end. Even Voss, the most obdurate of White's characters to this point, is led in the end to accept the enlightenment he is vouchshafed. White has portrayed such characters, and done it well, but hitherto they have been essentially minor characters: Mrs Flack and Mrs Jolly in *Riders in the Chariot*, Tom Radcliffe in *Voss*, Theo's sister and brother-in-law in *The Aunt's Story*. In Waldo, however, White stresses more emphatically than ever the need to be open to experience when it is presented, to be open to what is inside one. The structure of *The Solid Mandala* itself enables White to show clearly how the two brothers, whose lives are so very closely entwined, either profit or retreat from the opportunities life offers to become whole. This in itself is a paradox of the kind that White enjoys treating ironically.

In *Psychology and Alchemy* Jung points out that "far too many people are incapable of establishing a connection between the sacred figures [or archetypes] and their own psyche: that is to say, they cannot see to what extent the equivalent images are lying dormant in

their own unconscious."[7] These are the people, like Waldo Brown, who need more Meister Eckhart in their lives. Ironically, these people are often those whom the world in general considers to be intelligent, and certainly rational. Such is the case with Waldo. Of the two brothers he is the "intellectual," the "rational" one, and Arthur is the brother with "one shingle short," subject to flights of imagination. Yet it is Waldo who refuses to get in touch with his psyche, his inner core. This is what makes him belong so irremediably to the "dead." Although Arthur tries to help and encourage him in many ways, Waldo persistently rejects any opportunity for rebirth. He gradually builds such a secure wall around himself that he becomes immune to the process of "becoming" which affects Arthur, Dulcie and Mrs Poulter. No moment of insight can penetrate his persona, and he is doomed to die as he lived, wholly absorbed by *Physis*, shunning *Nous*.

The structure and plot of *The Solid Mandala* are admirably shaped to illustrate the dichotomy between the two brothers, between the "living" and the "dead." The story of the twin lives of Arthur and Waldo is framed by a short introduction and conclusion which take place entirely in the fictional present. Besides their rôle as a frame, these two chapters provide a context for the reader to see Mrs Poulter other than through the eyes of one or another member of the Brown family. As well, they create a book of four sections, the last of which comes back to the beginning, somewhat in the manner of *The Living and the Dead*, creating a circular mandalic structure based on the quaternity.

It is the two internal chapters, however, that illustrate the antithetical halves of the whole. The first recounts the major events of the lives of the twins seen through the eyes of Waldo; the second presents essentially the same events seen through Arthur's eyes. The fictional present is the walk that Mrs Poulter has seen the brothers embarking upon and two or three subsequent morning walks, ending, without the reader's being aware of it immediately, the day of Waldo's death. Waldo remembers incidents from childhood right up to his retirement from the library a while before the book begins: schooldays going to Barranugli High, his relationship with Dulcie, his accident, their father's, and later their mother's, death, the acquiring of the two dogs, his experiences in the library--in particular Arthur's embarrassing visit; his "literary" ambitions; his fascination with his mother's background; and Arthur's relationship with Mrs Poulter from across the street. For Waldo, memory is a "glacier in which the past is preserved,"[8] and he feels that "to pick too deeply in the ice of memory is to blench" (p. 192). The ice of memory is a virtual block through which Waldo cannot pass into his inner core. Waldo's memories, so revealing for the reader, and so unrevealing for Waldo himself, are combined with his overwhelming sense of his "duty" to the burden of taking care of Arthur, his "dill" brother. Waldo considers himself virtually perfect, but the reader is left with a picture of the dry, empty shell of a self-centred, overly rational man. It is no wonder Waldo is so impervious to the love of Arthur and the friendship of others. Keeping in mind Waldo's view of himself, however, it is interesting to see what Jung has to say on this subject:

> To round itself out, life calls not for perfection but for completeness; and for this the 'thorn in the flesh' is needed, the suffering of defects without which there is no progress and no ascent.[9]

By contrast, Arthur's section flows far more harmoniously from present to past and back to present. On the whole,Arthur deals with the same incidents, though his relationship with Dulcie is far deeper than Waldo's and thus occupies more space. The only other incident in Arthur's considerably shorter section that does not appear in Waldo's section is the dance he dances for Mrs Poulter under the Chinese woman's wheel tree.

Memory for Arthur is not frozen in ice. Ice forms a "rigid dividing line between consciousness and the unconscious," and, by its nature, inactivates the "potentialities of water."[10] Instead, it is the icebergs, two-thirds submerged, which represent the archetypes of the unconscious. Whereas Waldo's section begins with the dry command of a fussy, self-centred mother-hen, Arthur's begins with the sea, the icebergs, "waves of sleep" and "dreaming and dozing" (p. 215), immediately alerting the reader to the fact that Arthur has not set up uncrossable barriers for his unconscious. The language itself belies each of their characters. The beginning of Waldo's section is terse and dry: "Put on your coat, and we'll go for a walk," he decided at last. "Otherwise you'll sit here brooding." (p. 23)

On the other hand, Arthur's section begins with a feeling of the dream world where conscious and unconscious meet profitably:

> In the beginning there was the sea of sleep of such blue in which they lay together with iced cakes and the fragments of glass nesting in each other's arms the furry waves of sleep nuzzling at them like animals.

> Dreaming and dozing.
> The voices of passengers after Capetown promised
> icebergs to the south, two-thirds submerged. (p. 215)

It is in Arthur's section that we see that, contrary to what Waldo believes, it is Arthur who leads, or tries desperately to lead, Waldo by his love. Arthur suffers because he is not able to make Waldo see, to make him accept the solid mandala. Of the four taws, Arthur considers the one with the knot in the centre to be the one that should belong to Waldo. The knot represents the intricately entwined relationship of the two brothers.

In most of White's work, names reinforce the philosophical underpinnings of the novel. *The Solid Mandala* is no exception. Thelma Herring has pointed out that the name Brown represents "Everyman's quest,"[11] indicating that the quest for wholeness is open to all, but is only taken up by some. We are told in the text that Waldo was named after an ancestor on his mother's side who had built a "Gothick folly." Herring adds that this "Gothick folly" is a focus for the snobbish nostalgia of the intellectually superior twin, and its exotic quality befits his pretentiousness and cultivated separateness."[12] Later she speculates that there is also a possible connexion with Ralph Waldo Emerson, since Waldo Brown's isolation from "common humanity" comes from the same idea of the "self-sufficiency of the individual" as Emerson held.[13] She also has two speculations about Arthur's name. The first connexion she makes is with Arthur in *The Faerie Queene* whom Spenser saw as a complete man. She adds that Blake associated Arthur with Albion, "his symbol of universal man."[14] The significance of the name Arthur is not to be taken lightly as quite a ritual is made by the

Saportas when they tell Arthur that they plan to name their son after him. The boy's other name is to be Aaron. Aaron, the brother of Moses and ancestor of Saint Elizabeth, mother of John the Baptist, put his rod in the Arc of the Covenant and it flowered with almonds, a mandalic symbol. Another important Aaron, Aaron ben Samuel, brought the Cabbala from Babylon to Europe, and we have already seen White's interest in the Cabbala. The name Saporta lends itself to interpretation as support or help. Len Saporta is associated with various mandalas which give succour to both Arthur and Dulcie, even though White implies that Len himself is not aware of their significance. He gives a Star of David pendant to Dulcie. This gift is the first indication that she has accepted the path of the "living," symbolized here by the Jewish faith and marriage with Len. Arthur sees a carpet in Len's shop with a mandalic centre which helps him realize that Dulcie is in good hands and that he can turn to the Saportas in time of need such as his mother's death, and again after Waldo's death. When Len tells Arthur about their decision to name their son Arthur, he is seen to be wearing a watch that looks like a "large golden disc" (p. 276). Mrs Poulter (an old form of poulterer) is like a mother hen. She protects or mothers Arthur and she "clucks" about Mrs Brown who grows to hate the sight of her coming across the way with baking or advice in hand. On a lesser plane, Mr Allwright, the shopkeeper for whom Arthur works, is one of the "living"--in Arthur's eyes he is all right. Finally, Mrs Poulter's friend, Mrs Dun, is indeed a dull, dun character with no imagination or feeling.

Let us turn now to the brothers and see how each relates to the mandala and what it signifies, which, of course, has great bearing on the eventual wholeness of Arthur and the unrepentant death of Waldo.

The general picture one gets of Waldo is of a sterile, pretentious, ego-centred person, who is afraid to venture into the perilous waters of the unconscious in order to become whole and belong to the "living." The main forces in his life are his will and his hatred. Unlike Arthur, Waldo rejects his *anima* almost viciously and it shows in his physical appearance and mannerisms. Not only was Waldo born with a small head and withered face with "thin lips which tended to disappear in bitterness or suffering" (p. 33), he was also "born with his innards twisted" (p. 32). This condition is particularly symbolic of his mental state. He secretly yearns for the brick boxes rather than the overrun, decaying wooden house they live in. These brick boxes have been treated satirically by White in many of his other books. Waldo walks "primly," with "thin, male steps" (p. 27). Although one of the two dogs is ostensibly Waldo's, Waldo does "not believe in touching dogs" (p. 27): he spurns anything that symbolizes a lower, more instinctual order.

Waldo considers himself to be the intellectual twin, the one who is going to be a writer. He collects words "like stamps or coins" (p. 36). In other words, they are not a living force for him as they should be for a writer; they are cold, lifeless objects. On one occasion when he is trying desperately to make Waldo "see" what he understands almost instinctively, Arthur explains that "[w]ords are not what make you see." Waldo retorts that he "was taught that they were"

(p. 57). The poetry that Waldo thinks he has written himself and with which he is most impressed turns out to be some lines of Tennyson which he has copied. Adding insult to injury, it is Arthur who is able to point this out to him.

The novel Waldo has begun is entitled *Tiresias a Youngish Man*. The title, of course, is highly ironic. The only connexion between Waldo and Tiresias is Tiresias' physical blindness. Waldo's blindness is spiritual, for Waldo is blind to himself, blind to his need to become whole, to accept his feminine nature as Arthur has done. It is Arthur who has more in common with Tiresias. The connexion of Waldo's blindness with that of Tiresias is doubly ironic since Tiresias was blinded for having looked upon Athena, goddess of wisdom, and in compensation was given the ability of a seer. Waldo does not have that "inner sight" of the outwardly blind that Mrs Hunter does in *The Eye of the Storm*. His blindness is not essentially outward, but inner. By finally burning all his manuscripts, Waldo, in the guise of "Tiresias a thinnish man" (p. 212), rids himself of what might have brought him into closer contact with his unconscious, especially his *anima*. The important aspect of the Tiresias myth that Waldo cannot see is that Tiresias spent seven years as a woman, in touch with his feminine nature. In order to keep his writing all the more secret, out of reach of any "assault on his privacy" (p. 191), Waldo puts all his manuscripts in an old dress box that had belonged to his mother. When he gets the box down from the dusty cupboard top, Waldo finds in it an old dress and fan. Both the dress and the iridescent mother-of-pearl fan are connected with moon and feminine imagery. The shadow of the

quince branches outside indicates Waldo's temptation by his unconscious,[15] but what could be an apocalyptic experience of getting in touch with his inner self becomes a disaster. As he opens the box to empty it for his papers, the fan drops to the floor and one of the connecting ribbons breaks. Then, in the shadow of the quince branches, Waldo investigates the blue dress, the colour of divine contemplation and mysteries. However, for Waldo the dress evokes nothing more than memories of his mother's aristocratic past. It becomes "blue, reverberating ice" (p. 192) and Waldo is soon "encased in ice" (p. 192). This ice-like surrounding is like the persona he has built around himself, isolating him from contact with other human beings, and he realizes that "to pick too deeply in the ice of memory is to blench" (p. 192). He seems to be fighting with the *anima* which is desperately trying to assert itself. His memory, which should help him on the journey backward through time to the archetypes, does not become "a triumph of memory but rather a symptom of a diseased mind, crumbling under the assaults of the unconscious."[16] He is "obsessed" even "possessed" by the dress; his "breath went with him, through the tunnel along which he might have been running. Whereas he was again standing. Frozen. " (p. 193)

The tunnel through which Arthur crawls the night of Waldo's death, which opens the way to the unconscious, beckons Waldo, but he is torn between following and standing still. However, the "brilliant truth" that Waldo expects to be revealed when he takes off his symbolic outer garments in order to put on the dress moves him paradoxically even further from contact with his *anima*. He expects too much from the

experience. He approaches it from too intellectual a standpoint. Opportunities must be accepted when given, not sought by cunning. It is not the neatly pigeon-holed memory of his aristocratic forebears that he needs to come into contact with. He needs to proceed much further back down the tunnel to reach the instinctual, the archetypal. Instead, this is what Waldo experiences:

> Then Memory herself seated herself in her chair, tilting it as far back as it would go, and tilted, and tilted, in front of the glass. Memory peered through the slats of the squint-eyed fan, between the nacreous refractions. If she herself was momentarily eclipsed, you expected to sacrifice something for such a remarkable increase in vision. In radiance, and splendour. All great occasions streamed up the gothick stair to kiss the rings of Memory, which she held out stiff, and watched the sycophantic lips cut open, teeth knocking, on cabuchons and carved ice. (p. 193)

At this point Arthur bursts blunderingly in on him. The blundering is Waldo's interpretation, for in actual fact Arthur has seen Waldo in the mirror and calls to the dogs to warn Waldo of his presence. Waldo tries to assuage his guilt by getting rid of the dress behind the copper, but, of course, he is not free at all. He returns to the library with a renewed determination to protect himself from any further threat of intrusion by his unconscious. The library is the ideal place for this since:

> [n]akedness was not encouraged, or eyes were decently averted whenever it occurred. All the necessary or compulsive exhibitions were reserved for Terminus Road, which he loved because of Memory's skin, and where he could always ignore Arthur's burrowing through the long grass in search of that vicious ferret, the other truth. (pp. 194-95)

That "other truth" constantly "threatens" Waldo in many forms from his image in the glass, to the waves of grass that he encounters around the house on Terminus Road, to the paper bags of seeds his father has left hanging and which he knocks into from time to time. Neither Arthur's love, nor the symbolic reminders, nor the dreams which constantly affect his sleep seem able to perforate Waldo's shell. In spite of the occasional move towards the primeval archetypes as when the "gothic arches of dead grass were taking over from the classical"--expressive of one stage on the journey backwards through time--Waldo "would not, would not let it happen" (p. 127).

The plastic doll incident is another in which Waldo's impenetrable shell prevents contact with his unconscious. One day on the way home from the library Waldo buys a large plastic doll. Waldo himself is not quite sure why he does so except perhaps as a bargain and a gesture. Most likely this is an attempt by his *anima* to make contact with his conscious being. Waldo did not buy it specifically for Mrs Poulter but once he decides to give it to her he is carried along by the speed of events. Once the deed is accomplished however, and just as he did in the incident of the blue dress, Waldo regrets his act. Like Arthur and the Saportas, Mrs Poulter is someone who yearns to see farther than she normally does, someone who makes mysteries. Such people threaten Waldo because they "might even be the core of truth" (p. 187). The incident of the plastic doll raises its ugly head at the moment Waldo is dressing up in the blue dress, for when Arthur enters he has just chanced upon Mrs Poulter dressing the doll. The coincidence is almost too much for Waldo. Indeed, with the addition of Arthur's revelation

that one of Waldo's poems which falls from among his "private papers" is in fact a Tennyson poem, the situation becomes "too brutal" (p. 195).

This revelation leads Waldo to recall Arthur's visit to his library. Miss Glasson, a librarian, brings Arthur's presence to Waldo's attention. Arthur has been in the habit of going to the library to read the *Bhagavad Gita*, *The Brothers Karamazov* and *Alice Through the Looking-Glass*--all works of importance in terms of the search for integration with the unconscious. Arthur does not necessarily understand all the words which, for Waldo, are the part that matters. Nevertheless, as he tells Waldo on another occasion, "'. a word will suddenly flash out, won't it Waldo?--for somebody who doesn't always understand'" (p. 196). Outraged and intent on disowning Arthur, Waldo escorted him unceremoniously to the door, calling him loudly, "Sir."

Waldo's relationship with the Feinsteins is even more threatening than his relationship with Mrs Poulter. He goes to their house for the first time with great expectations of finding Dulcie the way she had been when he first met her at Mrs Musto's, but he is disillusioned; she seems different. Even on the occasion of their first meeting, Waldo suspected there was more to Dulcie than he cared to admit, but on this visit she plays "the dark rôle he had expected on the first occasion when she hadn't played it" (p. 101). Her hair even has been transformed; it now flows over her "white-embroidered shoulders" (p. 103) and her eyes brim and shimmer through a steamy curtain over the teacup. Indeed, Waldo feels so uncomfortable that he grinds the

mandalic roses on the carpet with his foot. He is constantly threatened and put on his guard by anything he cannot understand rationally.

When Waldo discovers that Mrs Feinstein has died, he decides to visit Dulcie and possibly ask her to marry him. Notwithstanding the dark, threatening side that Dulcie has shown from time to time, Waldo thinks that marriage with her would be beneficial to him. Naturally the reasons that lead him to this conclusion are entirely ego-centred. He has no inkling of the real need he has of Dulcie, just as he will not open himself up to Arthur's love and help:

> Waldo went over the way in which he would benefit by marriage with Dulcie. On the financial side they might have to skimp a bit at first, because he would refuse to touch anything Dulcie brought with her until he had proved himself as a husband. Nobody would be in a position to say theirs was not an idealistic marriage. The ring--they would decide on something in the semi-precious line, of course, though he would not suggest an opal, as some women were foolish enough to believe that opals bring bad luck. Then, undoubtedly he would benefit by having a home of his own. A bed to himself. And the meals Dulcie would prepare, rather dainty, foreign-tasting dishes, more digestible, more imaginative and spontaneously conceived. Because food to Mother was something you couldn't avoid, and which she had always offered with a sigh. But it was his work, his real work, which would benefit most. The atmosphere in which to evolve a style. The novel of psychological relationships in a family, based on his own experience, for truth, illuminated by what his imagination would infuse. One of the first things he intended to do was buy a filing cabinet to instal in his study. (pp. 149-50)

White marvellously underlines here both the elaborate self-centredness of Waldo's plans and the irony of his literary expectations. All Waldo's delusions are shattered with one blow. On entering the house he discovers Arthur is already there, sitting close at Dulcie's side on

the sofa, their knees touching. Arthur has just given Dulcie one of the four mandalas, although she has less need of it now that she is engaged to marry Len Saporta. Waldo is "astonished, then horrified, at the strangeness of it" (p. 152). In spite of this, as soon as Arthur has left, Waldo proceeds with his proposal, telling Dulcie, "'You are what I need. .'" (p. 153) By this time Dulcie has already accepted the dark, 'cello-noted side of her psyche. Her marriage to Len Saporta culminates in her fulfilment as a mother, personification of the Great Mother archetype, and as the centre of her family. Waldo rejects this new vision of her. Even though he sees her as the "Goddess of a Thousand Breasts, standing at the top of her steps in a cluster of unborn, ovoid children" (p. 157) (all symbols of wholeness), Waldo rejects being engulfed by her light and love, and replaces his momentary lapse with the image of Dulcie as an "ugly girl" (p. 158).

A final encounter with Dulcie and her family is so disquieting for Waldo that he runs into the path of an oncoming car. Meeting the Saporta family one day while shopping, Waldo can see only the outward appearance of the four of them. The impact of this mandalic quaternity threatens his complacency. The meeting is accompanied by Dulcie's deep 'cello-like voice, the blazing sun, and "a green shade of white hydrangeas" (p. 66). The announcement that the boy has been called Arthur is too much for Waldo and he escapes, only to be knocked down. The situation is still not lost for Waldo. He is given yet another opportunity to "see," finding himself without his pince-nez and drifting in an "extra-corporeal situation" (p. 67). But Waldo will not accept the overtures of his unconscious. He returns to consciousness

still thinking of the great burden life has inflicted on him in the guise of Arthur. He emerges from the deathlike experience completely unchanged.

After the accident Waldo replaces his pince-nez with glasses, symbolic of the even greater assistance his sight now needs. But even glasses do not help someone so impervious and "blind" as Waldo. It is on the surface of his glasses that his intellect glitters, not in his "rather pale eyes" (p. 56); in fact, as mirrors of his soul, his eyes blind.

Waldo rejects Arthur's love and help by telling himself that he is the leader of the two. Although he senses that they are more one than two, he resents it bitterly. It becomes "more a harness than a relationship" (p. 24) for him. Waldo dreads "the brother who looked almost right inside him when they opened their eyes on the twin pillows in the morning" (p. 39). He cannot "bear what he had to bear, his responsibility for Arthur" (p. 41). In his ego-centred self-sufficiency Waldo does not see that he needs Arthur as much as Arthur needs him, if not more. Waldo's problem with Arthur has two sides: first of all he looks down on Arthur, believing, for example, that the reason he is good with animals is that "it was perhaps natural for them to accept someone who was only half a human being" (p. 75). The other part of his misunderstanding comes from the fact that he dreads the greater understanding he suspects Arthur of having, he dreads hearing the truth that Arthur "might tell him one day" (p. 167). Waldo's attitude is illustrated by his refusal to accept the mandala Arthur offers. Not only will he reject the help of Arthur's love, but also

any symbol of wholeness. The idea of two in one is anathema to Waldo. The night that he offers his brother one of his mandalas Arthur is almost transfigured: "Arthur had turned, and was towering, flaming above him, the wick smoking through the glass chimney" (p. 169). Waldo is repulsed by Arthur's white, porous skin and shouts at him to go. For these reasons and others Waldo hates Arthur. Jung reminds us that "[l]ove makes a man better, hate makes him worse. ."[17] Little could be more applicable to the Brown brothers than this perception.

Perhaps Waldo is right to fear this truth, knowing that he is not strong enough to support it; for eventually the truth about himself leads directly to his death. Again Arthur approaches him on the subject of love, the subject that Waldo dreads most because of his unwillingness either to give or to receive it. Arthur blames himself for being simple and therefore unable to help Waldo. Waldo raves from the horror of what Arthur is saying. He believes, like Voss, that anything can be overcome by man's will. Not having the will does not bear thinking about for Waldo. He is so upset by the conversation that Arthur begins with him that he breaks down into tears and Arthur must comfort him. That night in the bed they share they take part in a eucharistic experience, one of those experiences which in White's novels are usually apocalyptic. As Waldo lies in Arthur's "engulfing arms" that night:

> All the bread and milk in the world flowed out of Arthur's mouth onto Waldo's lips. He felt vaguely he should resist such stale, ineffectual pap. But Arthur was determined Waldo should receive. By this stage their smeary faces were melted together.

> But so ineffectual. Waldo remained the passive, though palpitating, plastic doll in Arthur's arms (pp. 208-9)

In spite of the fact that they did seem "to flow together as they had, once or twice, in memory or in sleep" (p. 209), Waldo's will overcomes. This opportunity, as others of the past, is lost for Waldo. Indeed, in the whole of the White canon there is no other main character who so resolutely resists the opportunities for wholeness that are presented to him. Already before sunrise, "Waldo was again the dried-up grass-halm caught in the crook of Arthur's sweater" (p. 209). Soon Waldo rises and busies himself with washing dishes, which were normally left, in order to keep his thoughts at bay.

On the days that follow, Waldo occupies himself more than ever with his writing, especially about Tiresias who, he says, "found that words, turning to stones, would sink below the surface, out of sight" (p. 211), just as his own unconscious is buried, prevented from being of any use to him. Life carries on in this way until the day Arthur presents Waldo yet again with the horrible truth. Arthur has discovered the blue dress behind the copper. As if this were not enough, Waldo discovers a poem that Arthur has written:

> "my heart is bleeding for the Viviseckshunist
> Cordelia is bleeding for her father's life
> all Marys in the end bleed
> but do not complane because they know
> they cannot have it any other way." (p. 212)

The brother with the shingle short has reached a greater truth about life and suffering than all of Waldo's "words" put together. Suddenly everything is utterly intolerable for Waldo, and after Arthur leaves the room:

> He took down the dress box and began to look out shining words. He was old. He was bleeding. He was at last intolerably lustreless. His hands were shaking like the papers time had dried.
>
> While Arthur's drop of unnatural blood continued to glitter, like suspicion of an incurable disease. (p. 212)

With this, Waldo takes his papers and burns them. Lighter in this way, he is still encumbered by his hatred of Arthur and desire for his death. Arthur senses this, apologizes for the poem and again tries to explain about the rejected mandala. But Waldo is even more impervious than ever. He has seen Arthur's poem as a "disgusting *blood* myth" (p. 213)--and, at this point in the story, we have already read what Waldo feels about myth. Myth should help the ego get in touch with the archetypes of the unconscious, act as a kind of catalyst or psychopomp. On the contrary, Waldo feels that "[m]yths, evil enough in themselves, threatened one's sanity. " (p. 56). Insanity is what Jung says will happen to those who have not the stamina to come to terms with their psyches, those who cannot sustain the paradoxes that wholeness entails. According to Jung, there are "an inordinate number of [such] spiritual weaklings."[18] Without a doubt Waldo belongs among them. When faced with these truths and "Arthur's great marigold of a face beginning to open"(p. 214)--a mandalic image of the sun--he literally falls apart. Waldo's section ends with him "dropping. Down. Down" (p. 214).

Thus, although Waldo is in many ways like Voss, in the end Voss is saved, and Waldo is not. Like Voss, he is ego-centred and rejects love. Like Voss, he is offered love, but, unlike him, Waldo rejects it, probably because his hatred for the giver is so strong. As well,

in this case the giver is hindered in the expression of his love by his simplicity and, as Beatson says, his "unprepossessing exterior and lumbering mind alienate many of those who should be the recipients of his gift."[19] In *Voss*, lover and loved save each other, each one in himself becomes whole, but also the two form a hermaphroditic whole of juxtaposed opposites--physical and spiritual, male and female. In *The Solid Mandala* it remains for Arthur to absorb the necessary guilt from his relationship with Waldo and to assimilate his more feminine attributes with Waldo's masculinity. He is unable to save Waldo from himself. Perhaps the fact that they are twins, and thus more one than two, is one of the factors in Waldo's situation. In the end it is only Arthur, Dulcie, and Mrs Poulter who profit from the mandalas. The one that Arthur has kept for Waldo is lost forever after Waldo's death.

Arthur is the antithesis of Waldo. To begin with he is more in touch with his inner core, and was so even as a child. He takes the opportunities vouchsafed him, learns and grows, using his mandalas, even dancing them when necessary, and finally descends into the depths of suffering and guilt after his brother's death to re-emerge whole. So whole does he, in fact, become that, like Theo Goodman, he must be taken off to the asylum.

Two related images, both of great importance to Jung in *Psychology and Alchemy*, are inextricably bound up with Arthur: the mandala and the hermaphrodite. Although the hermaphrodite is essentially an alchemical symbol, Jung uses it extensively in his *Psychology and Alchemy*, the book which White admits to having influenced his writing

of *The Solid Mandala*. In this text Jung explains how the metaphysical aspects of the true alchemy are analogous to many important concerns of the individuation process. The goal of this process as well as the goal of the alchemical process is a union of opposites. Of the hermaphrodite, Jung says: "This primordial pair of opposites symbolizes every conceivable pair of opposites that may occur."[20] Beatson has much that is pertinent to say about the rôle of the hermaphrodite in *The Solid Mandala*:

> The conception of the hermaphroditic self receives its most complete expression in *The Solid Mandala*. In Waldo Brown the division between masculine and feminine is never healed; throughout his life he remains a victim of his bisexuality. Waldo obstinately and neurotically asserts his masculinity, despising Arthur for being a "fat, helpless, female!" His very denial of the female component in his nature, however, makes him most vulnerable to its assaults. As he grows older, denied more and denying more, he increasingly falls prey to the autonomous assertions of his own *anima*. This reaches its climax in the transvestite scene. . . . Waldo identifies himself from time to time with Tiresias, but unlike Tiresias, he never learns wisdom from his encounter with the female principle. Arthur's poem, which forces Waldo to face Physis directly, destroys him.
>
> Arthur is also interested in Tiresias, but unlike Waldo, he never experiences his hermaphroditic condition as a lethal schism. Instead, he uses it to explore the true nature of both his own self and that of other people. He is excited and fascinated whenever he comes across the phenomenon of bi-sexuality, accepts it without reservation or shame, and through this very acceptance achieves a unity of personality unknown to his schizoid twin.[21]

Of course, both boys are introduced to the Tiresias myth at the same time by their father. Even before this we are given a clue about Arthur's affinity with things feminine. As a boy Arthur liked to watch and help his mother make bread and butter, and eventually took complete

responsibility for these jobs. His father was disgusted, "but Mother approved, as though Arthur's head for figures were not enough; she seemed to be trying to turn the butter-making and bread-making into some sort of solemn rites" (p. 35). At one point Arthur has a dream in which a tree is growing from his thighs. (Fig. 131 on p. 245 of *Psychology and Alchemy* shows an hermaphroditic Adam with a tree growing from his thighs--the *arbor philosophica*--an indication that both bi-sexuality and the "active imagination" are needed to set this process in motion.) Cirlot refers to Jung's *Symbols of Transformation* to explain the "symbolic, bi-sexual nature,"[22] its connexion with the mystical Centre and the Tree of Life. Another reference to Arthur as a hermaphrodite occurs on the walk that Waldo and Arthur take at the beginning. Arthur is talking about their dogs and finds Waldo particularly unreceptive to what he is saying. At this point his "big, old-man's body" shows signs of "distress of feminine origin" (p. 27).

It is soon apparent that Arthur is fascinated by the Tiresias myth. Mr Brown is not so sure what Arthur gets from his reading to them from the Greek myths and asks him which one he prefers. Arthur's immediate response is Tiresias. His thoughts at the moment tell the reader just how much he is affected by it. He seems to sense a correspondence with himself:

> He could not explain the diversity of what he partly understood. . . . Nor would his family understand. How could he tell them of his dreams, for instance, except as something to laugh about. They would laugh to be told how shocked he was for Tiresias when Zeus took away his sight at the age of seven--*seven*--for telling people things they shouldn't know. So Arthur kept quiet. He was only surprised that they didn't notice how obviously his heart was beating when Zeus rewarded

> Tiresias with the gift of prophecy. . . . Then there was that other bit, about being changed into a woman, if only for a short time. (p. 224)

Waldo's reaction to Arthur's interest is typical: he stares. Later, in the library, when Arthur begins to talk about the hermaphroditic Adam, about whom he has learned from his reading, Waldo's reaction is much more violent, indicating how the years have made Waldo even more brittle. He takes Arthur by the wrists:

> "Shut up!" he ordered. "Do you understand? If you think thoughts like these, keep them to yourself, Arthur. I don't want to hear. Any such filth. Or madness." (p. 283)

The separation into sentence fragments at the end indicates just how distraught Waldo is. Arthur easily accepts the idea of a hermaphroditic Adam because he is at ease with the feminine element within him, his *anima;* Waldo is not, and the fact that he never comes to grips with it, the fact that he constantly barricades himself from it, leads to his death, unsaved.

We turn now to the symbol in the title of this novel--the mandala. Jung tells us in *Psychology and Alchemy* that, although individual mandalas differ, all have a basic circular structure and are frequently based on a quaternary system, and that they represent the psychic centre of the individual. In the East they are used as an aid to contemplation.[23] In *Psychology and Religion* Jung adds that:

> Since modern mandalas are amazingly close parallels to the ancient magical circles which usually have a deity in the centre, it is clear that in the modern mandala man--the deep ground, as it were, of the self--is not a substitute but a symbol for the deity.[24]

The mandala is "the psychological expression of the totality of the self"[25] and as such can "occur either in dreams or in the forms of concrete visual impressions, [or as the "solemn round dance" as Jung states in *Psychology and Religion*], often as the most obvious compensation for the contradictions and conflicts of the conscious situation."[26] In *Psychology and Alchemy* Jung also emphasizes the fact that the mandala symbol cannot be imposed from outside. White thus uses the unintelligent "dill," Arthur, as his instrument here. Arthur does not have the intellectual capacity to create "mandalas" out of his taws. Indeed, if he had, they would have been psychologically useless to him. Long before he discovered the definition and rôle of the mandala in Mrs Musto's library, their meaning was implicit for him. Thus they are truly a symbol from his unconscious.

Upon even casual reflexion it is obvious that all of these explanations of the mandala symbol are intricately knit into the fabric of *The Solid Mandala*. Although the solid mandalas or taws of the title are of prime importance, other mandala symbols proliferate throughout the text. There are some, such as the sun, the rose, the lotus, the hat, that any reader of White is well familiar with. Other important mandala symbols in this novel include the Chinese woman's wheel tree and the bay of blackberry bushes where Arthur performs his mandala dance for Mrs Poulter; the Star of David that Len Saporta gives Dulcie; the central mandalas on the carpets in Len's shop; as well as the orange jujubes Arthur requests before being taken away to Peaches-and-Plums, the asylum whose name itself is symbolic. Various flowers take on mandalic significance here, from the white chrysanthemums that

Mrs Poulter is taking to market at the beginning to the chrysanthemums and white and blue hydrangeas that grow in profusion in the Feinstein garden. Flowers are all-important in *The Solid Mandala* in both their psychological and alchemical functions. Cirlot reports that "because of its shape, the flower is an image of the 'Centre,' and hence an archetypal image of the soul." Orange or yellow flowers, continues Cirlot, reinforce sun symbolism, and blue flowers are "probably an allusion to the 'mystic' Centre. The golden flower occurs also in alchemy as does the sapphire blue flower, symbol of the hermaphrodite."[27] The yellow flower is highly significant because of the two plants closely associated with Arthur, the dill and the fennel. Both produce yellow flowers, and as Jung points out, for the alchemist, the "golden flower is the noblest and purest essence of gold."[28] "Dill," an old dialect term for "thick" or "stupid" is applied to Arthur as a child. Arthur uses it himself and is not embarrassed by it. From an early age Arthur is fascinated by the fennel which grows wild in Sarsaparilla. Waldo includes the fennel in a composition he has to read aloud in class and Arthur pricks up his ears "because he was interested in fennel. '*Frizzy* fennel!' Arthur laughed low, loving it" (p. 43).

The sun in *The Solid Mandala* plays a somewhat different rôle from the one it plays in *Voss* where it is predominantly a symbol of masculinity. Here too it symbolizes the masculine side of the androgynous Arthur, but it represents as well the "classical symbol for the unity and divinity of the self."[29] Arthur's fiery orange hair is very clearly an image of the sun. When Arthur saves his brother from

his schoolmates who are persecuting him, he seems to swell:

> The pale lights were flashing from the whiter edges of his skin, from under the normally hateful hair.
>
> The fire was shooting in tongues from every bristle of Arthur Brown's flaming hair. (p. 45)

Even as a child, on the way from England to Australia, he is aware of the sun in a special way:

> suddenly he noticed for the first time without strain, it seemed, the red gold disc of the sun. He was so happy, he ran to reach, to climb the rails, reaching up. (p. 215)

In two different articles Thelma Herring comments on the imagery in *The Solid Mandala*. In "Self and Shadow" she enumerates the various mandala symbols in the novel and then adds an interesting comment in parentheses to the effect that Arthur notices a wreath of roses hanging over the mirror in which Waldo is contemplating himself clad in his mother's dress. Herring feels that "this cryptically described incident seems to suggest a vain search for totality through his family heritage."[30] However, I believe it goes further than this to symbolize the good that *might* come from this experience if Waldo were to accept the advances of his *anima*. Not only is the rose a mandala emblem, but the wreath of roses around the mirror forms a circle with Waldo in the centre. But then all the family seem to be in the glass, and Waldo's journey goes no further than the ancestors on his mother's side who have, unfortunately, such significance for him. Of greater interest is Herring's note on fennel in the same article. She came across a pertinent description of the virtue of this plant in Holland's *Pliny*: "'Fennel hath a singular property to mendify our sight, and take away the filme or web that overcasteth and dimmeth our eyes.'"[31] This

property is appropriate for someone who can see "right into the part that matters" (p. 29) and who seems to participate, at least to some extent, in the gift of insight granted to Tiresias whose story fascinated Arthur so much.

Throughout *The Solid Mandala* the reader is given clues as to why the mandalas are so meaningful for Arthur. He is early associated with the importance of myth and ritual for the individuated person. "The evenings of lamplight, with the smell of bread and the sweat of butter, were not less mythical than some golden age of which Dad read to them from a book" (p. 36). Later the ceremony of bread- and butter-making is underlined further:

> Only she [Mrs Brown] and Arthur were to understand the mystery they had to celebrate. Arthur was only too glad to adopt the rites she imposed on him. By lamplight he and Mother became their own closed circle in the kitchen. (p. 232)

He is shown to have the intuitive wisdom, like Rose in *Voss*, or those numerous White characters who are in touch with an inner reality. He tries to help Waldo in this, to "drag him back behind the almost visible line beyond which knowledge could not help" (p. 47), but Waldo remains stuck in the realm of reason. There are two other illustrative, though less significant, elements of Jung's thought to be found in *The Solid Mandala*: Arthur's things are on the left (unconscious) side of the dresser and Waldo's on the right (conscious) side; Arthur has the habit of barging around and knocking over things that are in his way. This habit seems to indicate that he can eliminate just as easily the barriers the conscious mind puts in the way of the unconscious. The interest Arthur takes in icebergs at the

beginning of his section also connects him with the unconscious. He wanted to see some on the trip to Australia, but never did. Nevertheless, "in sleep the icebergs moaned, and jostled one another, crunching and tinkling. The moons of sky-blue ice fell crashing silently down to splinter into glass balls which he gathered in his protected hands" (p. 218). Here too the unconscious is able to come into contact with his conscious self. All these things both establish Arthur as the unconscious half of the whole which constitutes the Brown twins and underline the influence Jung had on White at this time.

The mandalas, of course, are of supreme importance in establishing Jung's influence on White. As a child Arthur collects and trades marbles, but four become his special talismans. The fact that there are four is important. In *Psychology and Alchemy* Jung stresses the significance of the quaternary and the indissoluble relationship of four to the circle of wholeness. He says:

> Among the various characteristics of the centre, the one that struck me from the beginning was the phenomenon of the quaternity. . . . It would seem that there is normally a clear insistence on four.[32]

The four different marbles are very important to Arthur. He associates each one with a different person and eventually gives both Dulcie and Mrs Poulter the ones that should by rights be theirs. But, Waldo persistently refuses his and it is finally lost. The following passage indicates the great importance of these mandalas:

> He was different, then, in several ways. But did not mind since he had his marbles.
>
> However many marbles Arthur had--there were always those which got lost, and some he traded for other things--he considered four his permanencies. There

> were the speckled gold and the cloudy blue. There was the taw with a knot at the centre, which made him consider palming it off, until, on looking long and close, he discovered the knot was the whole point.
>
> Of all these jewels or touchstones, talismans or sweethearts, Arthur Brown got to love the knotted one best, and for staring at it, and rubbing at it, should have seen his face inside. After he had given two, in appreciation, or recognition, the flawed or knotted marble became more than ever his preoccupation. But he was ready to give it, too, if he were asked. Because this rather confusing oddity was really not his own. His seemed more the coil of green and crimson circlets.
>
> Waldo the twin used to scoff at the marbles.
>
> "Who'd want to lug round a handful of silly old marbles!"
>
> "You would not," said Arthur, undisturbed.
>
> "You'll bust your pocket, and lose your old marbles. What'll you do then?"
>
> "Nothing," said Arthur. "I shan't lose them." (p. 228)

The utmost significance of the marbles is underlined on several occasions. One night Arthur's own marble rolls out of reach and he lies in bed "miserably conscious of the distance between his desire and perfect satisfaction" (p. 262). They soon develop "into something more serious than play. For the circle of the distant mountains would close around him, the golden disc spinning closer in the sky, as he contemplated the smaller sphere lying on the palm of his hand" (p. 233).

The dance Arthur performs for Mrs Poulter by the Chinese woman's wheel tree represents, in another important mandalic form, the whole of Arthur's life and relationships. It is of interest here that the wheel tree, which Arthur sees as a "treeful of fiery wheels" (263) belongs to the Chinese woman. This connects the mandala dance more closely with the Eastern origin of the mandala as an "aid to contemplation."[33] Indeed, the fiery hair which radiates from Arthur's head associates him

clearly with this mandala. Arthur's dance is apocalyptic as well. Afterwards he collapses and sleeps for a time. He is not so much dramatically reborn after the experience of the centre followed by the symbolic death or sleep, as renewed. After this he seems to need Mrs Poulter's company much less--the different aspects of his life fit together more meaningfully from this time on. Again what Jung has to say about the mandala dance is highly pertinent:

> At all events, the aim and effect of the solemn round dance is to impress upon the mind the image of the circle and the centre and the relation of each point along the periphery to that centre. Psychologically this arrangement is equivalent to a mandala and is thus a symbol of the self, the point of reference not only of the individual ego but of all those who are of like mind or who are bound together by fate.[34]

Since Arthur's dance, as Patricia Morley points out, "summarizes the meaning of the entire novel in a way that no direct statement could,"[35] it behoves us to look at the passage in detail. Arthur sets out in the first corner and intends to "proceed by stages to the fourth, and beyond" (p. 265), that is, right to the centre. The movement seems to come to him without any conscious effort on his part. The first corner is a kind of prelude where he dances about himself, his dichotomies, and the images he is associated with: the moon, the "disc of the orange sun" (265), and the icebergs, his beginning and his end. The second corner belongs to the second person in his personal quaternity, Dulcie Feinstein. This corner unites Arthur, Dulcie and her husband and unborn children. Here the Star of David is important and is seen to represent the three-cornered relationship of Arthur, Dulcie, and Leonard. Included too are the hydrangeas and Dulcie's

music. The third corner belongs to Mrs Poulter and she sways slightly in concord with the dancer. The images danced into this corner belong, as does Mrs Poulter herself, to the earth: ripening pears, "rootling suckling pigs" and honey. The most significant part of Mrs Poulter's corner belongs to "the child she had never carried in the dark of her body, under the heart, from the beat of which he was already learning what he could expect" (p. 266), for Arthur becomes that child at the end. The whole rhythm of the dance changes in Waldo's corner. The dry, unloving and well-protected centre of his being is translated in the "brittly rigid" stamping of the dance. Even the language White uses--"brittly"--exquisitely portrays the sense:

> the reeds sawed at one another. There was a shuffling of dry mud, a clattering of dead flags, or papers. Of words and ideas skewered to paper. The old, bent, over-used, aluminium skewers. Thus pinned and persecuted, what should have risen in pure flight, dropped to a dry twitter, a clipped twitching. He couldn't dance his brother out of him, not fully. They were too close for it to work, closest and farthest when, with both his arms, he held them together, his fingers running with candle-wax. He could not save. At most a little comfort gushed out guiltily, from out of their double image, their never quite united figure. In that corner of the dance his anguished feet had trampled the grass into a desert. (p. 266)

Then, in the centre Arthur dances all four elements into "the passion of all their lives, the blood running out of the backs of his hands, water out of the hole in his ribs. His mouth was a silent hole, because no sound was needed to explain" (p. 266). Words are not important. Then, after a "little quivering footnote on forgiveness," Arthur is finished. The somewhat unprepared Christian imagery present in the centre of Arthur's dance can be explained in Jungian terms. In

Psychology and Alchemy Jung says that the "Christian symbol is of the greatest psychological importance in so far as it is perhaps the most highly developed and differentiated symbol of the self."[36] As well, Jung discusses the presence of man in the centre of most modern mandalas, as opposed to the mediaeval and Eastern mandalas which tend to place a divinity in the centre. Morley resolves the problem as follows:

> multiple patterns converge in the fourth corner where Waldo is identified with life's winter and with death--a *dead end*, apparently, like the Terminus Road where the brothers reside. In the mandala dance this apparent failure is resolved by an archetype of the Christian which Arthur understands to be the centre of *both* square and circle. . . . Thus the conclusion to the mandala dance does put man at the centre of the mandala, but a man whom image and archetype identify with divinity.[37]

Perhaps, however, this imagery is not so unprepared as might seem at first. It is possinle to see Arthur's head, with its radiating fiery red hair as a kind of Christian monstrance containing the host, itself a mandala. And indeed, by the end, Arthur partakes of both the human and the divine when he becomes Mrs Poulter's personal saint and she kneels beside him, "since her God was brought crashing down" (p. 311), and she encircles "by instinct her joy and duty with her arms--ritually as it were" (p. 311). When he awakes from his sleep and finds Mrs Poulter's nostrils are "still slightly flared, from some experience recently suffered" (p. 267), Arthur knows that he can give her the mandala he considers hers.

Apocalyptic experiences aside, Arthur must yet suffer, especially through the guilt he feels towards his brother, before he ascends at

the end to wholeness. When Waldo dies, Arthur feels he is the murderer: "Arthur was afraid Waldo was preparing to die of the hatred he had bred in him. Because he, not Waldo, was to blame. Arthur Brown, the getter of pain" (p. 294). As he dies, Waldo grasps Arthur's wrists in a steel grip, to bring him to trial, as it were. When he manages to free himself, Arthur runs out of the house to begin this trial, his final descent into the very depths of the unconscious. After "journeying" on bus and train, back to an animal stage of the unconscious, seeking a dark corner "to prepare himself for putrefaction,"[38] (p. 305) he reaches the nadir in a "narrow printer's lane alongside the cold-smelling bricks, in the corner in which drunks, evidently, came to piss" (p. 306).

Soon after this he realizes he is not intended to die and is gently eased towards the future. This is the point where he loses a marble. White reduces Arthur "to nothing [until] he remembered that one marble must be left. The first and sleaziest ray of light from the entrance to the lane showed him the whorled marble lying in the hollow of his hand. The knotted mandala [Waldo's] was the one he had lost" (pp. 306-7). Arthur can now emerge and begin the trek upwards. He passes the public library, but no longer needs to search for truth in books "because in the end knowledge had come to him, not through words, but by lightning," the way it comes to all White's individuated heroes and heroines. Then he looks in on a meal at the Saporta's. The scene is redolent of fulfilment. He does not need to enter, Dulcie helps him just by being there, as he has helped her in the past. The next day "he felt the sun burning between his

shoulderblades, he felt a resistance leaving him under the great orange disc of the sun [which] burned with him in a fit of understanding or charity" (p. 309). The "revolving wheels, of trains, of buses" (p. 309) carry him back to Mrs Poulter.

After suffering the discovery of Waldo's body, Mrs Poulter is highly charged with the fire of wholeness, and after their faces join in the mandala, Arthur is content to be led away by Sergeant Foyle. His exit is accompanied by a recurrence of the sun and iceberg images associated with Arthur since childhood. These paradoxical images represent the beginning and the end; the source and the goal are juxtaposed here:

> For Arthur the orange disc [his goal] had not moved noticeably since he began his upward clinb. It was the accompaniment which confused, by its increase in complexity: the groaning, and tinkling, and splintering of invisible icebergs. (pp. 314-15)

Thus the lives of the two brothers represent the extreme dichotomies of reason and intuition, the descent of Waldo into a purely physical death and the "upward climb" of Arthur towards a wholeness symbolized by the mandala, the sun and the jujubes--a thoroughly Jungian approach.

Dulcie is perhaps the most Jungian character in terms of an individuation "process" and thus best represents the theme of "becoming." The person most closely connected with her becoming whole is Arthur. The very different relationships of Waldo and Arthur with Dulcie show how opposite the twins' natures are. When Waldo decides to propose to Dulcie, his attitude is calculating and materialistic.

Arthur, on the other hand, bases his relationship with Dulcie on affection, honesty, and intuitive understanding. At the beginning Dulcie is seen to have a latent affiliation with the "living," but at the same time she exhibits aspects of her personality which are more characteristic of someone like Waldo. Her vacillation is best seen through the eyes of Waldo, since Arthur always seems to bring out those aspects of her character that will lead to wholeness.

First presented in a chance meeting with Waldo, Dulcie is the wife of Len and mother of two. Having rationalized her rejection of his proposal as a result of Dulcie's poor judgement, Waldo feels very superior to them and particularly looks down on Len as stupid and vulgar. However, Dulcie's eyes and the presence of the burning sun make him uneasy. The family itself appears as a quaternity in the aura of Dulcie's "throbbing and vibrating" as she "put a hand on the girl's head and the three of them, the four even, because you could not separate Saporta from his flesh, the four then, transcended their own vulgarity" (p. 65). Then the 'cello-notes of Dulcie's voice play havoc with Waldo's presence of mind as he is told that her son is named after Arthur. Waldo must escape.

He has first met Dulcie as a teenager at a tennis party at Mrs Musto's. Here Dulcie is sufficiently different from the other guests for Waldo to despise her. Nevertheless, he is attracted by the fact that her father owns a music store. Waldo, after all, "had always longed to acquire an intimate intellectual friend, with whom to exchange books, and letters written in the kind of literary style which went with such relationships" (p. 91). But even Waldo senses something

in her he does not understand. He feels he "might be addressing the kind of complicated human being his reading told him did exist" (p. 93). He senses in her eyes the look of a dog which he often feared. Moreover, like Arthur and their dogs, she seems to be able to penetrate into his inner being. For a while he thinks he has won her over until something she says makes her sound "suddenly darker, exotic" (p. 94). Yet Dulcie seems to deprecate the images which are frequently associated with the "living" in White's work--the clown and the moon in particular. As Waldo walks her home, she tells him of the scent bottle she discovered in Mrs Musto's bathroom:

> "There was a pierrot"--Dulcie was bursting herself--"sitting on the *moon*!"
> She dabbed and mopped.
> "On the *bottle of scent*!" She shrieked.
> It was strange, when he had decided she should be a serious-minded girl, that she should show this other frivolous side. (p. 97)

However, the incident is seen in a different light when Dulcie later tells Arthur of it. Now she sees a different shape and meaning to the words *amour* and *love*, and as Waldo enters the room he immediately senses that "this is Dulcie being herself" (p. 111).

Dulcie seems closest to ignoring her potential when she returns from a trip abroad with her mother. An encounter with Waldo on her return shows the two sides fighting for prominence:

> She would have liked, and did try, to keep it light, giggly, and Australian, but in spite of herself the muted 'cello notes rose from her thicker throat, as he had heard them also in her mother. Dulcie, though, it was obvious, the matter-of-fact yet still ready-to-become-hysterical young girl, had not yet experienced the full agony of 'cello music. (p. 131)

At times even Arthur experiences the "dead" side of her nature. On her return from abroad she seems to have entirely forgotten the post card that she sent him about the rock-crystal studded walls she saw in Europe. She bluntly refuses a walk in the park excusing herself with a headache, as if she no longer wanted to move "in perfect time, in absolute agreement" (p. 246) as they had before she left.

But it is after the death of her mother that she seems at her lowest ebb, as if she had "dried up inside" (p. 252). "If [Arthur] had not known her to be genuine, her manner could have appeared false" (p. 253). Upon reflexion, Arthur feels her "face had been whittled down to the yellow bone" (p. 254). To try to help her emerge from her grief more whole than before, Arthur decides he must give her the mandala.

Dulcie's unsettled position between the "living" and the "dead" is best seen on a visit the two brothers make to the Feinstein house for tea after Dulcie and her mother have returned from abroad. Waldo asks her to play the *Moonlight Sonata*. Though Dulcie senses that her playing of the symbolic piece might be disastrous, she undertakes it as the moon rises jerkily:

> But it was going to be a heroic struggle. Not in the beginning, not in the *Adagio what's-it*. There she could lay the atmosphere on, and did, in almost visible slabs. Dulcie's ever so slightly hairy arms were leaning on the solid air, first one side, then the other. Building up her defences against inevitable suicide somewhere along that road which was never moonlit enough. Her shoulders, however, were getting above themselves. If she had started humbly, the music had made her proud. It was kidding her all over again into becoming the genius she was never intended to be, dissolving the bones in her arms with a promise of release, offering a universe of passion instead of

> plunkletty-plunk on the home upright.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> When a succession of little pure notes trickled from her fingers into the living-room, suddenly and unexpectedly, but right. [Waldo] could have sunk his teeth in the nape of her neck where the little curls were unfurling, from beneath the bun, with the logic of notes of music on the page.
>
> With less logic than tenacity Dulcie began to shape the *Allegretto*. The paper moon was dangling. Unwisely she allowed herself to indulge in coy skips and pretty side-steps for the *Allegretto*, and did not recover the balance in time for arrival at the precipice. (p. 135)

But, as she breaks off before finishing the piece, it is evident that the "living," whole side will eventually win the battle:

> Immediately afterwards she turned round, her appearance dishevelled, as though she had walked out between storms. Branches still wet and aggressive had hit her in the face, without however breaking her trance, deepening it even, by making her gasp and swallow down the black draught of sky which otherwise she might have shuddered back from. As she sat looking out at them from her irrelevant body with such a pure candour of expression Waldo saw it was he who had lost. He might never be able to forgive her the difficulties she put in the way of loving her. (p. 136)

Arthur had an innate sense of his relationship with Dulcie from their very first meeting when it seemed that "he had met her before" (p. 109). This close connexion is mutual and continues throughout the novel. By the time Arthur implements his decision to help her by giving her the mandala, she has been "restored to flesh" (p. 254) and shines with "a lovely confidence" (p. 254). Her love for Len Saporta, already clearly associated with the mandala, is largely responsible for reinstating Dulcie on the path of "becoming." As well, the quaternity connects them:

> There was now no need, he saw, to offer the mandala, but he would, because he still wanted to, because they were all four, he, Dulcie, Mrs Feinstein and Leonard Saporta, so solidly united. (p. 254)

Arthur knows that her inner beauty will not evaporate ever again, the battle has been won; the hermaphroditic wholeness in Dulcie, represented by the incipient moustache on her upper lip, is triumphant. She realizes this herself as well:

> Though first she had to denounce herself, saying: 'I have always been--particulatly lately--hideously weak. You' she said, gasping for breath above the glass marble, 'were the one, Arthur, who gave me strength--well, to face the truth--well, about ourselves--in particular my *own* wobbly self.' (p. 255)

Dulcie's wholeness grows as she gets older. Her "beauty had increased with marriage, was more outflowing, her eyes more lustrous in communication" (p. 275). The culmination is the picture the reader gets of her at the end as Arthur looks at the family gathering through the window. The language verges on the biblical:

> the upright candle-flames made the room look vast and black. The Saportas were preparing to dine, amongst their children and their children's children. . Only her beauty still aglow inside her revealed Dulcie in the old woman of fuzzy sideburns and locked joints, caged by her own back. (p. 308)

Dulcie sits at the table in her violet dress receiving the homage of her family in a tumult of songs, prayers, blessings and clatter of dishes, golden steam and the scent of cloves. Her individuation, or "becoming" whole, is complete.

Like Dulcie, Mrs Poulter is one of Arthur's "fluctuating figures" (p. 249), but unlike Dulcie, her change is less gradual and more apocalyptic and thus she is the least Jungian of all the characters in *The Solid Mandala*. She illustrates most emphatically the myth of rebirth. Her importance is underlined by the fact that the framing

sections at the beginning and end of the novel belong essentially to her. We meet her first in the fictional present as she sits on the bus with her friend, the "dead" Mrs Dun, who "was the sallow sort" (p. 12). The novel opens with Mrs Poulter's statement that "'[t]here's more life up this end'" (p. 11). Almost immediately, and in contrast with Mrs Dun, Mrs Poulter is set among the potentially "living" by her association with mandalic flowers. We are told that she "listens" to the dahlias and she protects the white chrysanthemums she is holding on her lap. Like the many "living" White characters who are parti-coloured--reflecting the opposites that go together in the whole--Mrs Poulter is pigeon-coloured: black, or brown and white. She realizes that there is "more to the Brothers Brown than meets the eye" (p. 18). She is one of the many characters that Waldo cannot relate to because, although he finds her "an unalterably stupid creature, [she] usually seemed to find an answer"(p. 61).

From the day the Poulters arrive in Terminus Lane, Arthur finds her easy to get along with, to the dismay of both Waldo and his mother. Besides her affinity for flowers, other signs of potential rebirth are associated with her. Her house is in the shape of a houseboat, a vehicle for journeying across water into the unconscious.[39] Throughout the novel Mrs Poulter is seen to have an affinity with simple, earthy things. Although her experiences are not the same as Dulcie's, she shares a symbolic significance with her, which Herring points out: "Both are on the symbolic level earth goddesses, Dulcie through her fecundity, Mrs Poulter through her closeness to nature."[40] She knows much intuitively and is generous with help and love. She yearns to see

farther than her eye can and, most important, it is she who takes Arthur to see the wheel tree in flower. As Arthur admits, "'I would never have seen without she took me' (p. 145). It seems to be as much Mrs Poulter as the spot which inspires Arthur's mandala dance. Before he begins, he longs to touch her shiny hair that, when warmed by the sun, seems "to be leading a life of its own, like some kind of sleepy animal" (p. 264). Arthur suddenly realizes "what was intended of him" (p. 264). And after his dance, through which Mrs Poulter has visibly suffered as well, he gives her one of his mandalas. At that moment she realizes "there was never no need for fear" (p. 300), for "in a moment or two they had gone through more than you live in years" (p. 300). After this, in spite of her ups and downs, "the bonfire of Arthur's head never quite [goes] out for [her]" (p. 300).

Mrs Poulter has her less inspired side as well. She seems adequately adjusted to the "Zeitgeist"; she has her religion. Nevertheless, the experience of Arthur's dance has not been lost on her.

She suffers too. First for the child she never had, and then for the shame of becoming so attached to Waldo's plastic doll that in the end she had to bury it. But the watermelon cardigan she has knitted indicates more is to come. Red is the colour of suffering as well as the colour associated with the last stage of the alchemical process. This cardigan is first mentioned just before she suffers her symbolic death. As she runs away from the terrible sight of Waldo's mutilated corpse, she descends into mental hell:

> For the clouds were building up from beyond and over Sarsaparilla, for the armageddon of which Mrs Poulter had read and heard. She knew now. All the films, all the telly, all the black-and-white of the papers was turning real, as the great clouds, the great tanks, ground up groaning over Sarsaparilla. To lock together. Men burning in the steel prisons. Mrs Poulter went zig-zagging over the ruts, along the road, along the banks, over the tussocks, to save those who need not die. But age had made her top-heavy. Hope was faint. She knew now. The flat faces of all those Chinese guerillas or Indonesians, it was the same thing, dragged out across the dreadful screen. All those Jews in ovens, that was long ago, but still burning, lying in heaps. Lone women bashed up in Mosman, Marouba, Randwick, places you went only in your sleep. Little girls held to the ground. The bleeding wombs of almost all women. (p. 302)

But she is gradually raised up again and as her watermelon cardigan flutters in the "rainy green," the colour of hope. At the same time her conventional religion fails: "And He released His hands from the nails. And fell down, in a thwack of canvas, a cloud of dust" (p. 303). She continues to run nevertheless:

> Then she fell down. She lay amongst the cold mossy-coloured grass at the side of the road, extended, not so much injured by her fall, as bludgeoned by this moment at which the past united with the present, her own pains with those of others.
>
> When she got up, her stocking down, her right knee grazed blue and bleeding, Arthur should have been standing beside her. As she ran on, he was that close to her thoughts, without putting out her hand she could feel the shape of his. (p. 304)

As she emerges reborn, she can accept Arthur as the child she never had and realizes that he has become her symbol of everlasting life. She kneels beside him, and their faces blend in his mandala. This experience has been so apocalyptic that it will never be reversed. She can return to her daily routine of the telly, the animals, and Mr Poulter's tea because she knows "nothing can touch Arthur nothing

can touch me not the part of us that matters not if they tear our fingernails off" (p. 316). The novel ends, as do most of White's novels, with a mandala: "Then she turned, to do the expected things, before re-entering her actual sphere of life" (p. 316). Mrs Poulter's rôle is well summarized by Geoffrey Dutton:

> As Oscar Wilde said, those who go beneath the surface "do so at their peril" . . . . But the mandala of wholeness is given to those that do, like Mrs Poulter at the very end of the book, who performs the ordinary expected things, and then re-enters that inner life which the external world cannot destroy.[41]

In *The Solid Mandala* the related themes of White's work all appear again: the dichotomies presented through the Brown brothers, the slow "becoming" of Dulcie, and the apocalyptic rebirth of Mrs Poulter. Although Mrs Poulter's case is not so obviously Jungian as the others, the myth of rebirth is, of course, concerned very intricately with the archetypes which Jung explains, and which are basic to any individuation process. Arthur and Waldo represent the opposites which must be juxtaposed before wholeness can be reached: left and right, unconscious and conscious, imagination and reason. Although Waldo represents one of those people that Jung sees as too weak to be able to support and benefit from the battle between opposites, he is nevertheless necessary to Arthur's wholeness. Through him Arthur undergoes the necessary suffering and guilt without which "a man will never reach his wholeness." Indeed, the passage which follows this in

Psychology and Alchemy provides a fitting summary of the meaning of *The Solid Mandala*:

> Wholeness is in fact a charisma which one can manufacture neither by art nor by cunning; one can only grow into and endure whatever its advent may bring. No doubt it is a great nuisance that mankind is not uniform but compounded of individuals whose psychic structure spreads them over a span of at least ten thousand years. Hence there is absolutely no truth that does not spell salvation to one person and damnation to another.[42]

Notes

Chapter Three

[1] William Walsh, *Patrick White's Fiction* (Sydney: George Allen and Unwin, 1977), p. 85.

[2] White, *Flaws*, p. 146.

[3] Jung, *Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious*, pp. 387, 389.

[4] Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*, p. 97.

[5] Edinger, p. 179.

[6] In particular Patricia Morley, *Mystery*, p. 191, and John Colmer, *Patrick White*, p. 51.

[7] Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*, p. 13.

[8] Patrick White, *The Solid Mandala* (Harmondsworth, Mddx.: Penguin Books, 1966), p. 192. All subsequent references to this novel in this chapter will be noted in the text.

[9] Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*, p. 152.

[10] Cirlot, pp. 155-56.

[11] Thelma Herring, "*The Solid Mandala*: Two Notes", *Southerly*, 28.3 (1968): 216.

[12] *Ibid.*: 216.

[13] *Ibid.*: 217.

[14] *Ibid.*: 216-17.

[15] Ivor Evans, ed. *Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable* (New York: Harper and Row, rev. ed., 1981), p. 439.

[16] Beatson, *Eye*, p. 73.

[17] Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*, p. 32.

[18] *Ibid.*, p. 16.

[19] Beatson, *Eye*, p. 43.

[20] Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*, p. 144.

[21] Beatson, *Eye*, p. 95.

[22] Cirlot, p. 349.

[23] Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*, pp. 91, 92, 94.

[24] Jung, *Psychology and Religion*, p. 96.

[25] Jung, *Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, p. 304.

[26] Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*, p. 27.

[27] Cirlot, p. 110.

[28] Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*, p. 80.

[29] *Ibid.*, p. 75n.

[30] Thelma Herring, "Self and Shadow: The Quest for Totality in *The Solid Mandala*" *Southerly* 26.3 (1966): 186.

[31] Herring, "Two Notes": 220.

[32] Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*, pp. 208-9.

[33] *Ibid.*, p. 91.

[34] Jung, *Psychology and Religion*, p. 276.

[35] Morley, *Mystery*, p. 188.

[36] Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*, p. 19

[37] Morley, *Mystery*, pp. 188-89.

[38] The *putrifactio* is a vital step in the alchemical process prior to the production of the Philosopher's Stone, or *Lapis*. See in particular fig. 48, p. 101 and fig. 221, p. 390 in *Psychology and Alchemy*.

[39] Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*, p. 192. It should also be noted that the Feinsteins' house is equipped with a ship's bell, and Arthur makes note of both these nautical equivalences.

[40] Herring, "Self and Shadow": 186.

[41] Dutton, p. 39.

[42] Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*, p. 30.

Chapter Four

The Eye of the Storm

From Aristotle's "The greatest thing by far is to be a master of metaphor" through Shelley's "Language is vitally metaphorical" and Nietzsche's designation of truth as a "mobile army of metaphors,"[1] right to the present, literary critics have tried to explain the reason or reasons why metaphor is so vital to language. In the twentieth century people of very different backgrounds recognize the importance of metaphor. Robert Frost said, "All thinking is metaphorical"; C.S. Lewis that "All truth, or all but a few fragments, is won by metaphor"[1]; and Jung, that "Archetypal content expresses itself first and foremost in metaphors."[2] Metaphors vary from the very ordinary "the sun rises", to Shakespeare's poetic "O how shall summer's honey breath hold out/Against the wrackful siege of battering days,"[3] and include the vivid image in Pound's short poem:

> The apparition of these faces in the crowd;
> Petals on a wet, black bough.[4]

Why then does metaphor underlie such a vast range of expressions? I believe the answer lies in man's difficulty in expressing in words his most intense feelings. Patrick White illustrates his own problem with words when he says:

> It is difficult to express what I have to express in a naturalistic medium in the age in which I live. I feel you can do far more with paint and music; I am hobbled by words.[5]

Since White has long been aware of the problem of using words to express thoughts and feelings, and since he uses metaphor more directly in *The Eye of the Storm* than in any other of his novels, this chapter will deal specifically with his treatment of the three themes in terms of metaphor. Using a metaphor which recurs throughout his work, White wrote in an article in 1958 that "Writing became a struggle to create completely fresh forms out of the rocks and sticks of words."[6] This struggle has led White to rely on metaphor in all its many forms in everything he writes. Indeed, White's use of alchemy, Jewish mysticism, Jungian psychology, Neo-Platonism, Christianity and other sources is essentially a manner of speaking metaphorically. However, the same archetypes, dichotomies and myths are reached by less specifically oriented metaphors in the novel which won the author the Nobel Prize--*The Eye of the Storm*. As Jung said: "An archetype content expresses itself first and foremost in metaphors."[7] In order to appreciate fully the imaginative use Patrick White makes of metaphor, it is necessary to comment briefly on the nature of metaphor itself.

The most common definition of metaphor, one which lies in its grammatical distinction from simile, is an implied analogy between one thing and a second, without the use of "like" or "as." Despite the prevalence of this kind of metaphor in Patrick White's work, my major concentration in this chapter will be on a broader aspect of metaphor: that aspect of metaphor which, as Aristotle said centuries ago, gives "[c]learness, pleasure and distinction"[8] to the work in question.

The importance Aristotle gives to metaphor in both poetry and prose is echoed in the twentieth century by Northrop Frye, who illustrates the limitations of descriptive language which often destroys ideas. Frye believes there are many ideas that can be expressed or understood only by metaphor. As an example he cites the Trinity ("three persons *are* one"), and the Real Presence where the "body and blood *are* the bread and the wine." Obviously these doctrines are more than simply metaphors; however, "the point is that they can be stated only in a metaphorical this-is-that form."[9]

At this point, I would like to turn to the perceptive study of metaphor made by Philip Wheelwright in *Metaphor and Reality*. The conclusions he draws about the reliance of metaphor on tensive language and the rôle it plays in transforming into words experience of great "psychic depth" are of particular importance to the study of metaphor in Patrick White. Wheelwright's study of the metaphor begins with the concept that as man is alive, so is his language: the more intensely he lives, the more tense a form of expression his thoughts require. Since the basis of all Patrick White's writing is the discovery of intense moments of human experience, it is most important to delve deeply into the ways White uses language to express these intense moments; or, as Aristotle said, to give "clearness" to them.

The dichotomy between the "living" and the "dead" in White's fiction is the dichotomy between those who benefit from the elusive moments of perception of the mystical Centre and are thus set upon the road to self-knowledge and those who do not. These are, then, moments of "psychic depth." These moments are what Frye refers to when he

indicates that the metaphor is indispensable to express certain things. Foe Wheelwright the very nature of these moments of perception is "dark, kaleidoscopic and elusive." He says:

> Language that can adequately, or almost adequately, speak forth the living truths of human experience, must itself be living; and since those truths are always somewhat dark, kaleidoscopic and elusive, an appropriate language will to some extent, and with chosen controls, reflect these qualities.[10]

The essential characteristic of this living language, according to Wheelwright, is tensive. It should reflect life's "ceaseless but varying struggle between opposing forces."[11] Wheelwright then proceeds to discuss the most suitable term to apply to these "opposing forces" and to the language that embodies them. He narrows the field quickly to three possibilities: symbol, image, and metaphor. He soon discards the first two in favour of the third which, although not entirely adequate, seems to Wheelwright to answer best his needs. In its most comprehensive form, the term "metaphor," in Wheelwright's view, combines Pound's definition of an image as "an emotional or intellectual complex in an instant of time" with Allen Tate's idea that imagery evokes "a single act compounded of spiritual insight and physical perception."[12] What is important about the metaphor, according to Wheelwright, is the "psychic depth" at which the experience is perceived. The relevance of the terms "opposing forces" and "psychic depth" to White's fiction is, of course, obvious.

Patrick White uses metaphor in *The Eye of the Storm* to portray a psychic or archetypal experience. Thus, it is indeed a "psychic depth" which underlies the novel-long metaphor in White's *The Eye of the*

Storm. The heroine, Elizabeth Hunter, has an archetypal experience of psychic enlightenment in the calm centre of the eye of a storm. The results of the experience permeate the whole book, providing, as well, in its title, a metaphor for the mystical Centre.

The plot of *The Eye of the Storm* involves the return of a brother and sister to Australia. They hope to extract some profitable financial benefit from their aging and very rich mother. The fictional present covers only the several weeks between Dorothy's and Basil's arrival and their subsequent departure. Notwithstanding, the novel itself spans almost all their mother's lifetime. In the fictional present, Elizabeth Hunter is old and bedridden, attended by nurses and two servants. However, as she lies in bed various experiences in her past come to her, often when she is in a state half-way between dreaming and being awake. These "reminiscenses" are frequently prompted by conversations which take place around her bedside. The reminiscences, especially the experience on Brumby Island, form the main part of the novel and are framed, and therefore set off by, the arrival and departure of her children. Basil's and Dorothy's experiences in Sydney are also recounted; the most significant of these is their journey to the old family home of Kudjeri. The reader also learns of significant experiences in the lives of brother and sister and in the lives of Mrs Hunter's nurses and the likely future that lies in store for all.

Before treating White's use of metaphor in its major rôle, let us begin with the ordinary metaphor of rhetoric which ascribes to one

object the quality or qualities of a second. The effectiveness of this kind of metaphor lies in the ability of the author to choose objects which, when juxtaposed, will body forth the insight of the comparison.

The Eye of the Storm is permeated with imaginative metaphors of varying significance, some of them "ordinary" in the sense that they do not have a major significance in the underlying metaphorical or symbolic scheme of the book as a whole. Nevertheless, these metaphors add to the rich texture of White's prose. There are many different examples that one could pick to illustrate the ordinary metaphor. White refers to the protagonist's heart as "that muffled metronome that might have been her heart."[13] The railing on the stairway leading to Elizabeth Hunter's bedroom is twice referred to as an "iron hedge" (p.169). Mr. Wybird, the solicitor, compares the voice of Flora, one of the nurses, to a "windsock, filling and tearing at its moorings" (pp.169-70). Sister de Santis, another of Mrs Hunter's nurses, is at one point described as "a giant scallop, and raw" (p.339). Elizabeth Hunter sometimes finds the time long: she feels that she must spend a "desert of an afternoon" (p.315). Earlier, she knows "from the sound of the knife-edged skirt that she has offended the nurse" (p.60). These "ordinary" metaphors, and others like them, lend to White's prose a sense of vitality and, at times, perceptive humour.

Although in his novels Patrick White deals with the quintessential in human experience, he is by no means uniformly sober and dry. Many incidents verge on the hilarious, and, here too, metaphor is not lacking. At one point in this novel Basil Hunter, Elizabeth's son, takes Sister de Santis out for lunch. The incident

has a symbolical rôle within the texture of the book, but this does not preclude its having comic elements as well. Towards the end of their meal, a grotesque group of tipsy businessmen enters the restaurant. One of them has great difficulty connecting with his chair and falls to the ground, "a vast, purple bladder, palpitating with mirth and tears"(p.338).

Frequently these ordinary metaphors are used to underline a certain trait of one or another of the characters in a way which makes them at once recognizable and unforgettable and more significant in their relation to the central metaphor. There are three nurses attendant upon Elizabeth Hunter. Two of them are significant in the metaphorical whole of the book. The third provides a staid, unimaginative, somewhat comical contrast with the other two. In one description of her, White recalls Chaunteclere of the "Nun's Priest's Tale," thus adding another, richer dimension to this "ordinary" metaphor:

> Sister Badgery shook her wattles, her comb, and raised her disdainful beak, as suddenly remembering she was superior, in the hierarchy of the yard, to this shapely but scatterbrained pullet. (p.314)

A second character for whom metaphorical epithets indicate a personality trait is Edvard Pehl, a Norwegian scientist who happens to be visiting the Warmings' cottage on Brumby Island along with Elizabeth Hunter and her daughter. He is a dry, uninspired character, as his name might imply from its association with the Latin *pellis*, and thus parchment. Twice White underlines the contrast Edvard creates with the lively and alive Elizabeth. He is referred to as "that slab of a

Norwegian" (p.399), and later as "the dead fish Edvard" (p.408).

Here then, as elsewhere in the White corpus, names can often be taken metaphorically. The surname, Hunter, of course, indicates the pursuit of enlightenment. In this connexion it is interesting to note that Elizabeth and Basil, the two successful "hunters," retain their surname throughout, and the unsuccessful "hunter," Dorothy, has lost hers by marriage. Turning momentarily to their Christian names, both Elizabeth and Basil have regal overtones. The worship of Elizabeth Hunter by her entourage supports this. As well, Elizabeth brings to mind the mother of John the Baptist and the bringing forth of both life and enlightenment, which, with *King Lear*, is one of the senal metaphors of this novel. The name Basil comes from the Greek, meaning "royalty," and has obvious connexions with one of the seminal metaphors of the novel, *King Lear*. Another interesting name association is the place where Mitty Jacka lives, Beulah Hill: the land of heavenly joy where pilgrims await their final entry into eternal bliss in both Isaiah and *Pilgrim's Progress*. As well, Beulah figures prominently in William Blake, an author in whom Patrick White has shown considerable interest. For Blake, Beulah represents the State of Innocence, a world of dreams and childhood. The attendants, too, have metaphorically significant names. Sister Badgery, as we have seen, is described as a rooster, but she is also as plain, badgering, and spiritually flat-footed as the plantigrade quadruped with which her name associates her. Sister Flora Manhood's Christian name suggests rich vegetation and her surname the fecund nature of her true vocation. The significance of Mary de Santis' name is almost blatant, incorporating as it does both her

virginal and saintly nature--she is indeed "an emanation of the night [that] could flow like water and back into her secret self" (p. 201).

When it concerns the main characters, the metaphor which indentifies character trait takes on greater significance. Dorothy Hunter, Elizabeth's daughter, is like Edvard in several ways. Though she is twice granted the opportunity of experiencing the "eye of the storm," an experience which has immense metaphorical relevance for her mother, she cannot benefit from these occasions. In fact, the first time that Elizabeth has her transcendental experience on Brumby Island, Dorothy leaves the island before the storm breaks, and only a short while before Edvard Pehl also leaves. It seems as if these two characters fear what might be a powerful archetypal experience. Dorothy's second opportunity occurs on her return to Sydney at the beginning of the book. Seated beside a Dutch sea captain (the Flying Dutchman?), she fails to respond when, during a period of turbulence which frightens her, her neighbour describes a mystical experience he had at the eye of a storm. His storm seems paltry to her, and soon she "lost her Dutchman, probably forever" (p.70). The fact that Dorothy is unable to respond to this experience, even vicariously, has already been indicated by White in two metaphors which associate her closely with the "dead." The fur coat that she carries over her arm becomes her "buckler" (p.47), protecting her from experiencing the world around her, and from seeing its significance. Shortly after this, she recollects the view from her window as a child, "the skyline of convents and araucarias, a geometry of concrete and brick" (p.56). Her straight-laced mind sees only the geometric pattern. This

characteristic is also evident when she is described as a stick. On arriving at Brumby Island with her mother, "[t]he Princesse de Lascabanes failed to animate the stick she was changed into" (p.361). White frequently uses the title Dorothy gained by marriage when he wants to indicate the indestructible formality she builds around herself as a kind of protection or "buckler" against the world of feeling and insight. On yet another occasion, she forfeits an opportunity for insight. She and her brother have returned to the family home of Kudjeri to spend some time. As will be seen later, the experiences they undergo there will provide at least the beginning of insight for Basil. But such is not the case for Dorothy. She and Basil spend their last night together in their parents' bed. Dorothy becomes "this stick-woman" (p.508) and the bed becomes for her "an island of frozen ridges and inky craters" (p. 509). It is not insignificant either, of course, that the other, real, island is sterile for Dorothy, whereas for her mother it has been just the opposite.

Sticks indeed figure significantly in Patrick White's feelings about writing itself, as we have already seen in his article, "The Prodigal Son." Words for him are frequently sticks, and when he uses this term for other things or for people, it always has a pejorative sense. The same metaphor can be found in several of his other novels as well.

In *The Eye of the Storm,* there is no great insistence on the recalcitrance of words to convey meaning such as one finds in most of White's earlier novels; however, there are a few references to it.

Wybird, the solicitor, has lost faith in words: "they could be used as fences, smoke-screens, knives and stones; they could take the shape of comforting hot water bottles; but if ever you thought they were about to help you open a door into the truth, you found, instead of a lighted room, a dark void you hadn't the courage to enter" (p.258). He remembers how his friend Bill Hunter, Elizabeth's husband, now dead, saw words: as "pitiful threads to dangle above those whom actions had failed and God was swallowing up" (p.259). The Macrorys, the down-to-earth present owners of Kudjeri, tend to communicate by touch, as if words "were the dangerous weapons some malicious daemon from time to time put into their mouths" (p.464). It is, of course, significant that each time White refers to the problem of using words to portray one's inner thoughts and feelings, he uses a metaphor. This fact definitely recalls what Northrop Frye had to say about the necessity of using metaphor to express ideas and emotions of a difficult or nebulous nature. All these "ordinary" metaphors, of course, help illuminate for the reader the difference between the "living" and the "dead," and thus must not be dismissed in a study of this theme in White.

Notwithstanding the interest of these metaphors, we must focus our attention on the major metaphors of the novel and their relationship to White's three themes. The structure of the metaphor itself--the recognition of some common character in things that seem to be diametrically opposed--coincides nicely with the theme of the juxtaposition of opposites. Added to this is the nature of the two major metaphors in this novel: the eye of the storm and *King Lear*.

Both are closely linked to the idea of the mystical Centre and the myth of rebirth. The title of the novel draws the reader's attention immediately to the central metaphor which, as with all good symbols, lays itself open to varying depths of interpretation. Susan Gingell-Beckman points out three of these: the "I," or Elizabeth Hunter, as the centre of the emotions she causes in those who surround her; the eye as God, or the mystical Centre; the literal eye of the storm. This last level of interpretation connects neatly with both the major and the secondary metaphor of the novel, as both Elizabeth and Lear endure a storm and learn from their experiences. Gingell-Beckman goes on to point out that not only do the archetypal symbols of *The Eye of the Storm* unify the meaning of the work and guide the reader to this meaning, but they also "form the basis of the novel's structure and the keys to its logic. The succession of events in the work is primarily structured not by chronology, but by symbolic association."[14]

Let us look first at the second most important extensive metaphor in this novel which involves two parts--the Shakespearean idea of the world as a stage and, in particular, *King Lear*. The novel is permeated with allusions to *King Lear* and to Basil who "acts" his life as he does a play. As Patricia Morley reminds her readers, Shakespeare's play magnificently manifests the paradox that Basil Hunter must accept--to be "both royal and foolish."[15] Sir Basil Hunter, the Shakespearean actor, is the major vehicle for this metaphor which involves his failure as an actor in the rôle of King Lear and his subsequent obsession with playing that rôle successfully. Basil's failure stems

directly from his not being "alive" enough to capture Lear's experience. Like Lear, he must learn.

One of the most frequent images which relates to both the theme of the juxtaposition of opposites and to the religion of becoming is that of buttons being undone, usually found in conjunction with the idea of letting the world and the spirit intermingle. The reference is to Lear's last speech when he draws attention to the button:

> Why should a dog, a horse, a rat have life,
> And thou no breath at all? Thou'lt come no more,
> Never, never, never, never, never!
> Pray you, Undo this button (V iii 306-9)

It seems to me that Lear is desirous of facilitating the return of the breath of life to Cordelia's body, a remingling of the spiritual with the physical. Patricia Morley interprets it somewhat differently as a suggestion that "humility and love are the final lessons to be learned before Lear dies at Dover."[16] The possibility also exists that the button is Lear's. He too must feel the need to breathe both physically and spiritually. Patrick White does frequently imply that love and compassion must be learned before the final enlightenment. Notwithstanding, given his insistence on the conjunction of *Physis* and *Nous*, and the context in which most of the references to buttons are found in *The Eye of the Storm*, I believe that the former interpretation is at least equally valid. Other references to buttons are myriad. Before he leaves Brumby Island, the "dead" Professor Pehl is seen buttoning up his shirt. After having received their mother's generous cheques from the lawyer, Basil and Dorothy make their separate ways to the park. Basil sits and falls into a reverie about *Lear*. As he comes

to, he finds his top button is choking him as it "had eaten into his throat" (p. 264). He then recognizes that there "had been a time when he saw clearly, right down to the root of the matter, before his perception had retired behind a legerdemain of techniques and the dishonesties of living" (p. 264). This button must be opened once more. Juxtaposed with Basil's awakening of perception is Dorothy, seated on a bench almost right behind Basil. She finds the sight of two lovers "writhing" on the grass "ghastly." Nevertheless, she senses that there is something in life which eludes her, something she must find out about, something "which is neither marriage, nor position, nor the procedures of formal religion, nor possessions, nor love in *that* sense. If [she] could only ask Mother; but Mother was always a greedy, sensual woman, and is now dotty with age" (p. 263). Dorothy, still hidebound and a "stick," discovered that her deliberations had caused her to grind "her knife-edged buttocks into the park bench, till she was positive she had struck a splinter" (p. 263). No buttons to open here, we have only White's return to the stick image.

While having lunch with Mary de Santis, Basil seems to be infected by the wholeness she emanates. He participates with her in the kind of symbolic eucharist so important to White: "Sir Basil broke bread; he drank the lees of the wine. " (p. 338) After this he again shows some insight about Lear. He says, "'[N]obody has ever entirely succeeded as Lear, because I don't think he can be played by an actor--only by a gnarled, authentic man, as much a storm-tossed tree as flesh'" (p. 339). Soon after they are beset by the sight of a dead dog that has been washed up on the beach. Basil appears "to take it

personally" (p. 341), because, after all, one of the things that he must achieve before he can hope to play Lear successfully is the conjunction of *Physis* and *Nous*. He must accept the grossly physical--the swollen and obscene dog--as part of life. At this time he shrinks from this sight which reminds him of the suffering and death of physical man, for as yet "[h]e can only cover 'imagined miles' on the stage, not the actual miles to Dover, the real miles of suffering which would acquaint him with his real self."[17] Nevertheless, the influence of de Santis and of the carcase does have an effect on him. After leaving Sister de Santis at work, he drives off thinking: "*Pray you, undo this button. Thank you, sir.* Why? Only that on his last performance as the old king he had never felt so personally bereft, so bankrupt; technique could not protect him from it. This last gasp; and the poverty of a single bone-clean button. In this you may have conveyed the truth, if in nothing else" (p. 344).

Lear must divest himself of the outward paraphernalia of the material world, so that through his madness, he may draw closer to the spiritual world. White believes that the soul must accept the sordidness of the world before it can return to its spiritual home. Indeed, this is what the Lear metaphor in *The Eye of the Storm* is all about. In this context, Sir Basil feels the spiritual necessity of playing Lear well--this is, in a sense, a kind of measure of his spiritual rebirth. Before it can happen though, Basil, like Lear, must be guided by the blind fool, in this case his mother. In the end, and again like Lear, he returns to Dover, at least in spirit, as he flies over it on his return to London. By the end of the novel the reader

senses he will, in fact, eventually succeed in playing Lear.

Although second in importance to the main metaphor, the rôle of King Lear in *The Eye of the Storm* is vast and varied. Something must be said of the various characters who play different rôles in the metaphorical *King Lear* as well as of the play's particular importance to Basil. Certainly Lear is represented by Basil, and his daughter, Imogen, may be seen as Cordelia. On the other hand, Elizabeth Hunter herself qualifies as a candidate for Lear. In this case Sister de Santis is Cordelia, while Basil identifies himself as a "drag Goneril." In both scenarios, as in the old barn at Kudjeri when she helps Basil remove the boot he cannot get off, Dorothy is probably Regan. Both Basil and Dorothy fit the rôles of Goneril and Regan to Elizabeth's Lear in their feigned love for their mother, alongside their grasping desire for her money. Lotte Lippmann is a candidate for the rôle of Fool to Elizabeth's Lear, most particularly when she dances her mandala dance for her and sings of the circus and of the scales which must be removed from one's eyes. The rôle of Fool fits Basil as well at the end for he must, as Morley says, be "both royal and foolish."[18] The whole *King Lear* fabric, moreover, is made more dense when one realizes that it is Elizabeth Hunter who is almost blind, whose eyes are frequently referred to as empty sockets, thus qualifying her also for the rôle of Gloucester. And certainly she does play the Fool as well, since she seems to be the catalyst for the likely enlightenment of both Basil and Sister Flora Manhood. The complexity is manifold. Sister Manhood and Sister Badgery could be seen as Goneril and Regan with Sister de Santis as Cordelia. But Sister de Santis, the saintly one,

as her name implies, could also be the Fool, especially when one thinks of the Jungian term "fool saint," a term which, without much difficulty, could also be applied to Cordelia.

Notwithstanding the interesting texture of interwoven rôles, they are of less import than the play itself and the rôle it plays in the life of Basil Hunter. Of the three themes that we are studying, the religion of becoming is of greatest importance in *The Eye of the Storm* where, in fact, it is named as such for the first time. There are certainly characters who belong definitely to the "living" such as Sister de Santis and Mitty Jacka; there are, as well, those that belong unquestionably with the "dead," such as Sister Badgery and the Princesse de Lascabanes. However, *The Eye of the Storm* presents a world where the boundaries betweeen the "living" and the "dead" are more flexible perhaps than in any other of White's novels. Obviously, Elizabeth Hunter herself is the prime example of the theme of becoming, but both Basil and Flora Manhood are highly eligible candidates as secondary examples. Because of White's insistence on the theme of becoming in this novel, the third of the three themes--rebirth--takes on increased significance. This is perhaps why myth and metaphor are so basic to an understanding of Elizabeth's experience.

Let us turn now to investigate how the themes of becoming and rebirth are related to the Lear metaphor. Being a Shakespearean actor, Basil is related to them in two ways: first, in terms of the rôles one plays in life and the facility with which a carapace or persona can be erected over the inner soul; second, in terms of Basil's intense desire

not to be a failure in the rôle of Lear and thus to arrive at some kind of enlightenment. Sir Basil Hunter has been knighted for his acting, but acting has overtaken his whole life. He does very little without thinking of it as a part he is playing before an audience. When Basil arrives in his mother's bedroom for the first time, Mrs. Hunter's first reaction is to be "dazzled by the aura of charm and brilliantine the great actor is wearing" (p.118). The brilliantine, of course, represents the outer shell or Persona his acting of life has become. Then Sir Basil makes his entrance:

> On catching sight of the figure in the wheelchair, Sir Basil hesitated the tick of a second, as though he had found an understudy waiting on the spot where his leading lady should have been; then (your performance is what matters; curse the management only after curtain calls) he continued across the carpet with that distinctive limp, probably a mannerism before it had set in slight gout, but which never weakened the power of his attack. One shoulder slouched a shade in advance of the other, he was presented in fact, though not objectionably, sideways to the audience of two. (p.118)

Later, Elizabeth tells the solicitor Wybird that "Basil is a great actor, and knows how to choose words for their marrow; he's learnt the business thoroughly" (p.271). And even further on, we read this laconic comment on the love-making of Basil and Flora Manhood: "So they were giving a great performance" (p.305). Critic Annegret Maack connects the frequently recurring reference to undoing buttons to Basil's ability as an actor both on stage and in life. Since he "portrays experience without possessing it [the undoing of buttons] is a metaphoric indication that Basil's real self is always hidden beneath the costume of his particular rôle."[19]

Nevertheless, his brilliantined shell is gradually being punctured. Prior to leaving London, Basil has encountered Mitty Jacka, the strange, almost mythological, creature of the night who lives in Beulah Hill. She wants Basil to work with her to produce the play of his life. She tells him:

> 'A man develops only one of his potential lives. There's no reason why he shouldn't live them all--or at least act them out, if he can liberate himself. This is what I'd like for you: this nightly liberation instead of cast-iron figures dragging themselves from one prescribed attitude to another.' (p.241)

Mitty Jacka uses the idea of acting out one's life in a positive, enlightening sense, not in the limiting, sterile sense which has become Basil's habit. But he is not ready to accept her advice. He continues to believe what he has already told her:

> I have been able to control my own life ever since I learnt the technique of living, which is also the technique of acting. (p.234)

But, in spite of himself, Sir Basil has been touched by Mitty Jacka. When he meets a group of actors he knows in Bankok on his way to Sydney, he describes her and her "play" in a very positive light. In fact, he has begun to see himself as a "vessel waiting to be filled" (p. 126). He tells them that Mitty "isn't old; she's ageless," alluding to the almost archetypal associations that she and her "play" evoke. White adds that Basil "believed it, and it frightened him" (p. 135). This faint beginning of perception, however, is not enough. He refuses to open the letters she sends him. It is not until he has encountered his mother again, and returned to Kudjeri that he looks forward to working with Mitty.

The return to Kudjeri represents for Basil two potent archetypal metaphors which help put him on the road to enlightenment: first, the return to the place of one's source, where the outer layers of everyday existence are pared away, and second, the consummation of the hermaphroditic whole in the parental bed. On the plane to London he dreams of Mitty, King Lear, his mother and sister. He wakes thinking he must button his collar, but finds "he had torn the damn button off" (p.576), irrevocably, and decides to "[c]ompose a wire, then, to the Jacka. " (p.546)

While in Sydney, Basil is overcome with a great desire to visit the house where he and Dorothy had grown up. He requests that the solicitor arrange for him and Dorothy to spend some time there with the new owners. Dorothy benefits very little from this experience, at the end of which she is still the same "stick" as before. Even as Basil awakens after the first night, White foreshadows his eventual rebirth, which, according to the myth, must be preceded by some kind of spiritual or metaphorical death. In this case, it begins with a return to the prenatal situation:

> Now he continued lying curled in the shape he had been longing to assume: that of a sleeping possum, or a bean before the germinal stage, or a foetus in a jar. (p.470)

The first day, Basil returns to a favourite spot of his childhood armed with his copy of *King Lear*. He injures his foot near where he had fallen out of a tree as a child. This return, especially to a spot that seemed important during his childhood, helps him shed some of the scales of his persona. A few days later he comes the closest yet to

the real Lear when he ventures into the old barn. After contemplating his father's old car, sitting in it and reliving a scene from his childhood, he puts on an old boot, only to find it almost impossible to remove. "There was no sign of its giving; a natural deformity could not have stuck closer" (p.491). It is finally removed by Dorothy. The fact that the boot clings so stands metaphorically for two things. On the negative side, the boot's tenacity can be compared to the tenacity of Basil's persona. On the positive side, the boot itself becomes a "natural deformity" linking Basil and Lear, as Basil is about to make his own journey of enlightenment to Dover. The boot which was Lear's becomes "natural" for Basil too. Basil, we feel, will finally unite within himself Lear and the Fool. After all, the image of the Fool constantly hovers around Basil: as Dorothy pulls off the boot he admits to being a fool
(p. 491). The term also figures significantly in his dream on the plane where he again admits to being a Fool just before he decides to wire Mitty Jacka. Just as Lear, in his madness, achieves some of the "truth" of the Fool, so Basil must take the "suicide risk" (576).

Morley claims that Basil never achieves enlightenment, that he "never plays Lear or his own real "I." His final role is a slightly surreal Fool."[20] Notwithstanding Morley's and Maack's views, I feel Basil's rebirth is most definitely projected by the end of the novel, both in his own experience and by contrast with that of his sister. However, I cannot go so far as Beatson does when he likens *The Eye of the Storm* to *The Living and the Dead*, indicating that "it is on the son, not on the mother, that the theme of rebirth is concentrated."[21]

As the metaphor of the play in general and of *King Lear* in particular permeates *The Eye of the Storm*, so does the metaphor of religious worship. This metaphor enhances the theme of the "living" and the "dead" by putting Elizabeth Hunter on a kind of pedestal. The almost religious awe or pseudo-awe which surrounds Elizabeth puts her, early in the novel, among those who seem to know more and therefore to belong more to the "living." This metaphor, in particular, is intimately related to the major metaphor of the novel. Elizabeth Hunter, sitting in her rosewood bed under the mandala of the silver disc, or sun, set in the headboard, is seen at times as a goddess. The "silver sun" is like a halo--as yet only silver, not gold. At other times she becomes a "barbaric idol" (p.116), and also a "relic" (p.204). She is attended by her three nurses or "acolytes" (p.42). There is a definite hierarchy among the acolytes. Sister de Santis, whose name, indeed, implies sanctity, is the "archpriestess" (p.18). She is at least once even elevated to the position of "this statue of a goddess" (p.336). She is also a "pale nun" who presents "herself at her evening devotions in Moreton Drive" (p.344). Sister Flora Manhood, the second in this hierarchy, is the "white-robed priestess" (p.114). The third nurse, Sister Badgery plays but a small rôle in the religious metaphorical structure. This stolid and unimaginative creature has already been described in Chaucerian terms. However, there are "other members of the order [the] lay sisters" (p.115). Housekeeper Lotti Lippmann performs her devotion by almost ritualistically preparing food and, even more importantly, by dancing for Mrs Hunter.

The other lay sister is the relatively insignificant cleaning lady, Mrs Cush. Together this retinue performs their "ritual of atonement" (p.115) in this house "with numinous forms and purposes" (p.16).

The metaphorical meat of the novel, however, lies in Elizabeth Hunter and her experience in the eye of the storm. This metaphor reflects most illustratively Wheelwright's "ceaseless struggle of opposing forces" at a level of considerable "psychic depth." Peter Beatson puts it very succinctly in an article in *Southerly*:

> Both the Eye and the storm have many resonances. They operate literally, metaphorically and anagogically and point both to the microcosm of the human soul, the macrocosm of the One, and the ultimate identity. The storm, on the human level, is the imperfect temperament and the whole riot of flawed existence through which it must struggle--the many forms of love misplaced or love betrayed, the struggle for power, the magnificence and the taint. The soul receives its fitting emblem in the blind eyes of Elizabeth Hunter, through whose opaque crust a mineral blue sometimes flashes out. Buried in matter, it sees as through a glass darkly, though its occasional flashes of vision suggest it will eventually see face to face.[22]

Patrick White's "religion" is Mary de Santis' religion "of perpetual becoming" (p.11), where the "dichotomy of earthbound flesh and aspiring spirit" (p.203) must be resolved. For Elizabeth Hunter, the visit to Brumby Island begins the resolution of these two poles of her being, at the very centre, where material and spiritual meet.

At this point the two major metaphors are joined. The brumby, for which the island has been named, is a wild Australian horse. Its wild nature and the land it inhabits provide an atavistic setting for the experience of approaching the mystical Centre where the principal

archetypes are found. The fury of the storm reminds the reader of the other major metaphor in the novel, *King Lear* and the storm on the heath. In both storms haven is sought in a dark, cave-like hovel, and just as Lear's "downward journey has reached a terminus"[23] by the scene on the heath, so has Elizabeth's in the storm on the island. Northrop Frye indicated the beginning of a union of opposites within Lear when he says: "[w]hat is happening is that he has lost his identity as a king in the body peculiar to a king, but is beginning to recover his royal nature in his other body, his individual and physical one; not just the body that is cold and wet, but the mind that realizes how many others are cold and wet. ."[24] Thus, in a way, Lear is beginning to experience the coming together of physical and spiritual, the beginning of the process towards awareness. Elizabeth's experience is by no means entirely similar, but it is in a storm at the centre of which she, too, experiences a coming together of the physical and spiritual.

To be effective, the terms of comparison of a metaphor must show a valid relationship with each other. This is of utmost importance, especially when the metaphor is such an all-pervasive one as the main metaphor in *The Eye of the Storm.* The eye of the storm itself represents Elizabeth's psychic or religious experience on Brumby Island in the literal eye of the storm. The sense of utter quiet or peace of being at the centre of things is an exact equivalent of what happens in actual fact in the eye of a hurricane. The metaphor clothes her experience in the mythical and archetypal centre. Many Eastern myths in particular treat of a central point at which the real world and the spiritual world meet, where movement from one to the other is possible.

Mircea Eliade explains the mythical implications of the metaphor of the centre:

> [E]very human being tends even unconsciously, towards the Centre, and towards his own centre, where he can find integral reality--sacredness. This desire, so deeply rooted in man, to find himself at the very heart of the real--at the Centre of the World, the place of communion with Heaven--explains the ubiquitous use of "Centre of the World.[25]

Philip Wheelwright has said that the most important part of a metaphor "is the psychic depth at which the things of the world, whether actual or fancied, are transmuted by the cool heat of image."[26] And certainly the incident on Brumby Island transmits the "psychic depth" of Elizabeth's experience by an image of "cool heat." Nevertheless, it is also a very real experience, surrounded by very ordinary circumstances. The Warmings have left the island because one of their children, visiting on the mainland, has become ill. The morning of the storm Dorothy has the Norwegian drive her to be picked up by a helicopter. She feels excessively uncomfortable on the island in the presence of Edvard and Elizabeth. That same morning, Elizabeth goes for a walk, encounters some woodsmen working on the island and has a very ordinary conversation with them. She returns to the house and, after eating a meagre meal of cheese and lettuce, prepares herself to spend the evening with Edvard. Thinking mundanely about what to prepare for supper, she sits down at the piano when the storm suddenly breaks. She goes out into the wind and rain looking for Edvard, finally has to take refuge in a kind of bunker that serves as a wine cellar, and eventually falls asleep on a shelf. After some time has elapsed she is awakened by the silence. The storm has abated. She

emerges, feeds some black swans, observes the wreckage around her and then, as the eye of the storm moves away, she returns to the bunker to wait out the final fury of the storm. The next morning she is rescued by the woodsmen.

At the same time as this story is an utterly natural one, it is also impregnated with important symbolic meaning which does not jar in any way with the incident taken at face value. White achieves this blend of the vehicle and meaning of his metaphor with considerable artistry. His artistry can be observed not only at this point of the plot, but also right from the beginning of the book, where the central metaphor is carefully prepared. On the very first page of *The Eye of the Storm*, the night nurse, Sister de Santis is seen "working around this almost chrysalis in her charge." In other words, Mrs Hunter is at a stage of becoming which will be fully realized only when she dies. The experience on Brumby Island and her reliving of it during the course of the book are both important stages in the progress towards her final taking flight.

The metaphors discussed above, which put Elizabeth Hunter in a religious setting, prepare the reader to understand the religious or spiritual nature of her experience. As well, throughout her life, Elizabeth Hunter has sensed a kind of *je ne sais quoi* within her, something which makes her different. Beatson says this "something" is no less than Grace, and the power of the soul to open itself to God. Even when the storm of life has blown most strong and her greed or her self-disgust have been at their height, this intuition has kept her alive to an end beyond her apparent ends. ."[27] Elizabeth's

spiritual nature is enhanced soon after she arrives on the island, first by the pleasure of the Warming family in having "a living breathing object of worship, and source of oracular vision" (p.363) visit them. As well, "the great silver sun which radiated from the head of Mrs Hunter's rosewood bedstead" (p.112) becomes in Dorothy's mind elevated into the shimmer of a halo:

> The fractured light in the shuttered room gave back to Mother's hair the aureole it must have worn in youth, of what again appeared as palest, purest gold. (p.363)

The episode of the storm takes place on Brumby Island, off the coast of Australia. The fact that Elizabeth's experience has a double connexion with water is important in its metaphorical interpretation. Water is, of course, an archetypal symbol of primeval matter, the source of all life, and symbol of the unconscious. As well, according to Cirlot, in Mesopotamian cosmogony water symbolized "unfathomable, impersonal wisdom"[28] which is important in an apocalyptic experience such as the one Elizabeth Hunter has. The fact, too, that water is associated with death must be considered. Elizabeth's connexion with the deep in her likeness to the skiapod is a preparation for the associations of her death with water. As Beatson says: "At the moment of her death she experiences both the daemonic and the baptismal aspects of water as, threatened by chaos, she hurries to immerse herself in the ocean of pure Being."[29] A frequent metaphor for death involves passing over water. When Elizabeth dies, she strives to walk out "towards the water" (p.532). But, even more important in this respect, is the spiritual death which occurs during the storm,

preparatory to the spiritual rebirth out of the "womb" of the bunker and into the eye of the storm. The enlightenment that Elizabeth receives is, in effect, her rebirth to greater spiritual potential. Cirlot also suggests that because the storm comes down from heaven, it has a sacred quality about it; as well, manifold myths associate the storm with creativity, and thus new life.[30]

The horses too have similar symbolic meanings. Most important here, it would seem, is their association with water in connexion with Neptune who lashes his horses causing them to surge "up out of the waves, symboliz[ing] the cosmic forces that surge out of the Akasha--the blind forces of primigenial chaos."[31] Cirlot also indicates the association of horses with certain burial-rites and "intuitive understanding". In conclusion, he points out that, because of its "fleetness, the horse can also signify the wind and sea-foam as well as fire and light. In the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, the horse is actually a symbol of the cosmos."[32] Plate XVIII of Cirlot's book shows a Celtic candelabra which includes a symbolic horse supporting a solar wheel on a pillar which resembles many representations of the mystical Centre.

Besides the metaphorical connotations of the water and the storm, rain, too, is symbolic. Cirlot connects it closely with life as well as with purification, "not only because of the value of water as the 'universal substance' but also because of the fact that rainwater falls from heaven. Hence it is also cognate with light."[33] During the moments when the eye is centred on the spot where Elizabeth finds herself, she emerges into the sunlight.

While nursing her husband in the last throes of cancer, Elizabeth has come across a drawing of the mythical skiapod: a fish of sorts with a woman's head, a creature of the deep. Before the storm one night she dreams of "walking on the bed of the sea" (p.388). After she has recounted her dream, Pehl asks her if she were ever a fish in her dreams. She answers:

> 'How can I say? One is always rather fluid in a dream. Or if I took on a form, I don't believe I was ever more than a skiapod.' (p.38)

This metaphor has been prepared for much earlier in the novel: Sister de Santis has mused at one point that "the lips suggest some lower form of life, a sea creature perhaps" (p.22). The fish as a symbol of coming up out of the deep can be found in pagan, Jewish, and Christian traditions. Jung identifies it as a symbol of the self, both in dreams[34] and in alchemy where it becomes the symbol of "a psychological concept of human wholeness."[35]

The spiritual nature of Elizabeth's experience is anticipated in different ways: by the terms of ritual which have been associated with her, especially the reference to her "aureole"; and the archetypal associations of both the storm and the water. There occurs one more spiritual association--that of the Eucharist--which is always a very potent symbol for Patrick White. The morning of the storm when Elizabeth is talking to the woodsmen, she sits on a trunk they have cut and "did actually taste a chip from the tree, and might have dropped this transmuted wafer. " (p.403) Later she takes refuge in the bunker where the wine is kept. Later still, she herself offers bread from the sea to the swans, almost, it seems, as a propitiation.

Swans are frequently associated with death. But, I believe they have even greater significance here. Cirlot says that the "ambivalent significance of the swan was also well known to the alchemists who compared it with 'philosophical Mercury,' the mystic Centre and the union of opposites."[36] Cirlot also indicates the hermaphroditic qualities of the swan. These two associations, in particular, belong at the very root of White's idea of the importance of the enlightening experience: the confluence of body and soul, of physical and spiritual, often in a place which could easily be seen as a Centre, and which will eventually lead to apocalyptic enlightenment. What better place for such an experience than the eye of a storm? In this connexion, Susan Gingell-Beckman points out that in *Man and His Symbols* Jung identifies birds as "the most fitting symbols of transcendance." She continues:

> The swans in *The Eye of the Storm* are to play a seminal role in the growth of Elizabeth's spiritual understanding, in her peace making with her unconscious. Within the context of the novel, the blackness of the swans may well be a symbolic indication of the way in which opposites are reconciled in the divine. With the purity and spirituality traditionally associated with the swan, White combines the earthly and the evil. [37]

One other association which connects the swan with White's themes is the legend of the "swan song," the song that the swan is supposed to sing just prior to its death, the physical death that precedes the spiritual rebirth. In noting that "the swan always points to complete satisfaction of desire," Cirlot adds that the swan-song is a "particular allusion to desire which brings about its own death."[38]

This, of course, is particularly related to Elizabeth who chooses the moment of her own death seated on the swan-engraved commode:

> In *The Eye of the Storm*, Elizabeth Hunter's 'precious wafer of flesh' (335) has always been denied to her children, her husband, and even her lovers. At the moment of Grace in the centre of the cyclone, she is allowed--as she never has allowed herself--to offer the Host to the black, accepting swans. This symbolic act is followed through and consummated fifteen years later when, sensing that the only thing she now has to offer her children is her death, she voluntarily renders them this service. It is, perhaps, this last and first gift of herself, that requires the destruction of herself, which hallows Mrs Hunter. That her children are unworthy is irrelevant.[39]

To show clearly White's skill in combining the metaphorical and realistic without stretching the limits of verisimilitude, it will be useful at this point to quote a fairly lengthy passage from *The Eye of the Storm*. This excerpt illustrates explicitly Morley's comment that the "death and entombment imagery is beautifully handled: strong, yet perfectly operative on the level of literal realism":[40]

> It must have been the silence which woke her. No, not woke: she had been stunned into a state of semi-consciousness from which light as much as silence roused her.
>
> She waded out of the bunker through a débris of sticks, straw, scaly corpses, a celluloid doll. Round her a calm was glistening. She climbed farther into it by way of the ridge of sand and the heap of rubbish where the house had stood. At some distance a wrecked piano, all hammers and wires, was half buried in wet sand.
>
> Without much thought for her own wreckage, she moved slowly down what had been a beach, picking her way between torn-off branches, great beaded hassocks of amber weed, everywhere fish the sea had tossed out, together with a loaf of no longer bread, but a fluffier, disintegrating foam rubber. Just as she was no longer a body, least of all a woman: the myth of her womanhood had been exploded by the storm. She was instead a being, or more likely a flaw at the

> centre of this jewel of light: the jewel itself, blinding and tremulous at the same time, existed, flaw and all, only by grace; for the storm was still visibly spinning and boiling at a distance, in columns of cloud, its walls hung with vaporous balconies, continually shifted and distorted.
>
> But she could not contemplate the storm for this dream of glistening peace through which she was moved. Interspersed between the marbled pyramids of waves, thousands of seabirds were at rest; or the birds would rise, and dive, or peacefully scrabble at the surface for food, some of them coasting almost as far as the tumultuous walls of cloud; and closer to shore there were the black swans--four, five, seven of them.
>
> She was on her knees in the shallows offering handfuls of the sodden loaf the sea had left her. When they had floated within reach, the wild swans outstretched their necks. Expressing neither contempt nor fear, they snapped up the bread from her hands, recognizing her perhaps by what remained of her physical self, in particular the glazed stare, the salt-stiffened nostrils, or by the striving of a lean and tempered spirit to answer the explosions of stiff silk with which their wings were acknowledging an equal.
>
> All else was dissolved by this lustrous moment made visible in the eye of the storm, and would have remained so, if she had been allowed to choose. She did not feel she could endure further trial by what is referred to as Nature, still less by that unnaturally swollen, not to say diseased defector will. She would lie down rather and accept to become part of the shambles she saw on looking behind her: no worse than any she had caused in life in her relationships with human beings. In fact, to be received into the sand along with other deliquescent flesh, strewn horse-hair, knotted iron, the broken chassis of an up-turned car, and last echoes of a hamstrung piano, is the most natural conclusion. (pp.409-10)

And then the next day she emerges from her bunker:

> Some time that morning day evening the thin ribbon of silence was stamped very faintly then more distinctly with voices. The thing on the shelf, becoming a body again, began painfully trying out her joints to see whether they still worked.
>
> An old woman appeared in the hole which had once been the doorway to a bunker in a sandhill, behind

> what was now the ruins of the Warming family's summer 'place'.
>
> The woman said, 'Yes. I am alive--after all.' The breeze even lifted her hair, or one lock less sodden than the mass.
>
> Elizabeth Hunter smiled at the still tentative sunlight; no it must be evening: the light was waning. She was glad to find herself reunited with her womanly self and to see that these were actual men. (p.411)

Both these passages clearly show the ease with which White moves from pure description of the débris left by the storm to the symbolic, the metaphorical, the archetypal significance of what is occurring. So truly has White combined these elements that the reader is not aware of the movement from one to the other, while, at the same time, he is acutely aware of the significance of what he is reading.

The metaphorical import of this scene is fundamental to the whole book. Indeed, I would venture to say that it is the most powerful metaphor of the myth of rebirth in the whole White canon. Nevertheless, it is not the only scene in which the vehicle and symbol of the metaphor merge successfully. Virtually the whole text is fraught with meaning. Some of the significant metaphors have already been discussed. However, this is not to say that these are the only metaphors to be found in *The Eye of the Storm*.

Two other ubiquitous metaphors in this novel are those of the jewels of Elizabeth's eyes and the swordlike face which reflects her intelligent but fighting nature. White early refers to "the weapon of her profile" (p.14), and later Dorothy refers to her mother as "this ancient scabbard, from which the jewels have loosened and scattered, the blind sockets filled instead with verdigris, itself a vengeful semi-jewellery, the sword still sharp in spite of age and use" (p.71).

There are frequent references to the blind sockets of her eyes, from which emanate the sparks of enlightenment and knowledge, in itself a juxtaposition of opposites. Cirlot continues: "they are clearly a symbol closely connected with the Jungian '*anima*'. Gems hidden in caves [or perhaps in a jewel box as Elizabeth's are] refer to the intuitive knowledge harboured in the unconscious."[41] Jewels, in fact, do frequently symbolize spiritual truths. The jewel most often seen in this connexion is the sapphire: this is the jewel Elizabeth favours. The sapphire, after all, next to the diamond is the hardest of jewels, and many considered Elizabeth to be "hard." It is also the jewel most frequently used to refer symbolically to her. One reads of "that moment of splintered sapphires, before the lids dropping like seals, extinguished it" (p.11), and later, that "one of the rare coruscations occurred in which the original sapphire buried under the opalescence invited you to shed your spite. (p.116) Just prior to this, as Mrs Hunter is being prepared for the "ritual of anointment" (p.115), Sister Manhood indicates she has "double esoteric knowledge" (p.116).

The blue of the sapphire represents the blue of the heavens, a fitting association for a character given the religious adoration that Elizabeth Hunter is given. The texture of possible connotation is dense here. The ancient Persians believed the globe of the earth stood on an enormous blue sapphire which gave the sky its colour. For Jung, the jewel so closely associated with Elizabeth is a central image in the myth of rebirth. He refers to it on numerous occasions as "the treasure hard to find,"[42] the goal of the search for the union of opposites which lies at the mystical Centre. In *Psychological Types*,

Jung discusses the jewel image used in the story of the birth of Buddha found in *Lalita-Vistara* and in the myth of Pandora. According to Jung, "Pandora's jewel is an unconscious mirror-image that *symbolizes* the real work of the soul of Prometheus. The text shows unmistakably what the jewel signifies: it is a *God-redeemer*, a renewal of the sun."[43] He adds that this image is further corroborated by the words of a Tibetan prayer: "Om! Behold the jewel in the lotus"--the same lotus that grew up at Bodhisattva's feet when "he became the Buddha, the Enlightened One."[44] Later, when discussing Spitteler's *Prometheus*, Jung deals with the jewel in terms of a "symbol of renewed life [which] will bring joy and deliverance and [which] contains possibilities for a new release of energy, for freeing the libido bound in the unconscious. The symbol always says: in some such term as this a new release of life will be possible, a release from bondage and world-weariness."[45] Jung elaborates on this idea in *Symbols of Transformation*: "The treasure which the hero fetches from the dark cavern is *life*: it is himself, new born from the dark maternal cave of the unconscious where he was stranded by the introversion or regression of the libido."[46]

White's metaphors almost always fulfil the basic function of a metaphor which is to elucidate by a striking juxtaposition of two things which, though different, nevertheless share some attribute. Elizabeth Hunter *is* an idol. Her experience in the eye--itself a significant word--of the storm *is* an experience of being at the Centre. The eye of the storm *is* also Elizabeth's jewel, the sapphire, brilliantly coruscating with enlightenment just as she *is* at the same

time the flaw in that jewel. However, both Elizabeth and the jewel combine good and bad, physical and spiritual: they both sparkle with the brilliance that can only come as a result of the yoking of opposing concepts. Thus the link between the parts of each of these metaphors is obvious enough to make the metaphor clear, yet at the same time, the juxtaposition of elements is striking enough to make it memorable.

In an article that forms part of a critical symposium on Patrick White, David Kelly shows the connexion between the metaphor of the storm and that of the jewel. He shows that it is during the storm that Elizabeth

> achieves a most complete self-knowledge . . . admitting to her faults and privileges, seeing herself as a "flaw at the centre of this jewel of light." In fact she comes to know herself so well that she realizes she has still not "experienced enough of living" and must return to the ordinary world for further trial. Her return is neither an evasion of self-knowledge, like Basil's, nor an attempt to forget self-knowledge, like Dorothy's, but is rather an acceptance of an ever-deepening self-knowledge.[47]

It is in this view of Elizabeth as the jewel with a flaw that we find the answer to the question that worries many critics--why many of White's "saved" are not "good." Beatson points out that for White the "ethical" and the "spiritual" do not always coincide in one person. Indeed, flaws in the character may be the needed catalyst in one's spiritual development. "Ossification," says Beatson--and in this connexion we must think of Sister Badgery--"can be more spiritually damaging than perversity, since perversity carries with it the redeeming urge to 'reach the unknown.'"[48] In the same clear way, the metaphors illustrate, through their very nature, the Whitean

juxtaposition of opposites. This view is emphatically supported by what Beatson says in the passage quoted on p. 185 where he discusses the multiple resonances of the eye of the storm. He adds:

> On the cosmic level the storm is God in His aspects of power, majesty and terror . . . . As man lives through "the responsible years", his eyes opened to the suffering and evil inherent in the fallen would, he, like Job, can envisage God only as an arbitrary Jehovah, killing men for sport. . . .
>
> But again as in Blake (not to mention the Bible) this face of God always gives way by the end of the novels to a higher and truer image of Divinity. For those who can bear the storm, Grace is found at its centre.[49]

Although the metaphorical content of *The Eye of the Storm* is eminently obvious, the fact that White wants the reader to be fully conscious of it is underlined by Mary de Santis:

> it might be easier to convert this old woman into an abstraction of age, or justification for your own existence, or see her in both physical and metaphorical terms, as a holy relic to which your faith bowed down in worship, but for the present, as mother of her children, Mrs Hunter remained distressingly human. (p.446)

Thus, while using metaphor for divers ends which add depth and variety to his novel, Patrick White has successfully presented as a central metaphor the apocalyptic vision of Elizabeth Hunter. Although, of the three related themes, the religion of becoming is least connected with the metaphorical content, it is named for the first time in this novel. The myth of rebirth, itself closely connected with the religion of becoming, is germinal to the eponymous central metaphor of the novel. The third of the themes, the juxtaposition of opposites, however, is basic to the whole concept of metaphor. Thus the myriad ramifications--mythical, religious and spiritual--which ripple out from

the central metaphor work together with the seductive tale of a fractious old woman. And they create a novel which could well be described in the words Allen Tate applied to the metaphor: "a single act compounded of spiritual insight and physical perception."[50]

Notes

Chapter Four

[1] From a list of definitions of the metaphor which serves as epigraph to *Essays on Metaphor*, ed. Warren Shubbles (Whitewater, Wisconsin: The Language Press, 1972).

[2] Jung, *The Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious*, p. 157.

[3] William Shakespeare, "Sonnet 65", quoted in Philip Wheelwright, *Metaphor and Reality* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973), p. 76.

[4] Ezra Pound, "In a Station of the Metro", quoted in Wheelwright, p. 80.

[5] White, "Conversation with Patrick White": 138.

[6] White, "The Prodigal Son": 35.

[7] Jung, *Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious*, p. 157.

[8] Aristotle, *The Rhetoric of Aristotle: A Translation*, trans. Sir R. Claverhouse Jebb, ed. and intro., John Sandys (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1909), IIIii8.

[9] Northrop Frye, *The Great Code* (Toronto: Academic Press, Canada, 1982), p. 55.

[10] Wheelwright, p. 43.

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 45.

[12] *Ibid.*, p. 67.

[13] Patrick White, *The Eye of the Storm* (Harmondsworth, Mddx.: Penguin Books Ltd., 1973), p. 14. All subsequent references to this novel in this chapter will be noted in the text.

[14] Susan Gingell-Beckman, "Seven Black Swans: the Symbolic Logic of Patrick White's *The Eye of the Storm*," *WLWE* 21.2 (1982): 316.

[15] Morley, *Mystery*, p. 106.

[16] Patricia Morley, "The Road to Dover: Patrick White's *The Eye of the Storm*," *The Humanitarian Association Review* 26.2 (1975): 112.

[17] Annegret Maack, "Shakespearean References as Structural Principle in Patrick White's *The Tree of Man* and *The Eye of the Storm*," *Southerly* 38.2 (1978): 139.

[18] Morley, "Dover": 106.

[19] Maack: 135.

[20] Morley, "Dover": 112.

[21] Beatson, *Eye*, p. 56.

[22] P. Beatson, "The Skiapod and the Eye: Patrick Whire's *The Eye of the Storm*," *Southerly* 34.3 (1974): 230.

[23] Northrop Frye, *Northrop Frye on Shakespeare*, ed. Robert Sandler (Markham, Ont.: Fitzhenry and Whiteside, 1986), p. 109.

[24] *Ibid.*, pp. 115-16.

[25] Eliade, p. 54.

[26] Wheelwright, p. 71.

[27] Beatson, "Skiapod": 226.

[28] Cirlot, p. 365.

[29] Beatson, *Eye*, p. 146.

[30] Cirlot, p. 315.

[31] *Ibid.*, p. 152.

[32] *Ibid.*, p. 152.

[33] *Ibid.*, p. 272.

[34] C.G. Jung, *Aion*, Vol. 9, Part 2 of *The Collected Works of C.G. Jung*, trans., R.F.C. Hull, eds. Herbert Read *et al.*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1959), p. 226.

[35] *Ibid.*, p. 183.

[36] Cirlot, p. 322.

[37] Gingell-Beckman: 318.

[38] Cirlot, p. 322.

[39] Beatson, *Eye*, pp. 108-109.

[40] Morley, "Road": 109.

[41] Cirlot, p. 163.

[42] C.G. Jung, *Psychological Types*, trans. H.G. Baynes, rev. R.F C. Hull, eds. Sir Herbert Read, *et al.*, Vol. 6 of *The Collected Works of C.G. Jung*, Bollingen Series 20 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), *passim.*; *Psychology and Religion*, p. 155; *Archetypes of the Unconscious*, p. 160.

[43] Jung, *Psychological Types*, p. 177.

[44] *Ibid.*, p. 178.

[45] *Ibid.*, p. 259.

[46] Jung, *Symbols of Transformation*, trans. F.R.C.Hull, eds. Sir Herbert Read *et al.*, Vol 5 of *The Collected Works of C.G. Jung*, Bollingen Series 20 (New York: Pantheon Books, 1956), p. 374.

[47] David Kelly, "The Structure of *The Eye of the Storm*" in *Patrick White: A Critical Symposium*, p. 62.

[48] Beatson, *Eye*, p. 38.

[49] Beatson, "Skiapod": 330-31.

[50] Wheelwright, p. 67.

Conclusion

In the preceding chapters I have tried to show how the overall theme of the "living" and the "dead" manifests itself in its three basic aspects in works from each of the major decades of White's writing. In closing, the 1980s must not be forgotten. White has published two novels since 1980, as well as his autobiographical musings, *Flaws in the Glass*. A third book, *Three Uneasy Pieces*, is a collection of three musings on the themes that have occupied White in his lifetime. Since it has only just been published in Australia it will not be discussed here.

Both novels published during the 1980s, *The Twyborn Affair* and *Memoirs of Many in One*, continue in a vein similar to that of White's previous work. It is interesting to note, however, that both these novels stress the process, the "religion of becoming." In *The Twyborn Affair*, Eddie/Eadie, the main character, is seen passing through three well-defined stages before reaching a state where the dichotomies, mainly sexual here, are resolved. Eddie/Eadie dies in a final affirmation of both male and female characteristics.

Alex Xenophon Demirjian Gray, the heroine of *Memoirs of Many in One*, proceeds similarly through various different personae before the moment of her death when "the last of human frailty makes contact with the supernatural,"[1] and she whispers her final question: "'Is it this--then. ?'" (p. 183) In a sense, *Memoirs of Many in One* returns to the structure of *The Aunt's Story*. In *The Aunt's Story* the paths of

White's quest are not those of different metaphysical or psychological systems. Instead, solutions are sought in the guise of the various personae Theodora explores. The same is true of *Memoirs of Many in One*. Jung comments on this phenomenon of divided personalities or "autonomic psychic contents" in his commentary on the Chinese *Secret of the Golden Flower*:

> Autonomic psychic contents . . . are quite common experiences for us. Such contents have a disintegrating effect on the consequent mood.
> . . . . . .
> The more complicated they are, the more they have the character of personalities.[2]

Memoirs of Many in One purports to be the diary-like jottings of Alex Xenophon Demirjian Gray, edited after her death by none other than the family friend, Patrick White. Like Elizabeth Hunter, Alex is nearing death and frequently relives her past. In the fictional present, Alex lives with her straight-laced, unimaginative daughter, Hilda. Hilda's lack of imagination is richly compensated for by Alex's own wild imagination. This imagination helps her escape both physically and spiritually from the constraints Hilda and, to a certain extent, Patrick try to put on her. Her physical escapes take her to the park as well as on an excursion downtown and thence to spend the night with an elderly couple whom Alex imagines are her parents. The spiritual escapes are the various imaginary or real rôles she has played in her life. These include two different rôles as a nun--once as Cassianí, helpmate of Onouphrios, a monk at Ayia Ekaterini, and once as Benedict, living in an Australian convent; her life as a dancer; her life as an actress, the culmination of which is a tour into the Australian outback. But she is more than all these. She is also

Patrick White, who, through Alex's various rôles, is searching still for enlightenment. On two specific occasions Alex enunciates the problem which White is constantly trying to solve: "[W]hen you're stranded amongst the human furniture, the awfulness of life, you've got to set out on a search to find some reason for it all" (p. 105). And later: "I've got to discover--by writing out--acting out my life--the reason for my presence on earth" (p. 157). At the end White intimates the very close connexion between Alex and Patrick White, the character in the novel:

> While I I--the great creative ego--had possessed myself of Alex Gray's life when she was still an innocent girl and created from it the many images I needed to develop my own obsessions, both literary and real. (p. 192)

Many too are the references to White's previous novels throughout the course of the memoirs. Allusions to acting out one's life are myriad. Alex claims to be a professional actress. But her reference to "life's play" (p. 34) recalls even more specifically Basil Hunter and the play of his life that Mitty Jacka wanted him to act. Later Alex accuses her daughter:

> "You are one of those who dismiss theatre as illusion, when many of us see it far more real than what is known as life." (p. 120)

At this point White even makes a dig at some of his critics. He has Alex say, "'Sounds elitest, doesn't it, Patrick?'" (p. 120) A much more specific reference to *The Eye of the Storm* occurs soon after. Alex explains to Hilda about the male rôles she will be playing on the proposed tour into the outback:

> "No male actor has ever conveyed the essence of Lear. He hasn't the necessary compassion. Lear will be all

> right. I'm insisting on a straw Cordelia. After that, you're home when the button's undone. ." P. 121)

The tour itself recalls Voss's journey into the desert. The letters Alex supposedly sends to Patrick at this time talk of sand, blood, putrescence and the need to be humble. Like Voss, she has a psychic encounter, in Alex's case with a "miraculous Being" from whom flows a "stream of understanding" (p. 139). Alex has lain in bed with Patrick, her husband's lover, much in the way that Aurthur and Waldo Brown lay in bed together. While on a trip to Rome, Patrick and Hilda encounter a man who has been knocked down on the pavement. In the same way that Elyot Standish turns his back on the drunk at the beginning of *The Living and the Dead*, the essentially "dead" Hilda quickly decides the incident is none of their business (p. 186). The visit to the exotic luncheon of Lady Miriam Surplus of Comebychance Hall recalls in many ways the *Jardin exotique* section of *The Aunt's Story*. Nor is the mandalic spittle of *Tree of Man* forgotten. Suffering, a continuing White theme, recurs at various moments. It is Alex's opinion that "[t]he trouble with ordinary people is they haven't suffered enough" (p. 86). Alex claims to have followed White's paths on her search for enlightenment. This passage in her memoirs applies equally well to White himself:

> I have studied practically nothing beyond my own intuition--Oh, and by fits and starts, the Bible, the Talmud, the Jewish mystics, the Bhagavad Gita, various Zen masters, and dear old Father Jung who, I am told, I misinterpret. (p. 54)

These allusions do not, however, overshadow the treatment of the three themes. Dichotomies are found throughout--Alex fills with "a deplorable mountain" of cold jewels the peasant basket which was much

more accustomed to carrying "more precious wares" (p. 44)--goat cheeses or figs. In her life as Cassianí, Alex stumbles on the mountainside, "face to face at last with the sky--dare I say Heaven, as opposed to the damp and mouldy simulacrum in our church" (p. 77). Pondering her problems with her "Mystic" from the park and the dog and her difficulties in extending compassion towards them she muses, "I am torn in opposite directions" (p. 101). These and other textual examples of dichotomies are underlined by the persuasive dichotomy of the characters of Alex who belongs, even in the course of her search, very much among the "living," and her daughter who, like Waldo Brown, will forever remain among the "dead." Hilda is self-satisfied and "has achieved all she ever aspired to" (p. 57). It is Hilda whose notes take the form of dry "archives" which "have no soul" (p. 21). Alex's memoirs, by contrast, are full of all aspects of life from "putrescence" to the sublime. In addition, although the many rôles Alex plays are not opposites in the true sense, they do illustrate the many-sided or "parti-coloured" aspect of truth that White returns to time after time. As well, in the end they too must all be united.

Equally present are the reminders that the process of life belongs to the "religion of becoming," that the search for enlightenment must continue. On various occasions Alex muses about this: "I have always been searching, however squalid the circumstances" (p. 35); "Even though we are unconscious of it, we are all born to search for a vocation" (p. 74). She realizes, as did Mrs Standish, that the process must come from the inside out. She asks, "Does Hilda know that the key to anybody is in one's self?" (p. 64). On this same topic, her memoirs

again recall Basil Hunter's final realization of how right Mitty Jacka was, "I am about to launch into a role which has not yet been devised, although I can feel it forming in me" (p. 126). Again the connexion between the author and Patrick White the character is made: "Patrick himself is in search of the unanswerable, the unattainable. He will know that we, the explorers, stop at nothing" (pp. 88-89).

Like Voss, Alex knows the egotistical power of the Creator: have been everywhere. I know all. Am all, I am the Creator. Perhaps for that very reason I am afraid of what I have let loose, of what I have created" (p. 166). Like Voss, too, she realizes she is a failure and that she needs to suffer. Like most White protagonists she knows the heights and depths of the journey into the interior. In her rôle as an actress she has known both sides of the coin--cleaning out stinking toilets and being on stage, flowing "as rhythmically as the waters of the Nile" (p. 130), authenticating "some of Shakespeare's more sensuous visions" (p. 131). She knows failure and humiliation as well as pride; nevertheless, she continues to strive. Like many White protagonists, she sees beauty in simple, natural things. As Cassianí she comes upon a "little parti-coloured doe" on the hillside:

> On all fours, I face her, eye to eye, forehead butting forehead, the tassels at her throat trembling, her belly stirring with the unborn kid. I caress the little teats, the udder already preparing milk. (p. 78)

Then a few pages beyond, the doe gives birth, and as life courses through the new-born kid, Alex sees herself as part of the continuous spectrum of nature:

> The kid twitched and breathed. I bowed my head beneath the starry night for what I was vain enough to see as my own contribution to the continuity of being--though

> impostor-nun, sorceress, failed wife-mother, mere woman, in my various allotted lives. (p. 80)

Alex, like all White protagonists before her, undergoes a final spiritual or symbolic death. After her "performance" at the Sand Pit Theatre, she brings out her husband's old service revolver and starts firing blanks. This act "produces a heart attack, a crypto-corpse, screams and sirens. Paddy-wagons and ambulances" (p. 169). She comes to in the psychiatrist's office and is put in a straight-jacket. From this point until her apocalyptic death she is in a kind of death-like limbo. Just before her actual death she is transferred from the psychiatric hospital to an ordinary one, where, soon after, she "makes contact with the supernatural" (p. 183). She has reached what White called "a splendour, a transcendence, which is there, above human realities."[3] Her final rebirth is foreshadowed early in the novel. While spending the night with the couple who become her pseudo parents she thinks, "Nobody ever believes that inside an old woman there's a young girl waiting" (p. 47). At this point some gulls--symbol of the soul--rise up from Neptune's Cave on their "aluminium wings." The significance of what she thinks is underlined as she continues: "[t]he grey distance was infused with red, the scarlet threads bringing to my mind the unhatched, shell-less eggs dragged from the innards of a slaughtered hen" (p. 47). The colour red, as we have seen earlier, has an important alchemical significance--the colour that represents the third of the four steps in the production of gold or of the Philosopher's Stone. The egg is a mandalic shape, but here the shell-less ones can be connected with the threads that draw outwards

from the inside. White uses this image at the end of *The Living and the Dead*, and here too the threads are red.

A conviction about the ultimate union of the opposites is clearly stated by Alex when she is explaining the theme of the "play" in which she will act: "'Difficult to put it in a nutshell--like life itself. I'd say it unites all the great themes--classic and contemporary dilemmas. War. Corruption. Violence. Revolution. Anarchy. Love and sex in their many variations. The BOMB! Ashes .'" (pp. 154-55)

Memoirs of Many in One, being in the form of edited memoirs, is more episodic than most of White's other novels. It is considerably shorter as well. In spite of these two considerations, *Memoirs of Many in One* shows concern for the same issues which we have already identified through each of four of the five decades that comprise White's long career as a writer. The text is still redolent of symbolic meaning. The style is still richly textured. And interwoven into this texture are the ever-present themes: juxtaposition of opposites, the "religion of becoming," and the myth of rebirth.

The title for this thesis derives, of course, from the title of White's second novel. As H.P. Heseltine said in a review of this book, "The distinction (implied in the title of *The Living and the Dead*) between those who withdraw from brute experience and those who meet it head-on, is at the heart of all his most impressive writing."[4] Although this review was written in 1963, the words apply equally well to his subsequent works. Of course, this is just the beginning. Some critics have left the distinction at this point, and it is mainly these

critics who have tended to see White as an elitist. First of all, the dichotomy between the "living" and the "dead" is basic to the first of the themes discussed in this study. Antinomies exist in all aspects of life and they continually strive to be resolved. The most important antinomies for White, besides the "living" and the "dead," are male and female, and *Nous* and *Physis*. The potentially "living" must be aware of the "dead" and suffer for them in order to be fully alive or whole. For example, Elyot Standish must come to terms with the "dead" side of his own nature; as well, he must see people like Muriel Raphael for what they are; Arthur Brown must try to help Waldo and must suffer for him before Arthur becomes completely whole. The antinomy of male and female is seen in the constant search of these two halves to form a whole, and it has its most obvious illustration in *The Solid Mandala*. The need for *Nous* and *Physis* to conjoin is seen all through White's work. Elyot Standish is too intellectual and must immerse himself in the physical world of Julia and Joe. Likewise, Voss must tend LeMesurier in the most grossly physical aspects of his illness. Arthur must be intimately involved in his twin's death. Basil Hunter must not turn away from the dead dog on the beach.

All these dichotomies lie very obviously at the base of the first of the themes we have separated. However, they also have a rôle to play in the second of the three themes--the "religion of becoming," the process which begins inside and moves outwards. Not only is the concept of antinomies inherent in the movement from the inside to its opposite, the outside, but often the moments of enlightenment, which are a part of the actual process of becoming, are the result of a

conflux of conscious and unconscious at the mystical Centre. Elyot's experience at Ard's Bay and Laura's experience at Rose's funeral are examples of such moments.

The third of the three themes we have been dealing with is very tightly tied to the idea of dichotomies in two ways. First of all, no spiritual rebirth can take place without being preceded by a symbolic death of some kind. Elyot Standish suffers it vicariously with the drunk who is killed, Laura in her fever, and Voss in the Australian desert. Like Elyot, Arthur Brown suffers it vicariously through his brother's death and then through his disappearance; Elizabeth Hunter suffers it in the storm on Brumby Island, and Alex Gray in the straight-jacket. The second way in which the final theme is connected with the original dichotomy is in the wholeness which accompanies rebirth. Finally, all dichotomies are united in a sense of wholeness. This wholeness is represented in one of two ways in White's novels: by a mandala or by some form of enlightenment. The mandalic structure of *The Living and the Dead* is witness to Elyot's rebirth; Laura's is represented by her lozenge; Arthur Brown's by his taws; Basil Hunter's by his collar button. Enlightenment which comes through death, as in the case of Voss, Elizabeth Hunter, and Alex, or in madness as in the case of Arthur Brown, is often accompanied by mandalic symbols, but this is not always so.

Thus the various parts of the progress of the soul towards enlightenment all involve dichotomies, for, after all, the soul cannot be free until it has been translated in some way into the phenomenal world, joining the spiritual and physical worlds. David Tacey notes

that for White as for Keats the world is "the vale of soulmaking."[5] Many and different metaphysical systems have tried to devise explanations of how this "soulmaking" takes place. Given White's absorbing interest in this phenomenon, it is not surprising that he has investigated most of these metaphysical systems in the course of his life. The idea of the "vale of soulmaking" is a Platonic one, closely connected with Plato's concept of the transmigration of the soul. The idea of an original hermaphroditic being which was split into male and female, also comes from Plato. The mediaeval alchemists took over many Platonic ideas. The creation of the Philosopher's Stone involves the union of opposites into a pure substance, a kind of physical symbol for enlightenment. Hermaphrodism played an important part in alchemical thought. Jewish mysticism and the Cabbala concern themselves closely with spiritual death followed by an ascent into enlightenment. Christianity too deals with death and resurrection as well as with humility and suffering which are all important to White. The Eastern religions have similar concerns--especially Buddhism. Both spiritual enlightenment and the idea of the mystical Centre where the noumenal and phenomenal worlds meet are basic to Buddhism. C.G. Jung involves a study of the ubiquitous nature of ancient myths and archetypes in his studies of individuation. For him

> [r]ebirth is an affirmation that must be counted among the primordial affirmations of mankind. The primitive affirmations are based in what I call archetypes. In view of the fact that all affirmations relating to the sphere of the suprasensual are, in the last analysis, invariably determined by archetypes, it is not surprising that a concurrence of affirmations concerning rebirth can be found among the most widely differing peoples.[6]

The term "individuation" is, after all, simply a modern term for the mandalic wholeness of rebirth and enlightenment, where both the process and the juxtaposition of opposites are of great import.

In an article on Jung's influence of modern literature, Radford and Wilson affirm that the universality of his interpretation of myths "provides the first touchstone of his influence."[7] They specifically mention White as one who has been affected by Jung. David Tacey explains this close correspondence in terms of White's sensitivity to myth and archetypes. He states:

> It seems to me that White's reading of Jung did not essentially change his work or even introduce anything new--rather it gave him a conceptual language and a framework for his vision of wholeness, a vision which had long been formulating itself, if unconsciously, in the course of his creative development.[8]

It is particularly in the realm of myth, archetype and symbol that all the various paths are related. Each of the areas in which White has shown an interest uses symbols to explain its metaphysical beliefs. Because much symbology wells up from the unconscious it is closely associated with archetypes. And if we believe Jung that the unconscious is collective, not merely personal, it is not difficult to understand both why these various philosophies show similarities, and why White has found them fascinating.

That the unconscious "speaks" in symbols is an accepted fact. White has freely admitted the rôle of the unconscious in his work.[9] Thus, it is not surprising to find the three themes that have concerned us here expressed symbolically in White's novels. Nor is it surprising to discover the indebtedness of these themes to the original concept of the "living" and the "dead." For as Mircea Eliade states: "All the

images by means of which we try to express the paradoxical act of 'escaping from time' are equally expressive of *the passage from ignorance to enlightenment* (or, in other words, from 'death' to 'life'. .)"[10] This passage from death to life encompasses all three themes: dichotomies, becoming and wholeness or rebirth. In turn, the universal nature of these themes encompasses symbolically all the various paths that White has pursued in his quest for enlightenment.

Notes

Conclusion

[1] Patrick White, *Memoirs of Many in One* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1986), All subsequent references to this novel in this chapter will be noted in the text.

[2] C.G. Jung, "Commentary" in *The Secret of the Golden Flower: A Chinese Book of Life*, trans. R. Wilhelm, rev. ed. (New York: Harcourt Brace and World Inc., 1962), p. 110.

[3] White, "Conversation": 136.

[4] H.P. Heseltine, "Writer and Reader," rev. of *The Living and the Dead* by Patrick White, *Southerly* 23.3 (1963): 212.

[5] Tacey, "'It's happening inside'": 34.

[6] Jung, *Archetypes*, p. 116.

[7] F.L. Radford and R.R. Wilson, "Some Phases of the Jungian Moon: Jung's Influence on Modern Literature," *English Studies in Canada* 8 (1982): 313.

[8] Davis Tacey, "Patrick White: Misconceptions About Jung's Influence," *Australian Literary Studies* 9.2 (1979): 246.

[9] Patrick White, interview, *In the Making*, p. 219.

[10] Eliade, p. 82.

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