



The Reign of the Mother Goddess:

a Jungian study of the
novels of Patrick White

by

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To Ian Fraser

Great Mother Nature has proved most potent
... down to the present day. It is 'she'
who does nothing by leaps, abhors a vacuum,
is *die gute Mutter*, is red in tooth and claw,
'never did betray the heart that loved her,'
eliminates the unfit, surges to ever higher
and higher forms of life, decrees, purposes,
warns, punishes and consoles ... Of all the
pantheon Great Mother Nature has ... been the
hardest to kill.

- C.S. Lewis, *Studies in Words*

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Summary

This thesis offers a new approach to the study of White's novels. It does not assume that the author is identical with his work, that he "produced" it and therefore "knows" what it is about. Rather it adopts the view that the work, being a truly visionary kind of literature, leads a life of its own which is independent of the author's mind. The work must, however, relate to White at a depth-psychological level. The stories can be seen as spontaneous creations of the author's inner world, or representations of his imaginal life. The teller/tale relationship is therefore analogous to that between ego and unconscious in psychoanalytic work. The teller stands amazed at what he "creates", frequently misunderstands what the tale is saying, and often forces the symbolic material into an incongruous intellectual frame. The dynamics of this situation, or White's "quarrel with himself", is what forms the central focus of the ensuing discussion.

Each White novel is a variation upon a single myth relating to the image of the Great Mother and Her Son. The presence of this archetypal pattern makes the novels unusually accessible to a Jungian or mythic approach. The point is not that White read Jung and "applied" his work in the fiction, but that the creative imagination, structured *a priori* along mythic lines, is comprehensible and accountable within the context of Jungian archetypal thought. The thesis is in some way a contribution toward a science of the imagination, which Freud and Jung pioneered earlier this century, and which has been carried forward in the work of Kerényi, Neumann, James Hillman, and Marie Louise von Franz. It is founded on the idea that imagination is not chaotic and limitless, wandering hither and thither in an arbitrary way, but that it follows highly structured patterns, is ordered by internal psychic forces, and works in accordance with mythic principles. The task of the myth critic is to experience the work from the inside, to penetrate its deep structure, and to relate this to an appropriate

psycho-mythological paradigm. The critic must proceed with utmost caution, allowing the work to suggest its own interpretative frame by "amplifying" the mythic content which is already inherent in the material. In White studies the critic must be especially careful not to allow himself to be sidetracked by the author's interpretation of events, but to remain absolutely faithful to the narrative structure and acutely receptive to its symbolic imagery.

In approaching White we have to unlearn much of what we have been taught about the novel. We do not, for instance, find that the characters "develop" in the expected sense, nor do we find that the subject of the fiction is the "world" as we know it. White's world is one of myth and dream. We have to view everything as if we were moving in a psychic landscape, inhabited not by people and things, but by imaginal figures and numinous objects. White is not writing about life: he is simply writing, or rather, he is dreaming a universe. And although that universe coincides at times with certain aspects of "Australian life" it is not to be located within a realistic context. Sarsaparilla is not Sydney or Melbourne, but it is a place, a mythic place in a mythic reality.

Declaration

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university, and (to the best of my knowledge and belief) no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text or notes.

The thesis does, however, contain some work which has previously been published. A section of the Introduction originally appeared as, "Patrick White: Misconceptions About Jung's Influence", in *Australian Literary Studies*, Vol. 9, No.2, 1979. An earlier version of Chapter 1 appeared in *Southern Review*, Vol. 11, No. 2, 1978, and work in progress toward Chapter 2 was published in *Adelaide Australian Literary Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 2, 1977. An earlier version of Chapter 6 part 3 was published in *South Pacific Images*, ed. C. Tiffin, St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1978, and an early attempt to envision White's novels in a Jungian context appeared in *Patrick White: A Critical Symposium*, ed. R. Shepherd and K. Singh, Adelaide: Centre for Research in the New Literature in English, 1978.

Signed

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Introduction

Jungian psychology in criticism

Jungian criticism has acquired a bad name in literary circles, and when one analyses the literature one can see why. Much of what has appeared to date is systematic and lifeless. Often one feels that the Jungian critic is imposing his template upon the text, forcing it into a preconceived mould. Needless to say, this adds nothing to literary study, and also damages the reputation of analytical psychology. Toward the end of his life Jung was disturbed at the too mechanical use of his ideas. After hearing a student give a seminar paper on his psychological "system" he shook his head in horror, and exclaimed, "I'm glad I'm Jung and not a Jungian".¹

It is apparent that we have yet to experience the mature burgeoning of Jungian criticism. What we have seen so far is a series of fitful attempts which do not constitute a valid or representative "school" of criticism. Either the critics have been at heart clinical psychologists, with a knowledge of the unconscious but no real appreciation of literature, or they have been literary scholars who have made hasty and often inadequate attempts to come to grips with Jung. The one analyses the literary work in order to "prove" the validity of Jung,² the other clutches at a fragment of Jung in order to "explain" the text.³ The methodology is still very much in its infancy and requires further cultivation and skilled application before it can become a genuine force in literary studies.⁴

Jung himself made it a practice not to approach a dream, a work of art, or any product of the imagination with a too confident sense of "knowledge", or a ready-made intellectual framework.⁵ The first stage of analysis, he emphasized, is complete receptivity to the material. After being told a dream he would strive to remain open to the symbolic images, never losing sight of them amidst a plethora of theoretical assumptions.

The first stage must be one of listening and not acting, allowing the imagination to tell its own story, on its own terms, and in its own language. The second stage is then to relate the given material to a wider mythological context. The importance of this technique - which requires a thorough grasp of mythology, fairytale, and imaginative literature - is to evoke and establish the archetypal frame within which the psychic product is operating. By seeking wider parallels one gains more comprehension of the material, is able to relate it to historical paradigms, to connect the specific images with universal patterns and conflicts. The crucial thing is to ensure that the "right" frame has been selected. This means constantly checking the source material, searching for the mythic resonances already inherent in it. One must not be led astray by the dreamer's or artist's interpretation and suggestions, which can often be far wide of the mark.⁶ Above all, the "amplification" technique had better not be attempted until one has become thoroughly acquainted with the language of the imagination, and with the profusion of archetypal contexts represented in mythology and literature.

It often happens in White studies that the Jungian critic is not wholly cognizant with the symbolic material, so that he places it in a wrong archetypal context. In particular, he appears innocent of the fact that the author himself could often be mistaken in his response to the work, and carelessly adopts the frame which White provides in his authorial presentation. Examples of this procedure can be found in A.P. Riemer's essay "Visions of the Mandala in *The Tree of Man*" (1967), in Patricia Morley's *The Mystery of Unity* (1972), and in Peter Beatson's *The Eye in the Mandala* (1976). In these studies the hero myth and the Jungian individuation paradigm is applied to works which do not reveal any progressive or developmental patterns. Critics simply assume (with the author) that the ever-recurring circle image is a "mandala", and that mergence with this image is synonymous with self-realization.

Whereas the textual evidence suggests that the circular form is a representation of the matrix⁷ or source, the womb-like symbol of the maternal unconscious, and that fusion with this pre-worldly image leads to disintegration and death.⁸ The end result is that critics talk about archetypal constructs and ideas which have little or nothing to do with the processes that take place in the fiction. The misapplied paradigm leads to general misunderstanding, and the work itself is lost sight of altogether. Only if the Jungian critic is as cautious, as reflective, and as sensitive to the language of the imagination as Jung himself, can he profitably apply archetypal methods to the study of literature.

The question of Jung's "influence"

The question regarding White's "use" of Jung needs to be examined at this point. The presence of archetypal patterns in White's fiction has led many critics to suppose that White actually modelled his work on the researches of the Swiss psychologist.⁹ A.P. Riemer has been the most vocal in espousing this view, arguing that *The Tree of Man* and *Riders in the Chariot* both rely heavily upon Jungian material, and adding that "a novelist's use of such arcane material will inevitably involve questions of propriety: but I prefer to leave this problem of artistic licence to be fought out elsewhere, as I have no doubt it will be".¹⁰ This argument is entirely misdirected. White's novels seem Jungian because the author has in his own way drawn upon the deep unconscious and its archetypes.¹¹ It is precisely this fact that makes the novels so powerful and accounts for their genuine visionary quality. They are not products of his conscious mind, but spring up, as it were, from the creative unconscious.¹² A writer does not have to read Jung to formulate archetypal configurations - he has rather to turn within and enter into his own dialogue with the mythic imagination. This, surely, is the mark of all great art, certainly of all visionary art.

Far from "basing" his work on Jung, White claims not even to have read him before the mid 1960s, after all his so-called "Jungian" novels (i.e. *The Tree of Man*, *Riders*) had been written:

I did not read Jung until the time of *The Solid Mandala*, when somebody gave me *Psychology and Alchemy*.¹³

And again:

I did not know of Jung's work at the time of writing *The Aunt's Story*. I don't think I had even heard of him, though I may have as I had read some Freud¹⁴

Jungian influence is evident in *The Solid Mandala*. The title itself betrays some knowledge of Jung, and the text reproduces passages from his work. Yet even here it is wrong to be deterministic about the relationship, to argue that the psychologist provided "source materials". White's vision of the circular form (which becomes "the mandala" in this work) was in evidence long before his reading of Jung. It appears in every work from *The Living and the Dead* (where we find Elyot Standish carrying "sacred" rounded stones) to *Riders in the Chariot*. It seems to me that White's reading of Jung had no real impact upon his literary vision. All it did was to allow him to name (or more precisely, to misname) the image which had been central to his work. I say "misname" because in reality White's symbol was never a true mandala, a symbol of the integration of personality, but rather a representation of the womb-like condition of unconsciousness, as already mentioned. The distinction between these two kinds of circle images will become clearer as the argument develops, but it is a crucial distinction upon which the author - and White criticism - founders. Thus I do not believe that White's contact with Jung was profitable - rather, it engendered confusion and presented a false lead to the critics. If anything it revealed that the **author** did not really understand his work, that the literary vision was autonomous and independent of his conscious intentions.

Natural and algebraic symbols

In approaching the novels we have to be extremely careful to differentiate between teller and tale, to separate that which is contrived and imposed from that which is organic.¹⁵ The imposed layer consists not only of intellectual constructs and interpretative materials, but also of artificial patterns of symbolism. White's work is a mixture of natural and algebraic symbols.¹⁶ "Natural" symbols arise of their own accord, are spontaneous products of the imagination. "Algebraic" symbols, on the other hand, are super-added by the author, are introduced to support his own particular philosophy or point of view. *The Aunt's Story* and *The Tree of Man* are among the better works because there the concentration of natural symbolism is at its greatest. The symbols of the rose, the nautilus, the tree, the Meroë dragon, the four seasons "work" because they emerge naturally from the fictional ground. In *Voss* and *Riders in the Chariot*, however, the presence of algebraic symbols obscures our evaluation of narrative structures, and overlays much that is "genuine" in these novels. The imported Christian parallels, the use of Kabbalah, Judaism, and Hermetic philosophy all point to contexts of meaning which are inappropriate to their respective fictional settings. The teller of these works is Christian in outlook, but the tale itself is pagan in character, pointing not to the redemptive mysteries of the Spirit but to the triumph of the Great Earth Mother and Her defeat of the masculine spirit. The symbol of the Chariot of Redemption is possibly the most deliberately contrived representation in White's fiction. The author foists this foreign symbol upon the narrative, "grafts" it into the lives of his characters, but it does not - or cannot - work, because the mytheme itself will not support the blissful dream of transcendence. The gestures toward redemption and the laboured symbolism represent White's own particular standpoint, but the "natural" symbols and textual structures point to a decidedly pre-Christian and matriarchal universe. Once the critic has penetrated to the core of

White's fiction, and has become familiar with its mythic "ground", he is able to differentiate more readily between natural and artificial contents, and to ascertain whether a particular symbol is authentic or not.

White's individual psychology

In this work I repeatedly refer to White's inner situation, his imaginal life and psychological conflicts. This might seem indefensible or even offensive to readers who are used to viewing the novel as an "objective" literary product. But White's novels are not objective - at least, not in the conventional sense. They are largely about himself, about the conflicts and struggles which take place within his own unconscious. Of course this "unconscious" is an objective realm in its own right, a realm quite separate from his mind, which is why he so often fails to grasp the meaning of his work, and why it frequently runs counter to his own intended designs. The work comes from a deep imaginal realm and is concerned with archetypal and mythological processes. Yet these processes are also "his", and are conditioned by his particular psychological situation. The novels reflect problems which are both personal and universal - uniquely White's yet shared by all who venture into the interior world.

Chapter One

Resistance to the Return



The psychopathological problem of incest is the aberrant natural form of the union of opposites, a union which has either never been made conscious at all as a psychic task or, if it was conscious, has once more disappeared from view.

- C.G. Jung¹

The archetype of the Great Mother is, I would argue, the key to both the meaning and the structural foundation of White's literary vision. Each of his novels represents an attempt of the son to return to the mother-image as the source and essence of his being. However I am not wishing to reduce White's work to the dimensions of the Oedipal complex. I do not believe the Freudian model is large enough to accommodate Patrick White - mainly because, as I shall attempt to show, the object of desire is not the personal mother, but the mother-*image*, the archetypal or transpersonal Mother. The distinction between personal and archetypal mother will become clearer as the thesis unfolds, but essentially the archetypal figure personifies the innermost depths of the human personality, the capacity of the inward self to renew and "give birth to" itself. Hence the archaic idea of the "mother" emerges as the imaginal persona for this fundamental and vital aspect of the human psyche. Every man longs to be renewed by the inward depths, and so fantasies involving a return to the "mother" are a universal category of experience.² Incest fantasies are especially common in the life of the creative artist, for his very creativeness is dependent upon his intimate relation to the deep unconscious.³

But just as often as incest material emerges the personality is inclined to deal with the fantasies literally - to feel that an actual return to the personal mother is what is demanded in order to seek rebirth and creative renewal.⁴ White's early career is deeply involved in this

literal-incestuous pattern, and *The Living and the Dead* [1941] is the novel in which the confusion between literal and symbolic levels of meaning is most strongly pronounced. The call to archetypal renewal, to symbolic incest, has been sounded but the protagonist of the novel is unable to properly attend to it. For him that call involves him in insurmountable moral problems and difficulties which are characteristic of the mother-son pattern at an early level of development, where the son is still grappling to free himself from the literal trappings of his deepest symbolic urge.

I

On many mornings. Elyot, are you working? his mother called, exasperating him to the point where he ground his ears with his hands, because she knew from the experience of years that he closed his door after breakfast for one purpose. But this was part of the scheme of his mother's morning, to stand on the first floor landing and call to the top of the house. Often he refused to hear. He left the voice to ramble, a voice without purpose on the stairs. Once he had seen her standing vaguely, hand to chin, the sleeve drooping downward from an arm, as if she were listening for a lost voice, or wondering, trying to trace her own purpose on the stairs. [pp.13-14]⁵

Here the figure of Mrs Standish functions in Elyot's memory⁶ more as a creature of fantasy than as an actual person. The old, nagging woman, standing on the stairs each morning in her nightgown, calling out for her son, is an excellent image of the neglected unconscious psyche and its desperate "call" for attention. And each morning Elyot sits at the top of the house, with his door closed, and pretends not to hear the call of this figure below (i.e. from the unconscious), although it exasperated him "to the point where he ground his ears with his hands". The mother is so often rejected that her daily mission is made to seem pathetic and pointless; she is merely "a voice without purpose on the stairs".

In this passage we have a clear image of Elyot's psychic situation: his consciousness retreats into isolation and puts up a violent resistance to the mother-image; on the other side the "mother", rejected and neglected, grows haggard, ugly, and demanding, exerting a wholly negative influence

upon the conscious mind. But this passage presents more than a psychic conflict - it also suggests a way out of the conflict and anticipates the course of Elyot's future development. Clearly, Elyot must take a backward step towards the unconscious, he must go by way of a "return to the mother" in order to be healed of the dangerous rift within his psyche. The "mother" herself is imaged here as wanting to make some kind of re-union; she wants to re-connect with her "son". It is the conscious side that puts up a violent resistance and refuses to enter into dialogue with the mother. This is partly because of the fear of annihilation, the fear that he will be overwhelmed and destroyed by the maternal unconscious. But his resistance is mainly conditioned by the incest-problem: a fear that this much-needed return is synonymous with an incestuous cohabitation with the human mother.⁷ When consciousness fails to interpret this urge symbolically the movement toward transformation is arrested at the banal level of a family romance. As a result of this fixation Mrs Standish is seen as an increasingly negative figure - since she appears both as the source of his greatest fear and as the object of his deepest desire. As the "carrier" of his unconscious incestuous libido she is experienced as a negative temptress, as one who calls to him each morning from the foot of the stairs, dressed only in a loose nightgown ("this was part of the *scheme* of his mother's morning"), as if she were trying to draw him toward her to enact the forbidden incest.⁸

In the light of this it is highly significant that Elyot's eventual transformation - his return to the matrix⁹ or "womb" of the deep unconscious - is delayed until after the death of his mother. It is as if transformation is impossible so long as the unconscious is projected outside and held by the mother. With her death he is released from his personal fixation and neurotic despair and is now able to make his return to the matrix without having to act this out literally as sexual incest. And so he remains until her death a victim of his own literalism,¹⁰ caught up in the material or carnal aspect of a spiritual idea.

II

But before we trace the development of Elyot's regeneration we must first turn to his childhood experience and discover how this confusion arose, and why he became negatively fixated upon the personal mother.

At an early age Elyot experienced his mother as a demanding, possessive, invading person who showed interest in his feelings if they matched her mood, but who was scathing if they did not. From the outset she appeared as a kind of ambivalent, paradoxical Great Mother figure who seemed to extend her love with one hand and to draw it back into herself with the other. The emotional relationship between mother and son was naturally intensified by the absence of the father, who walked out of the family while Elyot was still a young boy. On the night of the father's desertion Mrs Standish takes possession of her son as a source of emotional support, as a kind of replacement for her husband:

Would you like to get into Mother's bed? she asked slowly, speaking as much to darkness, and still thinking, her voice. Would Elyot like to sleep with Mother?

He nodded his head against her side, feeling on his cheek the rub of silk

Elyot will keep Mother company, she said. [p.71]

With the father gone, the son falls into the arms of the mother - he substitutes for the missing husband and takes on a somewhat inflated role as the mother's son-lover, at least until she finds herself another man, when she virtually abandons Elyot altogether. Even here it is clear that the mother is not concerned with Elyot himself, but is preoccupied with her own needs, so that she appears distant and detached - "speaking as much to darkness, and still thinking" as she draws him toward her. The moment of closeness between mother and son is based purely on the mother's self-interest - the boy himself is almost superfluous, existing merely as the means of fulfilment of her own momentary desires.

Eventually the boy becomes terrified of his mother's dominating, possessive aspect - he feels eaten up by her "love", or rather, sacrificed to her instinctive demands:

Come here, darling, she said.

Why?

Come and sit on Mother's lap, she said.

He did so unwillingly, sat there stiffly, allowed her to stroke his hair. It was too close, too close to the scent of darkness and the slamming of a door. [p.76]

"The scent of darkness" and "the slamming of a door" refer to the night of his father's defection, to the tension and turmoil in the house on the night that the mother claimed him as her son-lover. Here we see that whenever the mother draws him to her the child is reminded of that crucial night - he is reminded that his function is not to love his mother but to placate and serve her. As a result the child feels alternately exploited and abandoned - the mother makes use of him whenever she sees fit; beyond that, she has little or no concern for him or for his welfare.

For this reason "mother" seems destructive and devouring, an all-powerful figure who takes away life. It is not difficult to see why "mother" becomes associated with everything negative and life-denying - in particular with the Great War and with the collective upheaval which had just broken out in Europe:

It was about this time there began to be a numb feeling in the streets. Mother was pale and excited. Her face had drained away from the stuff she put on her cheeks. [p.78]

The War depended largely on Mother, she read the battles out of the papers, or she made it recede, she came upstairs while you were having tea, and said you would leave for the country in a few days' time. [p.80]

It is clear that the war is identified with the mother; it takes on the image of the Terrible Mother, as that force which devours, destroys, and lays waste. In a very literal sense the Great War takes away the boy's source of nourishment and life - the mother herself abandons Elyot to take part in the war in voluntary service with the medical corps.

After his mother's departure he goes to live at the Macarthy's house in the country, near the Bristol Channel. At this stage in his life, isolated and abandoned, with his world dominated by the image of the terrible mother, a miraculous thing happens: his unconscious psyche, as

if to compensate for the absence of a loving, maternal figure in his outer life, constellates the archetypal image of the Great Mother in his inner, psychic life, which gives him a new sense of security and support. This experience of the maternal archetype takes place at Ard's Bay in the form of a mystical communion with the primordial Earth Goddess - that is, with the all-containing, nurturing mother in her most primordial, elemental aspect:

It was an almost enclosed, almost a circular bay. He spent many hours looking into pools.... He took up the smooth stones in his hand, the red and the mauve stones, that shone when you took them out of the water. And standing on the rim of the bay, holding the rounded stones in his hand, everything felt secure and solid, the gentle, enclosed basin of water, the sturdy trees that sprouted from the sides, his own legs planted in the moist sand. [pp.101-102]

This is an image of complete at-one-ment with the maternal-nourishing sources of life, or with the Great Mother - represented here as "the gentle, enclosed basin of water"¹¹ - in whose embrace the child feels "secure and solid". The circular bay¹² is a true symbol of the "container" in which ego-consciousness is as a small child in the womb of the mother. Here, at Ard's Bay in this childhood landscape, all the powerful mother-symbols are united: the circular bay, rounded stones, trees, earth and water. Earth and water¹³ are ancient symbols of the mother-image - earth representing the "foundation" and water the "source" and "origin" of all life. Trees¹⁴ have long possessed a maternal significance, representing the life-force of the maternal earth or the creative aspect of nature (*Mater Natura*). The fact that Elyot is depicted as tree-like, his legs sunk deep into the maternal earth, emphasizes his particularly close bond to the archetypal mother and suggests further that he only lives when rooted in the maternal matrix.¹⁵

The image of the circle - which we find in the circular bay and in the rounded stones¹⁶ - is a characteristic symbol of the mother-image, representing psychologically the all-embracing unity of the unconscious and mythologically the Great Round of nature. The circle as maternal womb is known in archetypal psychology as the *uroboros* [see Figure 1] in order to differentiate

it from its counterpart, the mandala, which points to an entirely different psychic constellation. The *uroboros* symbolizes the "unity" of the unconscious, whereas the mandala represents a much higher stage of psychic development - the unity of the unconscious with ego-consciousness. The former, which excludes consciousness, points backward to unconscious containment in the mother, the latter, on the other hand, points forward to the *conscious* realization of unity in the Self.¹⁷ Critics have generally confused White's circular mother-symbol with the mandala - the result being that his work has been distorted and overinterpreted.¹⁸ It is important for us to realize at the outset that his characteristic "symbols of unity" are not mandalas - they are uroboric images which reflect the dominance of the mother archetype and which point to an ego as yet undifferentiated from the maternal matrix (or "at one" with the world in an unconscious way).

Elyot's longing for the maternal depths is further expressed in his discovery of the cave at Ard's Bay, a place where he feels completely contained and transformed by the archetypal mother:

Later he found the cave, going inward through the wall of rock He gathered the coloured stones. And on the wall of the cave he scratched with a crumbling finger of stone, no particular design, but he liked to draw, he liked to sing to himself as the line became more and more intricate on the surface of the rock. It gave him great pleasure to feel he was doing this, secretly, unknown to the Macarthy's, or Julia, or Eden. He very much needed this secret life. [p.102]

The cave is an ancient symbol of the womb of the earth-mother - the place where primitive man returned for the sake of renewal and rebirth. Here it is as if Elyot is taking part unconsciously in an ancient mother-cult ritual - entering the cave ("going inward through the wall of rock") as if he were returning to the cavern of the womb, and, once inside the "belly" of the earth, being inspired to draw and sing as if he were a primitive artist in matriarchal times.

This passage emphasizes the division between his secret life at Ard's Bay and his life in ordinary reality. "It gave him great pleasure to feel

he was doing this, secretly, unknown to the Macarthy's, or Julia, or Eden". It is as if, retreating from an external reality which is wholly dominated by the terrible mother (and her image-bearers in the outer world), he suddenly stumbles upon the positive world of the Great Mother and finds refuge within her sheltering cave.

Significantly enough, as soon as he returns home after his excursion at Ard's Bay he is confronted by Mrs Macarthy - a typical terrible-mother figure,¹⁹ who wants to know where he has been. But Elyot does not tell her because he finds her world incompatible with the world of the nurturing earth-mother:

Nowhere, he said. Nowhere much.
Because Mrs Macarthy and Ard's Bay were quite
separate. They had to stay like that. [p.102]

This points, in the first place, to a division between inner and outer worlds and the injunction "They had to stay like that" emphasizes the depth of the split and his desire to keep the two worlds apart. This attitude encourages a deep split within the structure of the mother archetype itself: its negative and positive sides, which should be contained within the paradoxical totality of the archetype, are split apart and turned against one another. A completely negative image falls to the outer, human mother and a wholly positive image is given to the inner mother-image. This leads to a distorted, exaggerated view of both figures: he has an unreal, idealized and exalted view of the mother-image (and of the world of Nature), and on the other hand he severely depreciates and undervalues the human mother (and all maternal women). What Elyot fails to realize is that his "negative" human mother and his "positive" mother-image are really different aspects of the same archetypal reality - that these reflect the ambivalent and paradoxical nature of the Great Mother - and that the negative aspect which he projects solely upon the human mother is an attribute of the archetypal mother as well.²⁰

But the immediate problem here is that these two irreconcilable figures

point to a fundamental split within Elyot himself - they personify the division between his positive inner life and his negative outer life. At one crucial stage Elyot tries to merge the world of Ard's Bay with his everyday reality by bringing some of the colourful, rounded stones of the bay into his own bedroom. But this proves to be an impossible task - he is unable to unite these different worlds. Firstly, Mrs Macarthy seizes upon his source of inner riches and symbolically devalues or "devours" it:

I don't see why you should bring home stones, Mrs Macarthy said. You might start making a collection of stamps. Stamps are educational, she said. [p. 102]

Secondly, the stones themselves, sitting isolated on his bedroom windowsill, seemed to lose their colour, their life, indeed their very effectiveness as "carriers" of positive psychic energy and maternal support:

He did not answer this. When she had gone, he looked at the stones. He wondered a little himself. They were dull and colourless, unlike the glistening stones he had picked up out of pools. These belonged to the bay. Soon it was dusk, and he picked up the stones one by one, slowly threw them out of the window, heard their heavy landing in the undergrowth. [pp.102-103]

Once brought up into the outer world the symbols of the positive mother lose their value and effectiveness - somehow her spiritual "radiance" does not come through into his conscious life. The positive mother is to be met only in the unconscious - she does not readily yield up her riches for the sake of his conscious world, but keeps her mysteries to herself. From a mythological point of view we could say that *she* (the Earth Mother of Ard's Bay) takes away the colour and the life of the little stones - she draws their life back into herself, so that Elyot is left with mere relics, with dull, lifeless stones. He is forced to conclude that the stones "belonged to the bay" - that they belong to the mother's own world - and taken out of her primordial realm they simply have no effect or reality. Elyot can partake of the mystery and numinosity of her nature-symbols, but only on her terms - that is, in her world. There is no "bringing-up" of this deep maternal source into his conscious reality. Here we see how the character of the archetypal Earth

Mother begins to closely resemble the personality of his personal mother - she too is an awesome, powerful Goddess who is capable of extending love and support to her son-lover, but who does so only on *her* terms, and is equally capable of taking it away again, of withdrawing all that she has given. This negative aspect of the archetypal mother (of which Elyot is unconscious) is projected upon the figure of Mrs Macarthy - who appears in this context as a kind of lamia, a monstrous figure who sucks the life out of the little stones. Psychologically this is proof that his conscious world is governed by the image of the terrible mother - a figure who steals the life-force from his conscious existence and who leaves him isolated and abandoned.

At this crucial stage his personal mother returns for a brief visit from the war in France and this same cycle (i.e. the movement from the Good to the Terrible Mother) begins again at a different level. This paradoxical pattern, by which the once-nourishing, loving mother suddenly reveals her negative face, has by now impressed itself deeply upon his psychic life, so that he meets it again and again in different guises and at different levels of reality. At first the return of Mrs. Standish brings with it the promise of mother-love, of a renewed source of maternal support:

...it was exciting enough, when you ran outside to be kissed, to kiss, the rain getting in between your faces, and the scent that came back; you had almost forgotten so many warm moments between sheets. [p.109]

But then the mother, after this initial moment of warmth and expectation, reveals her cold, impersonal aspect and Elyot is made to feel once more rejected and abandoned:

Run along, Elyot. It's cold.
She sounded tired. She was the same, and at the same time different.... Mother had a habit of talking to you as if you were hardly there, it was this now, it was this and more, she looked from side to side in the garden, as if she had forgotten. [p.109]

His mother is accompanied by an army-officer called Charles and it is clear to Elyot that in this man she has found herself another husband-lover,

and so has no further use for him, since he was never anything more to her than a substitute lover. There emerges here the image (to be further developed) of the mother as a kind of "whore", a degenerate figure who satisfies her own needs through sexual affairs with war-time army officers but who fails to meet the needs of her dependent son. And as a result of this sudden awareness Elyot becomes increasingly hostile toward his mother:

So that on the whole, because you had only just discovered this, you were sorry that Mother had come from France. [p.111]

More dreadful than this rejection by the personal mother is the sense that the inner mother-image - the unconscious psyche and the "water" of life itself - has suddenly receded from his reality and left him in a state of deathly existence. From this moment he is overcome by a growing sense of alienation and existential aloneness: "He had no part in anything. It frightened him a little. He could feel himself tremble It began to occupy him more and more, his not being part of anything" [pp.110-111]. The force of life slowly begins to drain away from the face of the world, and objects and people begin to acquire an atmosphere of unreality:

...the water jug that Julia left you might or might not have seen in sleep or waking, it was not quite real, the sort of daylight real And Mother belonged in a way to sleep. Everything she did was not quite real, like sleep, only there was no waking. He stood a long way off and watched. He began to develop a perpetual frown. [p.111]

To be rejected by "mother" is for a child to be rejected by the creative matrix of life itself - it is to be cut off from the "source", so that the world is suddenly benumbed and everything seems as a dream or nightmare - "only there was no waking". Psychologically this means that there is no psychic energy forthcoming from the unconscious - a situation depicted earlier in the "drying-up" or devitalization of the sacred stones of Ard's Bay. So now Elyot has been rejected by the human as by the Archetypal Mother - in this state he becomes one of the "living dead"; an ego without an inner, living centre, a child who has "lost his soul" (since he is no longer in possession of the sacred stones), or we could say, in mythological terms, that he has been expelled from the paradise of the mother - is no

longer held within her containing embrace - and so he now feels utterly alone in an unreal universe. From this moment on - until the end of the novel, when he finally makes his symbolic "return to the mother" - the tone of his life is one of stagnation and meaninglessness. Yet there is always within him the secret memory of the paradise of the mother and the boy continues to hover about her image, knowing that "she", who devoured his soul, must still contain that secret, seemingly unattainable, treasure within her depths:

She was so beautiful that he would have liked to touch her. But he did not know what to do, or say. He stood kicking at the frosted ground. [p.111]

III

After his mother's return to the war in Europe Elyot transfers this emotional burden onto his sister Eden. Now she becomes the Ambivalent Female - she who hides within her depths the treasure of his soul yet who keeps this secret world jealously guarded and quite beyond his reach:

There were days when he hated Eden with all the intensity of this freshly developed emotion. Ignoring his own aptitude for silence, he hated her because she sat apart. She wore an aura of secrecy. She wrote letters, endless letters. She made mysterious visits to the chest of drawers He hated all this, but perhaps he hated her most because she was his sister, because in this intimate relationship he failed to understand the paradox of distance. [p.118]

The revealing phrase here is that his sister seemed to have "an aura of secrecy". Projections are commonly detected when one speaks of an uncanny quality of the other person - certainly Elyot as a child often noted an aura of secrecy, a strange sense of detachment, about his mother. And Elyot hated this in Eden because it makes him feel excluded from the feminine mystery within the depths of his own inner being.

His faulty relation to the mother archetype has disturbed his relation to the feminine principle generally - so that every female or maternal figure is experienced in a negative way. But it is more particularly the absence of Mrs Standish which forces Eden into the role of "mother", so that she

becomes the new carrier and embodiment of a negative archetypal image. With Eden he feels simultaneously fascinated and repelled - he is caught up in a negative situation yet he is drawn to her in spite of the resentment she arouses:

If he had wanted to resist the violence Eden roused, but there was a half-craving for its stimulus, as if, taken away, nothing would exist, the empty room, the stuffy streets, Eden herself was agreed on this, silently, unwilling to withdraw. [p.120]

His outstanding mother-fixation has temporarily transferred itself to the sister: here again we have a female figure who stands at the centre of his world and, though she is experienced as negative and hateful, he continually revolves around her like a satellite, unable to break free from her orbital attraction. Despite the contempt and the resistance there is a "half-craving" for Eden, for the eternal feminine, which keeps him bound to her.

But then, at the approach of manhood, during his year in Germany before taking up studies at Cambridge, this whole constellation is transferred onto Hildegard, the daughter of Frau Fiesel, Elyot's motherly guardian while in Germany. And so the predictable mother-son cycle begins again, this time with a new mother substitute. At the outset Hildegard seems a suitable replacement - she is beautiful, with long golden hair, taller than himself, and four years his senior - which gives her a strong sense of superiority and "greatness" - an essential quality if she is to be worthy of carrying his projection of the Great Mother.²¹ In this way Elyot can feel himself sufficiently small and inferior (i.e. a boy) in relation to Her. Before long he falls into a state of swooning adoration:

He wanted to touch her. Perhaps he was in love. He wanted, in an agony of discomfort, to explore this new situation with his hands. Her silence left him in a state of painful expectation and desire.... He wanted her to remain physical. His eyes rested, diffidently, on her breasts. [p.124]

Here his consuming passion is set aflame by the incest urge, by the urge to reunite sexually with the image of the mother. It will be noted that until now - that is, until the approach of manhood - we did not need to refer to his longing for the mother in terms of "incest". For the child, of course,

this longing cannot be called incest; it is only for an adult with a fully developed sexuality that this backward striving becomes incest. And, as is characteristic of a mother-bound man when he falls in love, Elyot loses his ground and is drawn irresistibly into the archetypal world of the Mother Goddess:

Drawing him into a world of her own, making him acknowledge this, he began to doubt the reality of trees, the stones their feet touched in fording a stream, all these were unreal, undergoing some form of reconstruction in Hildegard's voice ... All that late afternoon, wandering, sitting, in the forest Hildegard made with her voice ... he knew that he was not himself. He was a strange person, subscribing to arguments in which, soberly, he could not believe. But he watched, he listened to her, he was obsessed himself, with the form of Hildegard. He was becoming what she wanted him to become. [pp.124-125]

From this we can see that this form of "love" is pleasurable - he feels transported and deeply related to the eternal feminine - but as involuntary transference it can only be counted a negative experience: his ego position is annulled, he is made to play the fool, an idiot without an orientation - he is overwhelmed and assimilated by her powerful image. This is the grave danger that faces a mother-bound man - when he does fall in love, it is in a stupid, infantile way, because the woman has evoked the awesome image of the Mother Goddess, before which he falls a helpless victim.²²

However this encounter with Hildegard does have one truly refreshing, positive aspect - Elyot, for the first time in his restricted life, is moved to engage in passionate contact with the woman. This represents a slight break-through for him, since his strong mother-complex cuts him off from his instinctual life and makes him "faithful to mother" - that is to say, sexuality is stifled because it is felt to defile his spiritual bond with the mother.²³ This scene with Hildegard, enacted on a forest floor at dusk, is depicted by White with a certain distaste, and in a rather tentative, awkward manner - probably because the author himself (as is evident from any one of his works) suffers from a tremendous resistance to bodily passion and sexuality, and seems to sketch in this section of his story almost, as it were, against his will.

But then the inevitable happens - the couple return home and Elyot experiences "the closing of the door" - Hildegard retreats into her room and leaves him dejected:

He listened to the closing of Hildegard's door, listless on its hinges, the sighing of a door. You felt either repudiated or taken for granted, it was difficult to decide which [p.127]

It is by now typical of the mother-image to give Elyot a certain amount of love and then to take it back again - to lead him on, so to speak, and then to withdraw back into herself. This pattern continually constellates itself in his outer experience, and is experienced as if it were a quality of the "world", as if it were in the nature of every woman or maternal object²⁴ to suddenly turn hostile and negative.

And so it is in keeping with this process that Hildegard changes, in Elyot's eyes, from a beautiful, glowing Goddess into a nasty, bitchy woman. Elyot feels that Hildegard "had entered into a different phase" [p.127], which shows how convincingly "external" the projection of psychic contents can appear. Suddenly her physical characteristics, her mannerisms and habits all bear the marks of the terrible mother: now her presence "suffocates" him [p.127]; she seems to "pout" and "look angry" [p.128]; her voice seems "shrill" and "expressionless" [p.130]; her once flowing, golden hair is "scraped up too quickly, stiffly, into the little braids" [p.130]; her smile seems "bitter" [p.131]. It is clear that Elyot is not describing the actual woman - rather he has been blinded by a negative archetypal image and can no longer see the real person behind the projected psychic content. Hildegard attempts to relate to him several times before his return to England but each time he cuts away brutally, simply ignores her, because he is not capable of a human relationship - she has become for him the formidable Terrible Mother, from whom he feels he must flee.

As a result of this sudden reversal of her image he experiences a retrospective wave of regret and guilt about his physical involvement with her:

...he resented even her appearance now. The golden, sealed surface of her face that would blur in a gust of hysteria. There was a falseness in Hildegard that he could not quite bridge. He felt his emotions had been enlisted in an illegitimate cause. So that he held back continually. He tried not to think of the gauche physical encounter in the forest. [p.132]

This wild oscillation from lust and infatuation to guilt and revulsion is, according to Hillman,²⁵ a characteristic phenomenon of the mother complex: a man is driven to a bout of lust, because his instinctual and incestuous drives, living autonomously in the unconscious, have seized control, but then he is overcome by a wave of guilt and bitterness, feels cheated and deceived, resents the woman who "led him astray", and sees his moment of passion as a lapse in his pure state, an assault on his psychological marriage to the mother, which he now tries hard to repair and restore. He is helped in this work of reconstruction by the sudden (and convenient) appearance of a letter from his mother, which effectively renews his bond with her:

He folded the letter. He was somehow, inextricably, an accomplice of his mother's. After all these months, she stood there in the gold dress, that time had tarnished, but that left its mark still upon the stairs, ebbing molten as she mounted. [p.130]

This shows how easily the libido of a mother-bound man is returned to the parental figure, how quickly and readily it detaches itself from Hildegard and reverts back to the image of Catherine Standish. Now his mother is the Golden Goddess, ascending the stairs "ebbing molten as she mounted". Of course, this inner image called "mother" is not his human mother - for she, after all, is the negative, devouring figure who rejected him. No, this inner person is his idealized image of the Good Mother -- derived in part from his early childhood experience of Mrs Standish, and partly from his original experience of the earth-mother of Ard's Bay:

He remembered his mother in the copper-coloured dress, spread out on the winter path so that it touched the spikes of flowers. He remembered the edge of Ard's Bay, where you looked down into pools, into the mouths of anemones. Because there is a kind of connexion between all positive moments. These were ... interchangeable. [p.135]

What makes all positive moments interchangeable is that these spring from and cluster around the archetypal image of the nourishing Good Mother. That this group of memory-images should arise at this point of time is typical of the mother-complex - it attacks a man when his beloved behaves negatively, and reclaims his feelings by casting up an idealized image of "mother". Yet these images do not have a dynamic effect on him. They merely draw him back a little way into the inner world, so that he loses touch with life, but do not relate him creatively to the unconscious:

At times he felt very thin, almost substanceless, in spite of the moments of positive experience that bring conviction. Even these, strung together, pointed to another person. They did not explain the shadow in the glass. [p.135]

Here we see again the terrible aspect of the mother-image: she is a negative temptress who reveals herself in crucial moments and then when he responds to her call, she seems to fade away like a mirage, leaving him stranded, helpless, substanceless. Once more he finds himself living in a wasteland, a world deprived of psychic energy and cut off from the maternal source of life.

IV

In order to protect himself from the irrational forces of the mother-world Elyot seeks refuge within the boundaries of ego-consciousness - he retreats into the secure realm of the rational ego and leads a dull but comfortable existence as a London intellectual:²⁶

Out of his bewilderment he had taken refuge behind what people told him was a scholarly mind. [p.176]

Adopted as a defence, this becomes a habit. Like the intellectual puzzle as a substitute for living, which you chose deliberately [p.174]

His life is no longer characterized by closeness to the maternal-feminine principle, but by resistance to it. He is no longer inclined to seek the positive mother-image in women, because his efforts in this direction proved fatal - he was overwhelmed by the powerful emotions released by

the incest urge. And so, because relationship involves him in such suffering, such utter helplessness, he prefers not to relate or get involved at all rather than run the risk, each time he falls in love, of being carried away by the tidal wave of emotion on which it is borne:

On the whole people bothered him, the effort, the having to commit yourself, and most of all emotionally. He sometimes shuddered now over the episode of Hildegard. Because this was something over which he had no control. His relationship with Hildegard presented a picture of himself jiggling wildly on the end of an invisible rope. [p.149]

His own desire for the mother has become too strong - it is "something over which he had no control" - a consuming passion which threatens the stability of his existence. It is the fear of losing rational control which now characterizes his conscious life and makes him strongly antipathetic to women. Life no longer reaches him, he becomes untouched and untouchable - partly because he does not feel, partly because he feels so much, every response releasing an uncontrollable flood of affect.²⁷

His repression of the feminine side is evident in his way of relating to Connie Tiarks. Connie, a life-long friend of the family, had long been a source of irritation for Elyot - even as a child she had bothered him: "Connie was a girl. She was sent to exasperate him" [p.105]. Now, years later, he continues to project his dark, feminine, emotional side upon Connie and in her presence he feels constantly under attack, as if his own unconscious were about to devour him. One Sunday, "overcome by the incubus of Connie Tiarks" [p.178], he proposes a visit to the Gallery as a means of escape, but instead he finds himself thrown more deeply into her emotionality:

Connie began to gasp in front of Raphael. She made the little, round, gasping, female noises of a woman trying to identify herself with Art.

It's so, it's so *complete*, Connie said helplessly, her eyes already humid under thick glass.

He hoped she would leave it at that. The fervid desire of a certain type of feminine mind to identify itself with objects ... drained the dignity from these. [p.179]

Elyot is further irritated by the way his own face is reflected upon the glass surface of the paintings, for this somehow draws him into the work, and poses a challenge to his reasoned universe:

He avoided the emotional commentary, especially when made by his own reflected face, the part of him that ventured through the glass into the Italian field, out of his own body, away from the environment it had taken, the habits it had formed. This was dangerous because it verged on the irrational. Twentieth-century London was eminently rational. He frowned at his reflexion in the glass, at any recollection of the beech forests of Germany. [p.179]

The reference to the beech forests refers back to his physical encounter with Hildegard and shows how his fear of incest, his fear of being overwhelmed by the unconscious, has permeated his life and makes him fear all things irrational - anything that is obscure, instinctive, ambiguous, and "feminine".

But it becomes increasingly difficult for Elyot to shut himself off from the inner world in this way. The psychic energy dammed up in the unconscious begins to "erupt" in various ways - and these eruptions, because unconscious, are projected outside him as external events. While sitting in the protective world of his bedroom-study he becomes disturbed by the "noises in the street" outside his room:

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]

People walked below with their own submerged thoughts. But you avoided this, in your own life or in the lives of others, wherever this was possible. [p.189]

But it is the emotional element in other people, particularly in Eden and Joe Barnett, which is to have a decisive role in Elyot's own development, for it begins to act, like the work of art with the reflective surface, as a kind of mirror in which he is forced to view his own unknown face.

We have already noted how Eden acted in Elyot's childhood world as a carrier of the maternal-feminine image. In later life she continues to bear

this symbolic role but because Elyot's feminine world has grown alien and hostile as a result of repression and the accumulation of psychic energy Eden too seems to Elyot to have become an excessively emotional, almost explosive figure: "You might say that Eden flickered up, lapsed again into a state of burnt, spent passion ... if you touched Eden you might get burnt" [p.180]. Despite his fear Elyot finds himself, as before, irresistibly attracted to his sister because her passionate, emotional nature evokes something of the positive side of his own incestuous longing. This desire to re-connect with his passionate longing is reinforced when he discovers, in the doorway of Crick's workshop, the intensity of Eden's love for Joe Barnett [pp.201-202].²⁸ Elyot is devastated by this incident, partly because his awareness of the depth of Eden's passion makes him feel desperately isolated and envious of her lover, and partly because he is forced to recognize that he has cut himself off from the possibility of such intensity in his own life:

In his fury he wanted to possess something, make it answerable, because he was so far distant from the other, the faces of Eden and Joe Barnett discovering a reality, finding a substance for which the symbols stood. [p.214]

From this point he becomes increasingly self-critical and suffers from a growing sense of dissatisfaction, an awareness that he is living a dull, sterile existence. He realizes that he has protected himself from relationship and involvement by maintaining a safe distance from life. For many years he has lived inside a kind of protective shell, and he sees the little glass box that stands upon his mantelpiece as a symbol²⁹ of his self-elected containment. This ego-bound world has now become a stifling prison, from which he longs to break free:

The just opaque Bristol box remained on the mantelpiece.... This both irritated and roused, to take it in the hands. Sometimes, in frustration, he could have broken more than the passive elegance of glass, he wanted to press with his hands, rouse an element of fear or surprise, some sign of the spontaneous. [p.293]

But there is still such a deep resistance to psychic transformation that he does not act. He knows, however, that in not acting he is resisting the demands of his inner world and also the challenge of the time:

He shut himself in his room and worked. Outside were the house sounds, the flap of the duster, the rumble of a cistern.... All round you there was pointed evidence of your own anachronistic activity. [p.303]

His psychic energy, we might say, wants him to move in a completely different direction but the resistance of his conscious mind is so strong that it forces him to persevere in his old activity.

Naturally he suffers from an instinctive fear of annihilation, since contact with the inner life and the maternal unconscious will destroy his rigid ego-personality and his old form of existence: "You could feel the waiting. For a cataclysm perhaps" [p.303]. Yet his resistance is still largely reinforced by the archaic fear of incest, by the notion that the personal mother (or sister) holds the key to his inner life and therefore to his psychological wholeness. For him the literal and symbolic levels of rebirth and renewal have yet to be differentiated. The archetype of the Mother is still subsumed by the personal mother, so that contact with the inward image is still not possible.

V

The incest urge, which has been repressed for most of his adult life, has not disappeared altogether but has simply fallen into his unconscious, where it now leads a dark, malignant life of its own. Because it is autonomous it is projected upon the figure of Mrs Standish, who seems to Elyot to be possessed by a consuming passion and to be obsessed by sexuality and lust.³⁰ In this way his own repressed and distorted incest urge confronts him in the guise of a morally decadent, lust-ridden mother. The moral conflict which is rightfully his is transferred onto his mother - she becomes the scapegoat and is accused as though she were the bearer of a perverted sexual longing.³¹

Shortly after Elyot's return from Cambridge this unconscious mechanism begins to take effect - he begins to see his mother as a loathsome figure:

She listened to men, and gave them the impression she enjoyed it, the yawn caught somewhere in her handsome throat. It was a technique taught her by economic necessity. She could be very gracious at a supper table. And afterwards. She would accept a cheque, after protest, in which she never went too far. [pp.137-138]

In Elyot's eyes, his mother seems to have descended to the level of a harlot - but a sophisticated one, the Whore of Ebury Street who receives money from her suitors after a formalized protest. Even here, however, his own desire for the mother is evident beneath the loathing and the resentment. He feels left out and rejected - watching his mother satisfy her own desires while he is forced to stand in the background with his unfulfilled longing:

Elyot was a shadow that fell across the substance of her friends, the men who brought her presents, who filled her drawing-room with conversation and cigar smoke. Elyot standing sideways. His manner was perpetually sideways. Smoothing his hair, she could sense withdrawal. Or they sat in untidy silences. She could feel his disapproval of mentioned names. [pp.138-139]

As time moves on Elyot's unconscious desire becomes more intense and there is a corresponding intensification of his mother's sexuality and lust. From his standpoint it seems as if she had sunk down "into the easy, satisfying coma of the flesh, for which ... her whole temporal being craved" [p.242]. Eventually it seems as if she were about to suffer a "collapse in dignity" [p.279], to be consumed by her own unregenerate desires. Her affair with Wally Collins, the night-club saxophonist, marks the beginning of her disintegration. She becomes known about the Café Vendome and the Soho restaurants as Wally's moll, his "Old Girl" [p.325]. Wally himself (who, significantly enough, is the same age as Elyot Standish) is spellbound by his Old Girl and wonders how a "dame of her class" [p.281] could have fallen in love with him:

Looking at her in the restaurant his mouth drooped open. All the things he'd never had, and wanted, seemed to put themselves in reach in the body of Catherine Standish. He could not possess her too quickly, in case they removed themselves again. [p.282]

It is interesting to note that Wally's desire for Mrs Standish is expressed in terms which are reminiscent of Elyot's childhood feeling toward his mother and which are still appropriate for his unconscious feeling toward her. The emphasis here is on the fact that Wally finds in Mrs Standish "all the things he'd never had, and wanted" - which reminds us of Elyot's childhood predicament - his constant sense of being deprived of mother-love and his equally constant desire to get close to his mother, whom he felt contained everything he wanted. There is even a suggestion here of the mother's dark, ambivalent aspect - her inherent tendency to suddenly withdraw her love and support - and so we find Wally Collins clinging desperately to Mrs Standish, fearful that she might at any moment take away all she has given: "He could not possess her too quickly, in case [all the things he'd never had, and wanted] removed themselves again." This shows that White has unconsciously modelled the character of Wally Collins along the lines of Elyot's infantile desires - Wally, in fact, personifies Elyot's unconscious longing.

During her affair with Wally Collins Mrs Standish suffers a complete emotional and moral breakdown - seemingly consumed by a demonically destructive instinctual force. There is no need for us to discuss the details of her breakdown here - suffice it to say that she never recovers from it, but dies in a state of utter exhaustion. Elyot's last image of her is as a completely spent, wretched creature brought home by Wally Collins in a state of collapse after a wild party at Soho:

You remembered how the head lolled, she just wasn't well,
he said he remembered how the eyes opened, watched the
trailing of a red skirt, the arm brushing the carpet, as if it
had no connexion, or at least sawdust-filled. [p.328]

The malignant force inside her (and that projected upon her by Elyot and White) has unconsciously run its course and has resulted in the complete annihilation of her moral and physical existence.

VI

The death of Mrs Standish brings Elyot a tremendous sense of relief and alters the whole tone of his psychic life. The fear of incest falls away (and with it the fear of being devoured by the unconscious), and all the psychic energy which was bound up in this negative condition is freed and put at the disposal of inner development. Gradually he begins to feel a process of growth taking place and now appears ready to face the mother-image - the unknown in himself - without fear:

...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.

In the morning there would be the funeral. [pp.344-345]

That this process of transformation could take place only after the death of his mother indicates to what extent he was bound to her image and how much he was a slave to the concrete idea of incest. But Elyot's return is a cowardly one: he simply did not have the courage to face the incest problem while his mother was still alive. In a sense the incest problem and the associated mother-fixation are never really resolved -- they are simply by-passed altogether by the eventuality of her death.

There is one thing, however, that still blocks the way of return. This is his incestuous fixation upon his sister Eden. Earlier we noted how, when the mother was absent, the figure of the sister replaced her as an image of the unconscious matrix and the maternal-feminine world. This transference of the mother-image to the sister occurs again at this stage: he is plagued by the suspicion that *she* might contain within her depths the secret treasure of his soul.³²

However, soon after the death of Mrs Standish, Eden decides to go off to Spain to participate in the Civil War and so again the course of events allows Elyot to withdraw the projection of the mother-image and to turn toward the inner world. With his mother and sister gone, Elyot is now in a position to make the "incestuous return" at an inner level - to enact the

sacred union with a *symbol* of the mother. After saying goodbye to Eden at the railway station the symbols of the archetypal mother, lying dormant in the unconscious since childhood, are suddenly re-constellated and point the way to the symbolic return:

Outside the sighing of an anxious piston, there was still the bay, smooth, almost circular, the glistening of red and periwinkle stones. You went down alone. This was a secret expedition. To lie on the back, the sun glistened on the teeth, a hot sinking of the bones. [p.356]

Once more he is connected to the "mother" - to the creative depths of the unconscious and to the maternal-feminine world imaged in the circular bay and the rounded stones. And the little rounded stones of his childhood are "living" and glistening, indicating that the psyche's life-giving capacity, or the nourishing aspect of the mother-image, has been reactivated. It is surprising how suddenly the unconscious acts; how soon after Eden's departure it constellates a new way, putting forward the world of the great mother as an alternative, full of potential "healing" power, to the rigid and limited ego-bound state of his former life. This shows that the overcoming of the fear of incest was all that was required in order to allow the transformative process to come into its own.

This regression³³ back to the objects of his childhood is easily accomplished precisely because his psychic energy has always been attached to the mother-image: he "returns" to where he always was, to where his unconscious libido was originally held. This return has both a negative and a positive aspect. It is positive because a reunion with this source will bring him new life and restore his link with the deep unconscious; it is, however, negative because he is strongly fixated at the level of the mother - there is every possibility that, having returned to her, he will not be able to free himself from her archetypal attraction and return to the upper world of ego-consciousness.³⁴ This means that the return is also a devouring - he is sucked back deeply into the eternal womb of the collective unconscious. There is a suggestion of this in the above-quoted passage: "This was a

secret expedition. To lie on the back, the sun glistened on the teeth, a hot sinking of the bones." Here the emphasis on teeth, bones, and sinking suggests an almost deathly eternality, an experience of the collective unconscious which is overpowering in its intensity. It is a return to the deathly womb of the mother - to a "country of the bones" which is antithetical to the flesh and to human reality. This "terrible" aspect of the earth-mother of Ard's Bay was also apparent in his childhood experience:

...he lay on the shore, and the sound of the water lapped
across his chest, a blaze of sun shone between the bones.
[p.112]

Here again we sense the strongly disintegrative aspect of the great mother's eternality - she makes her son-lover ecstatically related to her, but at the same time she draws him back into her own deathly world: "the water lapped across his chest" suggests drowning in her source,³⁵ and "a blaze of sun shone between the bones" points to the idea of blissful dissolution. Somehow the mother-world within him is too strong - entry into her realm leads to the disintegration of personality.

Elyot is unaware of this aspect of the return - he is conscious only of the ecstasy of merging into the archetypal mother. What he has feared all along - the devouring side of the maternal image - has become a reality, but it is not identical with the "terrible" mother; it now appears in a disguised form, as the seductive-devouring aspect of the "good" mother. It is rather like the tale of Hansel and Gretel, where the kindly witch lures the unknowing and unwary child into a world of sugar-candy and nourishment but then, once he is drawn into this world, the house of candy becomes a prison and the old woman reveals her daemonic aspect as the eater of human flesh. Elyot enters blindly into the world of the archetypal mother, believing that the "terrible" aspect has disappeared with the death of Mrs Standish and that he is now alone to enjoy the wholly good mother and the world of the bay.

From the tone of the prose towards the end of the novel it is evident that White too believes that the negative archetypal constellation has ended. His stubborn projection of the "terrible" side upon the human mother leads

him into a false sense of relief when this figure passes away. But the mother-image in White's fictional world is rather like a hydra-headed monster - when one of its "heads" or projected forms disappears, another more potent one is put forth to replace it. This progressive demonization continues up until the time of *Riders in the Chariot*, when we meet the twin-headed succubus of Mrs Flack and Mrs Jolley. The problem is that the author fails to deal with the monster itself, he fails to realize the inner reality of the negative mother and so is constantly forced to battle with one of her projected forms in the outer world.

The novel closes before Elyot's return is made a reality in terms of his actual life-situation. At the very end White has Elyot taking a bus journey ("It was any bus. He was bound nowhere in particular" [p.358]) into the depths of night, as if to point to his new, spontaneous and "liberated" mode of existence. But because it was "any bus" the reader is not left with a very dynamic view of White, or of his protagonist's "regeneration".³⁶ At the time of writing it is apparent that White had no clear idea as to the nature or outcome of the return - and so Elyot's story is incomplete - the return is stated but as yet unrealized.

Chapter Two

Return to the Terrible Mother

Always he imagines his worst enemy in front of him, yet he carries the enemy within himself - a deadly longing for the abyss, a longing to drown in his own source, to be sucked down to the realm of the Mothers. - Jung¹

"But old Mrs Goodman did die at last". From what we have gathered so far concerning the strength of the terrible mother in White's fictional world it is well that we should doubt the confidence with which her death is announced in this important opening line of *The Aunt's Story* [1948]. Positioned carefully and self-consciously at the beginning of the work this line could be seen as a kind of device - the author's attempt to convince himself as well as his readers that he has finally freed himself from the clutches of this daemonic figure. And Theodora Goodman, the daughter and victim of the terrible mother, believes - with White - that the death of Mrs Goodman has finally delivered her from a life-long phase of maternal enslavement. But this is not the case. The death of old Mrs Goodman (as of Mrs Standish) merely marks the end of the reign of the terrible mother in the outer sphere. In the depths of her being, Theodora Goodman - the fictional "carrier" of White's psychic situation² - is still possessed by this negative maternal archetype. The "terrible mother" simply falls back into her unconscious and becomes the devouring and destroying aspect of her own inner world, enticing her (as it did Elyot) back into the abysmal womb of death, madness, and disintegration.

Before we turn to a detailed study of the novel³ it may be useful to delineate several lines of development within White's archetypal standpoint, which become apparent as we turn from *The Living and the Dead* to *The Aunt's Story*. There is a drastic shift within the mother archetype itself - the two sides (positive/negative) of this ambivalent archetype split apart and

attach themselves to different parental figures. The positive, loving side now hinges exclusively upon the figure of the "father", and the personal mother - previously "dual" in nature - becomes the exclusive carrier of the negative archetypal image.⁴

This change is of course partly brought about by the change in the sex of the protagonist - the movement from a male to a female character - in which case the "incestuous libido" is now transferred onto the father and re-enacted through the father-daughter relationship. But it is more to the point to ask why White should choose a female protagonist in the first place. And to answer this question I suggest we look to the problems arising in the previous novel. What we noted there was the building-up of tremendous pressure within the mother-image itself - her light and dark sides threatening to split apart and become independent entities. We found, in fact, that this process of fragmentation was already under way in the idealization of an all-positive image of nature on the one hand, and the depreciation of woman as the carrier of an all-negative image on the other. And while Mrs Standish maintains her ambivalence to the end it became increasingly difficult for the author to represent her simultaneously as the object of desire and "terrible mother". White longed to convert her into the all-negative mother, but so long as Elyot's incestuous libido was still tied up in her image this was impossible. Thus she maintains, against the author's will as it were, her central ambivalence and her central place. The idealization of nature was not yet sufficiently developed or "charged" enough emotionally to "carry over" the incestuous libido from the personal mother to the archetypal Earth Mother.⁵ How then, could White hasten the "carry-over" and successfully take away the over-powering drive toward incest⁶ from the figure of the personal mother? One answer would be to make his next protagonist female so that all the incestuous libido could flow away from the mother toward the father. This is precisely what happens in *The Aunt's Story*: the father is idealized (along with nature in the image of Meroë, which is called "Father's

Place") and the mother is demonized - she functions, as never before, as an exclusively devouring figure. I am not suggesting that White *consciously* arrived at these conclusions and created a female protagonist for these reasons, but that his creative imagination, sensing that he must withdraw libido from the personal mother, unconsciously directed him to a choice of a female character.⁷

The Aunt's Story, in this light, can be seen as a crucial novel - a kind of bridge upon which the author makes his transition to the new standpoint. Because by the time we get to *The Tree of Man*, his next work after *The Aunt's Story*, the carry-over or transformation of libido from the personal to the archetypal Great Mother is complete. In that novel there is a return of libido to the mother-world; an idealization and adulation of nature as the all-powerful Great Mother.⁸ But without the crucial catalyst of *The Aunt's Story* - which puts the incestuous libido at the image of the father - it is doubtful whether White could have turned the libido back to the mother-world without regressing right back to the personal mother. *The Aunt's Story*, then, facilitates the move to a new, "higher" orientation - it helps the libido flow from the personal to the archetypal mother via (surprisingly enough) the figure of the father. Never again after *The Aunt's Story* does the father represent the "highest value" and object of desire. He is simply *used* here as an alternative to the personal mother - and as soon as the libido is able to be returned once more to the mother-world his importance diminishes in White's fictional world; in fact he virtually disappears altogether.

What we have, then, in the relationship between Theodora and her father, is a kind of masked re-enactment of the mother-son relationship. This functions as an archetypal resonance below and behind the father-daughter relationship. As such it is immediately apparent: Theodora, though a girl, has the psychology and even the physical characteristics of a boy; George Goodman, apparently the father, has the loving, protecting character of a

kind, positive mother. In later life, Theo (a man's name) has a moustache, wears boots and trousers, and even in women's clothes is said to resemble "a bloke in skirts" [p.67].⁹ And even in his negative aspect George Goodman is quite feminine - he never gets angry or aggressive, but merely gets moody. For Theodora he is an ideal maternal figure: he is nurturing whereas "mother" (Mrs Goodman) is scathing, he is supporting and loving whereas "mother" is brutal and devouring. He is everything that "mother" is not. The relationship between Theodora and her father is close and intimate - to the point of being passionate. They go long walks together across the Meroë plains in order to escape the stifling, the hateful atmosphere of Mrs Goodman. For George Goodman is as much subject to the "terrible mother" as Theodora. He too, like Theodora, longs to escape from her dominating presence and murderous domain.

If we can step back from the personalistic frame of the novel for a moment and see the characters as *archetypes*, as psychic figures, then we can understand why "father" should want to flee from the negative clutches of Mrs Goodman. Psychologically, he is not a true Father, equal to the Mother, but, like every father-figure in White, is a *maternal spirit*, the masculine (and "positive") side of the maternal uroboros [Figure 2]. Mythologically George Goodman could be seen as a nature- or tree-spirit (he is constantly associated with trees and natural life) who is still caught up in, and wholly subordinate to, the Great Round of maternal nature.¹⁰ In ancient mythologies the "spirit of nature" was actually portrayed by a male figure - worshipped as a corn- or vegetation-deity in the form of Attis, Adonis, or, in England, as John Barley-Corn. But although the nature-spirit is male he is in no sense independently masculine or individual; he is merely an extension of the Mother, her positive or life-creating side, which she easily takes back into herself. Consequently the vegetation-deities of ancient mythology are the constant victims and mere companions of the Great Mother. They serve her will and do her work and are "sad by nature"¹¹ because they know that they have no life of their own, but only live on and through the Mother. They are slain annually

by the Mother Goddess because, according to the myth, the Mother withdraws her positive, life-creating energies each winter, leaving the world desolate and barren and returning to Hades where, as Persephone, she rules as Queen of the Underworld for the winter period. But then, each spring, she returns triumphantly to the world, and her return is most often represented by the resurrection of Adonis or Attis, who dies in winter only to be reborn anew. And so the maternal spirit of nature is trapped for ever inside this endless Round, this eternal circle. George Goodman is a modern representation of Attis or Adonis.¹² He represents the positive, life-creating forces of nature, but like his mythological counterparts his life too is co-ordinated with nature and subject to the "darkening" of the maternal uroboros as the cycle of nature draws to a close. At the end of his life he is pictured as a pathetic, helpless figure, and as the "autumnal decline" of his life sets in, he can merely look out across the darkening landscape "with a plaid across his shoulders for the cold that had not yet arrived" [p.84],¹³ and await his early death. Like the matriarchal gods of old he dies young but the Mother Goddess lives on. Throughout his entire career his own wife, Julia Goodman, functions as the death-dealing Terrible Mother who has supreme power over her phallic consort and husband. He projects onto her his own dark fate, and the author himself makes it seem - as we shall see - that Mrs Goodman is personally responsible for George Goodman's decline and death. He longs to escape from his wife because she is the mana-charged image of his own unconscious, the dark maternal figure who threatens to overpower and destroy him.

In the previous novel we saw how easily the mother-figure "took back" her own positive aspect whenever she so desired. In the present work this same process reaches mythic proportions - it links up with the Great Round of maternal nature, with the psychological conflict between husband and wife, and finally, and most importantly, with the psychic conflict within Theodora herself, the negative-maternal versus the positive-masculine forces of her own inner world. And in each case the mother proves supreme: she easily

overpowers and destroys the life-creating aspect of the "masculine" world. She is the primal figure, the ruling deity of White's fictional world. Nothing can interrupt her all-powerful (and for the most part, unchallenged) reign of terror.

This supremacy of the mother-world is portrayed most explicitly in the relationship between the two worlds of the novel, the Australian Meroë (Father's Place) and the original Meroë of Abyssinia (the dark world of the primordial mother).¹⁴ For Theodora, the Australian Meroë seems primary, since it is what she knows and experiences in the beginning. She is brought up, initially, under the positive aspect of the Father and the paternal-loving side of the uroboros. But then she discovers, to her horror, that there is another Meroë, whose existence she at first rejects. For her, Father's Meroë seems the primary realm, the *true* Meroë. But the novel makes it clear that Abyssinia is the primary factor, the dominant and original psychic landscape, and that Meroë and the father-world are subordinate to it.

In short, her world - whether Theodora realizes it or not, is matriarchal.¹⁵ Even the paternal, fatherly elements of her psychic world are parts of the larger matriarchal field - positive, or "split-off" aspects of the mother-world.¹⁶ For most of the novel (in fact until the end of Part Two) she believes that she is "father's daughter", the child of the loving, paternal principle. But at the end she is forced to realize that her libido is caught up in the mother-world and that her mission is simply to "return to Abyssinia" - to submit to the dark, maternal archetype which holds sway over her unconscious.

I

In her paradisaal state of early childhood, dominated by the positive side of the uroboros, Theodora Goodman rests ecstatically in the "dawn-state" of early consciousness:

Theodora, lying in her bed, could sense the roses. There was a reflection on the wall that was a rose-red sun coming out of the earth, flushing her face and arms as she stretched ... She lay in the warm bed, remembering sleep, and drifted in the roselight that the garden shed. [p.21]

The full roses and the rose-red sun coming out of the earth are not mandala symbols (as critics have claimed) but are circular symbols of the uroboros, the maternal uroboros, inside which Theodora is contained as a child in the maternal womb [Figure 1]. Everything is bliss and happiness because the ego is not yet differentiated from the primal reality of the maternal unconscious; it is bathed in "roselight" - that is, in the splendour and pleromatic feeling¹⁷ of the circular uroboros. This, for White, is the ultimate state of being, that early state of childhood paradise where the nascent ego-personality is still blissfully contained in the fullness of the mother.¹⁸ The most important image in this section of the novel is of Theodora as an ego-germ inside an uroboric totality which is ruled over by "father":

Altogether this was an epoch of roselight. Morning was bigger than the afternoon, and round, and veined like the skin inside an unhatched egg, in which she curled safe still, but smiling for them to wake her, to touch her cheek with a finger and say: I believe Theodora is asleep. Then she would scream: I am not, I am not, and throw open her eyes to see who. Usually it was Father. [p.22]

Here the embryonic and still undeveloped germ of ego-consciousness slumbers in the perfect round and awakens. And the "father" - the attendant at her awakening - represents the life-creating, positive side of the uroboric situation. He is the guardian of sleep and also the promise of growth and of upward movement toward the light. He fulfils, that is to say, the positive maternal function, the life-supporting and guiding figure who operates *within the great round* to the benefit of the developing ego-consciousness. All through this early section he stands over Theodora's childhood with a loving, nurturing character. And Theodora herself demonstrates a wealth of love and affection for her adoring father, who becomes the central figure of her

world, the dominant feature of her childhood landscape. Surprisingly enough, little mention is made of the mother, who is a background figure in these early days. It is George Goodman himself who fulfils the positive maternal aspect, as well as the fatherly role. As a small child Theodora writes a brief essay about "Our Place", where it is clear that she associates Meroë with Father, and where she is herself identified with him:

At Our Place, wrote Theodora Goodman on a blank page, there is an old apricot tree which does not have fruit, and here the cows stand when it is hot, before they are milked, or underneath the pear trees in the old orchard where the cottage has tumbled down. I see all these things when I ride about Our Place, with my Father. Our Place is a decent size, not so big as Parrotts' or Trevelyans', but my Father says big enough for peace of mind. [p.24]

It is clear that "Our Place" is a private world of herself and her father, and that it excludes the figure of the mother. Everything, for a while, is an idyllic paradise - herself and Father and Meroë - all "one" in an undying unity.

But then this paradisaal situation is destroyed. It happens slowly at first, but eventually Theodora is forced to see that "Father" is not what she imagines him to be, but is a weak, ineffectual, and failing man. At first there are small indications - not enough to seriously destroy his image, but enough to begin to undermine it. Firstly, Gertie Stepper complains about her father's unmanliness, and suggests that he spends too much time sitting in his room and mooning over "books". And Theodora senses, from the tone of Gertie's voice, that Father's "books" merely symbolize his retreat from life, and that it was "sad and incurable, almost ... an illness, what Father did with books" [p.22]. And then Theodora herself begins to sense that her father is not the guiding and supporting figure she had imagined him to be. During one of their long walks across the Meroë plains George Goodman took her by the hand, as if he were "about to lead you somewhere", only Theodora could sense "inside the hand, that you were guiding Father" [p.22]. She also notices that he

"sighed a lot" [p.21] and that amid the pines beside his window (with which he is constantly associated) there was "a stirring and murmuring and brooding and vague discontent" [p.21]. All is not well with Father. He has a tragic flaw, a certain hollowness which belies Theodora's idealized image. This becomes further apparent to Theodora when she comes into contact, for the first time, with the objective observer, the "detached eye":

'Meroë?' said Mr. Parrott. 'Rack-an'-Ruin Hollow.'
 Which Theodora heard. She was waiting for Father,
 in town, under the long balcony of the Imperial Hotel
 'All this gadding off to foreign places,' said Mr. Parrott.
 'Sellin' off a paddock here and a paddock there. George
 Goodman has no sense of responsibility to his own land.'
 This was awful. It made your stomach sick, to hear of
 Father, this, that you could not quite understand, but it
 was bad enough. [p.25].

And on the way back from the Imperial Hotel she felt

oppressed by a weight of sadness that nobody would lift,
 because nobody would ever know that she was shouldering
 it. Least of all Father, who was thick and mysterious as
 a tree, but also hollow, by judgement of the men beneath
 the balcony. [p.25]

At this point Theodora "linked together" the judgement of the men with the "remarks that Gertie Stepper made" [p.26]. She is forced to realize that in the eyes of other people her father is a failure as a farmer and as a practical man. But these are merely the external manifestations of a central inner weakness. For in the depths of his being George Goodman is held fast by the maternal unconscious - he suffers from a regressive tie to the mother-world and has a failing and ineffectual masculine ego.

As Theodora travels home with her father from the hotel she asks herself why he would want to sell off bits of Meroë and so destroy his reputation as a farmer and diminish the size of his own property. And here we get - in a memory-sequence which unfolds in Theodora's mind - the first glimpse into his inner situation and to the role played by the "mother" in his psychological and material decline:

'I refuse to vegetate,' said Mrs Goodman. 'Let us go somewhere. Before we die.'

Her voice struck the dining-room door ...

'It's reckless, Julia,' Father said.

'Then let us be reckless,' said Mother, and, on the other side of the dining-room door, she must have tightened her mouth.

'Let us be reckless,' she said. 'And die. We can sell a paddock. Let us go to the Indies.'

Mother's voice burned the quiet air. It was stifling as an afternoon of fire. [p.26]

Here we see how part of his decline is attributed to Mrs Goodman, who continually pestered him about "living it up" and "going overseas". And Father's protestations are in vain - they are easily countered by the mother's supreme wit and conniving attitude. In this way we begin to see how "mother" begins to overwhelm Meroë and the father-world - which actually decreases in size as a result of her demands.

We must also realize that the above passage is a memory-sequence from Theodora's mind. In this light we see much being projected upon "mother" as a figure of fantasy, a creature of Theodora's imagination. Her voice *burned* the quiet air and was as stifling as an afternoon of *fire*. This is the first association between "mother" and "fire" - an archetypal association which is crucial to the structure of the novel, particularly to the "Jardin Exotique" section. The fact that mother's voice is both *fiery* and *stifling* is significant because here we begin to sense something of her dragon-nature, her almost mythological and daemonic power. Psychologically she is here making her first appearance as the formidable "terrible mother", the dark maternal figure who represents the chaotic side of the uroboric situation of early childhood. The child's world is often filled with dragon-figures, witches and dark, regressive forces. This is because the ego-personality is relatively weak and the "mother" (the psychic background) strong and all-powerful. The constellation of the fiery dragon suggests that the ego is in constant threat of being devoured by a demonized unconscious background. Here the mother's voice is *stifling* because in the uroboric situation, where the young ego is still held in the maternal womb or matrix, it is actually deprived of space and

independent reality - the mother's presence is strong and suffocating, and the ego struggles for "breath", as though it were actually trapped inside an airless container, an unhatched egg.¹⁹ And so this "mother" is an actively devouring figure, who deprives the father-world of its territory (i.e. its ego-ground and reality) and who destroys the "air" and atmosphere with her fiery breath.

Because this is an unconscious process within Theodora herself it is experienced in projection as something "mother" is doing to "father". And in actual fact mother *is* doing this to father. So here we discern three levels of meaning relating to this incident of "mother" taking land from "father": as mundane fact, as George Goodman's inner situation, and as Theodora's inner situation.²⁰ The first is hardly significant, a minor event in a complicated novel; but the second is a little more significant in pointing to the gradual undermining of the father by the mother-world. The third, however, is crucial: a determining psychic experience in the life of the major character.

Thus we can read this event psychologically and it takes on colour, depth, dimension - a seemingly mundane event is seen as a meaningful psychic experience. This is how I believe one ought to read *The Aunt's Story*. Every external act, incident, event as a symbolic expression of an "inner" or psychic experience. My method is simply to "dream the image onward", to translate the narrative into archetypal sequences and to introject the action of the novel onto the inner place. I must emphasize that this does not lead to a false representation of the story, but rather complements and carries forward the psychic movement already discernible within the novel.

At the end of the instanced sequence we find Father conceding defeat and giving in to the mother's demands:

Father laughed. 'I suppose we can sell Long Acre,'
he said. 'Old Trevelyan's willing to buy.'
Then they were both silent, as if consumed by Mother's
fire.

'The Indies,' Mother breathed. [p.26]

And to conclude this memory-sequence the author adds: "That was Long Acre". In other words, that was the story about why "father" is losing his land and why he should be losing his reputation as a farmer and as a practical man. More importantly, at an inner level, we have seen the symbolic process by which George Goodman as a man and human being is being undermined and reduced by the "terrible mother". He foregoes his "land" and in this way is *consumed by Mother's fire*; that is, he is devoured by the maternal world.

It is about this time, with his strength and masculinity rapidly declining, that George Goodman tells Theodora about the existence of the Second Meroë and of the dark mother-world which has him in thrall. As well as describing the charcoal, fire-ridden landscape of his imaginary "Abyssinia" he tells Theodora the mythological tale of the trochilus and the crocodile:

He told you something funny. It was the bird that sat in the crocodile's throat. Fanning his larynx, Father said. Herodotus wrote this in a book. It was both funny and strange. And the crocodile lay in a river called the Nile, which flowed not far from Meroë. [p.23]

Nothing more is made of this story, and critics have generally overlooked it.²¹ But from a mythological perspective it is of crucial significance to the structure of the novel as a whole. In fact, if I were to identify one image which stands out above all the others in this visionary book it would be this one. No other image presents the archetypal situation of the work as colourfully and as succinctly as the image of the trochilus caught up inside the mouth of the crocodile.²² In mythology, and in the realm of symbolism generally - the bird is a symbol of the winged spirit, the masculine ego-consciousness or *pneuma* which attempts to soar above the earth and take leave of the maternal unconscious. The crocodile is the beast of the lower-world, the reptilian monster which lives in swamps and could be said to represent the devouring, chthonic world of maternal nature.²³ And here, in the present image, the bird of the air is caught

up in the devouring jaws of the Meroe-dragon [c.f. Figure 3]. And this is precisely where the masculine spirit is in White's fictional world - caught up in the lower-world of chthonic nature and overpowered by the terrible mother. All carriers of the masculine principle - whether George Goodman, Theodora, or later Sokolnikov - are ineffectual and earth-bound, are trapped helplessly inside the mother-world and unable to break free. Like the young and all too innocent trochilus White's fictional *spirit* is attracted to the mother-world by the prospect of "nourishment", but it does not see that it has fallen into a trap, and is actually living inside the dragon-jaws of a monster.²⁴ And like the trochilus it is wholly dependent on the dragon-mother's "mercy" - it lives only to the extent that the dragon-mother prolongs the inevitable moment, when it will snap its jaws and devour its helpless victim.

The unfortunate truth is that George Goodman is a "fallen" spirit, a frail trochilus trapped inside the devouring maw of the Meroë-dragon. Although obviously fascinated by this story which he communicates to Theodora, he does not realize its symbolic importance for his own life. Nor does Theodora realize its importance for her life, or for her father's. For her, the story is "funny" and "strange"; that is, it has a certain archetypal resonance, a peculiar attraction, but she fails to penetrate its meaning.

More striking for Theodora, however, is the mere *fact* of the existence of a Second Meroë, where this strange mythological tale is set. She senses immediately that the existence of a Second Meroë is a threat to her own world, almost in the sense that the crocodile-monster represents a threat to the frail and helpless trochilus. Significantly enough, the landscape of Abyssinia is described in terms which call to mind the previous description of her own mother. It is a place which has once "flowed fire" and it is said to be a "dead place" with "suffocating cinder breath" [p.24]. Fire and suffocation: these are the two terms which were associated

with the terrible Mrs Goodman. And in a sense the Second Meroë is the "mother" of the Australian Meroë - a primal, archaic place which has a certain precedence and natural supremacy over its derivative counterpart. In this work we have to recognize "Abyssinia" and "Mother" as symbolic quantities, archetypal realities which are virtually interchangeable in Theodora's mind, as in the mind of the author. Furthermore, we have to recognize the dominance of the sequence "mother - chthonic nature - fire - Abyssinia" over the sequence "father - spiritual nature - Meroë".

The recognition of the reality of Abyssinia is for Theodora the recognition of the dark side of the uroboric situation and the acceptance of the negative aspect of her own psychological world.²⁵ Thus, while at first she "wanted to escape from this dead place with the suffocating cinder breath" she gradually begins to accept the negative side of her situation, reflected in her new response to the landscape at Meroë:

She looked with caution at the yellow face of the house, at the white shells in its placid, pocked stone. Even in sunlight the hills surrounding Meroë were black. Her own shadow was rather a suspicious rag. So that from what she saw and sensed, the legendary landscape became a fact, and she could not break loose from an expanding terror. [p.24]

She is, we might say, more "conscious" than her father. He is fascinated by the idea of the Second Meroë, but he cannot see its terror. Nor does he fully realize the negative side of his marital situation, or the fatal way in which the mother-world is undermining his position. The burden of his psychic situation is largely carried by Theodora herself. She has a better instinct, a more emotional response to the negative polarity which is now rising up into her reality, filling the landscape of Meroë with darkness and "suspicious" shadows. The whole tone of her life now changes: the negative is on the increase, the "father" on the decrease, as the uroboros or great round rolls on and turns up its dark, negative side. No longer is "Our Place" a private world of herself and her father. It now becomes mother's-world: Mrs Goodman is increasing in strength and power as surely as the dark landscape of Abyssinia is now looming into view.

From a psychological point of view we must realize that Theodora's childhood paradise is coming to an end because she is growing up and developing an ego-consciousness which is distinct from the uroboros and the maternal unconscious. When she had no ego-consciousness (but was a mere germ inside an "unhatched egg") the world was paradise, and everything was bathed in roselight.²⁶ But now that she is acquiring a separate and individual self the maternal unconscious becomes something alien and "Wholly Other". It threatens to destroy and overpower her, to take her back into its deathly womb. And so what was once perfection and contentment becomes darkness and night: "the roselight hardened and blackened" [p.27]. In contrast to her early days we now find Theodora walking in a "garden of dead roses" [p.28]. The dark, malignant aspect of the uroboros (or rose) is suddenly made apparent. Erich Neumann puts it this way:

During the phase when consciousness begins to turn into self-consciousness, that is, to recognize and discriminate itself as a separate individual ego, the maternal uroboros overshadows it like a dark and tragic fate. Feelings of transitoriness and mortality, impotence and isolation, now colour the ego's picture of the uroboros, in absolute contrast to the original situation of contentment.²⁷

She has lost her original paradise precisely because she is beginning to come to herself, to acquire self-definition and individuality. She is no longer "at one" with the maternal round, but is beginning to differentiate herself from it.²⁸ Her desire now is for consciousness and knowledge: "'I would like to know,' said Theodora, 'I would like to know everything'" [p.39]. But the "mother" - representing the natural inertia of the psyche - would contradict this impulse toward consciousness and draw her back into the womb of darkness and night. And for this reason her own "mother" is suddenly constellated in a wholly negative light. She becomes the great adversary, the dark figure who undermines and opposes everything Theodora does or represents:

'No, no, Theodora,' crackled Mother. 'Not that way. Where is your feeling? ... Here, give it to me.' ...

She took possession of the piano, she possessed Chopin, they were hers while she wanted them, until she was ready to put them down. [p.28]

And again:

Once there were the new dresses that were put on for Mother's sake.

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

Because Fanny was as pink and white as roses in the new dress.

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

These are but two examples of many instances where we find "mother" intent on destroying and undermining Theodora's every attempt at consciousness and life. No matter what she does, or where she turns, "mother" is there to tell her that it doesn't fit, look right, or that she can do it better. In this way the negative maternal figure invades the field of the conscious personality, robs it of its direction, its incentive, and renders it ineffectual. This is what the "mother" is doing on the inner place - attempting to reduce the libido of the conscious personality and turn everything inward, back toward herself.

In order to combat the negative influence of the mother-world Theodora tries desperately to cling to her identification with her father. She turns again to him for guidance and support, and emulates his every action so that she might merge with his "positive" image:

From the rise ... Father would aim at a rabbit scut.
Theodora aimed too. She was everything in imitation,
and because of this the importance of what she did was
intense. [p.32]

However once more she is confronted with the terrifying prospect of her father's innate weakness as a human being. This time she is made aware of his weakness not by way of a "battering" executed by the external mother but by an inward psychological attack. George Goodman is made to undermine himself, the negative inner figure reducing him, and his masculine activity, in a bout of self-criticism:

'Perhaps after all pretty futile,' Father once said, breaking open his gun over the carcass of a rabbit.

The voice did not immediately convey. She had bent to touch the body of the still-warm rabbit ...

Then Father's voice bore in. 'A pretty kind of idiocy,' it said. 'A man goes walking with a gun, and presents his vanity with the dead body of a rabbit.'

After the moment of exaltation, and the warm shining fur, she was puzzled, and it hurt. [p.33]

It becomes increasingly obvious to Theodora that her father does not embody the truly masculine-spiritual image which she would like to discover in him. He does not represent a viable bulwark against the mother-world because he is himself a victim of that world. After this incident we are told that "Theodora sometimes walked in the paddocks alone" [p.33], because she now finds her father's presence an acute embarrassment and of doubtful support in her own psychological quest.

As if to give awesome, almost "cosmic" dimension to the loss or decline of the masculine principle at Meroë the big oak tree at the front of the house is struck by lightning on Theodora's twelfth birthday. The tree, as we have already seen, is a recurrent symbol of the masculine spirit - whatever happens to the tree (strong and phallic like the spirit)²⁹ also happens to the masculine principle. The fact that it is destroyed by lightning is significant because "fire" and "elemental power" have already been attributed to the world of the terrible mother. Symbolically, the bolt of lightning is "mother's power" which has struck down the phallic masculine principle. (Later we read: "Mother was more terrible than [the] lightning that had struck the tree" [p.42].) And the fact that Theodora herself is "thrown to the ground" by the lightning relates this external event more directly to herself. She is almost destroyed by the same elemental force which destroys the masculine factor. But this is not yet her crisis: she "picked herself up and gave a rather pale laugh, because naturally she had been frightened, and went to look at a calf that had just been born" [p.40]. She survives this disaster to face another "trial by fire" at the end of Part Two, where she is finally consumed by the dragon-flames of the mother-world.

But one other thing happens on the day of her twelfth birthday - there is the visit of the Man who was Given his Dinner. This man, a one-time gold-pro prospector and friend of George Goodman, reminds Theodora very much of her own father. However one thing separates the Man from her father - unlike George Goodman, he is not tied down to a negative, all-devouring wife, but is free to roam the countryside as an independent spirit. Symbolically, the Man is a "liberated" masculine spirit which is not held fast to the terrible mother. Needless to say, Theodora falls into a state of complete identification with the Man - for he would seem to represent the possibility of a "spiritual" life lived outside the bounds of the regressive unconscious. The Man, then, arrives at an opportune time because we have already seen how her own father has failed her as a father-figure. We are told that "he had a beard, like a prophet, greyer than Father's, thick and big" [p.40]. In Theodora's imagination he is a truly positive figure, *better*, more *spiritual* than her father. This strange visitor (who remains unnamed) has profound intuitive powers and his very presence enables Theodora to sense the symbolic connection between the fallen tree at Meroë and the fallen state (or spiritual decline) of her own father:

'You had a bit of a storm. That's a bad bit of business.'
He pointed to the tree.

'That is an act of God,' said Theodora. 'I was three hundred yards away, but I survived.'

'It is sometimes like that,' the man said.

And now Theodora decided to sit down, because something warm and close had been established with the man.

'Perhaps they will ask you to stay to dinner,' she mused, almost as if she did not belong.

'I dunno,' said the man. 'Sometimes it's different when they settle down.'

He sounded melancholy. And suddenly the lightning trembled in Theodora, that she had not felt, the lightning that had struck the oak.

'What's up?' the man asked.

'Nothing,' said Theodora.

But she continued to tremble. [p.41]

The man's seemingly innocuous references to the tree and to her father ('It is sometimes like that'; and 'Sometimes it's different when they

settle down') strikes a highly emotional chord in Theodora's psyche. A sudden sense of doom and depression strikes at her consciousness - *the lightning that she had not felt*, because this is the inner, psychological experience of that earlier event. More strongly than ever, Theodora is made to sense the inadequacy and spiritual failure of her father. The man's statement - "it's different when they settle down" - implies that the spiritual life is easily given up, the demands of the spirit easily neglected when an individual decides to settle down and become involved in the daily round of ordinary life.³⁰ And Theodora knows that "mother" is responsible for the downward drag of her father's spirit, its imprisonment in mundane affairs, family life, and banal reality. "Mother" is synonymous with settling *down*, with the gravitational force that subdues and overpowers the flight of the winged spirit. This is made apparent in the following crucial scene, where Theodora encounters - in the kitchen of her parents' house - her mother's fearsome, father-destroying power as she sets about to destroy her husband's integrity and character over his request to invite his old friend to dinner:

'You are a romantic, George,' Mother was saying. '*Romantic and ridiculous*, they both begin with r.'

'It's a pity,' said Father in a tight way, 'that you never realized this before.'

'As if I didn't,' said Mother. 'As if I didn't! I very quickly learned to spell. But, of course, I am tarred a little with the same brush.'

Then she looked at him and laughed, as if it were the least funny thing that had ever happened.

'Julia,' Father said quickly.

He could not quite find what he wanted to say. He took a step forward. You felt that he would have gone farther if it had been anyone else but Mother.

Mother sat on the sofa. She twisted her rings round. She rolled her hands in a tight ball and said, 'It is no use, George. I refuse to sit down to table with every tramp that comes along. I will not. I will not.'

Then you knew that Mother had won, in spite of Father breathing hard. It was terrible, the strength of Mother. All your own weakness came flowing back. Mother was more terrible than lightning [*sic*] that had struck the tree. [p.42]

This is an extremely significant passage. It highlights the strength of the terrible mother as never before. George Goodman, we feel, is unable to hold his own against the tremendous power of Julia Goodman. In fact,

the mother seems to have an uncanny ability to sap his strength, to render him ineffectual - "he would have gone farther", we are told, "if it had been anyone else but Mother". And then: "It was terrible, the strength of Mother. All your own weakness came flowing back".³¹ This shows that psychologically and spiritually the terrible mother has castrated George Goodman. He has so little power in his own house that he cannot even extend friendship and hospitality to his old friend and newly arrived visitor. In this way the "mother" succeeds in reducing the claims of the masculine spirit - both in terms of the father's desire for spiritual companionship and in terms of the wandering prospector's desire for food. That the mother should refuse food or "nourishment" to the wandering spiritual figure is interesting for this highlights the psychological or symbolic dimension: the negative mother's unwillingness to support or nourish the consciousness- or light-creating masculine factor. But although Mrs Goodman refuses to allow the man to eat with them at the dinner table Theodora - always on the side of the masculine principle - suggests that the man might be given his dinner on the veranda at the side of the house. Mrs Goodman concedes this, but she makes it clear that she will not have anything to do with the serving-up of the meal. And George Goodman, wheezing heavily and with all the signs of moral defeat, turns away from the mother and retorts: "'Let Gertie hand it through the spare-room window. To the leper!'" [p.45].

And so the man is given his dinner on the veranda, and this allows Theodora a brief opportunity to tell the man of her own spiritual quest and to receive warmth and support from a truly positive figure. But George Goodman does not make an appearance or even attempt to communicate with his old mate. He is so reduced and embarrassed by the whole affair that he prefers to slink off into the background. The mother's destructive influence is so strong that it causes him to betray his own kind; he is no longer able to affirm his connection with the masculine spirit. And despite the man's affections for Theodora he sets about to leave Meroë

as soon as he has finished his dinner. Theodora and Fanny walk with him part of the way along the track that leads out of the property, and Fanny naively asks the man whether he will return to visit them again. "'I'm inclined to say I'd eat my hat'", says the exiled visitor and rejected friend, "'but perhaps for your sakes, perhaps'" [p.45]. But Theodora, more sensitive than the superficial Fanny, knows that he will not return:

... she knew already that he would not come. In all that she did not know there was this certainty. She began to feel that knowing this might be the answer to many of the mysteries. And she felt afraid for what was prepared. The magpies sang cold in the warm air of Meroë. [p.46]

He will not come because, she realizes, the atmosphere at Meroë is hostile to him, and he will not want to face the same ordeal again. And this is a deep archetypal realization for Theodora: the wandering spirit has been exiled from her psychological landscape, driven out by the fearsome terrible mother. This fact was of such crucial importance that she sensed that "knowing this" might be "the answer to many of the mysteries". "And", we are told, "she felt afraid for what was prepared". She felt afraid because insofar as the man is identical with her own masculine spirit she senses that her spiritual side will suffer the same fate and be cast out and reduced by the negative mother. The "mother" has already overpowered her own father and now has exiled the wandering spiritual figure: the pattern has been set, and she, a carrier of the same masculine factor, is darkly aware of her own part in the tragic pattern. The magpies add a final note to the tone of despair. They might be seen as images of the winged spirit; their song is cold and ominous because there is a sudden foreknowledge at Meroë, or rather within Theodora herself, that the quest of the spirit is foredoomed, that its flight will be subdued.

This sequence of events ends Chapter Two of the Meroë section of the novel. In the next chapter we find Theodora as an older girl at Spofforths' boarding school, quite some distance from Meroë and her place of origin.

Psychologically she is now "distant" from her original state of childhood paradise, which was identified with "Meroë". She is now thrust out of the positive matrix of early youth and finds herself in a seemingly hostile world, with the prospect of a difficult life before her. She must leave behind the "golden days" of youth and learn to accept the sufferings of life and the painful trials of boarding school. Indeed, part of the philosophical *intention* of schooling is to separate the child (sometimes delicately, sometimes brutally) from its state of blissful unconsciousness and to bring it into "reality", into the human world of tension, conflict, and ego-consciousness. But for Theodora, unable to affirm a life of creative tension, school is "hell", a world of rigidity and horror against which she pits her childhood condition of paradisaal harmony:

Life very soon became a ringing of bells, unlike the silent drowsing days at Meroë, where time just slid along the yellow stone, rested, slid, with the lizards and the sun. Because nothing ever happened at Meroë, you could watch the passage of time, devote a whole morning to the falling of a rose. But at Spofforths' time jerked and jangled ... The hours were Music and Sewing and Geography and French. Only at evening, time would ease up; the bell was still, and you could hear an apple thump the earth somewhere in the long grass at the back. Then the world would begin to revolve again, like the great sphere that it is ... [p.49]

At Meroë everything was still in the "now and forever" of eternal being; time had not yet been created. But at school life is ruled by the clanging of bells - i.e. the day is broken up into fragments of time. For Theodora this represents a "fall" from the unborn state of eternal being, a corruption of an earlier paradisaal state. And here we detect, for the first time, the crucial weakness in her character, and the destructive part played by an "uroboric" or "pleromatic" fixation. For in desiring unconsciousness, in preferring eternity to time, Theodora is preferring the "mother" (or the source) to life, reality, and consciousness. We might say that her memory of uroboric paradise is too strong, or too near, so that it endangers her connection with the real world. Beside the great whirling wheel of the maternal uroboros, a world of sun, stone, and eternity, life seems of relatively little value. She would rather

sink back into this psychological landscape than face the trials of boarding school and human reality. This is how the "mother" undermines her personality from within, making it impossible for her to establish a real adaptation to life and to ego-consciousness.

Prior to the destruction of the "tree" and the Meroë-spirit we found Theodora concerned with life and wanting consciousness: "'I would like to know,' said Theodora, 'I would like to know everything'" [p.39]. But now she does not want to *know*. In school her one desire is to get back again to the unconscious condition of childhood. And at the close of her years at boarding school Theodora is asked by the headmistress whether she has thought about the future, about what she might do with her life. Other girls - including her friend Violet Adams - are making preparations for life, work, or marriage, but Theodora has only one desire: to return home, to go back to Meroë. Rather than go forward into life Theodora opts to return to the psychic past, in the hope of recovering the lost reality of childhood. This, as I have suggested, is an indication that she is inwardly possessed by the "negative mother", an archetypal world which prevents her from extending her consciousness or entering into human reality. But Theodora does not see this. She sees only the pleasurable side of the backward-striving movement - for her it is a way of merging again into the blissful state of paradise. In this way the "mother" seduces the masculine spirit from its task of human consciousness, inviting it to extinguish itself in the source-situation.

The first real indication of this negative inward possession is found in the incident of the shooting of the little hawk. As a girl Theodora had adored the sparrow-hawks that had flown across the Meroë plains, for these were images of her own aspiring spirit - soaring through the air with an intensity and a direction which filled her with the promise of her own spiritual flight. But now, in late adolescence, we find her in pursuit of the winged spirit, intent on destroying the very thing which had once symbolized her highest value:

Theodora had begun to laugh. She knew with some fear and pleasure that she had lost control. This, she said, is the red eye. And her vision tore at the air

Now she took her gun. She took aim, and it was like aiming at her own red eye. She could feel the blood-beat the other side of the membrane. And she fired. And it fell. It was an old broken umbrella tumbling off a shoulder.

'There,' laughed Theodora, 'it is done.'

... She felt exhausted, but there was no longer any pain. She was as negative as air ... I was wrong, she said, but I shall continue to destroy myself, right down to the last of my several lives. [p.70-71]

Here we find her as "negative as air": yet there is excitement to be had from her own violence, ecstasy in dissolution, and delight in her capacity to destroy. She knew "with some fear *and pleasure* that she had lost control". This points to an unconscious identification with her mother's power and destructiveness - a certain delight in killing and destroying the masculine winged spirit. Even as she takes aim she is aware that she is destroying an integral part of herself, but the claims of the "negative mother" (and the lust for destruction) are far stronger than the claims of the spirit. She is partly aware that the killing of the little hawk was wrong, but she is possessed by a destructive power over which she has no control. And so we read: "In a sense she had succeeded, but at the same time she had failed" [p.71]. That is, the dark maternal impulse in her had succeeded - she had moved one step forward to self-dissolution; but the masculine spirit had been defeated and its winged carrier in the external world savagely destroyed.

It is significant that her own father - once her constant companion over the Meroë plains - is absent on this occasion of the shooting of the little hawk. It is as if, without a viable father-figure to guide and support her, she falls prey to the negative maternal archetype. Or, more precisely: when the father is absent, the spirit becomes dark and uroboric, intent on destroying its own flight.

But this inward destructive tendency is still projected outside herself upon her actual mother. *She* is experienced as the devouring creature, the dark force that undermines and destroys. In Theodora's

psychic world the role of the negative mother is paramount and central, as we can see from this fantasy-image relating to the "mother's" attack upon the sleeping "father":

And if Julia Goodman took a knife and turned it in her husband's side to watch the expression on his face and scent the warm blood that flowed, George Goodman stirred in his sleep and changed position, to another dream, of mortgages, perhaps, or drought, or fire. [p.69]

This is an excellent image of the process taking place in her own psyche: "mother" turns to "father" and, lamia-like, proceeds to suck away his blood. Symbolically, this shows that an inner daemonic figure is taking away the "blood" (i.e. the vitality and life) of her father-personality. But of course this is also taking place in "reality" as well, as an actual conflict between mother and father. It is interesting that George Goodman should be sleeping and dreaming in this fantasy-image: this shows that the "mother" attacks him from his unconscious side, where he is unable to offer any resistance. She is the supreme figure who robs him of his life-blood for the sake of her own pleasure, while he is "asleep" and entirely at the mercy of this daemonic figure.

Soon after this George Goodman dies. He is completely exhausted as a psychological being: the "mother" has drained him of his energy and his will to live. Just prior to his death Meroë experiences a dry, harsh, drought-ridden summer, which seems to symbolize the destructive-devouring side of the elemental cycle within which George Goodman is co-ordinated as a dying spirit of nature. At this point Meroë appears as a dried-out hollow where the spirit of life is absent:

The hills were burnt yellow. This yellow scurf lay on the black skin of the hills, which had worn into black pockmarks ... And now the trees were more than ever like white bones. [p.84]

In this charred, dying landscape sits the ailing George Goodman who laments about his cruel fate at the hands of the all-powerful mother-woman:

'Theodora,' he said, 'in the end I never saw Greece, because your mother would not come. She said it was a primitive country, full of bugs and damp sheets and dysentery.' [p.84]

Here the "mother" is used once more as a personification of the terrible,

devouring side of the unconscious, which cuts short the journeying of the masculine spirit - he does not reach "Greece", his mythological Ithaca and spiritual goal, because "mother" would not allow it. The text continues:

Father's voice complaining was the voice of an old man, ... an old man complaining in a Greek play. And she felt sad. She was sad for Meroë. Because it was coming to an end. The play would finish, after the blaze of gold.

Soon, in fact, the house was full of the smell of dead chrysanthemums, which are more than dead flowers, they are the smell of death. [p.84]

When psychic existence is ruled by the maternal uroboros life takes place within this tragic frame: it rises quickly in a sudden upward flourish, but then, "after the blaze of gold" it is soon taken back into the deathly womb of the mother. For this reason the matriarchal deities of ancient religions were often symbolized by flowers, because like flowers they flourish quickly but just as quickly fall into decay.³² Theodora's life takes place within this brief, flower-like pattern: in the beginning she was bathed in the pleromatic splendour of roses and awakened to life by a positive maternal father, but now she is subdued by the deathly side of nature and finds herself surrounded by dead chrysanthemums, dead trees, and a dying father.

As George Goodman is about to die Theodora rushes quickly to his bed-side and tries to persuade him to continue with the task of life:

She streamed out beside him on the carpet, kneeling, touching his knees. Her breath was hoarse. 'No,' she said. 'Not yet, Father. No.' [p.85]

But George Goodman, the dying tree- or nature-spirit, knows very well that the life has gone out of him, that he must now surrender to death:

His voice was as pale as the grey light that now sucked and whispered at the pines.

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

'In the end,' his voice said, out of the pines, 'I did not see it.' [p.85]

After his death, which occurs in the grey light of early morning, Theodora feels as if her own personality were being consumed by the same

uncanny darkness that has suddenly overwhelmed George Goodman and his native Meroë:

She walked out through the passages, through the sleep of other people. She was thin as grey light, as if she had just died. She would not wake the others. It was still too terrible to tell, too private an experience. As if she were to go into the room and say: Mother, I am dead, I am dead, Meroë has crumbled. So she went outside where the grey light was as thin as water and Meroë had in fact, dissolved. Cocks were crowing the legend of the day, but only the legend. Meroë was grey water, grey ash. Then Theodora Goodman cried. [p.85]

Adonis is dead: the positive energies of the Great Mother have been withdrawn, and the world turns to darkness and grey ash.³³ Or, in the symbolic terms of the novel, Meroë has been consumed by the darkness of Abyssinia, and reduced to a counterpart of that ancient, charred, mythological land.

II

From this point Theodora's life is a constant struggle against extinction, against the ever-lurking forces of darkness and night. Yet the peculiar thing is that unconsciously she longs for this extinction, even as she fears and tries to escape from its terrifying aspect. In her unconscious she is, like her father, possessed by the "negative mother" - an archetype which is bent on destroying her spirit and which draws her back into the darkness of the mother-world. Also, her own spirit, her masculine side, becomes dark and "uroboric" after the death of her father - she follows him down, psychologically if not physically, to the underworld and to the womb of the terrible mother. So now we have this situation: the masculine ego and the uroboric mother, once opposed and moving in contrary directions, are now united in one downward, regressive movement. The only difference between them is that the father is linked in Theodora's mind with a positive movement into blissful nonexistence, whereas the mother is associated with the "devouring" process of the unconscious. That is, they are simply the positive and

negative sides of the one regressive movement. This creates a particularly tense situation, both within the structure of the novel and within Theodora's psyche: she now longs fiercely for something which she also finds loathsome and disagreeable. But the dualism remains central to the novel, a dualism made possible by the fact that the protagonist does not see the connection between the two sides of the dissolution process; she does not see that her longing for mystic dissolution is also a longing to be devoured,³⁴ to be taken and "swallowed" by the uroboric mother [Figure 4].

This is the major theme throughout the rest of the story: her constant attempt to seek unconsciousness yet to escape from the uroboric dragon-mother. We see this manifesting in many ways: as the nostalgia for the psychic past on the one hand, and the terror of disintegration on the other. As the longing for "Abyssinia" and the resistance to "Mother" (which are actually identical symbolic entities). The conflict is no longer between the progressive and regressive forces of the psyche, but between the positive and negative aspects of the one regressive movement.

The negative aspect of this situation is experienced (as always) in projection upon Mrs Goodman. After her father's death she finds herself completely at her mother's mercy - held captive by old Mrs Goodman and forced to attend to her every demand. But Theodora longs to escape from the "mother's" stifling embrace, to live an independent life free from maternal domination. She becomes what Neumann would term a "struggler",³⁵ that is, an infantile ego-personality which longs to cut itself away from, but which also finds itself attracted to, the negative-regressive bond to the mother. Unconsciously she has chosen this state of maternal domination: it merely reflects her inner predilection for unconsciousness. But as Mrs Goodman grows older, as her demands become more insistent and her presence more hateful, Theodora finds her life-situation virtually intolerable. She even contemplates killing her mother (which we shall discuss more fully later). When, for instance, she learns of the Jack Frost incident - the

madman pastrycook who "cut the throats of his wife and three daughters" [p.96] - Theodora experiences a certain empathy for mad Jack Frost, for she finds her own situation mirrored in his tragedy:

"It is very personal. I find it difficult. Quite honestly. Difficult to discuss. I have thought about it. And it is still so close. Like something one has done oneself." [p.98]

The implication is that Theodora identifies with the madman's behaviour - perhaps she sees his killing of his own family, his wife and three daughters, as symbolic of her own desire to get rid of her mother and to escape from the devouring maternal-feminine world.³⁶ Mrs Goodman is naturally shocked and disturbed by Theodora's response to the Jack Frost case, for she begins to sense that her own daughter has a similar kind of murderous impulse. But then, the idea of murder is certainly not foreign to Mrs Goodman's psychology, and White makes it seem that she too gains some kind of vicarious delight in the Jack Frost incident.³⁷ At this point there is a kind of "cold war" between mother and daughter - both harbour murderous impulses toward each other, yet Theodora's is more strongly repressed and so she suffers the most. But the point here is that the negative side of her situation is wholly projected outside herself - onto her actual mother - whereas the real enemy is within her own being, the "terrible mother" who holds her fast on the inner plane.

And at the same time as she is engaged in this external battle with the negative mother Theodora's desire for unconsciousness, her longing to return to the maternal matrix, becomes more pronounced than ever.³⁸ We see this in her increased longing for mystic non-existence, and in her identification with "fire" [p.53], "air" [p.128], "eternity" [p.60], and "death" [p.71]. But we find Theodora's dissolution-desire reflected most clearly in her relationship with Moraitis, the Greek 'cellist. Moraitis, a sensitive, effeminate man, is linked in Theodora's imagination with the "positive" side of uroboric (or pleromatic) dissolution: he is associated with blue seas [p.106], roselight [p.106], and the country of the bones [p.108]. He is a crucial embodiment of the *uroboric spirit*, of the

ecstatic side of the movement into unconsciousness. And, as we might expect, he "believes" in death and celebrates the idea of dissolution: "'Greeks are happiest dying,' smiled Moraïtis. 'Their memorials do not reflect this fatality ... But the Greeks are born to die'" [p.108].³⁹ This naturally catches Theodora's death-fantasy - here, before her, is a little dark, primitive man celebrating a cult of the dead. Her identification with Moraïtis is reinforced when he bids her farewell, saying: "'Goodbye, Miss Goodman ... I shall remember we are compatriots in the country of the bones'" [p.108]. Symbolically, for Theodora, this is tantamount to a spiritual marriage - they are united in the beyond; she and her "ghostly lover" are as one in the country of the bones, the land of the dead.

She was already "in love" with the idea of the uroboric spirit (based upon the image of her own father) and this image now falls to Moraïtis. This is central to Theodora's personality: she cannot love men who are merely related to life and to the human world, she can accept as "lovers" only those men who, like her father, are turned away from this world and are linked to eternity and death. It is at this point that Theodora is finally moved to dispense with her would-be suitor Huntly Clarkson. In the face of this exalted marriage in the beyond, Huntly's offer of a worldly marriage in the human realm seems pale and insignificant. No mere mortal like Huntly can carry her *animus* role; she is in love with her dead father and only an "eternal", "deathly" person like Moraïtis can gain access to her heart.⁴⁰

And so Moraïtis affirms Theodora's uroboric fixation and her preoccupation with eternity and death. At the concert Theodora experiences a kind of symbolic death-experience. This comes about through an identification with Moraïtis' music, and in particular with his instrument: "Now she was closer. It was no longer a matter of intervening heads and chairs. She was herself the first few harsh notes that he struck out of

his instrument against the tuning violins" [p.111]. Through the concerto Theodora attains an ecstatic union with the uroboric spirit. The union is described in sexual terms: Theodora becomes the hollowed 'cello which Moraïtis "put between his legs" and which he "filled ... with long aching silences, between the deeper notes that reached down deep into her body" [p.111]. But by the end of the concerto Theodora has experienced a kind of spiritual apotheosis, a union with death and eternity:

... the 'cello's voice was one long barely subjugated cry under the savage lashes of the violins. But Moraïtis walked slowly into the open. He wore the expression of sleep and solitary mirrors. The sun was in his eyes, the sky had passed his bones. [p.111]

What happens to "Moraïtis" here is really a description of her own uroboric spirit: this fantasy-figure (or animus) walks out into the open and becomes the "eternal man", with the sun in his eyes and the sky between his bones. Here, through a mystical participation with Moraïtis, Theodora has achieved an eternal dimension.

Thus when she returns home to the "terrible mother", Mrs Goodman finds it difficult to upset or disturb her (in her usual manner). Because "Theodora was removed". "She had the strength of absence, Mrs Goodman saw" [p.112]. Having achieved "uroboric incest" with the masculine spirit she is psychologically returned to the blissful state of her childhood existence, to the phase *prior* to the domination of the terrible mother.⁴¹ Theodora has been psychically "taken in" and "fecundated" by the uroboric spirit, so that she is (temporarily at least) beyond the grasp of the mother and contained in the uroboros.⁴² The "mother" cannot dissolve something that has already been dissolved. Theodora is no longer an ego, and therefore no longer torturable.⁴³ And so after the concerto Theodora is temporarily returned to the dawn-state, and enjoys once again the *roundness* of the morning, the fullness of the pleroma:

... the absence of Theodora persisted, and in the morning. Many mornings trumpeted across the bay their strong hibiscus notes. The mornings smelled of nasturtium, crushed by the bodies of lovers on a piece of wasteland at night ... This thing which had happened between Moraïtis and herself she held close, like a woman holding her belly But although she was not a mother, her contentment filled the morning, the heavy, *round*, golden morning, sounding its red hibiscus note. She had waited sometimes for something to happen. Now existence justified itself. [p.112, italics added]

"Then it happened at last," we read in the next paragraph, "I am going to have a baby, Fanny said". And Fanny's child is, of course, Theodora's cherished niece, Lou Parrott. It is clear that "this thing which had happened" between Moraïtis and Theodora is associated with the birth of Lou: she is Theodora's "spiritual child", the product of her union with the uroboric spirit.⁴⁴ This is quite significant because later in the novel Lou is to function as Theodora's psychological counterpart or successor - she becomes the new uroboric or paradise-seeking child, the "fallen" spirit who is caught up in the devouring world of the "terrible mother" Fanny Parrott.⁴⁵ In this way the generational cycle rolls on and the same psychic pattern repeats itself *ad infinitum* in White's fictional world. Fanny Goodman replaces old Mrs Goodman, Lou substitutes for Theodora, but the psychic drama is the same: the players have merely exchanged faces and names.

But Theodora's state of "absence" does not persist. In time she returns to her former state and becomes again a struggling ego hounded by the terrible mother. The Moraïtis concerto could not provide her with a permanent state of uroboric fullness, but merely with a temporary experience of ego-less ecstasy and mystical death. And as soon as she assumes her former state she becomes possessed again by a self-destructive tendency which would return her to the abyss of non-existence. ("Life" for her is a dreadful see-sawing between pleromatic non-existence and partial or "threatened" existence.)⁴⁶ This renewed self-destructive tendency is evident in the incident at the Royal Show, where we find Theodora quite beside herself at a shooting gallery, intent on destroying

the bobbing clay ducks with the same daemonic enthusiasm that had impelled her to destroy the little hawk at Meroë:

... Theodora took the rifle, closing her eyes to the glare. She stood already in the canvas landscape against which the ducks jerked, her canvas arms animated by some emotion that was scarcely hers. Because the canvas moments will come to life of their own accord, whether it is watching the water flow beneath a bridge, or listening to hands strike music out of wood ... She took aim, and the dead, white, discarded moment fell shattered, the duck bobbed headless. ... and she remembered ... the swift moment of the hawk, when her eyes had not quivered. It is curious, she felt, and now, that my flesh does not flap. [pp.119-120]

Here we find her possessed by a fierce drive toward dissolution, a drive that "was scarcely hers". The fact that this activity is linked with her uroboric spirit is indicated in the references to the pneumatic music of Moraïtis and to the little hawk at Meroë. This incident, the relentless and somewhat sadistic "devouring" of the ducks, is further proof that her spirit has become dark and uroboric - it longs to re-unite with her father in the land of the dead.⁴⁷ She appears to be blind to the destructive side of her own efforts, although her friends at the shooting gallery certainly display an awareness of this aspect. They retreat from her in fear, as from something unknown and ambivalent. ["It was something mysterious, shameful, and grotesque. What can we say now? they felt" p.119.]

But when she returns home to old Mrs Goodman - the carrier of her own negative side - she receives the full force of the unacknowledged side of her own actions:

'Did you enjoy yourself?' asked Mrs Goodman, half in fear.
'Yes,' said Theodora. 'I had *a mild success at a shooting range.*'

Mrs Goodman turned her face, as if she were hiding a scar, and her breath some quick stab. She hated her daughter painfully ...

'In front of all those people?' Mrs Goodman said.

'Why ever not? They applauded me,' said Theodora dryly.

'I won a kewpie in a feather skirt.' ...

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

In her hate she could have hewn down this great wooden idol with the grotesque doll in its arms. [p.120-121, italics added]

Here we are faced with the two aspects of ego-dissolution: the uroboric spirit sees its nihilistic activity in terms of a "mild success", whereas

from another perspective it is an obscene display of antisocial, inhuman, and ultimately self-destructive behaviour. In this way the dissolving, downward spirit is met with its negative counter-image: the devouring activity of the uroboric mother. As we have seen all along, Theodora's longing for dissolution and for the return has its logical counterpart in the image of the devouring mother, who devours what "returns" to her. Finally, Theodora is moved to protest against her mother's actions:

'Mother, must you destroy?'
 'Destroy?' asked Mrs Goodman.
 'Yes,' said Theodora. 'I believe you were born with
 an axe in your hand.'
 'I do not understand what you mean. Axes? I have sat
 here all the afternoon. I am suffering from heartburn.' [p.121]

Here we find Theodora clearly projecting her own destructive tendencies upon the figure of old Mrs Goodman. But there is an interesting development here: Mrs Goodman as all-powerful uroboric mother is pitted against the human image of an ageing, dying woman. And she rejects the highly-charged image which Theodora projects upon her and claims instead to be a pitiful old woman suffering from heartburn. The text continues:

At night Theodora Goodman would bring her mother cups of hot milk, which she drank with little soft complaining noises, and the milk skin hung from her lower lip. She was old and soft. Then it is I, said Theodora, I have a core of evil in me that is altogether hateful. But she could not overcome her repugnance for the skin that swung from her mother's lip, giving her the appearance of an old white goat. [p.121]

In an earlier study of the present novel I had suggested that this passage points to an advance in Theodora's consciousness - a sudden awareness of the "core of evil" within her being.⁴⁸ But I would now disagree with my earlier assessment. True, this passage does reveal some kind of awareness about her own nature: the negative psychic image called "mother" does not tally with the reality of old Mrs Goodman, and so Theodora is forced to internalize it to some extent. But it takes more than this to *realize* the reality of the terrible mother in the inner world.⁴⁹ This passage, I would suggest, amounts to nothing more than a passing awareness of the

inappropriateness of her psychic projection. If it did represent a complete recognition of her evil aspect then she would not have to keep fighting her own evil in projection upon her mother and the outside world. As it is the projection - briefly lapsed - is quickly restored to its former place, as we can see from the concluding sentence of the passage: "But she could not overcome her repugnance for the skin that swung from her mother's lip, giving her the appearance of an old white goat".⁵⁰

That Theodora still remains bound to her mother in projection is clearly evident in the ensuing scene - which might be called her "fantasied killing" of the terrible mother. In the grey light of early morning Theodora feels prompted to get up out of bed and look upon the sleeping figure of old Mrs Goodman. Obsessed by the mana-charged form of her mother Theodora stands by her bed in a state of subdued excitement: "Theodora breathed low. Her hair hung over her mother's bed, just not sweeping the face" [p.122]. This is a stark, resonant image: it finds a parallel in mythology in the image of the inquisitive Psyche, with dangling hair and candle, watching over the body of her sleeping Eros. Both female attendants are drawn to the sleeping figure as if by an uncanny psychic force - both represent the fascination of the waking ego for the slumbering figures of the deep unconscious. Yet whereas Psyche's is a mission of love, Theodora's is a mission of hate - as she watches her mother's face she is filled with an overwhelming, almost physical, sense of resentment, so that "her own *breath* began choking and knotting inside her" [p.122].⁵¹ Finally Theodora is moved to leave her mother's side and goes into the kitchen, where she picks up Mrs Goodman's little silver paper-knife and begins her potentially fatal - and highly memorable - contemplation of the knife:

Theodora took up the thin knife, very thin and impervious, from where it lay in the zinc light. Now she remembered most distinctly the last counsel Jack Frost had held with the meat-knife in the kitchen. She remembered him standing by the dresser. She could see the black hairs on his wrist as he weighed the pros instead of the biscuits. [p.123]

Here, once again, we have a very powerful, "mythic" image: the struggling ego, with knife in hand, pauses (we can only suppose, from what follows) to consider the pros and cons of killing the sleeping dragon-mother. If Theodora were, like her father, a reader of mythology she might have identified herself in this situation with Perseus prior to his slaying of the dragon-mother, or with Theseus prior to his clash with the minotaur. Instead Theodora identifies herself with local madman Jack Frost prior to his merciless attack upon his wife and three daughters. The Jack Frost case represents a modern, pathological expression of the archetypal "dragon-fight" - that is, the masculine ego's attempt to cut itself free from the devouring maternal-feminine principle, in which it is fatally entangled. Theodora too, is entangled in this same fatal web, yet attempting to slough it off in the outer world will not actually free her from it at the inner level:

But this, she trembled, does not cut the knot.⁵² She threw back the thin knife, which fell and clattered on the zinc, where it had been put originally to be washed. [p.123]

Theodora now finds herself in a situation worse than before - the dragon-mother still lives and she is forced to bear the burden of a tremendous guilt, as if she were, like Jack Frost, a pathological murderer:

It has been close, felt Theodora, I have put out my hand and almost touched death. ... I am guilty of a murder that has not been done, she said, it is the same thing, blood is only an accompaniment. She went on to her own room, away from the act she had not committed, while her mother continued to sleep. [p.123]

This whole scene, as I have suggested, points to a basic confusion of inner and outer levels of reality. At an inner level it is right that she should feel prompted to destroy the dragon-mother - this is a genuine archetypal impulse, which must be faced. Yet the dragon to be slain is within herself - it is her own deadly longing for the abyss, her own desire to be sucked down into the uroboros.⁵³ Unable to see the dragon-image in her own longing, however, she unconsciously transfers it outside herself into the world. This is the stalemate situation that most of White's mystical protagonists find themselves caught up in time and again.⁵⁴ They want to slay the

dragon-mother, yet they cannot see her in her real, her mythic plane, in her psychic world. She is the image of their own desiring, the personification of their deepest longing. They cannot see her because she is too close to them. They cannot "kill" her because that would actually mean killing their own regressive longing, the very thing they prize above all else. So she remains their perpetual, if dreaded, companion: the uroboros mystic and the dragon-mother are an inseparable pair, they constellate each other.

This peculiar relationship between uroboric ego and dragon-mother is on a number of occasions made evident through the structure of the text itself, by the sudden juxtapositioning of one image against another.⁵⁵

For instance, early in the novel we find the following passage:

Sometimes, and tonight, Theodora went and sat beneath the apricot tree. She took a book that she would not read. She marked her page with a dock and sat. And as she sat, there seemed to be no beginning or end. Meroë was eternity, and she was the keeper of it.

Before Mother broke in, 'Theodora, Theodora, where is my little silver paper-knife?'

Mother's voice made the hot air quiver. [p.79]

And then, towards the close of Part One, we find this same process reflected in another crucial section:

At this point, Theodora sometimes said, I should begin to read Gibbon, or find religion, instead of speaking to myself in my own room. But words, whether spoken or written, were at most frail slat bridges over chasms, and Mrs Goodman had never encouraged religion, as she herself was God. So it will not be by these means, Theodora said, that the great monster Self will be destroyed, and that desirable state achieved, which resembles, one would imagine, nothing more than air or water. She did not doubt that the years would contribute, rubbing and extracting, but never enough. Her body still clanged and rang when the voice struck.

'Theo-dor-a!'

I have not the humility, Theodora said. [p.128]

In both sections the calling voice of the dragon-mother follows hard upon the image of the uroboric ego and its craving for dissolution and annihilation. In the first, we find Theodora about to merge ecstatically into an uroboric eternity, with "no beginning or end", when suddenly her mother's voice breaks into the scene and destroys her vision of paradise [cf. again Figure 4].

In the second we find her musing about how best she might destroy her ego-personality, the "great monster Self", and achieve an ego-less condition in the pleroma, when once again "the voice" interrupts her pursuit of ecstasy and forces her to attend to its demands. These passages point directly to the ambivalence or "two-sidedness" of the uroboric process: on the one hand the ego feels it is surrendering itself ecstatically to the uroboros, on the other it feels it is being "taken" by the uroboric mother and devoured by an aggressive-hostile force. Both of these reactions are true - together they constitute the paradoxical pleasure-pain experience of uroboric disintegration. Thus we find that whenever she longs to be absorbed into the uroboros the image of the terrible mother erupts spontaneously into her field of experience, carrying with it the unacknowledged negative side of the disintegrative process.

But then, eventually, the terrible Mrs Goodman dies. When Theodora first discovers one morning that her mother has died her response is one of overwhelming relief: "She did not cry. On the contrary, she ran downstairs, so fast that she was afraid her body might hurtle ahead" [p.129]. The fact that Mrs Goodman dies in her sleep "on a morning the colour of zinc" [p.128] is significant because we will recall that Theodora's contemplation of the knife and her "fantasied murder" took place "in the grey light of morning" [p.122] while her mother was sleeping. The connection with her own fantasied murder is further reinforced (synchronistically) by the headlines of the morning newspaper, telling of a recent murder in the district, strangely echoed by her neighbour's remark over the common fence: "'There has been a vile murder in Cremorne,' said Mr Love" [p.129]. Clearly the text suggests that Theodora's murder-fantasy has somehow realized itself,⁵⁶ and that the wicked old witch is dead at last.

But, as I have repeatedly stated, the death of the personal mother is by no means synonymous with the death of the negative maternal archetype, which lives on in the depths of the unconscious. The mother was merely

the "carrier" of this image in the external world - its transitory form or external image. Theodora is psychologically as possessed by the terrible mother as ever before. There is a crucial image at the end of Part One which suggests this, which points to the continued presence of the terrible mother after Mrs. Goodman's death.

We are told, surprisingly enough, that old Mrs Goodman died "without her teeth" [p.129]; that the night before her death she had removed her false teeth and placed them in a glass beside her bed. After her death Theodora discovers the teeth in her mother's room - "suspended in an endless china smile in a glass beside the bed" [p.129]. An ironic touch, to be sure, but not without its symbolic resonance. The *teeth* of the Mother Goddess have long symbolized the devouring, ravaging aspect of the mother archetype.⁵⁷ In some cultures the terrible mother is actually called the Teeth Mother,⁵⁸ because she is characterized in mythological statuettes and figurines by her enormous, gnashing teeth, with which she dismembers all who stray within her archetypal field [Figure 5].

Thus we find here, in the seemingly irrelevant "survival" of old Mrs Goodman's teeth, a stark image of the mother's terrible aspect which lives on after the mother herself has perished. In fact we could say that her death has merely refined her nature, revealing her "teeth", her deadly-devouring quality, in its chilling, naked aspect. It is significant that the teeth appear to be caught in "an *endless* china smile", as if to suggest the eternality and indstructibility of the terrible mother as archetype. And the teeth "smile", as if the immortal figure were saying, with amused contempt: you have not got rid of me yet, for I am eternal and will haunt you always. If we refer back to the crucial image of the trochilus and the Meroë-dragon we could say that the devouring jaws of the dragon-mother are here preserved and recreated in the image of the smiling teeth. Theodora can never escape the devouring aspect of the maternal unconscious because inwardly she still lives, trochilus-like, in the mouth of the uroboric dragon.

III

Still, her years of servitude have ended - she is "free", if not from the terrible mother archetype, at least from its external form. Theodora is excited by the prospect of physical freedom, and believes that she can now embark on her own spiritual journey. But this "freedom" is of dubious value, since she does not really possess a sufficiently developed self or ego-personality to take full advantage of it. It seems that her entire identity depended upon her negative relation to Mrs Goodman, for without that relation there is a sudden loss of identity - she no longer recognizes herself as a personality:

Since her mother's death she could not say with conviction:
I am I. [p.13]

Furthermore, her actions seem to her automatic - as an onlooker she observes her own activities and deeds:

Theodora went into the room where the coffin lay. She moved one hairbrush three inches to the left, and smoothed the anti-macassar on a little Empire prie-dieu that her mother had brought from Europe. She did all this with some surprise, as if divorced from her own hands, as if they were related to the objects beneath them only in the way that two flies, blowing and blundering into space, are related to a china and mahogany world. [p.11]

Still further, the outer world appears alien and new and has lost its reality:

She was part of a surprising world in which hands, for reasons no longer obvious, had put tables and chairs.
[p.132]

Chronic alienation has set in - or what psychiatry would term "depersonalization", or even "derealization", a common feature in schizophrenic conditions.⁵⁹ In depersonalization the individual feels not only that he is not real, but also that the world is not real. This phenomenon is a result of a psychological change in the personality: the libido, which normally flows outward into life and reality, has sunk back into the unconscious, making everything seem unreal, shadowy, enigmatic. The life has gone out of the conscious field of experience. What little

libido Theodora had at her conscious disposal was apparently invested in her relation to her mother - so that without "Mother" to tell her what to do and where to go she is all "at sea".⁶⁰

But depth-psychology warns us about the consequences of this *abaissement du niveau mental*. The libido, apparently lost, has simply moved to a new level. There is a psychological maxim which says: what is lost to the upper world of consciousness merely falls into the lower world and increases the energy-charge and affectivity of the deep unconscious and its archetypes. In our case, this means that the mother-world receives a further amount of libido, so that we could expect this unconscious realm to become more active and malevolent than ever. And this is exactly what happens in the next phase of Theodora's career: there is a tremendous welling-up of unconscious and spontaneous fantasy-life. Her experiences in Europe - and particularly at the Hôtel du Midi - suggest that Theodora's world is now more psychic than real, that the unconscious archetypes have invaded the "real" world and now force Theodora to live in a state of perpetual dream or nightmare. Everywhere she turns in the Hôtel du Midi she finds evidence of the Teeth Mother, her own activated archetype: in the yawning mouths of roses threatening to devour her [p.139],⁶¹ in the spiky cactus which pricks her flesh and draws blood [p.140], in the snapping jaws of the hotel guests sucking the last shreds of meat from a chicken-bone [p.137]. She is like an endangered trochilus who finds the psychic image of the devouring jaws reflected everywhere in her external environment. The "world" becomes a monstrous toothed maw, threatening to suck her in and make a meal out of her. This is most apparent in her response to the *jardin* itself, which seems like a monstrous, evil force which is bent on destroying her:

... fantastic forms were aping the gestures of tree and flower. Theodora listened to the silence, to hear it sawn at by the teeth of the *jardin exotique*. [p.136]

In its own right [the *jardin*] possessed, and rejected, absorbing just so much dew with its pink and yellow mouths, coldly tearing

at cloth or drawing blood. [p.140]

Now she saw it was, in fact, the garden that prevailed, its forms had swelled and multiplied, its dry, paper hands were pressed against the windows of the *salle à manger*, perhaps it had already started to digest the body of the somnolent hotel. [p.161]

In the garden the silence swung backwards and forwards waiting for the moment to strike. [p.163]

It is significant that the *jardin* should appear in this negative, hostile light, because Theodora had hoped that the *jardin exotique*, described so magnificently in the tourist brochures, would be "the goal of a journey" [p.139]. That is to say, Theodora had hoped to find the Garden, the paradisaical, pleromatic condition of early childhood, but instead she has encountered this fatal *jardin*; a deathly, terrible world with actively devouring jaws and teeth. In view of what we have discovered so far this is particularly significant: the uroboros-seeking spirit longs for paradise and finds instead this fatal, toothed world of nightmare and horror. For the movement into the unconscious brings with it these daemonic images of cataclysm and destruction - the world itself is filled with unreal, crushing shapes which reflect the same deadly, destructive power which overwhelms her from within.

The other important aspect of her movement into the unconscious, which I have already mentioned briefly, is her tremendously active fantasy-life at the hotel. Her over-charged unconscious psyche reaches out into the perceived world and converts the outer world into an inner drama. The people she encounters at the hotel are dream-like, acting more as figures of fantasy than as human persons. She exists in a state of *participation mystique* with her environment - since everything she experiences now comes to her via the unconscious and is peculiarly charged with psychic energy. We have heard often enough from critics that Theodora "enters imaginatively into the lives of the Hôtel residents", and critics have generally applauded her capacity in this regard. However, from a psychological point of view it would seem less praiseworthy than inevitable: she is unable to relate

to people in any other way - she cannot know them as real people but merely as externalized products of her own imagination. We cannot "praise" Theodora for her imaginative participation in the lives of others - any more than we can praise the schizophrenic for living in a world peopled by monstrous figures of fantasy. The point is that Theodora cannot do otherwise. She cannot *know* the human world in any other than a mythological way because the collective unconscious controls and conditions her vision of reality. Her experiences in Part Two become less "mystical" when seen in this light. Critics have deprived Theodora of her pathological dimension, seeing all her actions in a purely dramatic or "poetic" light, as if she were a kind of seer or saint. But to deny the pathological is to deny depth and "shadow", to take the human dimension from the novel and to replace it with a flat, two-dimensional mystic world. In giving Theodora back her pathology we do not detract from the novel as a whole: on the contrary, we make it for the first time humanly relevant and accessible - we can now locate Theodora within the human world rather than place her on some kind of mystical pedestal.

The first of Theodora's *jardin exotique* fantasies involves her experience of the earthquake with Katina Pavlou. Newly arrived at the Hôtel du Midi, Theodora's imagination is captured when Katina tells Grigg, her maid-companion, that "I must go home" [p.142]. These words evoke an immediate resonance within Theodora herself - they remind her of her own longing for "home", for the pleromatic condition represented by her early days at Meroë. So it is that Katina is imaged as an uroboric ego, a young consciousness which finds reality burdensome ["'I am tired,' she said. 'I am tired of all this'" p.141] and would shrug it off in order to return "home" to the uroboros. Theodora, as we might expect, becomes immediately identified with this uroboric girl-child overcome by nostalgic longings for the past:

Theodora Goodman had become a mirror, held to the girl's experience. Their eyes were interchangeable, like two distant, unrelated lives mingling for a moment in sleep. [p.142]

The fantasy-sequence begins when Theodora overhears Katina telling Grigg about "a black island that shook" [p.142] during their experience of an earthquake in the islands of Greece:

Theodora trembled for the black island. She looked at the opposite shore, which was just there, in the sea glaze. The earth was a capsule waiting for some gigantic event to swallow it down. Theodora looked at the island and waited for it to move. [p.142]

Quite clearly, Theodora has internalized Katina's experience of the earthquake and experiences it in the realms of fantasy as an inward, psychic image related to her own inner situation. The "island" is perhaps symbolic of her own ego-consciousness, tiny and vulnerable, surrounded on all sides by the threatening waters of the deep unconscious. The "earth" too is a symbol of her own threatened ego-personality, which "was a capsule waiting for some gigantic event to swallow it down". In the face of this imminent disaster, Katina and Theodora "held hands, waiting for some cataclysm of earth and sea" [p.143]. The "cataclysm", of course, is the disintegration and devouring of the personality which comes as a result of their homecoming, their own longing to return to the matrix of the uroboros.

Thus the two child-mystics are constantly threatened with extinction because by clinging to the idea of the matrix as their true home they unconsciously invite the uroboros to destroy and overwhelm them. The fantasy ends with a concrete image of the devouring of the personality and the human world by the subterranean forces of the deep:

The morning light saw the drawers fly out of the chest. Its tongues lolled. The whole cardboard house rejected reason. Then there was a running. ...

'Come,' they called. 'Run. It is the will of God. The earth is going to split apart and swallow the houses of the poor.' ...

They were thrown out, all of them, out of the functionless houses on to the little strip of sand. Their bodies lay on the live earth. They could feel its heart move against their own. [p.144]

Here it is significant that the devouring of the human world is felt to be "the will of God", for the uroboric ego experiences its own disintegration as "fate" itself, as something over which it has no control.⁶² It does not see that it has itself set into motion the entire destructive process by longing so desperately for unity with the deep unconscious. Consequently when the moment of fate arrives the chthonic forces of the unconscious easily overpower and destroy the human element because the ego puts up no resistance to its own disintegration. Note the way in which the human world is described in such frail, insubstantial terms: the human dwelling is a "cardboard house" easily "swallowed" by the catastrophe; or we have "functionless houses" rendered ineffectual by the disaster. The human element is easily overthrown for secretly it longs to be taken and destroyed. Thus the whole fantasy-sequence is underscored with a tone of exaltation and a secret delight in what is taking place. After the sequence has ended Theodora feels strangely satisfied and contented [p.145], rather like her contentment experienced after listening to the Moraitis concerto. And in the same way that her mother could not harm or destroy her after returning from Moraitis, so here we find that the fantasy of disintegration has altered the tone of the *jardin exotique*: "the air" of the garden "was no longer ... dry and hostile" [p.145]. It could no longer harm her because she was - as it were - already destroyed, taken back into the world of the uroboros below the threshold of pain and discomfort. Only an ego-self which is still partially intact can feel pain and the terror of disintegration, but once destroyed it feels a pleromatic fullness, a wave of ecstasy as the personality merges back into unconsciousness.

At this point we find the following puzzling section, where the *jardin exotique* suddenly acquires a "voice" and a personified tone:

... the air [of the *jardin*] stroked her. It said: See, we offer this dispensation, endless, more seductive than aspirin, to give an illusion of fleshy nearness and comfort, in what should be apart, armed, twisted, dreamless ... [p.145]

This seemingly nonsensical passage actually represents an important moment in Theodora's psychic life - where the archetypal terrible mother (or the spirit of the *jardin*) takes on an autonomous voice and presents her with an enigmatic word-puzzle.⁶³ In psychological terms the passage could be translated as follows: See, I (the mother) offer you this dispensation - the seductive attraction of pleromatic fullness and ecstasy (the "illusion of comfort"), in what should be a tortuous, twisted, armed nightmare of disintegration. This is the closest that White comes to realizing the ambivalence of the dissolution-process and to "seeing" the terrible mother who stands behind the prospect of blissful dissolution. The passage is written in bizarre and confused language for good reason: it is virtually a self-representation of unconscious processes, a paradoxical formulation which has yet to pass into conscious awareness and hence can only find expression in this disjointed dream-poem.⁶⁴ But neither White nor Theodora seems able to unravel this word-puzzle or extract meaning from its apparent nonsense. In this way the mother remains supreme; the keeper of "secret" knowledge of the inner world, the guardian of the secret fact that blissful dissolution is simply *her* way of luring the personality back into her terrible depths, or her seductive "dispensation" as she leads it toward its own destruction.⁶⁵ In mythology the "secret" or "hard-to-attain" knowledge of the psyche is sometimes imaged as the treasure which is kept closely guarded by the dragon-mother.⁶⁶ If the hero wins the treasure he is freed from maternal domination and bewitchment. In other myths the closely-guarded secret of the psyche is represented as the riddle put to the would-be hero by the sphinx-mother⁶⁷ - the hero must answer the riddle or be put to death. We can see the present word-puzzle in these mythic terms. To "realize" the secret truth contained in its nonsense would free Theodora from her present state of psychological possession and bewitchment. But the riddle remains unsolved, and the witch-like power of the mother continues to rule over her inner world.

In this particular fantasy-sequence there is a notable absence of father-symbolism, so predominant in Part One. Here the positive (seductive-desirable) side of uroboric dissolution, previously represented by the father and the paternal aspect of the uroboros, is found to be an attribute of the mother's paradoxical character.

There is an ongoing sequence (an admixture of fantasy and reality) in the Hôtel du Midi which seems to deal with this basic confusion at the centre of Theodora's psyche, and which seems to check her conscious notion that the uroboros "belongs" to the father-world. I refer to the sequence relating to the possession of the nautilus. The nautilus shell, which is described in terms of absolute perfection and which is said to contain a wondrous, seductive music, is clearly a symbol suggestive of the uroboros⁶⁸ [Figure 6a]. Katina Pavlou, the uroboros-seeking child-mystic, immediately responds to the nautilus as a symbol of her own longed-for state of perfection and harmony: "'It is lovely, it is lovely, may I look?' asked the girl ... She took in her hands the frail shell. She listened to its sound. She listened to the thick-throated pines fill the room ... The music of the nautilus was in her face ..." [p.155]. Mrs Rapallo (the present carrier of the negative mother-image) and General Sokolnikov (a new father-figure) grapple over the question of ownership of the nautilus. Does it "belong" to the terrible Mrs Rapallo who has purchased the shell from the nearby antique-store, or does it belong to the fatherly Sokolnikov who has a more "subtle" relationship with it, who has for many years studied the nautilus through the store-window and developed a kinship with it? Mrs Rapallo has paid hard cash for it but the General's claims for "ownership" are strongly nostalgic and, for him, more refined. Like Theodora's own father Sokolnikov is weak and ineffectual - throughout the middle section one word is used to sum him up: rubbery. He is as flexible and as ineffectual as rubber:⁶⁹

... when the General smacked his lips, or sucked from his fingers whatever it was, the suction of rubber sprang into the room, out of his face, for this was rubber in the manner of the faces of most Russians. His lips would fan out into a

rubber trumpet down which poured the rounded stream
of words ... [p.149]

In contrast to this Mrs Rapallo is described in terms which reflect the overwhelming power and natural dominance of the terrible mother-figure in White's fictional world. Her nature is hard, metallic, domineering, and magnificently arrogant:

... Mrs Rapallo, whom time and history had failed to trip
... continued to advance. Her pomp was the pomp of cathedrals
and of circuses. She was put together painfully, rashly,
ritually, crimson over purple. Her eye glittered, but her
breath was grey Her stiff magenta picked contemptuously
at the fluff on the *salle à manger* carpet ... But most
marvellous was the nautilus that she half carried in her
left hand, half supported on her encrusted bosom. Moored,
the shell floated, you might say, in its own opalescent
right. [p.153-55]

Mrs Rapallo is a true denizen of the lower world, a fabulous Great Mother figure who is "put together painfully, rashly, ritually". She is more grotesque and "mythological" than Mrs Goodman because she is more deeply contaminated by an archaic, archetypal image of the collective unconscious. That is to say, she is more nakedly a creature of Theodora's fantasy, an inhabitant of her psychic world. As Mrs Rapallo parades her prized ownership of the exquisite shell the General is suddenly overcome by a fit of emotion, for he senses that this "arrogant woman" has terminated his own secret relationship with the nautilus. And now there is a great debacle between the two archetypal figures, but (as we might anticipate) the rubbery General is no match for the terrible, swashbuckling figure of Mrs Rapallo:

Meeting somewhere about the centre of the room, you waited
for their impact, the hard thick thwack of rubber and the
stiff slash of the magenta sword. In moments of contention
Mrs Rapallo stood at the head of the stairs. She repelled the
uninvited guest with the coldness of inherited diamonds.
These she reflected even in their absence. [p.156]

In this scene we are back again in the kitchen at Meroë - with the terrible mother having all the power and the father-figure none. The argument between George and Julia Goodman is evoked by the reference to the "uninvited guest" ("She *repelled* the uninvited guest with the coldness of inherited diamonds") -

a direct reference to the Man who was Given his Dinner, whom Julia Goodman refused to allow into her house. The implication is clear: just as Mrs Goodman triumphed in that battle, so does Mrs Rapallo triumph now. As far as Mrs Rapallo is concerned there is no doubt about the ownership of the nautilus - she has it and no one else can take it from her:

'... And I bought, yes, Alyosha Sergei, I *bought* my nautilus. Of course I bought it. There it was. In full sail. I knew I had never seen perfection And now it is mine. My beauty, I have waited all my life.' [p.156]

All the rubbery General can offer in his defence is a running stream of declamatory phrases:

'You are a thief,' he said. 'It is immensely obvious. If there were any decency left in your American handbag, you would not have stolen what it is not possible to buy. Because it is not possible to buy, Mrs Ra-*pal*-o, what is already mine. It is mine from staring at, for many years. It responded through the glass. A tender, a subtle relationship has existed, which now in an instant you destroy. Oh, what an arrogant woman! What a terrible state of affairs! What assassination of the feelings! I do not hesitate to accuse. You are more than a cheeky thief. You are a murderess. You have killed a relationship,'⁷⁰ the General cried. [p.156]

This is perhaps one of the funniest scenes of the novel - where the blubbery, rubbery General pits himself against the pompous arrogance of Mrs Rapallo. But the scene is definitely tragi-comic because underlying it is the masculine principle's impotence in the face of the devouring mother. The General is a kind of modern-day Falstaff, a military man full of blood-and-thunder phrases and high rhetoric, but basically an empty wind-bag, as ineffectual as he is theatrical.

Clearly, in this sequence of events enacted on the psychological stage before her, Theodora is forced to witness an alarming and uncomfortable fact: the uroboros that she longs for, her rightful "home" and place of origin, is ruled (or "owned") by the terrible mother and is not, as she had believed, the possession of a loving father.⁷¹ The father-figure would like to have it, but his bid for ownership is in vain, since the mother is unlikely to surrender the very thing which gives her her absolute power. Mrs Rapallo is the keeper of the uroboros-symbol, just as the terrible *jardin* is the

keeper of the "secret" of uroboric disintegration.⁷² The question of the ownership of the nautilus is thus an unconscious symbolic sequence - acted out in so-called "reality" - which is designed to prove the supremacy of the mother and to correct Theodora's conscious notion that this lost, paradisaical world is an attribute of the father-principle.

But then we find an interesting turn of events. The General suddenly becomes possessed by a single idea: to steal the nautilus back from Mrs Rapallo. He persuades Theodora to help him carry through his master plan - to steal into Mrs Rapallo's room while she is sleeping and to bring the nautilus back to its "rightful" owner. In this sequence Theodora is the active participant while the General himself waits in the dining-hall to benefit from the fruits of Theodora's mission. Here we have to do with an image which is positively mythological: the masculine principle makes one final, if surreptitious, bid to secure control of the uroboros by attempting to snatch it from the mother's realm.

When Theodora first enters Mrs Rapallo's room she discovers that the nautilus is surrounded by a thick tangle of ferns and watched over by a pair of grinning false teeth:

Old teeth in an empty jam-jar grinned at her helplessness.
She heard the snigger of a tremulous fern. [p.191]

Here we find the same image as before - the teeth grinning at her from a glass, only now the teeth belong to Mrs Rapallo, not Julia Goodman. Of course it is appropriate to find the uroboros symbol surrounded by images of devouring - whether the devouring, entangling plants [with "the magenta mouth(s) pursuing" p.187] or the crushing, grinning teeth of the Terrible Mother. However, finding these images side by side means nothing to Theodora - there is still no recognition of what it might mean for her. As she enters the daemonic imaginal field she is suddenly overcome by a feeling of powerlessness and inertia,⁷³ and senses that she will not actually attain the treasured nautilus:

... now she had begun to doubt whether she could reach. Whether the pampas of the darkness would allow, and its great clouds of grass, heavy as breath, that she parted with her ineffectual hands. She also doubted whether the nautilus was substance enough, or whether it would blow. [p.211]

There is a suggestion here that once she takes the nautilus into her own hands it will disintegrate, or - more poetically - that once it is taken outside the mother's realm it will disintegrate upon impact with human reality. This anticipates the end of the sequence, the final disintegration of the nautilus. The uroboric shell survives miraculously in its own world [upon the mother's "encrusted bosom ... it floated in its own opalescent right" p.155], but it will not bear the touch of hands, the collision with reality. It cannot be brought up into the human world because it belongs to the mother and can only "live" in the dark maternal world.⁷⁴

But before she seizes the nautilus one final thing hinders her mission. She is intercepted by Mignon, Mrs Rapallo's pet monkey, who launches out of the darkness of the room to land on Theodora's head, making it impossible for her to concentrate on the task before her. The monkey clings to Theodora with a "furred and clammy" grip: "... she could not shake the monkey's heavy sadness. Mignon clung" [p.211]. The monkey, as Mrs Rapallo's companion and pet-animal, is here acting as the servant of the mother - the primitive, animal force which obstructs Theodora's progress in the absence of the mother herself. Mignon symbolizes the regressive, ensnaring side of Theodora's own psyche which would deter her development at the vital moment, just as she is about to make a crucial step. Eventually however the monkey becomes distracted by the prospect of food in another part of the room, and leaves Theodora to her own devices. But the "presence" of Mrs Rapallo is further emphasized by the fact that she talks in her sleep all the while Theodora is in her room. In the monkey's antics, the senseless dream-talk and the image of the grinning teeth Mrs Rapallo is "present" even when she is asleep. In Theodora's psychic world there is never a moment when the terrible mother is not alive and active in one form or another.

Even as she takes the nautilus its "spikes pricked her breast. Her hands were water" [p.212]. She can hardly believe her own actions because the present deed, the winning of the nautilus, seems unreal and inappropriate. As Sokolnikov gloats over his possession of the nautilus - "'My lovely shell,' he said, out of a long distance and a congested throat" [p.212] - Theodora is overcome by a sense of imminent disaster, an awareness that the shell is not really theirs to win:

And now she knew that it must happen ... Her heart turned in her side, because, she knew, the nautilus is made to break....

'Will you not look Ludmilla?'

Sokolnikov was holding it in his hands. His face oozed long opalescent tears.

'Do you remember, when we were children, the moon was transparent? You could watch it pulse like the skin on an unhatched egg.⁷⁵ ...

Alyosha Sergei, you foolish child, Theodora could not say, this is a crisis in which even I cannot protect you, and as for your moon, it is lost. [p.213]

And then the formidable Mrs Rapallo (looking like a creature of nightmare, hairless and toothless) suddenly appears on the scene to reclaim her possession:

'Somebody is a thief,' Mrs Rapallo said.

She stood in the passage without her hair. Her words were blunted by her gums. [p.213]

A battle ensues between the two archetypal figures, during which the shell is smashed. As Theodora had anticipated, the uroboros symbol could not withstand the impact with human reality, or survive the claims of the masculine principle. Although both parties lose possession of the shell it is clearly the General who is most disturbed about its loss: "'A murder has been committed,'" the General cries, to which Mrs Rapallo replies, coolly - "'Go hang out your soul to dry. You Russians were always damp'" [p.214]. Thus the disintegration of the nautilus is seen as something which the mother-figure does to the father - she is the murderess who has destroyed his relationship with the uroboros. This incident marks a turning-point in the archetypal structure of the novel: the uroboros is no longer seen as a possible possession of the masculine-paternal principle, but now

lies firmly beyond its grasp.⁷⁶ I have tried to show that it was never legitimately connected with the uroboros in the first place - the father's claims (and here I refer to George Goodman as well as to Sokolnikov) were merely nostalgic; he would have *liked* to have been the keeper of the paradisaical world of the uroboros. As it is the uroboros, no longer contained or symbolized by the nautilus (nor seen as the exclusive possession of Elsie Rapallo), falls deeper into the maternal matrix of the inner world, where it is still held and watched over by the "Mothers"⁷⁷ of the collective unconscious.⁷⁸ After this sequence Mrs Rapallo no longer functions as the central carrier of the negative mother-image. She fades into relative insignificance and is replaced by further representations of the maternal archetype.

IV

While resident at the Hôtel du Midi Theodora encounters (either in reality or in fantasy) a seemingly endless number of terrible mother figures. As well as the figure of Mrs Rapallo and the *jardin* itself, there is the devastating figure of Lieselotte, a veritable *femme fatale* who has an insatiable lust for violence and a destructive power over men. She keeps Wetherby orbiting about her like a satellite, not because she cares for him, but because she delights in the power she has over him. It is Lieselotte who finally destroys the hotel itself by throwing a lamp at Wetherby, which smashes and sets fire to the building.⁷⁹ Then there is Muriel Leese-Leese, Wetherby's domineering patroness, who exhibits a god-like power over all the men who are drawn unwarily into her social circle.⁸⁰ Through her escapades with the General Theodora also encounters the formidable Anna Stepanovna, a teeth-gnashing, elderly woman who keeps the General at her mercy and who dominates everyone around her. She also meets, in fantasy, the General's ex-wife Edith Sokolnikov, a tyrannical, murderous woman who the General suspects may have killed a rich and distant relative in order

to secure a fortune. Then there is Katina's maid Grigg, the ever-present teeth-sucking⁸¹ companion of the beautiful uroboric child. Theodora and Katina often desire to be alone but they never manage to shake off the encumbent presence of Miss Grigg, always hard on Katina's trail. Katina's mother, on the other hand, never makes an appearance in the novel, and is generally regarded as a callous, selfish, globe-trotting mother who cares little for her daughter.⁸² Whether notoriously absent, like Mrs Pavlou, or stifflingly present, like Grigg, the mother-figures of the Hôtel du Midi are "terrible". Even the parlour-maid, the seemingly innocuous Henriette, has a "gold tooth that gashed" [p.195] and a harsh, domineering voice. In countless forms and guises Theodora confronts the negative mother-image everywhere she turns.

J.F. Burrows, in his essay on the "Jardin Exotique" section, finds in these successive encounters with the negative mother-image a final resolution of the conflict between Theodora and her mother:

The globe-trotting socialite, the domineering mother, the frustrated wife: it begins to seem that, for all her travels, Theodora is never far from home and mother. Yet, neurotic though she may be, this is not the endless, futile retrogression of insanity but a determined and at last successful confrontation of old problems in new contexts. Thanks to the anguished searchings of Part Two ..., Mrs Goodman is no longer a force in Part Three.⁸³

Burrows' account fails because he does not take the archetypal dimension into consideration - he sees Theodora's mother-problem in purely naturalistic terms, as a resolvable conflict between mother and daughter. I do not find Theodora making a "determined and at last successful confrontation" with the negative mother-image: on the contrary, she is wholly at the mercy of this image and constantly finds herself the victim of its various manifestations. Theodora has no choice about the matter - it is not she who "works through" old problems, but her own psyche which forces them upon her, constellating relentlessly the same unresolved complexes and patterns which stood at the centre of her childhood reality. Her fate in Part Two is a cruel, Sisyphean⁸⁴ one - it consists of a constant repetition of

psychic patterns without any resolution. Wherever she goes everything is always the same - all that changes are the players in the drama, but the story-line is fixed, and the attentive reader can always guess it in advance. Despite its apparent diversity and breadth of scope Part Two revolves around a single pattern or "idea": the supremacy of the negative mother-image.

Burrows' comment about Part Three, concerning the absence of Mrs Goodman in the final section of the novel, misses the point entirely. The negative mother-image is relatively absent in Part Three simply because Theodora's ego has finally been disintegrated, has merged back into the uroboros, and therefore is no longer threatened by the uroboric mother. This has been a pattern which we have observed all along (as, for instance, after the Moraitis concerto) - the mother cannot harm her after her ego has been dissolved, for then there is nothing left to destroy. The devouring mother is constellated only when there is a separate self, an individual ego-consciousness which is able to be devoured. But when the dissolution has taken place the negative mother-image disappears because its task has been accomplished. Thus if the negative mother-image is absent in Part Three, this is not "thanks to" Theodora's "anguished searchings [in] Part Two": rather it is proof of the mother's final supremacy - she can now afford to quit the psychological stage because her fatal mission has been fulfilled, Theodora's personality has been devoured.

Towards the end of Part Two there are already strong intimations of this catastrophe which looms ahead on the psychological horizon. As in the earth-quake fantasy, where the earth itself had waited "for some gigantic event to swallow it down", so now we find Theodora waiting "for some act that still had to be performed" [p.231]:

... she knew she did not really control her bones, and that the curtain of her flesh must blow, like walls which are no longer walls. [p.196]

The fact that she is about to be devoured by the mother and the maternal uroboros is emphasized by the fantasy-images of devouring roses⁸⁵ - the

roses on the wallpaper of her bedroom seem to be actively pursuing her and even appear to lick their paper-lips in anticipation of the devouring:

It began to palpitate, the paper mouths of roses wetting their lips, either voice or wall putting on flesh. [p.196]

She lay and listened to the stirrings of the wallpaper, the mouths of paper roses open and close. [p.245]

Then, in this heightened emotional atmosphere, Theodora hears the smashing of the lantern - as Lieselotte throws it at Wetherby - and within minutes the hotel is ablaze. The consuming fire is perhaps more symbolic than real. It can be seen as the symbolic counterpart of the destructive bolt of lightning which struck Theodora on her twelfth birthday and which forced her to realize for the first time the overwhelming power of the "mother" and her Abyssinian fire. It represents an eruption of destructive energies from the maternal unconscious, which now make their final bid to swallow the conscious personality.⁸⁶ The text itself makes this symbolic level eminently clear:

Far away a mouth of glass bit the darkness. This way words finally shatter, or the envelope that protects human personality. [p.245]

But it is also a real fire⁸⁷ which destroys a hotel building and incinerates several of its residents. The fire functions at these two levels of reality and the reader must grasp both at once else he misses the entire psychological meaning of the ensuing drama. For now we approach the climax of the novel and witness, through the agency of the consuming fire, the disintegration of Lieselotte (the externalized terrible mother-image) and the transformation of Theodora herself into the image of the terrible mother:

'Miss Goodman, something has happened,' said Lieselotte. 'You must come.' ...

How beautiful she is now, Theodora saw. As if some terror has melted wax. Fear flowed in Lieselotte's transparent face. Her gestures and her hair streamed ... But Theodora's gestures were wood. She watched the revival of roses, how they glowed, glowing and blowing like great clusters of garnets on the live hedge ... She was filled with a solid purpose. Her handkerchief sachet must be reached ...

'There is a garnet ring,' she said, 'that was left me by my

mother.'

She took in her hand the small cool stone.

'Then we can do nothing?' asked the dead voice of Lieselotte ...

Theodora trod through smoke.

'Lieselotte?' she called.

But she was calling fire ...

Theodora Goodman put the garnet ring on its usual finger, below the joint which showed signs of stiffening with arthritis. It was rather an ugly little ring, but part of the flesh. In the presence of the secret, leaping emotions of the fire she was glad to have her garnet. [pp.245-47]

I quote this passage at length because without direct observation of the text we would not appreciate the subtle and crucial juxtapositioning of the one image against the other - the disintegration of Lieselotte against Theodora's sudden transformation into the selfsame image of the terrible mother. As this image awakens to life in Theodora it "dies" in the outward figure of Lieselotte. Her mother's garnet ring, the images of roses (blooming again in triumphant "revival") - even the signs of arthritis upon her finger - all these relate to the figure of old Mrs Goodman and suggest that Theodora has now become the replacement of the person she had once despised. This is how the "devouring" of her personality manifests itself - not in a literalistic disintegration of the ego but in a sudden possession by, and identification with, the archetypal Great Mother. Her personality is overwhelmed by this archetypal personage - she becomes a kind of Abyssinian Queen, surrounded by the characteristic symbols of fire and burnt roses,⁸⁸ and with the garnet ring on her finger to confirm her royal state. The ring (which is now *part of the flesh*) suggests that she is now at one with - or even absorbed into - the mother-personality.⁸⁹ There is no more fighting it: she surrenders totally to the maternal image.

And as Theodora is seized from within by the terrible mother the outward manifestations of this archetype - no longer serving a purpose - disappear [Figure 6b]. Not merely Lieselotte but the formidable Mrs Rapallo too is consumed by a triumphant burst of Abyssinian fire:

The window had become quite encrusted with fire. It had a considerable, stiff jewelled splendour of its own, that ignored the elaborate ritual of the flames. Everything else, the whole

night, was subsidiary to this ritual of fire ...

It was obvious that Mrs Rapallo was glorified by such magnificence. From the window she contemplated, only vaguely, the vague evidence of faces. Fire is fiercer. Fire is more triumphant. Then, she turned and withdrew, and there was the windowful of smoke ... [p.249]

Her fantasy-life is over - the mother's destructive task is complete - so that she can now quit the stage in a blaze of glory. Thus she returns triumphantly - even ecstatically - into her native Abyssinian landscape. The simultaneous deaths of Lieselotte and Mrs Rapallo suggest that an era has come to an end - Theodora is no longer hounded by the negative mother because she is now egoless and merged into the maternal world.

As the fire dies down Theodora is overwhelmed by a wave of nostalgia and tells Katina she is about to "return to Abyssinia" [p.252]. Katina, her uroboric companion or "double", is similarly filled with an "immeasurable longing" [p.252] and prepares to make her return to the lost world of early childhood:

Already, from her corner, Katina Pavlou watched the slow smoke rise from white houses and sleepily finger the dawn. She sat upright, to arrive, to recover the lost reality of childhood. [p.251]

But Theodora hardly has to *desire* any further to return to Abyssinia, she is already there - psychologically speaking. All that remains for her now is to enact the journey on a physical level, to move out of civilized France and journey to a country where she can celebrate more fully her return to the primordial world of the uroboros.

V

Her return to Australia, the country of the bones, is made via the Atlantic and North America. However as she travels by train through the rural landscape of mid-west America Theodora is intoxicated by the flowering of corn and the triumphant regeneration of nature which she senses all around her:

All through the middle of America there was a trumpeting of corn.⁹⁰ Its full, yellow, tremendous notes pressed close to

the swelling sky. There were whole acres of time in which the yellow corn blared as if for a judgement. It had taken up and swallowed all other themes, whether belting iron, or subtler, insinuating steel, or the frail human reed. [p.255]

In mythology, particularly in the Indian mythology of North America, the spirit of the corn is symbolized by the Great Earth Mother, who was felt to desert her natural world in winter and return to it triumphantly in spring.⁹¹ Most of Theodora's life has been lived in the "winter" period, where the Good Mother was conspicuous by her absence and where life generally was hostile and devoid of the positive maternal forces. But now these flood back in a triumphant wave - Theodora has entered the uroboros and the sustaining-nourishing forces of the Earth Mother surround and contain her. But these "positive" forces can be had only at the expense of life itself - for the Great Mother (at least, as we find her in White's fictional world) will only reveal her positive face after the personality has been devoured, or after it has been returned to her world. Thus, although the positive aspect of the great corn-song is emphasized we find that it is anathema to the human personality, for it had "*swallowed ... the frail human reed*". We found this same process at work in the previous novel: the mother would only extend her positive side when Elyot's ego was "devoured" and returned to her own domain. There is, in White, either a negative "life" in the human world - sterile and devoid of meaning or value - or a positive "death" in the unconscious, where one is virtually drowned in the goodness which the Great Mother lavishes upon her off-spring.⁹²

Theodora now senses that she has found the appropriate environment in which to celebrate her return to the mother. As the train pulls in at an unnamed station in the mid-west of America Theodora abandons the train - and her plans to return to Australia - and walks off into the beckoning cornfields and natural abundances of the Great Mother. She has found her Abyssinia.⁹³

In this mental landscape of fluidity and vastness she lingers in an

ecstatic *unio mystica*, as it were "ego-less":

The emptiness of this landscape was a fullness, of pink earth, and chalk-blue for sky. And the rim of the world was white. It burned ... Theodora could smell the dust. She could smell the expanding odour of her own body, which was no longer the sour, mean smell of the human body in enclosed spaces, but the unashamed flesh on which dust and sun have lain...

In her hand she still held, she realized, the practical handbag, that last link with the external Theodora Goodman In it there were ... the strips and sheaves of tickets, railroad and steamship, which Theodora Goodman had bought in New York for the purpose of prolonging herself through many fresh phases of what was accepted as Theodora Goodman. Now she took these and tore them into small pieces which fell frivolously at the side of the road. [pp.262-64]

Here we find her determined to destroy even the last shreds of her already disintegrating personality. She is totally possessed by the idea that she must move ever-deeper into the recesses of the mother-world (here imaged as a kind of nihilistic "mergence" into natural life) in order to complete and fulfil her destiny. And after further attempting to destroy her social identity - by giving a false name to Mrs Johnson, a woman who tries to help her - the author formulates her dissolution-striving attitude in these terms:

This way perhaps she came a little closer to humility, to anonymity, to pureness of being. [p.269]

In this statement White - and Theodora - celebrate their unconscious possession by the archetypal Terrible Mother, believing - with Lieselotte and Mrs Rapallo - that the absolute extinction of human personality is the ultimate, the "highest" state of being. To be totally "devoured" by the mother is the ultimate goal of Theodora's existence.

At this point Theodora's wanderings lead her to a little shack at the side of a mountain, a shack which reminds her of "the madman's folly" [p.60] which belonged to Mr Lestrangle, and which was situated near the summit of Meroë's extinct volcano. From this shack Theodora witnesses the disintegration of light as the night consumes and devours the day - a wonderful symbolic reflection of her own inner process:

Seen from the solitude of the house the process of disintegration that was taking place at the foot of the mountains should have been frightening and tragic, but it was not. The shapes of disintegrating light protested less than the illusions of solidity with which men surround themselves. Theodora now remembered with distaste the ugly and unnatural face of the Johnsons' orange marble clock Here there were no clocks. There was a time of light and darkness. A time of crumbling hills. A time of leaf, still, trembling, fallen. [p.275]

There is, here, a vague sense that this is wrong - that the process of disintegration *should* have been frightening and tragic - but it is not. Theodora is so completely captivated by the mother-world that dissolution can only be felt as something pleasurable, as something eminently desirable.⁹⁴

In the above-quoted passage we detect another important aspect of Theodora's dissolution process: an increased resentment for solid forms, for "clocks", "marble", or "objects" which stand for solidity and permanence. For in the same way that the ego-self creates separateness on the inner plane, interrupting the flow of "oneness" with the unconscious and the Great Mother, so too the form and uniqueness of things in the outer world is rejected because it is felt to disrupt the continuity and nondifferentiated "unity" of primordial existence. There is, in Part Three, an absolute resistance to solid objects and an adulation of free-flowing elements like fire, air, or water. Beyond this there is a general abhorrence for anything in the human world (particularly the human body) which dares to assert its separateness and uniqueness, thereby challenging the all-mighty disintegrative "flow" of unconscious life. Theodora inhabits a psychic world which has not yet learnt to affirm the human being, the world of form, or the creative principle itself. She would only be satisfied, it seems, if the entire world were to be consumed by fire. She responds only to formlessness, eternity, bones, fire, and night. For her *things* are merely "obstacles" standing between her and complete merger with the mother.

In this state of virtual non-existence and disintegration Theodora encounters Holstius, a fantasy-figure or archetypal personage who suddenly

materializes from the depths of her own unconscious. White makes it seem that Holstius has come to "save" Theodora, that his task is to guide her to wholeness and to lead her back into the world of human reality. Many of White's critics fall blindly for this attempt at instant redemption, believing, as White himself believes, that Holstius' intellectual jargon and philosophical remedies actually "work" upon Theodora and lead her toward a state of higher consciousness and a condition of "lucidity" [p.286]. But all this shows is that White himself has fallen dupe to the world of the Great Mother, mistaking dissolution into the unconscious for a higher state of consciousness.

For Holstius does not lead Theodora to a "higher" level of being or to "wholeness": he merely performs the last rites of the Mother and formally initiates Theodora into the highly honorific world of the maternal uroboros. Nor does he lead Theodora back into life, as White would have us believe, but merely leads her further into the primal swamp of the Great Mother.⁹⁵ In terms of facilitating her relationship with "reality" Holstius merely reminds Theodora that the external world exists and that she must defer (or make an adaptation) to it. This adaptation, however, is false and inadequate, for despite Holstius' philosophizing,⁹⁶ Theodora's relation to reality is as tenuous as it always was: she merely makes a gesture toward returning to it, as we shall see later.

Psychologically, Holstius is a regressive father-figure or negative animus who leads Theodora deeper into the inner world only to abandon her to the destructive forces of the deep unconscious. Mythologically, Holstius is the son of the Great Mother - the male figure sent by the Abyssinian Goddess to fulfil her work.⁹⁷ He even arrives triumphantly in the spring [Theodora's "Abyssinian spring" p.256], as do all the matriarchal gods or vegetation deities of Western antiquity (Adonis, Attis, Tammuz).⁹⁸ His link to the vegetative cycle and matriarchal world is evident in the way Theodora first encounters him: she looks out into the maternal landscape, which is

full of new life and the promise of spring, and notices what at first seems like a "walking tree" [p.279].⁹⁹ This in time becomes Holstius, whose very name (German: *holz*) suggests wood or tree. Clearly, Holstius is the spirit of nature, the wood- or tree-spirit whose task it is to reduce Theodora Goodman to the level of natural life and to return her to the Great Round of maternal nature.¹⁰⁰ His character is negative, his mission regressive, yet Theodora experiences Holstius as a heaven-sent messenger, a figure whose healing hands "soothed the wounds" [p.278]. And, in a sense, he does soothe the wounds - he makes her once and for all a creature of the Great Round, no longer balanced agonizingly between the world of the human ego and the primordial unconscious. It is the "healing" of the Great Mother who drowns the ego with her goodness and maternal energy, making it feel renewed and ecstatically "whole" even though it is actually undergoing a disintegrative death-experience. This is how the Mother seduces her "loved ones" away from life - offering them this deathly gift of ecstatic non-existence. Holstius offers this gift and she accepts it willingly. Behind the smiling face of Holstius, however, we detect the wicked intrigue of the Mother urging her child-victim to move deeper into the devouring urboros.

And so, with the healing hands of Holstius upon her head, Theodora is finally returned to the ecstatic, all-embracing "oneness" of unconscious existence:

In the peace that Holstius spread throughout her body and the speckled shade of surrounding trees, there was no end to the lives of Theodora Goodman. These met and parted, met and parted, movingly. They entered into each other, so that the impulse for music in Katina Pavlou's hands, and the steamy exasperation of Sokolnikov, and Mrs Rapallo's baroque and narcotized despair were the same and understandable. And in the same way that the created lives of Theodora Goodman were interchangeable, the lives into which she had entered, making them momentarily dependent for love or hate ..., whether George Goodman or Julia Goodman, only apparently deceased, or Huntly Clarkson, or Moraïtis, or Lou, or Zack, these were the lives of Theodora Goodman, these too. [p.284]

Many critics quote this passage as evidence of Theodora's achievement of wholeness, of her entry into a "mandalic" state of being. But they do not

look closely enough at the "oneness" which has been attained. This is not the oneness of the mandala or of wholeness, but the oneness of the uroboros, of nondifferentiated unconscious life.¹⁰¹ All lives become *interchangeable* - all forms and things become intermingled and confused with everything else. A mysterious bond unites everything in a kind of primordial or cosmic soup. All differences and individualities have been drowned in the uroboros. The mandala represents a wholeness which is achieved through consciousness: it does not obliterate or destroy individual forms or qualities but unites them within a larger pattern of unity. Uroboric oneness, however, is attained through sinking down into the unconscious - by returning to the source and discovering that everything is "one" - but only because, in the source-situation, things are not yet properly formed or distinct. Everything is bathed in the primal swamp, in the sloshing of indistinct forms. The rhythm of the prose: "met and parted, met and parted, movingly" suggests a watery, an oceanic oneness where all things are contained and nurtured. Life now takes shape within the Great Round - giving a rhythmic, a musical quality to all experiences. But all things are part of the same theme - the "full golden theme of corn" [p.259] which had overwhelmed and consumed all lesser notes. Within this great totality of being nothing can become individual or independent - everything is subject to the "oneness" of the uroboros.

There is something anarchistic and regressive in this conception: oneness is had at the expense of reality, at the cost of diversity and life. This is the "oneness" which White describes in all of his novels. There is something pathological about it - it is the oneness which destroys forms and annihilates the created world. It is the oneness of the Terrible Mother, the source which sucks all life back into itself. Theodora's present state represents a regressive or low-level mystical condition. She has not yet learnt to see herself as a separate being, as something with an individual ego-self or personality, so she identifies herself with the All

and lives in a state of *participation mystique* with her environment. This is the mysticism of early childhood or of primitive man, where the ego has not yet differentiated itself from the unconscious and so "all things are one" because the unconscious psyche colours and conditions everything that is perceived or experienced.¹⁰² We found this at the Hôtel du Midi, where Theodora reduced every character into a positive-father or a negative-mother figure. Her projections clouded and obscured her perceptions of life, so that "reality" became a perpetual nightmare, a constant repetition of unresolved patterns at work within her own psyche. The parental figures of early childhood were always before her, so that she could never experience people as they are, but only as they appear to her through the reality-transforming faculty of her own unconscious. What she needs, then, is not increased fluidity and oneness, but an increased respect for the world of form and for the separateness and uniqueness of people and things.¹⁰³ Thus when Holstius makes her see that Katina, Sokolnikov, Mrs Rapallo, and every other character she encounters in her career are all parts of herself - parts of an amorphous being called Theodora Goodman - this is precisely what she does not need to know. She is already caught up in *participation mystique* and needs to become aware of the individuality and distinctiveness of other people, to realize that there is an objective world which is separate from herself and from her projection-making psyche. But Holstius compounds this confusion of psyche and world, and even encourages her to see it as the ultimate state of being, so that she is lost forever to the fantasy world of the deep unconscious.

Having thus redirected Theodora to the maternal unconscious he then makes a curious - and to my mind largely ineffectual - move. He reminds Theodora that the external, social world still exists and that, as unfortunate as it may seem, she must make a deference to it:

'You will go back up to the house,' he said. 'Did you know?'
 'Yes,' she said, or mumbled. 'I suppose I knew.'

....

'They will come for you soon, with every sign of the greatest kindness,' Holstius said. 'They will give you warm drinks, simple, nourishing food, and encourage you to relax in a white room and tell your life. Of course you will not be taken in by any of this, do you hear? But you will submit. It is part of the deference one pays to those who prescribe the reasonable life. They are admirable people really, though limited.'

Theodora nodded her head to each point she must remember.

'If we know better,' Holstius said, 'we must keep it under our hats.'

She would pin on it the big black rose, of which only Zack, of all the Johnsons, had sensed the significance.

Then Theodora sighed.

....

'So you understand?' asked Holstius ...

'Yes,' said Theodora. 'I understand.'

She had worked it out, mathematically, in stones, spread on the ground at the toes of her long shoes.

'So that it will not be so irksome,' Holstius said.

'No,' she agreed.

She could accept the pathetic presumption of the white room.

[pp.283-84]

Here we can only imagine that White, believing that his character has actually attained "wholeness", realizes intellectually that "wholeness" must also contain the world and so makes this unconvincing gesture toward relating Theodora to humanity. The equation is made by deduction, not by vision, and for this reason Holstius' words are empty and lifeless. Even Theodora - never a wizard at logic or reason - had "worked it out mathematically, in stones spread on the ground". The prose is dull and flat because White is intervening in the story, pushing Theodora where she does not want to go. And the picture he gives of "reality" is utterly unconvincing and emasculated: a white room, pathetic people, warm drinks and kindness. Clearly, White himself does not "believe" in social reality - for him it is synonymous with the madhouse. He is caught in a dilemma: his idealism tells him that Theodora must accept reality, but the actualities of the novel suggest that society is irrelevant, something which is best dispensed with. For White, the *true* state of being is still one of absolute abandon, a kind of anarchistic nothingness, which he calls "anonymity" or "pureness of being". A more precise term would be "uroboric

incest" or "oneness with the mother". This state of primordial ecstasy can never compare with any human level of being, and so the human world is made to seem pathetic and foolish, and people who live in it are (at best) "admirable ... though limited".¹⁰⁴

Holstius himself (like White) does not really believe what he is saying, or what he is made to say. For him society is of doubtful value, as it is for Theodora. But he suggests that she should grin and bear it, despite its pitiable character. He is led on by White's idealism, hoping that Theodora will pick up on it and unite with the world so as to demonstrate her "wholeness". But she does not unite with it. Instead of willing acceptance there is blank resignation and mournful retrospect. She feels that she is leaving behind all that is of ultimate value and importance. For psychologically she is still at one with the mother, a child of the depths, far removed from life. She simply dons a social mask, a *persona*, with which she expects to cope with reality, but behind which she is actually lost to the maternal uroboros. Even Holstius acknowledges this: he suggests that if she "knows better" (i.e. if she has a deeper sense of life) she must keep it under her hat. The hat-image recurs at the end of the novel and is of particular importance to our present discussion. The *persona* that she dons is a kind of hat-personality, a mask which suffices as a social self in the absence of a genuine ego-personality. The hat itself - which is said to be "more a sop to convention than an attempt at beauty" [p.260] - is a mere conventional gesture, a cheap attempt at social adaptation. So too her hat-personality is a "sop to convention", a hoax behind which lies the real being, the uroboric self, at float in the sea of the deep unconscious.¹⁰⁵ And at the end of the novel, as she engages in social intercourse with the "mild man" and the admirable though limited people of rural America, Theodora's uroboric self is far removed from her social mundanities and has no relation to her "life" in the upper-world:

The hat sat straight, but the doubtful rose trembled and glittered, leading a life of its own. [p.287]

The hat-personality or mask sat "straight" (i.e. attempts to appear adjusted and well-adapted) but the black Abyssinian rose - "doubtful" of the world and of social reality - leads a separate life of its own. It "trembled and glittered" because all vitality and psychic energy is still held in the deep unconscious, in Abyssinia, and is unavailable to her conscious or social existence. It is unavailable because the mother has sucked back all life into herself - leaving the ego-consciousness as an empty shell and Theodora as a mere semblance of a human being. Still, in her own terms, her journey is complete. She has fulfilled her life's goal and is now at one with the mother, and -- save for a feeble mask or persona - is utterly extinguished in the eternal world of the uroboros.

VI

By way of conclusion I would like to make a few general remarks about the novel and suggest how the foregoing psychological study might alter critical inquiry in the future. The study of Theodora's character reveals two distinct, though not unrelated, features: a pleromatic or uroboric fixation on the one hand, and possession by the terrible mother archetype on the other. Both relate to infantile psychology, or rather, they suggest that the adult person in whom they operate is still tied up in an infantile situation, is living regressively and forever looking back into the past in search of the golden days of early childhood. This creates, to be sure, a mystical orientation, but a mysticism of a "low" or inferior order. It is a mysticism which derives from the weakness, or rather the absence of the ego-personality. There is very little separating the individual as such from the great numinous regions of the collective unconscious - the individual is bathed in it, like a child in the uroboric situation. Theodora has constant access to the numinous-mystical dimension precisely because she has not yet differentiated an ego-consciousness capable of rising above this dimension and of bringing her into life. She seems

"divine" merely because she has not yet become human. She is the daughter, or rather the victim, of the Terrible Mother, who holds her fast in the source-situation. Thus to say, as many critics have, that she is a "saint",¹⁰⁶ a "chosen one",¹⁰⁷ and that she has "the gift of God"¹⁰⁸ is quite erroneous. She is at the mercy of a dark divinity, an Abyssinian Goddess, and is in no way related to "God". She is quite removed from the Redemptive Father, and is caught up in an entirely negative matriarchal situation. Experience of "God" is usually related to a mysticism of a higher order, which presupposes a higher development of ego-consciousness.¹⁰⁹ But where ego-consciousness is absent this does not bring the personality "closer to God", as critics naively suppose - rather, the Terrible Mother erupts into view and, as Queen of the Underworld, stands as the presiding deity over psychic disintegration and uroboros or "source" mysticism.

Nor can we say anymore that Theodora is, in the well-worn critical phrase, "in search of her identity". Quite the contrary is true: she attempts to *extinguish* her identity at every point, to destroy "the great monster Self" and melt back into the pleroma. Yet critics continue to speak of her "quest for self-discovery",¹¹⁰ her "search for selfhood" and "identity".¹¹¹ Such imprecision is unforgiveable, particularly when we are dealing with a fictional work whose exclusive focus is the psychological world of a dissolution-striving individual. Far from asserting the "quest for identity" Theodora is actually involved in a cult of the dead - her one aim is to achieve a beatific non-existence in the unconscious.

Brian Kiernan comes closest to the mark when he tells us that "Theodora finds Reality within the world by shedding her social roles and identifying selflessly with the external forms that reassert themselves in the fluctuations of the natural world".¹¹² This is a tentative, nonpsychological way of saying that Theodora seeks as her ultimate goal the extinction of self in the depths of the maternal unconscious. But, having gone so far, Kiernan does not offer any critical comment on Theodora's position.¹¹³ This is what I find most distressing about

White criticism: those critics who realize that Theodora is on a path of dissolution do not offer any criticism of her inward quest. They seem to go along blindly with the author, believing, as he does, that the road to dissolution and regression is the road to Reality, the road to fulfilment and salvation. Frankly, many of White's critics are bewildered by his vision and are unable to take up a genuinely critical dialogue with it.¹¹⁴ And so the obvious flaws in White's vision - his nihilism, his rejection of the world and the human being - pass unnoticed and critics celebrate his closeness to "God" and his affirmation of "mystical" states.

One of the questions most often raised in critical discussions of *The Aunt's Story* is this: is Theodora mad? There is much divergence on this topical issue, but basically critics separate into two distinct "camps". On the one side we have the "modernist" critics who claim that she is not mad - she has simply reached a higher form of sanity and is misunderstood by society.¹¹⁵ On the other side we have the "rationalist" critics who argue that she is mad, that she is "clearly schizophrenic at the end of the novel".¹¹⁶

I can see the intentions of both sides: the modernist critics want to point out (in the footsteps of R.D. Laing and his school) that our notion of sanity is cramped and in need of revision; the rationalists simply point out that Theodora is, after all, taken away to an asylum and that she is quite definitely deranged. As much as I can sympathize with the modernist viewpoint I think it is inappropriate in the present context. While our concept of sanity may well be in need of revision I believe that there still exist undisputed forms of madness. Not every "crazy Annie" (a term used by Mrs Johnson to describe Theodora) is a high-soaring mystic exploring higher forms of consciousness and reality. Some, like Theodora Goodman, are hopelessly lost in the labyrinth of the collective unconscious, unable to distinguish any more between the real and the imaginal. The radical modernist viewpoint is inclined to become too simplistic and too extreme:

it would turn every madman into a would-be mystic misunderstood by an "insane" society. But clearly, Theodora Goodman is caught in the grip of the collective unconscious, which is simply my own polite way of saying that she is suffering from an acute form of schizophrenia.

True, she does put on a mask-personality, and attempts to look adapted and "back in life", but the regressive restoration of the persona¹¹⁷ is no solution to the personality crisis. It merely serves to emphasize the schizophrenic dissociation at the centre of her being: the persona-mask is restored, but inside lies an abyss of fiery libido, as unruly as before and liable to flare up at any moment and overwhelm her. The putting on of the mask-personality is in fact a common feature of the schizophrenic process itself¹¹⁸ and is no guarantee against further psychotic upheavals.

But despite its madness, or perhaps because of it, *The Aunt's Story* is one of White's best and most successful novels. It is said to be White's favourite book, and one can see why - it has a certain natural dignity and charm which make it a compelling and fascinating work. Its language is at times exquisite and highly poetic, and in some ways the whole story reads like a long narrative poem. And it is a beautifully designed and conceived work, with an intensity and a vitality which is not always present in his larger works. But this same vitality and intensity sometimes leads to excess. Often we find - particularly in the somewhat confusing middle section - that there is too much symbolism, too much visionary material, and that the texture of the prose is burdened and constrained by too much meaning.¹¹⁹

This is, I believe, partly due to the novel's subject and partly due to a creative flaw in the author himself. For the subject of the novel is, after all, the disintegration of a schizophrenic individual. The schizophrenic's world *is* one of excess - everywhere he turns he is confronted by a psychic image, a content of his own unconscious, because

the collective unconscious has been let loose and its archaic and energy-laden contents have burst forth upon the face of the world. As the process of disintegration unfolds the unconscious psyche comes to the fore and virtually litters the story with a flood of archaic concepts, archetypal images, and symbolic processes. The richness - and excess - of this novel is the richness and excess of the schizoid imagination, or of the archetypal psyche as it is revealed through a process of schizophrenic breakdown. To this extent the author manages skillfully and faithfully to represent the actual processes at work in the disintegration of personality. But the fact that White cannot control this flood of psychic activity indicates that he is as much the victim of the breakdown as Theodora. His own imagination has burst forth in this work and he is at a loss to direct or contain it. Yet, strangely enough, this lack of control is not detrimental to the work: for the reader senses it mainly as the work's "vitality" - as its abundant life and moving force - and he is buoyed along, sometimes joyfully, sometimes disturbingly, by this flow of unconscious life.

This brings me to the central weakness of the novel: White's "closeness" to, or his identification with, his work. *The Aunt's Story* is a kind of psycho-mythological autobiography, a record of White's own inner struggle with, and final submission to, the dark world of the Terrible Mother. This is not a weakness in itself. White is obviously a "psychological" writer and we must learn to appreciate his works as contributions towards a new kind of psycho-mythological fiction.¹²⁰ But when the author himself is so involved in his work that we sense his presence everywhere - in every fictional character, in every event or experience, then we can rightly complain of a certain intellectual claustrophobia.¹²¹ There is, for instance, little evidence that White is able to stand away from Theodora and "see" her for what she really is. He is so close to her that he is unable to set her psychic disturbance in any real context. This is why White cannot admit that Theodora is mad, but pretends that she has achieved

a new state of "lucidity" [p.286] and is far superior to her fellow human beings. White's identification with his character prevents him from gaining an objective stance to the processes at work in his own novel. Vincent Buckley anticipated this when he said: "White has no set of devices by which [Theodora's] madness can be placed in the perspectives of sanity".¹²² He cannot provide the objective context because he too, like Theodora, is caught up in the world of the Terrible Mother and cannot concede that unity with her dark world is synonymous with madness.¹²³ For him it is the ultimate, the highest state of being. This is why *The Aunt's Story* falls short as a great work and why we have the incongruities and fictional disturbances occurring in Part Three of the novel. That is by far the weakest section of the novel because White tries to pit his nihilistic vision against reality and to make Theodora seem triumphant and "superior". Had he not intervened in the course of the novel - but merely left Theodora alone, in her own, her true state of madness, he would have created a far better work. It would have been a masterpiece on schizophrenic breakdown and daemonic possession. All that is required is a greater degree of distance between the author and his work - an ability to reflect upon his creation and his fictional world. But White never - or rarely - provides us with an objective focus. He is usually "at one" with his central character, whether spinster aunt, madman, nature-lover, or visionary artist. Still, the saving grace of *The Aunt's Story* is that White rarely flatters Theodora - except for making her seem "whole" and "lucid" at the end. She is, for the main, a wholly authentic character, despite the subjective and solipsistic¹²⁴ frame through which her story unfolds.



Chapter Three

The Great Goddess and Her Son

1. Inside the Great Round

There is also the anti-hero, or hero-in-reverse who is another form of the great mother's son. He lives in her lap and off the lap of the land ... He just goes along with what is going, a stream slipping through the great body of mother nature, ending ultimately in the amniotic estuary streaming into oceanic bliss.
- James Hillman¹

Now that we have uncovered - at considerable length and in great detail - the mythic structure of White's fictional world, we can afford to be more concise in our studies of the novels. *The Tree of Man* [1956] carries forward the central theme of *The Aunt's Story*: the longing to return to the Mother or Source. There is, however, one crucial change in the mythic structure: in this next book the mother archetype attains an abstract level of existence and is called "God". In one sense this is a very positive development, but in another it is less profitable. It is important that the mother archetype has been separated from the personal mother, thereby releasing energy bound up in the family romance and re-directing it into a creative archetypal field. But it is quite another thing to put the Mother up on a pedestal and call her God. The same archetype that drove Theodora into madness and disintegration is now set up as the Deity itself. In ancient times (in the Graeco-Roman world) it would be unthinkable to pin the name of "God" upon the first archetypal figure that was encountered in the inner world. The unconscious is a polytheistic field - and not every archetype (some actively malign and devilish) warrants the name of the Most High.² Yet White has rushed into the business of "God" without caution or reflection. He has encountered the non-ego - which in his psyche is ruled by the image of the mother - and has jumped to the conclusion that this must be God.³ His tendency to associate the Mother with "God" was already present - unconsciously - in the previous novel:

Walking with us, slowly, because she had a hump, or again in the oval drawing-room, she encouraged us to talk on significant subjects, to discuss ourselves, and God. But more particularly ourselves, because in creating our ego by her own will, God became a minor influence, the power was hers. [AS, p.163]

At this point, Theodora sometimes said, I should begin to read Gibbon, or find religion, instead of speaking to myself in my own room. But ... Mrs Goodman had never encouraged religion, as she herself was God. [AS, p.128]

The first passage forms part of Wetherby's soliloquy about Muriel Leese-Leese, the formidable patroness who seemed to have usurped the power and the position of the Almighty. The second is from Theodora's meditation about her life and the crucial role played by her god-like mother. Of course these are ironic passages, and it is obvious that White intended them to have suggestive rather than literal force. Yet they do form part of the unconscious history, as it were, of White's conception of his deity. Belief in a "God" is never a spurious affair: it always has a firm history if we are prepared to look for it. The moment of the "conversion" is simply the time when the unconscious undercurrent reaches consciousness and one is suddenly forced to admit to the presence of a deity or god. White himself tells us that although he did not consciously believe in a "God" at the time of *The Aunt's Story* he felt that - in retrospect - such a belief was "already developing in my unconscious".⁴ His belief in a higher power is grounded solidly in an experience of an archetype, which was always present but never before realized. In *The Aunt's Story* - and even in *The Living and the Dead* - there is overwhelming evidence for the existence of an archetypal figure or deity, but White had not yet begun to think of his ruling archetype in terms of a "God". Thus the jump from the early novels to *The Tree of Man* - with its central focus upon a personal God - is not as great as we might first imagine: White has simply *named* (or more precisely, *mis-named*) his dominant symbolic force.

The problem with this is that an essentially regressive psychic figure (previously imaged as Mrs Goodman or Muriel Leese-Leese) is elevated to a divine status and made the object of worship and adoration. By divinizing

the Mother he falls more readily into her arms: like Theodora Goodman he turns his deadliest foe (the destructive mother-world of Abyssinia) into his goal and object of desire. By this same process he now sees his mother-fixation as something "spiritual" or religious. Being the Great Mother's son (her *puer aeternus*) now becomes linked with the idea of serving an Ultimate Deity, a Supreme Power [see Appendix]. This is, to be sure, a radical misinterpretation of psychic life: an example of a modern Western consciousness which is out of touch with the unconscious and which does not allow for the archetypal force which holds it fast from within. The pathology of the mother-complex is overlooked, and the content is spiritualized in an inappropriate way. But there is a positive aspect of this, which I have touched on already, and this relates to the detachment of libido from the personal mother.

I

One of the things which strikes the reader in the early stages of the novel is the way in which the figure of old Mrs Parker is under-stated. We have learnt to expect an all-powerful, tyrannical, even daemonic image of the mother. But Stan Parker's mother is simply a dear old soul, a "frail" woman with a "pink nose" [p.14] and "gold-rimmed spectacles" [p.11]; who is "humourless", "frightened" [p.10] and unable to make sense of "a world that is not nice" [p.14].⁵ She is thin, colourless, and thoroughly forgettable. It is almost as if White is over-reacting; is going to unnatural lengths to take all libido away from the personal mother and to leave her lifeless. Stan has very little regard, much less passion, for his mother. When she dies he simply "touched her cold hands, and buried her, and went away" [p.15]. And the neighbours are moved to complain that he "had no feelings" for his mother, "but" - we are told - "it was just that he had not known her very well" [p.15]. Like old Mrs Parker's failing voice, which is said to be "bare", "dull", and "scrubbed clean of the emotions", we find here a son-mother relation which is totally devoid of libidinal concern or involvement.

But the colour and dynamism of the mother-son connection has not disappeared. It has simply been given over to the archetypal image of the Great Mother, which in this novel is synonymous with Nature or the Earth Mother. Stan Parker enjoys an ecstatic and highly charged relationship with Nature: his communion with natural and elemental forces always bears - as we shall see - a decidedly erotic and passionate stamp. But this is not actually a *relationship* in the strict sense: he is merely in her grip, is acted upon and passively caught up in her world. For one cannot *relate* to the Great Mother - she is too vast; she is primeval, oceanic femininity and is scarcely approachable on normal, conscious, human terms. Psychologically speaking, the ego (or son) is no match for the collective unconscious (mother): it cannot cope with her primordality, her highly emotional, untamed nature. Thus whenever "She" does appear to him it is always in tyrannical outbursts of flood, storm, or fire. Stan is overwhelmed and disoriented by these experiences: yet he waits eagerly for them because these are the moments when she, the Great Goddess, appears near to him. At all other times he feels isolated and alone, devoid of life-energy and alienated from meaning. As was the case with Elyot Standish, the son is either drowned in the Mother's "goodness", or he is alone in an alien universe. There is nothing to mediate the contents of the collective unconscious; there is no *anima* (or soul-figure) to direct the richness of the inner life into the structure of consciousness. Thus the contents of the maternal unconscious retain their elemental, archaic, and disintegrative character to the end. The Great Mother is a daemonic lover: she consumes the ego-personality with her "love", or destroys it by her absence. This is Stan Parker's predicament all through the story - he achieves no independence or individual strength in relation to her, but, again and again, he merely sinks back into the disintegrative field of her world, obliterated by the power of her embrace.

This archetypal relationship contrasts strongly with the central human relationship of the book: that between Stan and his wife Amy. From the outset

it is clear that Stan is not in love with Amy. He is already "married" to the Great Mother and Amy is merely his mate, companion, and child-bearer. That is to say, he is related only collectively and instinctively to his wife. Amy Fibbens is no-one in particular: she is skinny and unattractive, one girl among many others at Kelly's Corner. The choice of partner is made without feeling or emotion - it is simply a mechanical response: he needs a companion and she is available. There is no romance, no courtship, just a simple, quick marriage:

Stan Parker did not decide to marry the Fibbens girl, if decision implies pros and cons; he simply knew that he would do it, and as there was no reason why the marriage ceremony should be delayed, it was very soon performed, in the little church at Yuruga, which looks a bit cockeyed, because built by hands less skilled than willing, on a piece of bumpy ground. [p.24]

Here we can hardly speak of "love", but merely an impersonal acting-out of collective roles. Amy is described as "the Fibbens girl", and the marriage itself is a most ordinary occasion, which must be "performed" without delay. Appropriately enough, the church building, which "looks a bit cockeyed", is less a sacred than a secular structure, designed merely to do its job as a social institution. The marriage, thoroughly dull and conventional, is robbed of its "spiritual" or even "personal" meaning. It is not a *hieros gamos*, a divine union or mingling of souls. The real mystical union takes place between Stan and the Great Mother: she is his real lover, his true bride.

From the beginning there is a sense of conflict between Amy and the Mother. By marrying Stan she unwittingly puts herself in opposition to the Great Mother: both are contestants for his soul. But there is never any doubt as to which party wins out - the Great Mother, with the force of elemental nature, never loses her primary claim upon his soul. Beside the sheer majesty of the Great Mother Amy Fibbens pales into insignificance, as can be seen in the following section:

'Does it always blow in these parts?' She laughed.
He made a motion with his mouth. It was not one of the things to answer. Besides, he recognized and accepted the omnipotence of distance.

But this was something she did not, and perhaps never would. She had begun to hate the wind, and the distance, and the road, because her importance tended to dwindle.

Just then, too, the wind took the elbow of a bough and broke it off, and tossed it, dry and black and writhing, so that its bark harrowed the girl's cheek, slapped terror for a moment into the horse, and crumbled, used and negative, in what was already their travelled road.

Achhh, cried the girl's hot breath, her hands touching the livid moment of fright that was more than wound, while the man's body was knotted against the horse's strength. [p.27]

An effective rebuke from the Mother! The dead branch of a tree, flung at the bride momentarily by a sudden wind, gashes her face and returns to the ground, *used and negative*. It is as if it had a mission to perform: stirred up by an angry earth-spirit after Amy had pitted herself against Nature by hating wind, distance, and road. She hated these because "her importance tended to dwindle": that is, the mortal woman, the skinny bride, begins to feel overshadowed by Mother Nature. Stan, on the other hand, had "accepted the omnipotence of distance". For him the Mother is supreme, there is no questioning or resisting her obvious omnipotence. After this incident Stan looks over at Amy and sees a confused, frightened girl, "whom apparently he had married" [p.27]. We find this tendency right through the novel: every time the Earth Mother intervenes in the course of events, she cuts Amy down to size and causes Stan to look at her with alien eyes - this ridiculous girl, whom *apparently* he had married.⁶ Later, the expression used by the author at such moments is: "this woman his wife". The phrase tends to emphasize the sense of alienation - he can hardly believe that this stranger-woman is also his wife.

But they do have moments of passionate union. These are, however, rare and always impersonal or instinctual, as we can see from this example:

Flesh is heroic by moonlight.
The man took the body of the woman and taught it fearlessness.
The woman's mouth on the eyelids of the man spoke from her consoling depths ... She could feel the doubts shudder in his thighs, just as she had experienced his love and strength. And out of her she could not wring the love that she was capable of giving, at last, enough, complete as sleep or death. [pp.29-30]

Flesh is also archetypal by moonlight. Under the influence of the moon (one of White's recurrent images of the Great Goddess) Stan and Amy become impersonal,

anonymous forces engaged in an instinctual embrace. Note the sentence: *the* man took the body of *the* woman and taught *it* fearlessness. No longer Stan or Amy but the man and the woman; or, more mythically, Mother and Son (since this is the only contrasexual pair-bond imagined in White's fiction). In these moments of union, Amy becomes an incarnation of the Goddess herself, and Stan is filled with a fiery passion for "Her". But always, when the death-ecstasy of orgasm has subsided, Amy shrinks back to human proportions and Stan feels once more alien and remote from her.

These passionate experiences occur very rarely. For the main their sexual life is completely unsatisfactory, and this forces Amy to resort to sexual fantasies about other men (Mick O'Dowd, Tom Armstrong, and others) and, finally, to adultery itself (with Leo, the commercial traveller). Stan is impassioned only by the Mother Goddess and cannot bring himself to love a mere human woman.⁷ The "love" he communicates by day is largely a facade: at best it is affection, or tender concern.⁸ By the end of the story he can hardly bring himself to look squarely at his wife - he is revolted by the mere sight of her, and is always glad to sneak away into his workshop or to leave her to go into town.

II

But very soon we begin to realize why Stan is so repelled by his wife. By now we should be able to guess it: not only is she a "mere mortal", someone who does not match up to his fantasy-image, but she also comes to carry the archetypal image of the Terrible Mother. Stan, like Elyot and Theodora, idealizes Mother Nature in an absurd way. He does not see her negative face. The negative side of his psychic situation, strongly felt but never realized, is projected upon Amy: she is made to carry a negative archetypal load that does not belong to her.

We first become conscious of this at the time of the visit of the pedlar, the ribald man selling Bibles and magnetic water. He speaks to them of the

ecstasies of the "spiritual life", of life lived before the presence of "God". (It is apparent, however, that this man's "God" is also the Mother Goddess, for he is concerned primarily with drunkenness, ecstasy, and loss of rational consciousness.) The man's stories of far-away places (such as the African Gold Coast) evoke a restlessness in Stan's personality: "As if other glittering images that he sensed inside him without yet discovering, stirred, heaved almost to the surface" [p.39]. Amy, however, is disturbed by the man's unruly character, by his dissolution-striving attitude, and by his loathing of her material possessions. He tells her that by hoarding material objects, such as the little silver nutmeg grater, we "insure ourselves" against direct experience with the "Almighty" [p.40]. It is here that Stan begins to suspect that Amy, with her great emphasis upon materiality and objects, represents a threat to his own "subtler longing" [p.39], his yearning for cosmic ecstasy and self-dissolution. After the pedlar disappears, their contradictory responses to his dissolution-striving attitude are represented in these terms:

His Gold Coast still glittered in a haze of promise as he grubbed the weeds out of his land, as he felled trees and tautened the wire fences he had put round what was his. It was, by this time, almost enclosed. But what else was his he could not say. Would his life of longing be lived behind the wire fences? [p.42]

Later, when the young woman was sweeping the place where he had slept, she could not sweep him out She had to go back into the room to see what her possessions really were. There was nothing much of which she could be proud; there was nothing sufficiently useless, except her little silver nutmeg grater.

Then Amy Parker began to burn inside her cold skin.

'Stan,' she called, ran, her skirts brushing hens, ... 'do you know', she said clearly as her breath allowed, 'what that old man has done? He has pinched the nutmeg grater!' [pp.41-42]

Amy wants to sweep the man out of the house - that is, to get rid of the non-material, "ecstatic" influence in their lives. (Compare this with old Mrs Goodman's hostile attitude toward the Man who was Given his Dinner.) Stan is "moved" by the man's visions of the Beyond and feels trapped by his domestic scene. The dualism between the life of the Ecstatic Mother, of free-flowing ecstasy and abandon, and the life of materiality (governed by the image of the Chthonic Mother) is emphasized by the pedlar's apparent theft of the nutmeg

grater. This "symbolic" act, which is supposed to highlight the conflict between ecstatic life and the Chthonic Mother, seems forced and contrived: certainly it is not as successful as the incident involving the Man who was Given his Dinner and Mrs Goodman. The "theft" of the nutmeg grater is simply too deliberate: it is not symbolic at all, but merely represents, I would say, authorial intrusion into the story. Still, the point is clear: spirit and matter are opposed, and Amy, as the image of materialism, is made indirectly responsible for the imprisoning of Stan's spirit. The hackneyed equation is: if the pedlar steals the nutmeg grater, then this "defeats" Amy's materialism and allows Stan's spirit to soar.

In reality, of course, Stan's predicament has little or nothing to do with Amy. It is simply that the mother archetype - in its downward, regressive aspect - fixates and ensnares him. It is no accident that the word *matter* relates to *mater*, which in turn means mother. The Mother Goddess is mythologically and symbolically associated with earth, matter, materialism, and physicality. In White's fiction the mother-figure is always associated with material things, objects, and the body: Mrs Standish filled her house with "bright things" and enjoyed a lust of the body, Mrs Goodman was noted for her "bright", "hard" rings and was the proud owner of a little silver paper-knife, and now Amy Parker (although certainly less terrible than Mrs Goodman) is associated with a little silver nutmeg grater, and with mundane, imprisoning life. Behind White's loathing for physicality and material things we can detect the archetypal image of the Terrible Mother: the *magna mater* who crushes and suffocates the subtler realm of the spirit. Matter is "hard", "bright", and "vicious" - it is linked with the maternal unconscious which snuffs out the aspirations of spirit.⁹

Later in the story Amy is associated with cows: she has a favourite cow, Julia, which she tends with great concern. She is always imaged seated upon a block of wood in the milking shed, tugging on the teats of cows: "She loved her copper cow in the orange light of evening. The world was open. Peace fell into her bucket ... She bowed her head against the cow and listened to the

sounds of peace" [p.36]. Eventually her own pregnancy is coordinated with the pregnancy of Julia,¹⁰ but that old cow dies as she gives birth to a calf, and that same night, running from the shed in fright, Amy slips in the dark and suffers a miscarriage. Quite clearly: Amy is the attendant of, and even the *image* of, the Cow: the maternal, reproductive, milk-giving creature of Mother Earth.¹¹ In ancient Egypt the Great Earth Mother was represented by a cow - Hathor - and her image was worshipped by pregnant women and by farmers at the time of the sowing of the seed: she was felt to lend fertility to the land.¹² But in antiquity she functioned in a highly positive way, and was given divine status, whereas here White gives the cow an ambivalent significance. He links the Cow-Goddess, not only with the fruitfulness of the earth, but with the image of the Terrible Mother; the chthonic, material, fixating and ensnaring aspect of natural life:

She was fixed now, seated with the bucket between her knees;
the river flowed away from her. [p.36]

Her eyes had a hungry glitter for something she did not possess,
... seated at her cow's side, with the teats slacker in her
aching hands. [p.36]

In the first passage Amy's *fixity* and the river's fluidity are opposed. In the second the cow-woman is once more a possessive force: she manifests an all-consuming hunger. Here we can see how the cow-goddess becomes the carrier for the shadow-side of Stan's idealized Earth Mother - she carries that side which he will not consciously recognize in his image of Nature.

Stan's cows are often dying with calves in their bellies, or give birth to still-born calves. And at the same time Amy Parker suffers not one but a whole series of miscarriages - which extend over a period of several years. Not much is said about this, but between husband and wife there is a growing sense of unease, which relates to more than the physical or literal condition of childlessness [cf. p.66]. Symbolically, the cow and the cow-woman are linked with the image of the death-dealing mother: the mother who conceives but does not bring forth; the off-spring die in the womb. This image of being still-born, or dying in the womb, is strongly represented in *Riders in the Chariot*, where it

assumes central importance. Suffice it to say here that this image relates directly to the psychology of the *puer aeternus* or Mother's son: he is in the womb, or matrix, of the unconscious and is denied "life" and separate existence from the Mother. The image of the fertile yet non-productive mother-woman is a wonderfully apt symbol for Stan's psychic situation.

III

How, exactly, does the Mother Goddess keep her son Stan Parker caught up in her womb [Figure 7a]? How does she fixate and ensnare him? I can think of three ways, though there may be others. First, Stan's life is *co-ordinated with nature*. His life follows the course of the seasons: the book opens with the promise of spring and ends with the natural decay of winter. Everything is conditioned and pre-determined by Mother Nature - his life is dominated by her authority, whose voice is felt to be the voice of God, or of "Fate". Many critics and reviewers have celebrated this aspect of Stan's existence - they have pointed out how wonderfully he lives "in harmony with nature". Yet I would emphasize, rather, that Stan is castrated by Nature: he is rendered ineffectual and overwhelmed by it. He does not have a separate self through which he might dialogue with it; he is merely a bit of nature, passively buoyed along by its elemental processes and finally returned to its bosom at the end. In actual fact Stan does not have the status of a human being - he does not create a meaningful and stable counterpole to the reality of the natural world. Man becomes man only with the advent of freewill, with the power of choice and self-determination. Prior to that time he is simply an extension of Nature: a puppet played upon by forces beyond his control. In *The Tree of Man* there is no tension between man and Fate (which is the stuff of great literature, and in particular, tragedy). Here we find an image of man submitting and surrendering to whatever "is intended":

But he knew also there was nothing to be done. He knew that where his cart had stopped, he would stop. There was nothing to be done. He would make the best of this cell in which he had been locked. [p.13]

Fate is felt to be an immutable law, an imprisoning force, yet there is no

questioning it, merely passive acceptance. Consciousness (which differentiates man from nature) is defined by Jung as an *opus contra naturam*, a work against nature. Nature has to be partly opposed, for consciousness is not a "natural" thing.¹³ Yet for Stan Parker, in love as he is with the image of Mother Nature and primordial existence, the prospect of "opposing silence and rock and tree ... did not seem possible" [p.15].

Second, the Mother Goddess keeps him bound to *materialism*, to a literalism of psychic images. The entire psychic drama is projected outside himself upon the face of the world: all the symbolic forces are "out there", in Nature, in the moods of the elemental world. For him, psyche and world are synonymous - he cannot differentiate his own unconscious imagery from the external world of images. Like Theodora Goodman, he lives in a state of *participation mystique* with his environment, or we could say he experiences the world through a solipsistic frame. So long as this continues self-realization is impossible. So long as everything is "out there" the human person cannot know the contents of his inner world, or the forces that move him from within. Consequently, Stan remains unchanged by his experiences - transformations occur, but they take place only within the unconscious, within the realm of nature. He is so caught up in matter, *physis*, body, world, that it overwhelms him. The literalisms of Nature, of *Mater Natura*, keep him stuck in unconsciousness and animal life. Ultimately, the mother's "materialism" is experienced as daemonic because it stifles the spirit and inhibits realization.¹⁴

Finally, Stan Parker experiences the imprisoning aspect of the Mother in terms of his *inarticulateness*, his inability to communicate and, more importantly, his failure to realize or uncover "the poem that was locked inside him" [p.29]. Hathor, the Cow Goddess, will allow of fertility, agriculture, subsistence-type living, the mysteries of natural life - but she rejects knowledge, reflection, or *logos*. These latter aspects are felt to intrude upon and sully her pristine realm of silence and mystery. And this is where we find Stan at odds with himself: for while he advocates silence and mystery, the primordial state of things, he also feels suffocated by silence and wants to "know". White is also

a victim of the same deception, for while he constantly depreciates *logos*, the word, and the rational mind, he yet feels stifled by its absence. As much as he tries to emphasize the "return to the mother" (i.e. silence, primitivism, the nonrational) there is at the same time a counter-tendency, a desire to know, to see, to make sense of experience, to "read" the mysteries that he so persistently tells us should not be read. We find these contradictory tendencies at work in the following section - where, after the storm, he is musing about the mystery that has passed:

...the orange fire of evening [blazed] with a prophetic intensity that would no more be read than the flash of lightning.

The man, who went about his evening work, did not try. He was tired. He was also at peace under the orange sky. Events had exhausted him. He had not learned to think far, and in what progress he had made had reached the conclusion he was a prisoner in his human mind, as in the mystery of the natural world. [p.49]

If we look closely at this section we find a real confusion of feelings, which might be re-formulated in this way: I do not understand what is happening to me, nor will I try; but I wish I did know because I feel a prisoner of my experience. That is, at one and the same time he celebrates and despises his unconsciousness. Being "at one" with Nature is felt to be a blessing and a curse - a blessing because he can flow with the course of events ("he was ... at peace under the orange sky"), a curse because this same at-one-ness with Nature stifles consciousness and makes him "a prisoner ... in the mystery of the natural world". Time and again White celebrates the natural state of *unknowing* as something "mystical" and "holy", yet the painful human experience of that state always belies his conscious intention. For the human being is never content with the natural state: he experiences it as limitation, as agonizing and painful, as repressing his native capacity for consciousness and light. But despite the human counter-tendency, the experience of Nature as an imprisoning force, it is the delight in this mother-bound existence which overrides the despair. The human desire for freedom and liberation is always overcome by the natural inertia of the unconscious. In terms of the instanced passage, it is the side that says "he was at peace under the orange sky" which defeats the aspect that feels itself caught, imprisoned, ensnared.¹⁵ He chooses to remain unconscious, and at the

same time chooses impotence, ineffectuality, and imprisonment. Like Theodora Goodman, he opts for maternal domination and enslavement without realizing it. Theodora was trapped for many years in old Mrs Goodman's house, Stan is a prisoner of the natural world - but the symbolic equation is identical: the ego held fast by the mother.

IV

By the time of the Wullunya floods Amy Parker is imaged as a containing-imprisoning force, and is associated with the image of the house, which becomes the dominant motif for box-like imprisonment: that is, it expresses the stifling womb motif, or being trapped inside the mother's world [Figure 7b]. Stan's adored Earth Goddess is connected with free-flowing, river-like fluidity, but Amy (the shadow-goddess, as it were) is felt to be repressive and containing:

In the contenting smell of sheets and her warm kitchen, the woman once more possessed her husband; why, she would not have held her children with firmer hand, if they had lived. So she was pleased.

But the man was looking out of the house into the rain. He had escaped from his wife, if she had but known it. He was standing on a small promontory of land above what had been the river at Wullunya And the shiny horns of cattle swam and sank in the great yellow waters of what was no longer river. It was no longer possible to distinguish the cries of men from the lowing or bleating of animals, except that the old woman made some protest to God before gulping at the water with her gums. But the arms of men, like the horns of cattle, were almost not protesting, as they were carried sinking away in the yellow flood that had taken the lives from out of their hands. [p.71]

These strongly contrasting images - Amy's fixity and the Earth Mother's fluidity - are not as opposed as Stan's experience would make it seem. In actual fact they are two sides of the one process. As the ego enters the maternal matrix it feels ecstatically released, everything is flowing and moving dynamically, for one is now "at sea" upon the collective unconscious. But the reverse of this is also true: the ego enters the mother and is devoured, or drowned. It loses its egoic structure, its human nature, to the fathomless abyss of the mother-world. Amy and her house merely represent the negative side of the paradoxical process of uroboric incest.

Moving into the floodwaters of the unconscious *is* a process of being devoured,

as the above-quoted passage makes clear. (It should be noted that this passage is a fantasy-sequence in Stan's mind, not an account of "real" life.¹⁶) It is fascinating to see how readily human life sacrifices itself to the teeming floodwaters: "the arms of men ... were almost not protesting, as they were carried sinking away ...". Psychologically, this is proof of Stan's fatal marriage with the mother-world: he allows himself to be taken and consumed by her watery chaos. It is interesting that an "old woman" puts up a resistance to the drowning. In White's fiction it is only the women who resist merging with the unconscious - characters like Mrs Goodman,¹⁷ Mrs. Standish and Amy preserve their material identities to the end and do not share the "masculine" predilection for unconsciousness. The men long for dissolution and fluidity:¹⁸ Elyot is obsessed by water, the mannish Theodora by fire and wind, and Stan Parker by all of these. The men are soluble, whereas the women are the aggressive solvents, the agents which seek to destroy the personalities of men.

Thus "Amy" is really a psychic image: the negative side of what is taking place in Stan's unconscious. The connection between the two images, the *releasing waters* and the *imprisoning mother*, is made apparent in a significant incident. As Stan and the others row across the "dissolved world of flowing water" [p.73] he notices the body of a man pinned in a tree:

In one place Stan Parker saw, stuck in the fork of a tree, the body of an old, bearded man. But he did not mention this. He rowed ... And soon the old man, whose expression had not expected much, dying upside down in a tree, was obliterated by motion and rain. [p.74]

Here we find a fascinating conjunction of the two aspects of the uroboric process: a dead, gnarled tree, with a corpse fixed in its branches, surrounded by swirling floodwaters and a dissolved world. This is possibly the key image of *The Tree of Man*, just as the trochilus/dragon image was the central motif of the previous novel. In fact, the meaning it expresses is very similar: it is of consciousness (or spirit) being trapped and held fast by the mother-world. In the previous novel it was a bird caught in the mouth of a dragon; here it is man suspended upside down on a tree, but both suggest the idea of spirit being destroyed by Nature. This image disturbs Stan when he first sees it, and

continues to plague him throughout the novel. He does not tell the authorities at Wullunya about the corpse in the tree: somehow it is too "personal", too private an experience. Waking in the middle of the following night he is disturbed again by this image, and feels ashamed for having said nothing about it. Years later he is finally moved to tell his wife about it, but he communicates it merely from the point of view of his "guilt" about not reporting the incident at the time. The real cause for disturbance, however, is not his guilty conscience, but his disturbed consciousness: he has witnessed a psychic image which aptly sums up his own inner situation.

In her crucial work on the Great Mother-*puer* relation Marie Louise von Franz tells us that, "The *puer aeternus* and the tree symbol belong together. The tree fixates him, fastens him to earth, either in a coffin, or in life".¹⁹ In our present image the tree is an extension of the earth-mother, and the *puer* is pinned to it in a fatal way. Symbolically, the earth-mother, amidst the devastation of the flood, has taken life back into herself. Stan moves into the flood, expecting to find release,²⁰ but instead he is confronted with this grotesque image of fixity and death. One simply cannot divorce the idea of being devoured by the Mother from that of being ecstatically released by her.

The fact that the dead man is upside down is interesting. In a sense, Stan lives life in an inverted way. Instead of growing up toward consciousness and maturity, he grows down and back into the unconscious, into earth, silence, infantilism, and isolation. His life is like a long downward slide into the world of the Earth Mother, finally recaptured by her at his death. His head, we might say, is in the earth, or at least is pointed in that direction. This relates to the image of the Hanged Man in the Tarot cards: a figure suspended upside down from a tree. Regarding the symbolism of the Hanged Man, one commentator writes: "He is in the grasp of fate. He has no power to shape his life or control his destiny. Like a vegetable, he can only wait for a force outside himself to pluck him free from the regressive pull of Mother Earth".²¹ Turnip-like, Stan Parker is rooted in the earth and moving downward, held in thrall by the great mother.²²

When Parkers return home from the Wullunya flood, they each bring with them an item of significant interest: Stan brings a bath-tub and Amy finds herself a little boy, a lost, crying infant left homeless after the flood. Let us take Amy's choice first. She has had no success bearing children of her own, and so her desire to mother a child is expressed in this rather peculiar act. But it is Amy's desire to possess the child which is emphasized by the author. We are told, for instance, that "She held in her hands the body of a caught bird" [p.89]; and again, "She would imprison the child in her house by force of love" [p.97]. And here we can see this act as symbolic of the unconscious process in Stan himself. For is he not a "lost" boy who is "found" (or rather, taken) by the Earth Mother of the floods? He is picked up and carried along by the floodwaters just as this helpless infant is picked up and carried away by Amy Parker.²³ Once again, we see the human mother bearing the negative aspect of Stan's inward experience of the archetypal figure.

Now to Stan's bath. Read naturalistically the taking of the bath is just a bit of socially accepted thievery, an acquisition of a domestic item. But from a symbolic level it is very important. The bath has long symbolized, in alchemic tradition, the containing vessel, the retort in which the alchemical *opus* was to take place. Other variations are the vase, the chalice, and the flask. In alchemy, one must have a psychic vessel of some kind, else the work of realization cannot begin. Without a vessel, without anima or soul, there can be no localization, no containment of psychic energy, and hence no *opus*. We could say that the bath functions unconsciously²⁴ as a potential anima symbol in which the life-waters of the unconscious can become contained and humanly relatable. The ego-personality cannot relate to a flood: it is simply drowned in it or carried willy-nilly by it. But a bath is a different matter: there the water has been contained and, as it were, "humanized".

Still, nothing happens with the bath, or with the anima-potential within Stan's psyche. The impulse is there but it is not carried through. He simply stores the bath in the shed and nothing more happens. There is a feeling of unease about the stolen bath:²⁵ in part it does not "belong" to Parkers, in part

(as anima-symbol) it does not "belong" to Stan's psychic world, insofar as that is ruled over by the Mother. And, as we might expect in White's symbolic universe, the mother-woman is not in favour of Stan's anima-symbol:²⁶

'What is that?' the woman asked suspiciously.

'That's a bath,' said her husband, banging it awkwardly against the side of the dray, before he heaved it out.

'Whatever for?' she asked. Her voice thickened, as if this second problem was too much ...

'It was there,' said her husband, kicking the hollow object with his toe, not by design, though it seemed like it ... 'Nobody seemed to want it. So I took it. It will come in useful.'

'Oh,' she said doubtfully. [p.92]

The mother-woman is antagonistic to the idea of taking the bath. Mythologically, the Great Mother is always opposed to the anima: if her son wins his own "bride", his own soul, he then becomes creatively independent of the mother, of her teeming source. This is why the winning of the soul is always an *opus contra naturam*: the hero must defeat the mother-dragon in order to free the anima.²⁷ Still, Amy cannot be blamed for Stan's own inertia, his own negative mother-complex. He simply does not have the right impetus to get out of the mother's grip and attend to the work of individuation. And so, the opportunity is wasted, the bath is stored in the shed, and no effort is made to contain or localize the waters of the deep unconscious.

Thus, without soul or anima, everything very quickly returns to its former state: "the waters subsided soon after ... and by degrees [they] forgot to mention the subject" [p.98]. Consciousness has not been transformed: the waters of the great mother subside and life goes on as if nothing ever happened. Stan returns to the cows, to his ineffectuality, and to his mundane life of maternal enslavement. It was the same after the experience of the storm - the day after that episode there was "very little evidence that the lightning had struck"[p.50]. His world is divided into mother and ego: the one triumphant, dynamic, and savage, the other dry, flat, monotonous.

About this time Amy Parker finally gives birth to children, Ray and then Thelma, and it is clear that she exerts a formidable power over them. The mother-child relation is the central axis in White's fiction, and it is as darkly ambivalent in the lives of the Parker children as it is in Stan's symbolic

life. Ray is the first, and Amy virtually consumes him with her "love": "She could not love him enough, not even by slow, devouring kisses. Sometimes her moist eyes longed almost to have him safe inside her again" [p.115]. This image gives further dimension to the "possessive womb" motif of the book: the maternal womb that will not discharge its offspring into the world. Significantly, the father is hostile to the mother's possessive character: "'I'd put it down,' said the father. 'It can't be healthy to maul it like that'" [p.115]. But as soon as Thelma is born, Ray takes second place to Amy's new object of interest, and the mother is quite scathing toward her son. He soon develops a "rejection complex" and feels isolated and abandoned, as did Elyot Standish (the first-born of the Standish family). It is clear that Amy does not love her son, but has merely used him as an object for her maternal-instinctual energy. And so while Thelma is being cuddled and smothered ["She drew the shawl tighter on the baby, as if to protect it out of existence" p.123] Ray is left to his own devices. He grows up to be an aggressive, rebellious child: he carries a grudge against the world, for he feels outcast and devoid of love. He takes several new-born puppies that are still sucking on the teats of the mother and kills them - the implication being, if he cannot draw nourishment from the maternal source, neither will they. The symbolic gesture is reinforced by the fact that the bitch, Blue, is Amy's dog, and she had attended the birth and nurtured the development of its puppies. Stan senses the agony and the guilt of his son, but he is too inarticulate to help him. Meanwhile, Thelma, over-protected by the mother, becomes a "thin" and "pasty" [p.122] child and develops a serious breathing problem, which soon leads to asthma [p.127]. "Asthma" and "domineering mother" go together in White's world, as in some theories of psychoanalysis. The "mother" or background of consciousness is overbearing; it stifles the personality and takes away its life-breath.

So we have, in the Parker children, two examples of a disturbed primal relationship: the one is consumed by the mother's presence, the other by her absence. These primal disturbances govern the psychology of Ray and Thelma in later life, and, in particular, they determine their attitude toward society

and the outer world.²⁸ Ray develops anti-socially:²⁹ his life is structured in opposition to the mother-society-world continuum, and even ultimately, to himself. The faculty of relationship is impaired at every level - including the inner connection with his own character. Thelma, on the other hand, over-nourished and overprotected by the mother, becomes excessively embedded in, and identified with, social structures and convention. She finds a comfortable place in society, secures herself a secretarial position, has nice friends, lives in a nice house, and marries a nice, obliging (though ineffectual) solicitor. Thelma, we might say, is so close to society that it destroys her, she has no personality of her own, no "space" to breathe as a separate self. She is, in fact, the first of White's "Sarsaparillan" ladies, and the object of his bitter cynicism. Ray, rejected by mother and society alike, leads a meaningless life as an isolated, alienated ego. He quickly becomes an outlaw, a gangster, and finds that he has nothing in common with his "socially-adjusted" sister.³⁰ But archetypally they are very much alike: both are victims of the Terrible Mother, the mythological image which brings about the destruction of the ego-personality. However, we must not "blame" Amy for any of this (despite what the author may have us believe). We must always realize that White does not experience "mother" in any real, human way - but only as an archetype, as an overwhelming, paradoxical figure, who suffocates with her goodness and who destroys when she withdraws her love.

V

The "good" or "ecstatic" mother, usually felt to be an abstract force called "God", and experienced as the earth-spirit, attains personified form at one point in the story. This takes place at the time of the bushfire, when Madeleine becomes a personification of fire, and subsequently, an incarnation of the Goddess herself. We first learn of Madeleine through the eyes of Amy Parker, and she seems to be more of an apparition than a human person:

So the dark-figured woman on the black horse advanced beneath the white trees. Although the dust of the road was unfurling beneath the horse's feet, it scarcely reached the woman's spur, she sat so high, and in the sea of dust in which she floated was god-like and remote. [p.131]

Madeleine's aloofness and other-worldly character is contrasted with Amy's fixity and earth-bound nature:

The woman's smile drifted over the head of the puny child, and on, without glancing at the mother, magnificent though she was too, in her own rooted way. [p.132]

Madeleine is "above", aloof, sophisticated, beautiful, and dreamy; Amy is "below", magnificently chthonic and earthy, but also "fat" [p.105], "coarse" [p.127] and "possessive" [p.109].³¹ Amy looks upon Madeleine with awe and reverence (tinged with jealousy): she is everything that Amy can never become. In dream and fantasy she identifies herself with Madeleine, not merely for the sake of vanity, but because she recognizes that Madeleine is close to Stan's ideal image of the Ecstatic Goddess. Amy is simply longing to become what her husband really is in love with: the reverse image of herself. Furthermore, Madeleine is, like Stan's adored Goddess, anarchistic, ecstatic, and dissolution-striving.³² She is the only one at Glastonbury who is not disturbed by the fire, or by the prospect of dissolution and death. In fact, she welcomes it, as is obvious by her languid attitude on the day of the fire, and, in the evening, by her passive acceptance of disintegration as the Glastonbury mansion burns down, with her inside it.

Stan rushes into the burning house, not so much to "save" Madeleine (as the onlookers believe), as to unite with her. White has carefully set the stage for the climax of Stan's erotic life, for him to break into the burning house and, in an ecstasy of fire, to engage in mystical communion with the mother-world:

All that he had never done, all that he had never seen, appeared to be contained in this house, and it was opening to him. Till his head began to reel with fiery splendours of its own, and he was prepared to accept the invitation, and follow the passages of the house, or fire, to any possible conclusion.

Now that he was there, Stan Parker had no doubts that he should have come. Lamplight made him bigger than he was ... All things in the house were eternal on that night ... Time was becalmed in the passages

...he found the staircase, stumbled, mounted, paying the banister out through his burning hand, feeling his swift shirt sail against his ribs as he mounted into the pure air of upper rooms. [pp.176-178]

If entering Amy's house is linked with fears of claustrophobia and stifling containment, entering Glastonbury, the flaming mansion, is associated with moving into a chasm, or womb, of releasing fire. Here the erotic tone is emphasized by the swift motion of the man as he plunges into passages of eternity and finally "mounts" the staircase that will lead him to Madeleine. It is interesting how the fiery passages "open" up to him and "invite" him to enter, as if these were the sacred uterine entrances of the Great Mother herself. The "worshipping man" [p.176] enters the realm of his beloved goddess and is released from his egoic structure: he becomes "bigger" than usual, linked with eternity, and soon carries the glowing fire-woman in his arms:

Approaching some climax, the breath of the saviour or sacrifice, it was not clear which, came quicker ... [He] broke his way to the heart of the house, it seemed, and saw that she was standing there, her back towards him, because the fire was of first importance.

Madeleine was wearing some kind of loose gown that shone in the firelight ... he had never seen anything glowing and flowing like this woman ... And suddenly he wished he could sink his face in her flesh, to smell it, that he could part her breasts and put his face between.

She saw this. They were burning together at the head of the smoking staircase. She had now to admit, without repugnance, that the sweat of his body was drugging her, and that she would have entered his eyes, if she could have, and not returned.

The text continues:

Then they came out on to the half-landing and felt the first tongue of fire. The breath left them. Now Madeleine's beauty had shrunk right away, and any desire Stan Parker might have had was shrivelled up. He was small and alone in his body, dragging the sallow woman.

And eventually, as they leave the house and move out onto the ground outside,

she fell on her knees and began a kind of dry retching, holding her head, and falling even to all fours. Most people were silent, from surprise and pity, but one or two let out loud explosions of laughter.

'Madeleine, darling,' said young Tom Armstrong, overcoming his disgust, and putting out his hand, in front of everyone.

'Please,' she said. 'Leave me. Not now.'

And got to her feet and staggered further into the darkness. Her hair had been burned off. [pp.178-181]

Here we find a very typical pattern in White's attitude to human love. For a time the man-woman connection is sheer ecstasy, the *puer* united with his Goddess, and then, quite suddenly, there is a radical reversal: the desire falls away, the beautiful woman becomes ugly, and the dramatic communion comes to a halt. We observed this pattern in the Elyot-Hildegard relationship, and also in Stan

and Amy's sexual relationship. The key to this phenomenon is quite simple: the *puer*-Goddess drama cannot be enacted at a human level; it is an archetypal union, and if human persons try to enact it the result will always be disastrous, for the human players must always fall short of the divine roles. The fact is that White (or his fictional ego) cannot love a human woman. He is wedded to the Mother Goddess and no-one else can hold his passion.³³ Only for brief moments - Amy in the moonlight, Madeleine in the fire - can the male protagonist feel erotically attracted to the human woman. That is to say, only when the reality-level is blurred and the woman is seen as an embodiment of the Goddess will Stan long to unite with her.³⁴

There is another dimension here. We could almost say that the Goddess herself, the abstract force in Stan's unconscious, causes Madeleine to be savagely reduced at the end. For does not her fire destroy Madeleine's beauty and singe off her flowing red hair? If the moment at the head of the stairs had been "carried through" into life Stan would have won for himself a human embodiment of the Great Goddess.³⁵ If this occurred Madeleine might possibly become an anima-figure, a "second woman" in Stan's life and a threat to the sovereignty of the Mother.³⁶ Thus the Goddess will allow her son to love Madeleine in the fire, for that is equivalent to loving her *in her own realm*, but as soon as they return to the human world it is essential that she destroy the vision of the woman, else she herself might be deposed. At the end of the sequence Madeleine is outcast, pathetic, wretched: Stan does not want her, nor does her fiancé Tom Armstrong, nor even Amy Parker,³⁷ who had once idolized her. She has carried the divine mantle for a brief moment, and now must suffer a base depreciation, so that the libido hitherto invested in her image can be returned to the Mother.³⁸ In *The Living and the Dead* it was Mrs Standish's letter which put an end to the Hildegard affair, just as in this novel it was the Earth Mother's power which put an end to Stan's love for Amy. The Great Mother is a jealous deity; she will have no other gods (or humans) before her.³⁹

After the fire the same thing happens as occurred after the flood: there is a period of desolation, for all richness and psychic energy still lies in

the depths of the mother-world. But the period that ensues is unusually long and exhausting - there are many years, perhaps decades, of barrenness and sterility. A war passes, Ray and Thelma grow up and leave home, but there is nothing forthcoming from the unconscious, no flood or storm or fire. This is the period of "drought", when the Earth Mother has deserted the world - or more particularly, Stan's psyche - and leaves him barren, dry, and thirsting. Yet Stan's world-view cannot accommodate this negative component of the Goddess's nature. We have seen all along how this negative side has been experienced in projection upon Amy, and this is precisely what happens here.

VI

As Stan Parker drives home from Durilgai one day and finds the salesman's blue car in the driveway of his house he is more disturbed by Amy's apparent unfaithfulness than we might expect. After all, his relationship with Amy is by now unimportant to him, for the only "real" thing in his life is his relationship with the Goddess. Furthermore, Stan has already noticed the salesman's car leaving the house after an earlier visit to Amy. Thus, by now, it would seem that her unfaithfulness would not pose such a drastic problem or disturb him in a serious way. But he reads the event in an archetypal way: he drives into the local town in a desperate state, gets drunk, almost strangles an old hag on the beach, and contemplates suicide. White makes it seem that his Beloved has deceived him, and so life is no longer worth living. We are even told that the only things dear to him were "his wife's form and those glimpses he had had of her soul, and those experiences in which he and she had been interchangeable" [p.323]. But we know that this is not true. We know that the pivotal thing in his life is not Amy but the Mother Goddess, the object of his desire and the focus of his spiritual existence. Thus we have to read this scene in a different way: not merely as "Amy's" unfaithfulness, but as the turning-away of the Goddess herself - her brutal, harsh, rejecting aspect. The archetypal nature of the crisis is immediately apparent:

There was a paper sky, quite flat, and white, and Godless. He spat at the absent God then, mumbling till it ran down his chin. He spat and farted, because he was full to bursting; he pissed in the street until he was empty, quite empty. Then the paper sky was tearing, he saw. He was tearing the last sacredness, before he fell down amongst some empty crates, mercifully reduced to his body for a time. [p.324]

We can hardly believe that Amy - the negative housewife who imprisons and stifles him - has caused this reaction. This is the result of a man isolated from his "God", deceived and rejected by his highest value. In fact, if Stan were on good terms with the Earth Goddess he would no doubt have welcomed the idea of Amy's extramarital affair: it would release some of the tension between them and allow Stan to get on with his Great Mother worship. But here - because his world is "Godless" and the Earth Mother "absent" - he projects this existential situation upon his wife and feels harshly treated by her. He cannot imagine that the deity itself has a negative side, that it could abandon him to a mental and spiritual wilderness and so the human woman is made responsible for his plight.⁴⁰

There is a further dimension to the "adultery" sequence: the unfaithfulness of Amy provides Stan with an opportunity to exorcize his guilt-feelings about his own "unfaithfulness" to his wife. For has he not entertained a long and lasting "extramarital" affair with the Goddess? This deeper aspect is, I believe, an accidental component of the work itself, and not something which White consciously intended. The whole novel has been a story about Stan's spiritual love-affair with mother nature. The erotic charge between them has been the driving force of the book, and this has always excluded Amy Parker. The "other woman", the earth goddess, has been hard to define, but she did reach human form, at least momentarily, in the figure of Madeleine. (About this time "Madeleine" returns to Stan's fantasy-life as an image of the Mother Goddess, and he feels that he

would finish this unfaithfulness to his wife if the opportunity occurred. Now the dispassionate evening allowed him no feeling of guilt. Under the wide sky, thickening into night, at the top of the deserted, desecrated house, vines crumpled in his hands with a fleshiness, a soft muskiness of flesh. Only he could not remember enough. He could not remember the pores of her skin, the veins in her eyes, her breath on his neck, however hard he tried ... [p.217]⁴¹)

The affair between Amy and the travelling salesman is a direct parallel to the

experience between Stan and the Goddess; only it is the shadow-side of Stan's archetypal affair, and, as such, it is acted out in the flesh, as literal sexuality. Witness the description of the adulterous act: "Buried in the flesh of the woman, he had returned to boyhood, from which poetry had escaped, and would again ultimately" [p.302]. The travelling salesman is Stan's shadow: he personifies his own erotic, sexual libido. As he enters Amy's womb he feels "returned to boyhood": a divine youth in contact again with the regenerative world of the Mother.⁴² It is interesting that he connects the sexual act with a return to "poetry", for Stan's entry into the burning house was similarly connected with a movement into "a houseful of poetry" [p.177]. Furthermore, as Leo enters Amy's house he feels the place opening out to him ["... everywhere the dimness of the inhabited house was opening to him He had never penetrated deeper into any house ..." p.301] just as Stan Parker had felt the corridors of Glastonbury opening to him.

And Amy Parker, like Stan's wild and highly-charged Goddess, is said to have a "passion [which] overflowed the bounds ... he knew":

'Take a hold of yourself,' he laughed, touching her with heavy superior hands. 'I'm not gonna run off and leave yer.'

If he was her inferior in passion, he was her superior in quickly appeased lust. So he could afford to laugh, and light another cigarette, and watch the soul writhe mysteriously in her body. [p.303]

Leo feels as inadequate before Amy as Stan does before the elemental outbursts of the earth mother. The Goddess's passion comes in torrents and the son-lover feels swamped by it. The salesman has won his quick release: but now he has to watch Amy's "soul writhe mysteriously in her body". He laughs because he feels scared - he is in the presence of a superior passion. Very soon he puts on his clothes and makes a polite dash for the door: the son, caught up in an agonizing situation, once more attempts to flee from the grasp of the mother-woman.⁴³

From this we can see how similar Stan's situation is to Leo's. Yet the author, unconscious of the parallel, converts the adultery sequence into a gigantic moral argument, an attack upon Amy's integrity. We have suspected White's dislike for Amy - but when he contrives three successive adulterous episodes with Leo, in which Amy becomes "brazen" and "one of the flash women"

[p.313], the reader feels at this point that the author has lost his control.⁴⁴ By turning Amy into a moral scapegoat, White's fictional ego Stan Parker feels itself cleansed of moral darkness and enjoys a sense of "purity" and "holiness":

When she had done her duty she watched him go. He was staring at the sky, as if to read its intentions, then starting the car, which he always did rather badly, looking closely at the panel. And as she watched this erect and honorable man she realized with blinding clarity that she had never been worthy of him. This illumination of her soul left her weary and indifferent. After all, she had done her material duty in many ways. Putting a clean handkerchief in his breast pocket, for instance. [p.317]

Here we see - "with blinding clarity" - how White has contrived to present an image of the "erect and honorable" Stan Parker in company with his wretched wife, but where the effect of the image is blurred and the prose itself made pretentious by the author's own emotional investment. Stan Parker, "staring up at the sky, as if to read its intentions", seems incredibly self-righteous, whereas Amy - with her sudden "illumination" of her unworthiness - is reduced to dirt in comparison. But the reader is not so quick to judge her: he has seen her life from the inside, has experienced her isolation and Stan's inconsiderate remoteness from her, and so can forgive her petty flirtation with a travelling salesman. In fact, Amy's brief affair with Leo is nothing in comparison with Stan's long-standing passionate engagement with the Ecstatic Mother. Psychologically speaking, he has been unfaithful to her for most of their married life. In this sense, we could say that Amy is driven to the affair by Stan's distant attitude, his lack of interest in his wife. In the final analysis, one feels inclined to "side" with Amy against Stan, although the whole book attempts to persuade the reader to damn her and celebrate him. But the moral structure of the work falls back on itself: Amy is somehow more real, her flaws quite acceptable, whereas Stan's superiority and wholesomeness are simply undigestible. It would be quite another matter if Stan had recognized his solidarity with his wife's situation, and had seen himself as similarly burdened. Scapegoat-morality is no morality at all, and White damages his work, and mars his own integrity as a writer, by indulging in it.⁴⁵

VII

Still, the situation makes possible Stan's final turning away from Amy, and from life in general, and a concentration on his internal communion with the Goddess. Very quickly, Stan begins his downward slide into the welcoming matrix of the Earth Mother. It is important that we get a correct "geographical" sense about Stan's final journey: it is not that he reaches up to the heights of vision (as critics have suggested),⁴⁶ but that he merely subsides into the unconscious and is buried in the depths of the mother-world. And as he goes "down" he becomes increasingly aware of the unitary nature of all existence, for as the ego slips back into the Mother it loses its sense of separateness and feels overwhelmed by the "oneness" of the cosmos. That is to say, as the ego is devoured it finds a vicarious pleasure in the devouring, and feels a sense of oceanic bliss as it is taken back into the Great Round.

Significantly enough, after he suffers a stroke - which occurs as he is digging a rock out of the earth - Stan contracts a sickness in a storm [at first it is a slight fever, and then it turns into pleurisy p.393]. These illnesses relate to his contact with the Earth Mother: we could say that his "closeness" to the earth-spirit - always antagonistic to his psychological and mental development - is finally taking its toll in physical terms. But this *abaissement* of consciousness is not without its "positive" attributes:

The night of the storm or shower, when he had got wet, Stan Parker had never seen more clearly ... In his fever he could not have been cleaner swept. All that he had lived, all that he had seen, had the extreme simplicity of goodness ... He was surprised at the newness of what he saw. [pp.391-393]

The deep unconscious invades the field of experience and everything is revealed in its "essential" nature, as part of a cosmic continuum. And, as he moves deeper into the matrix, Nature appears to be gathering him into itself, or taking him into its bosom:

[a] communion of soul and scene was taking place, the landscape moving in on him with increased passion and intensity, trees surrounding him, clouds flocking above him with tenderness such as he had never experienced. [p.397]

This is a vision of perfect bliss, the *puer* caressed and nurtured by mother nature. But we have learnt by now to watch out for the negative counterimage

of this process: the crushing, brutal matrix which destroys the ego that returns to it. And we do not have to look far to see the other side: for at the same time as the landscape is "moving in on him" so too are the brick-boxes of suburbia, the "brick tombs" [p.461]. All around him the houses are beginning to appear - almost magically, or like a disease spreading over the body of mother earth. The march of material ugliness keeps pace with the "increased passion and intensity" of the landscape. Inside every brick box (or so White imagines it) is a teeth-sucking suburban housewife.⁴⁷ "The brick homes were in possession all right. Deep purple, clinker blue, ox blood, and public lavatory" [p.394]. Stan is even forced to sell off bits of his land (recalling old Mr Goodman) to accommodate the urban sprawl. He is fighting a losing battle against materialism and the magna mater. The world of the novel is a psychic field: nothing happens that does not impinge upon the central mythic drama, and what better way to express the supremacy of the mother-image than by the "take-over" of the brick boxes.⁴⁸ The suburban villas may well be "out there", but we have to remember that Stan has the psychology of primitive man: all his psychic contents are outside him, are identical with the environment, and are experienced in a pseudo-objective way.

At the same time as suburbia is given this daemonic psychic image Amy Parker is demonized in a way which suggests an intensification of the negative maternal aspect. At the end she is imaged as an ugly woman, "who was troubled by her leg, besides having grown rather big behind, and old, and resentful", and who "clung to her cows as a motive of existence" [p.395]. She plays an important part in Stan's so-called "apotheosis", and fulfils a function which has not been properly grasped by critics or reviewers. After Stan points to the gob of spittle and sees "God" at its centre,⁴⁹ Amy Parker, with gammy leg, stalks through the garden and interrupts Stan's quietude and at-one-ness with the cosmos:

... the old man continued to stare at the jewel of spittle. A great tenderness of understanding arose in his chest. Even the most obscure, most sickening incidents of his life were clear. In that light. How long will they leave me like this, he wondered, in peace and understanding?

But his wife had to come presently.

'Stan,' she said, approaching, he knew it was she, crunching over the grass with her bad leg, 'you will not believe when I tell you,' she said, 'I was scratching round the shack, in the weed, where the rosebush was that we moved to the house, the old white rose, and what did I find, Stan, but the little silver nutmeg grater that Mrs Erbey gave me on our wedding day. Look.'

'Ah,' he said.

What was this irrelevant thing? He had forgotten.

Branches of shadow were drifting across his face, interfering with his sight. [p.476]

This scene pits the chthonic mother against the experience of the all-encompassing Great Mother. Stan is at the centre of the great round, yet even there the negative mother finds him out and comes "crunching over the grass with her bad leg", to talk of material, mundane matters. We recall this same process in *The Aunt's Story*, where Theodora would come close to merging with eternity, and where Mrs Goodman's voice would suddenly shatter the mystery and the silence. The "uroboric" vision simply cannot be had without the negative aspect, for the movement into the uncreate Source is at the same time a terrible devouring of the personality. Amy is therefore as central to Stan's cosmic experience as Mrs Goodman was to Theodora's.

It is interesting that Amy interrupts Stan's vision with talk of the silver nutmeg grater, for we will recall that Mrs Goodman had disturbed Theodora's romance with eternity by asking her about the little silver paper-knife [AS, p.79]. In both cases the mother-woman's object of interest is hard, metallic, and abrasive. As the ego surrenders to the great round it meets with a hard, biting maw, an aggressive content which destroys it. The mother-woman provides the brutal, metallic aspect which is lacking in the conscious awareness of the dissolution-striving protagonist, who is thinking only of comfort and bliss.

This also symbolizes the triumph of matter or nature over the spirit. Amy recovers the object which the pedlar had buried in the garden in the hope that Parkers might abandon their materialistic ways and concentrate on the "spiritual" life. Thus, the recovery of materialism signifies the defeat of the spirit, just as Amy's "bad" leg crushes the new growth into the ground, and as her conversation reduces Stan's awareness to banality and commonplace.

But then Stan goes on to have his final vision of oneness and merges into

the unitary reality of unconscious existence. Has he escaped the negative mother at last? Hardly: for the Terrible Mother has become death itself, the deathly matrix which devours him as he sinks into oceanic bliss. He finally returns to the source, and the price paid for this is life itself. Like Theodora Goodman he is taken back into the maternal uroboros, which is hardly an "achievement" in any real sense. Despite White's honorific presentation of Stan's death it can only be seen psychologically as an epic collapse: the anti-hero is finally swallowed by the uroboric dragon. Further, Stan does *not* attain self-realization, as many readers have conjectured. The term self-realization is inappropriate, for there is no self to witness the process of dissolution. By definition, the return to the uroboros is synonymous with an absence of self, so that "one" is no longer differentiated from the Great One. That is why Stan's so-called illumination is had only at the point of death - it is a regressive (i.e. non-mandalic) experience of eternity which excludes consciousness and human life. It takes place outside consciousness and is of no benefit to others, or to humanity at large. The Great Mother still holds her "secret", her mysterious unity continues undisturbed, and humanity is the loser.

And so, "In the end there are the trees" [p.479] - the continuity of nature carries on as before, untouched by human consciousness. The novel ends where it began, the uroboros bites its tail, and we have a new Stan Parker wandering through the scrub, dwarfed by the same giant stringybarks and overwhelmed by the silence of the bush. There is, however, a suggestion that the little boy will achieve more than his grandfather: he will write the poem of Life and Death that Stan Parker never wrote. But will he? Already, in his infancy, he is "tortured by impotence, and at the same time the possibility of his unborn poem" [p.479]. The writing of the "poem" would be symbolic of consciousness - one reflects upon life, penetrates its mystery, and so breaks the spell of Mother Nature.⁵⁰ Stan had great intentions, too, as a lad of promise and strength. But he could not write the poem; he remained "a prisoner ... of the natural world". And so, if the grandson is anything like the grandfather, then

we can assume that he will not write the poem, nor break the spell of the mother-myth. He is a *puer aeternus*, a child of the deep unconscious with great dreams and visions, yet who cannot realize these, for they are not pure nature - they require *spirit* for their actualization, and a consciousness-hostile Nature is what ultimately holds sway in White's world. So that, in the end, there were the suburbs. The suffocating, containing image of the negative mother is what actually reigns supreme.

VIII

One of the surprising things about the novel is that, despite its apparent breadth and the author's intention to include "every possible aspect of life",⁵¹ each of its parts, its characters and incidents, represents but a slight variation of the central mother-son myth. We have already seen how Amy's life fits the pattern of the shadow-goddess, and how Stan's is a complete embodiment of the Great Mother's son. But everything else - the Parker children, the dead man in the tree, the lost boy in the floods, Madeleine, the O'Dowds, the Quigleys, Mr Gage - these too represent "splinter" elements of the son-mother mythologem. Bub Quigley, for instance, is a rarefied version of Stan himself. That is, he is simply Stan's *puer* psychology drawn in extreme, or writ large. Bub (as his name suggests) is the classic *puer aeternus*, the part-divine, part-idiot child-soul who never grows up. His "boy's eyes were bright in his older face, looking for things" [p.183]. As a child of eternity Bub has a particularly close relation to death and the "beyond". At the time of the floods, he alone could "endure the smiles of the dead" [p.84] and, "Once he announced that he was dead and it wasn't half bad" [p.190]. Bub is an uroboros mystic, a boy-god who lives in eternity and for whom the "eternal" dimension of life is an everyday experience. But he is also an idiot and a fool: he is lanky and dribbly, shirks work whenever he can,⁵² suffers constantly from fits and mental seizures, and is finally put to "rest" by his sister as an act of lovingkindness. This is the negative side of the uroboric fixation: one is ensnared by the mother-world and so life does not develop - one merely grows downward into earth and

eternity, like the Hanged Man. Bub is a prisoner of eternity: he is held inside the maternal matrix and cannot break free.

Bub's sister Doll [who "had been born old-young, or had grown young-old" p.213], is a female version of himself. She is the *puella aeterna*, the girl-child of the mysteries, linked to eternity and death. Stan is moved to celebrate Doll's "purity of being" [p.218], her lack of ego and anonymity, for this is what he strives to attain in his own life. About Doll it is said that, "the purposes of God are made clear to some old women, and nuns, and idiots" [p.214]. This summarizes White's uroboric vision: "truth" or "meaning" can be had only by those who are submerged in the depths of the maternal unconscious.

O'Dowd is again a variation of the Great Mother's son. But in cruder, rougher tones. He is the derelict-alcoholic; the man who is constantly in a drunken stupor, hoping that in this way he might return to the blissful source. O'Dowd's life is a perpetual search for "melancholy glimpses of the static world of peace that he has lost" [p.145]. The idea of being "cold sober" (i.e. conscious of his life in the real world) is anathema to O'Dowd: "'That is terrible in anybody's life,' shuddered O'Dowd. 'To stay stone cold. I could not look me own reflection in the face, if it was not kept warmed op'" [p.288]. He has much in common with the pedlar at the beginning of the story, who resorted to alcohol to try to "make it last", to recapture the ecstasy of unconsciousness.⁵³ At the time of the floods, O'Dowd is drunk on alcohol stolen from the ruined houses, whereas Stan is on a "natural high" -i.e. is drunk on the native splendour of the Mother's elemental life.

But there is a certain ambivalence in O'Dowd: while there is a half-craving for the maternal source, there is also a desperate struggle against the mother-woman. His attempt to slough off the heavy presence of his companion, Mrs O'Dowd, is at times brutal and compulsive. In a memorable scene, with Amy Parker present, he chases his wife around the house with an axe, hoping to slay her as a dragon-figure ["'She will kill a man, if he does not kill her first'" p.291]. Mrs O'Dowd, of course, is a Teeth Mother⁵⁴ of the buxom, fubsy, whisky-taking variety. She is an appropriate companion for the dissolution-

striving Mick O'Dowd. Amy's presence at the raucous scene brings her into the same danger as her friend: she too is chased around the house by the axe-wielding Mick O'Dowd. This is a dramatic performance of the agonizing tension between the Mother and her son. In one aspect, the Mother-son pair are well-matched ["'But I like him,' said Mrs O'Dowd ... 'We are suited to each other'" p.146] and the son enjoys his proximity to the superior figure, but in another sense the situation is stifling, the son longs to kill the ensnaring mother-woman, to free himself from her embrace. We found this violent tendency in the previous novel, in the murder fantasy of Theodora and the killings of Jack Frost. O'Dowd is a new Jack Frost: he carries the negative libidinal impulse which is latent within Stan himself. White splits off the aggressive impulse within Stan's personality, transfers it to O'Dowd and has Amy join Mrs O'Dowd in the fatal chase. In this way he can indirectly associate Amy with the hideous Mrs O'Dowd, and with the motif of the dragon-fight. For he could hardly have Stan Parker chase his wife around the house with an axe, though he might want to. Basically Stan is the Great Mother's "good" boy; receptive, quietly suffering the blows of fate, never talking out of turn. He is so "good" that Mick O'Dowd, his own shadow-neighbour, has to be drawn in these strident, terrible colours. O'Dowd personifies the negative content in the mother-son embrace: the deeply felt though never realized urge to slay the dragon-mother.

Mr. Gage, "a child, ... an animal, or a stone" [p.106], is another *puer aeternus*. He is wedded to a domineering mother-woman, the post-mistress Mrs Gage [noted for her "broad, unconscious teeth" p.104], whom he had married "for no reason beyond an awful inevitability" [p.280]. Like Stan, Bub Quigley, and O'Dowd, he lives the provisional life - he is not really in reality, not in the world, but is still caught up in the uroboros, in a world of fantasy and dream. Significantly, he feels a mere "boarder" in his wife's house; "It was the post-mistress's house" [p.105]. The *puer* does not have an existence in his own right - he lives on and through the maternal body, a mere visitor to this world. "He is", says Jung, "only a dream of the mother, an ideal which she soon takes

back into herself".⁵⁵

And so it is with Gage. He hangs himself on a tree in his wife's backyard. By this act he unconsciously sacrifices himself to the earth-mother, which in this case is the Tree of Death, just as it was in the image of the dead man in the floods, Gage's suicide is an apt expression of the symbolic process at work in Stan's unconscious: by living so close to the maternal background he stifles his development and ends up willing his own death. In the Cybele-Attis myth the Great Mother Cybele drives the youth to frenzy, and he castrates himself under the maternal tree. In another version of the myth, he hangs himself on a tree. These are mythological expressions of the psychological forces at work in White's fiction: the desire for the Mother is so strong that it overwhelms the life-force itself. The son kills or mutilates himself in order to return to her in death.

But there is another element present; I have already hinted at it. From a depth-psychological standpoint it is not so much that the *puer* sacrifices himself, as it is that the Great Mother takes him back into herself. And White's fiction gives us ample instances of this - in projection, of course, upon a tribe of suburban mothers. As the "Sarsaparillan" women gaze upon the visionary works of old Mr Gage, there is a daemonic element in their presence, a terrible guffawing and gloating as they ridicule his life's effort. During the course of this posthumous "exhibition" one line is three times repeated: "Mrs Mulvaney sucked her teeth" [pp. 279, 280, 281]. The line has an awful resonance, repeated at regular intervals to create a chant-like effect. The symbolic meaning of this should be clear: the same day that the *puer* is "returned" to the mother in death, a tribe of teeth-sucking mothers appear on the scene to laugh at and "destroy" the productions of his creativity. It is somehow "right" that Gage's essence - expressed in his paintings - is exposed to the destructive gaze of these women. They perform a symbolic "rite" and remind us of the negative outcome of the uroboric situation.

Thus, all the characters are part of the one mythic pattern; each one expressing a characteristic feature of the Mother-son relation. I am not

suggesting that every character is reducible to Stan Parker, or to Patrick White - who obviously stands behind his central character. What I believe is that every figure, including Stan himself, is part of a greater whole, a mythologem, in which the characters participate as players in a play, or dancers in a dance. They are related to a central myth as particles might be co-ordinated around a magnetic field. None of the players have freewill; they do not act, but are acted upon. Everything is conditioned and pre-determined by the myth. The characters are subordinate to this mythic force, and so, ultimately, is the author himself. He is at his best when he acts impersonally, or anonymously, as the instrument of the tale. At these times his symbolism is organic and spontaneous; it grows naturally out of the fictional ground. But when he intervenes in the story, as he does from time to time, the mythic force lapses and is replaced by a personal voice. Then the teller of a myth becomes a moralist, and an inadequate moralist at that, because the moral issues are based on the projection of Stan's shadow-side onto the figure of his wife. If White had a conscious grasp on his myth this lapse would not occur. If he could see the ambivalence of the mother-son relation, and the paradoxical nature of the Goddess, he would not have to negatively "load" Amy Parker the way he does.

Clearly, White has difficulty in accepting the shadow-side of his myth. Amy, a central mythic character, is not embraced at a mythic level, but is seen purely as an obstacle in Stan's path of spiritual glory. Further, the author fails to note how integrally related Ray Parker's fate, O'Dowd's violence, Gage's suicide, and Leo's sexuality are to the central theme of Stan Parker. All parts of the myth are present, but they are not accepted by the author, or integrated by an ordering consciousness. The negative elements are parcelled out to Amy Parker and the minor characters, so as to free Stan from the nastier aspects of his situation, and to make his myth more "positive". White readily celebrates the mystery and the poetry of the uroboric situation, but the darker side - the regressive nature of the *puer*, the fixating tendency of the mother-world, the incestuous complications, and so on - are projected

outside the central character and experienced as qualities of the "external" fictional world.

In this regard it is significant to note that White had originally intended the book to be called *A Life's Sentence on Earth*,⁵⁶ but that, on reflection, he altered it to *The Tree of Man*. The former title would have highlighted the imprisoning aspect of Stan's relation to Nature, while the latter suggests ideas of continuity, man's relatedness to the earth and spiritual growth. Perhaps the concept of writing about *A Life's Sentence* became too depressing, and so the author opted for the more positive title. But it is still possible to read the novel in terms of *A Life's Sentence*, for Stan's imprisonment is what strikes one more readily than his affirmative relation to the earth-mother. Even the image of the tree is highly ambivalent: it becomes the Tree of Death on two significant occasions, first in the flood, and later in Gage's suicide. Further, Stan may well be rooted in the maternal earth like a tree (an image which critics "romanticize" out of all proportion) but he is also fixated by the earth, bound to the spot, and unable to exercise freewill. The tree of man ensnares him too. And so the eventual title has its negative side, its inherent ambivalence, and should not be read solely in terms of its romantic connotations.*

2. The Cult of the Dead

I saw pale kings, and princes too,
Pale warriors, death pale were they all;
They cry'd, "La belle dame sans merci
Hath thee in thrall!"

- Keats

Voss [1957] extends the idea of a movement into the mother-world in terms of the metaphor of the inland journey, the expedition into the centre of the continent. He enters that world, we are told, in order to conquer it and make a name for himself, but a closer reading of the text points to another motivation: he enters the unknown to be drawn into the matrix and to be returned to eternity. In Voss's imagination Laura fulfils the role of the Mother Goddess,

* Discussion of critical issues and problems relating to *The Tree of Man* will be reserved until the end of the chapter.

as Madeleine did (temporarily) in the previous story. As with Madeleine, however, the actual woman has little or nothing to do with the male protagonist's image of her. The two are quite distinct, as I hope to make clear. The fact that Voss and Laura are separated from each other allows the mythological content to flow more freely, without interruption from reality. And the physical distance between them prohibits the possibility of fleshly or sexual union - which is something that White has enormous difficulty with because of the incestuous complications and the negative image attached to sexuality. For him "love" and "sex" are quite separate: they are dissociated to such an extent that the connection between them is no longer recognized. This novel is perhaps the most disunified of all of White's works. The pairs of opposites - love and sex, materiality and spirituality, ego and unconscious - are split apart in a way which creates serious tensions in the structure of the novel, tensions which the author does not resolve but which destroy the work from the inside.

In the first instance we have the tension between Rose Portion and Laura Trevelyan. The former represents the fleshly aspects of woman, including sexuality, child-bearing, materiality, and the latter personifies the chaste, virginal maid associated with divine love and *agape*. Laura, with her lofty idealism and intellectual character, is repelled by Rose - she "could not begin to like her maid" [p.52], who reminded her of "an animal mumbling and biting on [its] harelip" [p.51].¹ Rose is a classic "devouring mother" - we are told that she killed her first child (a little boy), so that he "would not have to suffer" [p.76] the brutalities of life in this world. For this crime Rose was sent to Australia to serve a life sentence, and subsequently became the Bonners' emancipist servant. With her heavy breathing, enormous breasts, voluptuous body, and murderous aspect Rose is like a cavewoman of prehistoric times: the perfect complement to the modern, sophisticated character of Laura Trevelyan. From a symbolic standpoint, Rose would not have to be drawn in such dark tones if the author's image of Laura was not as refined and "spiritual" as it is. The more White emphasizes the divine, celestial

nature of the Mother, the more the unconscious is forced to constellate a terrible, chthonic-maternal figure.

Still, Laura, the Divine and Immaculate Mother, owes her very "motherhood" to the instinctual and biological processes of her maid. Rose Portion has her child Mercy as a result of a profane coupling with Jack Slipper, and later Laura takes the child into her care and nurses it as if it were the Divine Infant itself. Rose is no longer needed in White's fictional frame: she has done her duty, has produced the child which will allow Laura to enact the role of the undefiled, virginal mother, and so, conveniently, she dies an early death. It would be an embarrassment for Laura to have to deal with her presence, to listen to her heavy breathing and be weighed down by her gross materiality while she is trying to get on with the business of the Spiritual Journey. In this way the opposites split apart, the chthonic mother disappears from the fictional stage, slips into the unconscious as it were, only to reappear later - as of course is inevitable - in altered form. In Voss's inland journey the Chthonic Mother reappears in the images of the aboriginal women who haunt and plague his expedition, in the motif of the Black Madonna, and in the chthonic-devouring aspect of the maternal landscape. Voss himself is forced to deal with filth and physicality which far outweigh the materialism of Rose Portion. More important still, Laura reveals a decidedly "devouring" character beneath her immaculate persona, and at the end of the journey even looks like the serpent-headed Gorgon as the doctor applies the blood-sucking leeches to her shaved head. What the author rejects in his conscious frame returns with a vengeance in his unconscious, invading the fictional story "from below" and undermining the spiritual vision of love and light. He gets rid of Rose, Laura's "shadow", and then this same shadow re-emerges later with renewed vitality and destructiveness.

I

Another major tension of the novel is the fierce battle between the ego and the unconscious; or, more graphically, between the ego-bound huddlers in

Sydney and the dissolution-striving figures of the expedition. The reader is soon made aware of a tremendous gulf between Mr Bonner and Voss. The one represents provincial gentility, money-making, and materialistic incrustation, the other points to archetypal desire, *pothos*, and nostalgia. Bonner is the rational ego which refuses to have anything to do with the "inland"; he merely skates around on the surface of life, clinging to what is known and rationally acceptable. Voss, of course, is the *puer aeternus*, the boy-god who is burdened by an overwhelming longing, a craving for the depths, for the unknown, and for the maternal unconscious.

This is a crucial tension, not only in *Voss*, but in every White novel. In the author's psyche there is both resistance to and longing for the Mother. These two battle with each other - it is a conflict between fear and desire, the incest taboo and the incest urge, the fear of being devoured by the Mother and the urgent longing to unite with her.² By the time of *The Solid Mandala* this intrapsychic tension becomes the central focus of White's world, and the conflicting tendencies assume personified form in the figures of the antagonistic twin brothers. We found these tendencies already at work in *The Living and the Dead*, where Elyot was torn between the longing to unite with the Mother and the incredible fear of her world. His rational side held tightly to its attitude of resistance, but in his unconscious there was an overwhelming longing which finally erupted into view after the death of Mrs Standish and the departure of Eden. We might say that what began as a split within a single protagonist's world-view has ended in a split between two wholly opposed social groups. That ego-conscious part of Elyot which said "no" to the Mother has become an entire group of ego-bound, nay-saying characters: Mr Bonner and the Sydney huddlers.³ For all these people the unknown world of the Mother is a place of terror - their vision of the "inland" is negative and devouring:

'I am inclined to believe, Mr Voss, that you will discover a few black-fellers, and a few flies, and something resembling the bottom of the sea. That is my humble opinion.' [p.62]

'I would not like to ride very far into [this country],' admitted Belle, 'and meet a lot of blacks, and deserts, and rocks, and skeletons, they say, of men that have died.' [p.28]

On the other hand, that unconscious part of Elyot's character which longed for the matrix has become a group of dissolution-striving mystics: Voss, Le Mesurier, Palfreyman, and the others. For this group the mother-world is something positive and desirable, which they set out to explore with great passion and commitment:

'A pity that you huddle,' said the German. 'Your country is of great subtlety.' [p.11]

'I am compelled into this country ... ' [p.20]

... he sat beneath a dark tree, hoping soon to enter his own world, of desert and dreams ... he was restless. [p.26]

The problem is that, while both responses to the mother-world are "right", they are presented as entirely irreconcilable positions within the context of the novel. Voss and Bonner are completely opposed - neither can understand or sympathize with the other's point of view. Thus the tensions which were originally contained in Elyot's psyche have split apart and confront each other as autonomous psychic systems. Fictionally, this separation is disastrous - with the vital connection lost between the ego and the unconscious, both sides become static, extremist, and dogmatic. We easily tire of Mr Bonner - his actions and thoughts are predictable, his mind superficial and dry, devoid of life-energy, unmoved by passion. Voss, on the other hand, is predictable as his counterpart - always longing to abandon the human frame, to penetrate to the divine and dissolve in the Beyond. They are inorganic aspects of the fragmented fictional psyche and are too obviously, too simply opposed:

They were two blue-eyed men, of a different blue. Voss would frequently be lost to sight in his, as birds are in sky. But Mr Bonner would never stray far beyond familiar objects. His feet were on the earth. [p.17]

'You are quite certain you are ready to undertake such a great expedition?' he now dared to ask.

'Naturally,' the German replied.

He had his vocation, it was obvious, and equally obvious that his patron would not understand. [p.20]

In fact, everything about their relationship is quite obvious. As the men study the map of the inland we are told that "Mr Bonner read the words, but Voss saw the rivers. He followed them in their fretful course. He flowed ..., festering with green scum" [p.23]. The dissolution-striving Voss concentrates on the *unio mystica*, but Bonner sees only appearances and surface-reality. In the presence of Voss, Bonner feels uneasy and longs to "withdraw from deep water" [p.23]. The fragmentation of Elyot's psyche has not led to creative pluralism but to a sterile and rigid dissociation of sensibility.⁴

Because ego and unconscious function as separate systems, there is no real connection in the novel between Sydney and the inland expedition: as the story unfolds, the endless to and fro movement between the two societies becomes tedious, the two worlds are irreconcilable. In photographic terms, the Sydney scenes are over-exposed: there is too much brute light, everyday reality, the harsh tones of the naked sun [the huddlers are referred to as "the children of light, who march in, and throw the shutters right back" p.16]. The inland scenes are dark and mystical in comparison: there we have to focus our gaze more circumspectly, upon a nightscape full of wonderful happenings and weird creatures of the mind. The "eyes" of the reader tire from this relentless shifting from a too-light to a too-dark symbolic landscape. In psychological terms, White's ego-world is too bright and rational, his unconscious life too dark and morbidly mystical. The contrast gets more pronounced as the novel progresses - as, that is to say, the tension between the two systems becomes greatest. Voss and his party become increasingly visionary as he moves deeper into uroboric territory, and Bonner and his associates seem to grow - if it is possible - increasingly banal and ridiculous as they pursue their empty persona-lives. The point is that, no matter how much White despises the Bonner group, he is psychologically bound to represent them in an increasingly despicable and "ego-resistant" way, because within his own psyche the inherent resistance to uroboric incest must keep pace with the fanatic desire for it. That is to say, the more he consents to Voss's fearless passion the more he is forced - unconsciously - to present a

loathsome image of the resistant huddlers back in Sydney. The instinctual fear of the mother-world has split off from the inland story, and so must be pursued outside the central focus, in emotional tones which equal the tenacity and fanaticism of the dissolution-striving explorers.

Once again, we see how the unacknowledged aspect of the conscious standpoint actually returns with a vengeance and tends to collapse the fictional frame that has been established. If the dissolution-striving tendency would recognize the essential ambivalence of uroboric incest the huddlers would not have to be imaged in such a paranoid way. Conversely, one feels that if the huddlers were able to open themselves to the possibility of "exploring" the inner world, Voss would not have to be so desperate and nihilistic in his mission. The two groups mirror one another: extremism is matched by extremism. The movement of the novel is not toward unity - as critics have suggested⁵ - but toward increased disparity and disintegration. The intrapsychic quarrel becomes a wordly debacle between Sydney and the Inland, and the novel reflects this in terms of its agonizing dualities and irreconcilable worldviews.

II

Many critics and reviewers have seen *Voss* as an essay in the power of the human will and have regarded the German explorer as a typical "hero" figure. But the active element in his character, the force which impels him into the country of the dead, is not his own will but the unconscious *dynamis* of the mother archetype, or the force of inertia which draws the ego into its deathly matrix. It is not Voss who acts, but the unconscious "will" that acts through him. The problem is magnified to the extent that Voss identifies with the archaic power of the mother-image: he imagines he is omnipotent and eternal because he has been assailed by an archetypal force.⁶ Voss presents us with a classic case of *hubris* or psychic inflation, where the ego-personality confuses its own power or will with that of the gods, in this case, with the Mother Goddess.

At the basis of Voss's psychology is a pathological identification with the uroboric matrix in its crushing, over-powering aspect. In his youth Voss had a peculiar penchant for dangerous sports, and a strong passion for near-death experience, which "through some perversity, inspired him with fresh life" [p.18]. We are even told that, prior to his obsession for the country of the dead, Voss had developed a fascination for a certain insect-devouring species of lily:

He did study inordinately, and was fascinated in particular by a species of lily which swallows flies. With such instinctive neatness and cleanliness to dispose of those detestable pests. Amongst the few friends he had, his obsession became a joke. He was annoyed at first, but decided to take it in good part ... [pp.13-14]

Here we have, in a rather unusual image, an example of Voss's morbid interest in the devouring matrix: the aggressive force of nature which consumes the little creatures of the air. Theodora had a similar fascination for the devouring tendencies of the natural world, symbolized by the Meroëan crocodile. Here the values are inverted: a delicate and beautiful lily destroys "detestable pests", whereas in Theodora's fantasy the matrix was ugly and the thing that it consumed - the frail trochilus - sublimely beautiful. In psychological terms, there has been a radical shift in orientation: the devouring unconscious is now felt to be more desirable, and of higher value, than the ego which it swallows back into itself. By the time of *Voss* White has become a devoted servant of the Mother, so that it is characteristic that her image would change from a reptilian monster to a delicately beautiful death-lily. This change of character is not to be seen as an "advancement" in the archetypal structure - on the contrary, the fact that the uroboric matrix can now adopt a pleasurable and attractive aspect only makes it all the more treacherous. Instead of feeling pursued by a threatening figure the ego now succumbs to the unearthly beauty of the maternal unconscious and is drawn to it as if by an irresistible force.

At one point the novel images Voss as a kind of sleepwalker who is the passive victim of an archetypal fantasy or dream:

There he was stripped by moonlight and darkness, the stale air moving round him, very softly. Voss himself did not move. Rather was he moved by a dream, Palfreyman sensed. Through some trick of moonlight or uncertainty of behaviour, the head became detached for a second and appeared to have been fixed upon a beam of the wooden wall ...

The moonlight returned Voss to the room. As he was moved back, his bones were creaking, and his skin had erupted in a greenish verdigris ...

Next morning [Palfreyman] remarked:

'Mr Voss, do you know you were sleep-walking last night?' ...

'I have never been known to, before. Never,' he replied, but most irritably, as if refusing a crime with which he had been unjustly charged. [p.177]

This is a fascinating sequence, for it points to the image of Voss as the unknowing sleepwalker, the man who is caught up in a dream or fantasy in a completely unconscious way. It is interesting that Voss's actions appear to Palfreyman to be involuntary - "Voss himself did not move. Rather was he moved ...". Significantly, Voss refuses to accept that he is moved by forces beyond his control. This is a characteristic feature of the *puer*: he is quick to deny that he is the instrument of impersonal factors: he believes he acts from himself, and does not see that he is "lived" by an archetypal pattern. The reference to moonlight is important here: Voss's sleep-walking takes place "under the indicator of that magnetic moon" [p.176]. He is held fast in a Luna-spell, or is bewitched by Hecate-Artemis, the ambivalent Moon Goddess. In relation to this, it is fascinating that Palfreyman imagines that Voss's head has been removed from his body as he walks out into the night. In a sense, this is an anticipation of his decapitation at the hands of the Chthonic Mother in the Australian desert. But in psychological terms Voss has already "lost his head", i.e. he has lost his reason and his mind to the dark realm of the unconscious.

III

In relation to his fellow explorers Voss acts as the hypnotized hypnotist⁷ who draws other men into the nightmare in which he is himself ensnared. His colleagues, of course, must already have something of the *puer*-nature in them to be involved in Voss's enterprise, but the German leader acts as the satanic

figure who brings to life their latent desires for uroboric incest. One such follower is Frank Le Mesurier, who is inwardly a *puer aeternus*, but who has covered his "mystical" and childlike nature with an adult persona in order to cope with life in this world. Le Mesurier has repressed his *puer* aspect, but he pays for this in his sense of inner emptiness. His attitude has become cynical and bitter as he experiences the widening gap between his "true" self and his external social mask. Prior to his meeting with Voss he feels as if he is "getting nowhere" [p.34] and that his life has been a complete failure. Then Voss arrives on the scene, appeals to Le Mesurier's "genius", and invites him to join the expedition:

'... in this disturbing country, so far as I have become acquainted with it already, 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, and of which you will not tell me you are afraid.'

It was dark now. Tempted, the young man was, in fact, more than a little afraid - his throbbing body was deafening him - but as he was a vain young man, he was also flattered

'All right then,' said Le Mesurier. 'What if I come along? At least I shall think it over. What have I got to lose?' ...

He was already thrilled by the immensity of darkness, and resented the approach of those lights which would reveal human substance, his own in particular. [pp.35-36]

This is a good example of how the German leader, well advanced in the mysticism of disintegration, seduces another *puer*-oriented male into joining him in a cult of the dead. He teaches Le Mesurier to resent the human and the mundane and to "attempt the infinite" - which, as he describes it, is synonymous with being torn apart by the ravaging forces of the mother-world. Voss's "recruiting" works by contagion, by drawing others into the spell of his obsessive myth, and by their eventual succumbing to his powerful vision.⁸ His death-romanticism stirs their blood in an irrational way, and hence is all the more effective in producing the desired result - their unquestioning support and subordination.⁹

Harry Robarts is a *puer* of the Bub Quigley order; he is "good", "simple", "but superfluous" [p.21], "an easy shadow to wear" [p.31]. Harry is helpless in the face of Voss's tyrannical power - he devotes himself to the German, calls him his "Lord", and is subservient to Voss throughout the expedition, until he

meets his shocking but inevitable death in the Australian wilderness. Turner is a drunkard and a "derelict soul" [p.42], whose longing for death and disintegration has already expressed itself in his alcoholism and self-destructive life-style. For Turner the expedition is an opportunity to self-destruct in grand style, rather than to dissolve anonymously in the gutters of Sydney. It is the uninhibited Turner who sees clearly the perverse, morbid aspect of the expedition, and who readily admits that he has "'Contracted with a practisin' madman ... for a journey to hell an' back'" [p.43].

A dissolution-striving follower of a slightly higher order is Palfreyman. Palfreyman's life-story revolves around the image of his hunchback sister, whom he feels he has betrayed, and to whom he will offer himself as a willing sacrifice. During the course of the expedition we discover that Palfreyman had developed an impossible mother-son bond with his sister, who is several years older than himself, and who appears in his fantasies as an earth-mother figure, with a highly passionate and partly destructive character.¹⁰ Palfreyman had found his sister intoxicating and overbearing in her love, and was also agonized by his own incestuous longing, and so he escaped to another hemisphere,¹¹ leaving his goddess-sister to her own fate. But inwardly he was still tied to her, his passionate feelings merely aggravated and intensified by a growing sense of guilt and betrayal.¹² This is Palfreyman's state as Voss encounters him: he carries a terrible love-burden for his sister, and he sees the expedition as a means of retribution, whereby he dedicates himself to the mother-world and dissolves into the landscape as into her own image. By serving the earth-mother¹³ as the natural scientist of the party, and by journeying in toward her secret, eternal world, he relieves himself of his guilt and satisfies his unrequited longing at the same time. Thus for Palfreyman Voss is a kind of deliverer, a man who enables him to live out his fantasies and to lose himself in the depths of the matrix.

Apart from Voss himself, Palfreyman is the only member of the group whose maternal fixation is personified in a female figure who appears to be drawing him toward dissolution. Throughout the journey his sister appears to him as

an apparition, and as his death approaches "she" takes him by the hand and leads him into the Beyond. The others, Le Mesurier, Harry, Turner, merely experience the matrix as an imageless void; an impersonal abyss into which they fling themselves and by which they are consumed.

IV

It has become almost a cliché in Australian literary criticism to speak of the Voss-Laura relationship as an anima-animus involvement,¹⁴ but from what I have already suggested it is apparent that this is quite incorrect. The transference between them is a *puer*-Great Mother transference, which is of a different order of archetypal experience.¹⁵ In anima-animus affairs the positive aspect of the unconscious is constellated, enhancing the personalities and furthering the conscious development of both parties. But in the *puer*-Mother relationship the erotic involvement has a negative tone: the male is overwhelmed by his incestuous libido and his female partner invariably assumes the character of a devouring mother. From the woman's side, the contrasexual *puer*-figure is not so much the spiritual animus as he is the "ghostly lover" of ancient folklore and tradition, who leads the woman into madness and disintegration.¹⁶ Anima and animus are secondary or "threshold" figures who mediate between the two levels of the personality - they fascinate but do not obliterate consciousness; the Mother and the Ghostly Lover, however, are primary figures who personify the collective unconscious in its most undifferentiated and archaic aspect. To be drawn into the realm of these collective figures is to be overwhelmed by the disintegrative forces of the unconscious. "Mother" and "anima" are poles apart, which is why in mythology they are depicted as enemies, as in the Aphrodite-Psyche debacle.¹⁷ Laura may seem like the anima, in that she is young and maidenly, but she functions as the enchanting Mother Goddess, who drowns her lover in a flood of eros and instinctual libido. Her mythological counterparts are Cybele, Aphrodite, the Sirens, the Lorelei, and all those ancient beauties whose task it was to lure men into dangerous waters and to destroy them with ecstasy.

It is fascinating to witness the transformation in Laura's personality as the figure of the "ghostly lover" invades her character from within and converts a conservative English gentlewoman into a pseudo-mystic who longs for dissolution and nothingness. At first Laura is resistant to the figure of Voss - she finds him disturbing, threatening, "repulsive" [p.72] - and clings to her identity as the sheltered and inexperienced niece of Edmund and Mrs Bonner. But eventually she acquires a certain regard for Voss - she admires his apparent courage, his anti-materialism¹⁸ and his grandiose designs. Her immediate family discount him as a "madman" [p.27], or more simply as a "foreigner" [p.7], but, much to their surprise, Laura begins to defend Voss's project. According to Laura, Voss is "not afraid" of this country, whereas "everyone else is still afraid, or most of us, ... and will not say it" [p.28]. And she adds: "'We are not yet possessed of understanding'", assuming, of course, that Voss is. The fact that he is a foreigner merely adds to his psychological attractiveness, because the contra-sexual figure of the psyche is a "foreign" element in a woman's character, and is often projected onto strange or "exotic" men.¹⁹

By the time of the Pringles' picnic (her second meeting with Voss) she feels impassioned by the foreigner's words and inspired by his presence:

She did not raise her head for [the words] the German spoke, but heard them fall, and loved their shape. So far departed from that rational level to which she had determined to adhere, her own thoughts were grown obscure, even natural. She did not care. It was lovely.
[p.63]

Here we have the sense of an evocation of a deeper, more profound, more "natural" level of her being. An archetypal process has begun and she allows it to take possession of her ("She did not care. It was lovely"). Laura's assimilation to the realm of the undifferentiated animus is emphasized by her sudden association with Willie Pringle. Willie, "a boy, or youth, ... with a rather loose, wet, though obviously good-natured mouth" [p.63] is a familiar *puer*-figure, a counterpart of Bub Quigley and Harry Robarts. Of all her relations and acquaintances in Sydney, Laura feels most intimately associated with this slightly retarded youth. There can be no doubt that she would have given this

boy short shrift prior to her descent into the unconscious (her own family and relatives find him abhorrent), but now she is inspired by his child-like sense of wonder and awe, his clumsiness and irrational nature. Poor Willie takes this interest personally and imagines himself as Laura's consort, but it is clear that the fascination is purely archetypal: he is a fleeting image of her *puer-animus*, an image which is more completely carried by Voss himself.

The awakening of the "ghostly lover" and the masculine side is also evident in Laura's sudden penchant for witticisms and "great thoughts", and in her opinionated outbursts in public and social situations [cf. p.82f]. Shy and introverted before her meeting with Voss, she now becomes aggressive and forthright in her speech and behaviour. She succeeds in outwitting all the men in her social circle, and makes fools of Tom Radclyffe and Mr Pringle. She becomes an "intellectual" monster - feared by men and hated by women. This is a frequent archetypal phenomenon: when the undifferentiated animus emerges, the woman becomes opinionated, affected, pretentiously intellectual, and convinced that she is the sole bearer of ultimate truth. The contrasexual figure manifests as an intellectual force, but its effect is negative - overbearing, excessive - because the archetype is not checked or controlled by the conscious mind.²⁰ From this point her ego-personality progressively disintegrates, and the Ghostly Lover, personified throughout by Voss, seizes complete control, leading her finally to psychological and emotional collapse.

Up until the time of the departure of the expedition, Voss has thought little of Miss Trevelyan - there have been momentary feelings of warmth, but on the whole he has been preoccupied with his mythic lover - the mother-figure within - and betrays little interest. Even at their wharveside farewell Voss dismisses Laura in a rather blunt fashion [p.112], causing Laura to recoil and become defensive. Archetypally, she is not yet his lover - but is a mere external, human woman, who can never compete with the Mother Goddess. It is only later, when he is riding through the wilderness, that he falls in love with "Laura" - or, we should say, that his archetypal figure begins to adopt her form, her guise. Thus distance is not an obstacle to their love, it is

the essential precondition for it. It is only "from afar" that their mutual forms begin to acquire archetypal dimension and to merge with the inward figures. Eventually, when Voss's "Laura" becomes synonymous with the earth and the landscape he realizes that they "had been married an eternity"[p.269] - or symbolically, he realizes that he has always been united with the now-personified Mother Goddess.²¹

V

As she appears at the wharveside, seated "sculpturally upon her mastered horse" [p.109], Laura begins to emerge as a truly mythic figure. All the men at the docks are immediately drawn to this "sculptured" woman: some admire her, some frown because "they were unsuspectingly afraid of what they could not touch" [p.101]. Like Madeleine, who was also frequently astride a gallant steed (an obvious symbol of libido), she is an object of desire, yet untouched and, some feel, untouchable. She is aloof, remote, goddess-like.

Just as the ship prepares to sail, Palfreyman engages in brief and polite conversation with this goddess-figure, but as soon as he turns away from her to board the *Osprey* he is overwhelmed by a sensation of drowning and dissolution:

She looked toward Palfreyman. As he withdrew through the already considerable crowd, he received the impression of a drowning that he was unable to avert, in a dream through which he was sucked inevitably back.

Ah, Laura was crying out, bending down through the same dream, extending her hand in its black glove; you are my only friend, and I cannot reach you. [p.109]

This is our first indication that Laura is to function as a negative Siren-figure, a "seductress" associated with images of dissolution. Palfreyman feels that he is being drawn into the disorienting vortex of dream or nightmare, that he is being "sucked inevitably back". This is the reaction of the ego as it approaches the field of the mother-world - it loses its centredness and feels that it is drowning in the unconscious. Laura's operative gesture and gloved hand links her all the more clearly with the image of the beckoning enchantress: she is the angel of death and she invites Palfreyman, as her "only friend", to unite with her. It is clear that Palfreyman has unconsciously associated

Laura with his goddess-sister - she too appears as a devouring-seductive figure. This shows how fluid, impersonal, and collective are Palfreyman's experiences of the Goddess-image: "she" appears now as his sister, now as Laura, now as the Australian landscape. His relation to the female sex is completely mythic and preconditioned. Further, this shows that the experience of "Laura" is not limited to Voss alone - she becomes a powerful archetypal figure, and in a sense every member of the expedition is held under "her" sway. Palfreyman's vision stands at the beginning of the journey and prefigures the entire sequence that is to follow.

And so the cult of the dead begins. Turner, who arrives at the docks late, in a drunken, dishevelled state, announces the theme of the "journey into death" as he mutters the words, "'I will not be dead of this ... Or if I am, it is a lovely way to die'" [p.118]. A lovely way to die: this is the dominant image and motivation of the expedition, for each "explorer" is seeking the death-ecstasy of the ego and the pleasurable aspect of uroboric dissolution. Turner's very drunkenness - i.e. the "intoxication" of his personality - adds to the constellated image of self-dissolution. Once again, however, the negative aspect creeps into the picture "from behind", from the unconscious:

... as the ship began to move later that afternoon, [Turner] rose up in a dream, and cried:

'Mr Voss, you are killing us! Give me the knife, please. Ahhhhh!
... It is not my turn to die.' [p.119]

There is a conflict between the *idea* of self-dissolution and the *fact* of being devoured: in its "conscious" life the expedition readily embraces the notion of blissful entry into nothingness (as in Turner's drunken words), but unconsciously it is plagued by the fear of disintegration.²² Throughout the ensuing journey we witness this unconscious uprising of the negative-devouring element - usually in dream or subliminal states. In Sydney the huddlers carry the motif of fear and rejection, but within the expedition there is a kind of buried resistance which erupts involuntarily at crucial points. There is more instinctual fear amongst the so-called "explorers" than the author would allow, which is why he is forced to split the party into two groups at a later

phase, because the resistance builds up and eventually assumes personified form in the mutinous party which decides to return home. Thus we have to do with a split between "huddlers" and "explorers" as well as one between conscious and unconscious levels of the expedition itself. The resistance to incest is a psychological urge as strong as the desire for it, and will dog and pursue the dissolution-craving aspect to the very end.

As the expedition moves westward,²³ toward the centre of the continent, it is the positive, pleasurable aspect of the inward journey which predominates at the outset. Voss feels as if he is entering a "gentle, healing landscape" [p.124], and Le Mesurier and Palfreyman begin to sense the relief and joyousness which is a characteristic feature of uroboric incest. The tensions of the ego-complex disappear and give way to the limitless expanse of the collective unconscious. The ego suddenly feels surrounded by the sensuous folds of great Mother Nature ["At once the hills were enfolding him ... he was touching [them] and was not surprised at their suave flesh" p.139]. Whenever White presents us with strong, resonant images of Nature, whenever he pays tribute to the landscape, we can always be sure a dissolution process is at hand, and that the protagonist is about to merge in some way with the maternal unconscious.²⁴ White represents Nature within a mythical context: its moods always reflect the moods of the Great Mother and the archetypal world. If the day is kind and the landscape inviting then the unconscious background is showing its positive face. When snakes, rocky crags, drenching rain or scorching sun appear, then Hecate holds sway over the inner world. The tones of landscape have little or nothing to do with objective phenomena: they point primarily to psychic states, acting as a kind of barometer of the inner situation.

As the party approaches Rhine Towers several children run out of the settlement to greet them: " ... the children would run along the track in the wake of the riders, jumping the mounds of yellow dung, shouting and sniffing, as if they had known the horsemen all along" [p.125]. This adds to the positive image of "homecoming", of being greeted by the Earth Mother and her "little,

wild, rosy children" [p.125]. Always in White "children" have this symbolic significance: they represent the positive, vital side of the mother's world, and where they get together in song and celebration²⁵ it is as if a pagan or "natural" rite were being enacted.

The approach to Rhine Towers sets the scene for the ecstatic and unearthly entry into the mother-world:

... it was the valley itself which drew Voss. Its mineral splendours were increased in that light. As bronze retreated, veins of silver loomed in the gullies, knobs of amethyst and sapphire glowed on the hills, until the horsemen rounded that bastion which fortified from sight the ultimate stronghold of beauty. [p.128]

This is no mere entry into an outback settlement - it is a mythical homecoming to the Eternal City, a place full of marvellous light and jewelled splendour. The rocky entrances are like the portals of another world, the opening to uroboric paradise.

But the vision of light soon disappears as the party moves closer to the disintegrative field: "Now the beauty of their approach to Rhine Towers appeared to have been a tragic one, of which the last fragments were crumbling in the dusk" [p.129]. Significantly, the first person they encounter as they enter the settlement is Mrs Sanderson, a chthonic mother-woman preoccupied with materialism and concrete reality. Voss's first reaction to Mrs Sanderson is to feel trapped and ensnared by her materialism: he rejects her offer to sleep inside her house [cf. Fig 7b], much to the amazement of Sanderson, their host, and the other members of the party. Voss's reaction, however, is characteristic of his *puer* nature: although he longs to enter the matrix, he resists being "devoured" by its imprisoning aspect. Le Mesurier, reflecting the general attitude of the *puer aeternus*, sees Mrs Sanderson as a chthonic, evil force: "the serpent has slid even into this paradise, Le Mesurier realized, and sighed" [p.129]. White's misogyny is not a conscious hatred of women, it is an instinctive, archetypal reaction to the negative mother-image. This psychic content is never realized at an inner level, and so is always foisted out upon the world. And as soon as Mrs Sanderson insists that the party must sleep inside her house ["'But the beds are all aired,' ventured

the bewildered Mrs Sanderson" p.129] Palfreyman collapses in his saddle and falls to the ground. Symbolically, the *puer*-spirit has been "overcome" by an archetypal field: in this act Palfreyman expresses the agony of the *puer aeternus* when it comes into contact with the chthonic mother. As it is, they carry Palfreyman into the house, and Voss and his party sleep (disturbingly) in the imprisoning matrix after all: the mother-woman has triumphed, or, we might say, the *pueri* have submitted to their unconsciously chosen fate. Despite their resistance to imprisonment they are completely at the Mother's mercy once they have entered her world.

Further, it is at Rhine Towers that Judd, the former convict who will become leader of the mutinous group, joins the expedition. Also joining the party at Rhine Towers is Angas, a fleshly, animal-like grazier who will likewise depart from the central cavalcade. Judd and Angas are both large, strong, "practical" men who represent a threat to Voss's visionary nature. Judd tends to override Voss's leadership at crucial points and to assume authority for practical matters. He proves himself much more capable than Voss of leading an expedition - but then, Voss's aim was never to become a national hero, but to lead a party of hallucinated followers into ecstasy and death. As such, Judd and Angas are "shadow-figures", practical, earthy, common-sense men who do not abide by the fantasy of uroboric incest. Judd joins the party as a "service to the Colony" [p.136] which is why he must eventually turn back, for the party is not motivated by such pragmatic and well-meaning ideas.

Thus, having entered a seemingly paradisaic realm, Voss encounters an archetypal field which is replete with dark omens and negative experiences: the imprisoning materialism of Mrs Sanderson, the illness of Palfreyman, and the shadow-figures of Judd and Angas. These factors begin to undermine his fantasy of omnipotence and his dream of dissolution:

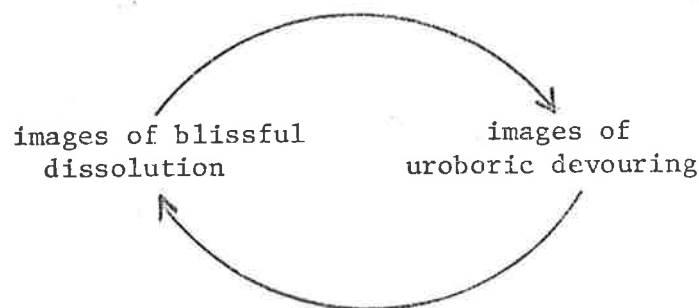
It was necessary for him to enjoy complete freedom whereas this weight had begun to threaten him. So he was chewing his moustache, nervously, his mouth quite bitter from a determination to resist, his head spinning, as he entered in advance that vast, expectant country ... [p.137]

It is clear that Voss does not associate these negative events with his uroboric

mission - for him these are purely external, "human" annoyances, and his true goal still lies over the horizon, deeper into the country of the bones. He does not realize that these occurrences are part of his archetypal fantasy, and that the desire for dissolution leads naturally and inevitably into the devouring maw of the mother-world. Theodora could never appreciate that her mother's destructive aspect was integral to her regressive longing, nor could Stan recognize that his dreadful wife was part of his chosen fate. For each of these characters the idea of maternal paradise is not connected with the fact of uroboric devouring, and so their "romantic" longings must always collide with the harsh reality of the death-dealing matrix.²⁶

VI

After the cavalcade leaves Rhine Towers the ecstatic motifs of uroboric incest begin to reappear. This is a typical sequence in the "uroboric quest", as we have observed from Theodora's story: images of blissful dissolution suddenly give way to images of uroboric devouring, and then there is a return to dissolution imagery:



This process is quite distinct at first, and we can readily observe the movement from one side of the uroboric experience to the other, but as the expedition draws closer to its goal the pendulum-swing moves faster and wilder, and there is finally a blur of images where motifs of dissolution and devouring begin to merge into one another. But at this stage there is a return to the positive imagery, governed by the image of "Laura" and the experience of the gentle, caressing landscape:

He continued to think about the young woman, there on the banks of the river, where the points of her wooden elbows glimmered in the dusk. [p.152]

In [his] 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.

The demands Voss made on his freshly-formed relationship were frequent and consuming, but, although exhausted by an excess of sensuality, it was a period of great happiness to him and, in consequence, of unexplained happiness to everyone else. [p.155]

With the image of the holy union before his mind, and the intensified vision of the "expectant", sensuous Earth Mother in the image of Laura, the party resumes its mission with almost child-like confidence and assurance.

This happy phase of the journey is dominated by the idea or motif of "ecstatic drowning", of being sucked back into a vast oceanic expanse and linked to eternity:

The wind bent the grass into tawny waves, on the crests of which floated the last survivors of flowers, and shrivelled and were sucked under by the swell. All day the horses and the cattle swam through this grass sea. Their barrels rolled and gurgled. All night the beasts were glutting themselves on dew and grass, but in the dreams of men the waves of grass and the waves of sleep were soon one. [p.165]

This reminds us of Stan Parker's experience in the Willunya flood - there too the imagery of the natural world was overwhelming and seductive, and the "waters" of the earth mother seemed to invite the exhausted men to extinguish themselves in her depths.

Later this swirling, psycho-physical landscape is more explicitly associated with Laura as the embodiment of *mater natura*:

All the immediate world was soon swimming in the same liquid green. She was clothed in it. Green shadows almost disguised her face, where she walked amongst the men, to whom, it appeared, she was known, as others were always known to one another, from childhood, or by instinct. [p.198]

Here Laura emerges as the Universal Mother, clothed in the green of the landscape, a figure synonymous with the earth itself, and known to all men as the same living force, for she is now a completely transpersonal figure. But a dark, ambivalent aspect begins to invade this delightful image of the Mother Goddess: "Then he noticed how her greenish flesh was spotted with blood ...,"

and that she would laugh at, and understand the jokes shared with others, while he continued to express himself in foreign words, in whichever language he used" [p.199]. This goddess, then, is also pagan and chthonic: she is spotted with blood (an ever-present symbol of the Great Mother in her dark, instinctual aspect) and she cavorts, unexpectedly, with the "ordinary" men and enjoys their jokes. Voss begins to suspect that his mystical bride is not his at all: "Only he was the passing acquaintance, at whom she did glance once, since it was unavoidable" [p.199]. Archetypally, of course, this is quite true: Laura does not belong to Voss, anymore than the spirit of the earth belongs to him. A man cannot "wed" the Great Mother, for he finds that she has an Aphrodite-nature - she is a shared experience, a woman who obeys no man, but who loves them all. Only the anima-bride is faithful to man, for at the level of the anima the masculine ego has wrested a personal figure from the collective psyche. But the Mother is the Universal Female, the "unmarried" one.²⁷ And so Laura assumes an ambivalent character that Voss had not anticipated: she seems unfaithful, pagan, and bloodied.

At this point Voss has a dream which seems to highlight this partly-submerged negative aspect of Laura's nature. He dreams that he enters a pond of lilies with his beloved, only to find that he is being drawn toward his death: "Now they were swimming so close they were joined together at the waist, and were the same flesh of lilies, their mouths, together, were drowning in the same love-stream" [p.187]. This is a classic representation of the siren-like aspect of the mother-world, where the masculine figure is drawn into a watery death. The re-appearance of the death-lily is significant here: this shows that this image is still alive in Voss's unconscious as a symbol of the seductive-devouring mother-world. Now *he* is the doomed insect-man who flies unwarily into the gaping mouth, attracted by its beauty, yet destroyed by it at the same time. As we might anticipate, the dream goes on to connect Laura with the death-lily: holding the womb-like flower in her hands she informs Voss that she maintains the superior position in their relationship, and that it is "*the woman who unmakes men*" [p.188, my italics]. This is an explicit statement of Voss's

inner situation: he is in a position of complete subservience to the Mother. Here we see how the dream reverses the image of reality - Voss himself believes that he is the conqueror, and that he is penetrating the mother-world by force of will. But the dream states that Laura is the supreme force, the figure who "unmakes men" and leads them to their doom.²⁸

It must be emphasized again that Voss does not *realize* the daemonic aspect of his beloved goddess. Although this aspect is "felt" it is never fully assimilated; Laura remains for him a divine, virginal figure. The negative image continues to haunt Voss in other ways, as for instance in the frequent appearances of the full-breasted aboriginal women who stalk alongside or "shadow" the cavalcade throughout the later stages of the story. The men urge Voss to shoot at the natives - since they are seen to be responsible for the plundering of the party's livestock and also for the theft of certain navigational instruments - but Voss tries to protect and befriend them, believing that in this way he will enlist their support and guidance. On one occasion Voss offers the aboriginal women a large bag of flour, but the chthonic mothers quickly lay waste his token sacrifice:

While yet in sight, some altercation of a semi-humorous nature arose, and many hands were tugging at the bag. One old woman was seizing handfuls of the flour and pouring it upon her head. She stood there, for a moment, in veils of flour, an ancient bride, and screamed because it tickled. They were all laughing then, and running through a rain of flour, after it was dropped, finally, in ignoble rags.
[p.206]

This is a compelling image of the destructive tendencies of the mother: she seizes the offering that Voss has brought to her and reduces it to "ignoble rags", making a joke of the entire exchange. The fact that the seemingly hysterical woman is represented as an "ancient bride" is perhaps an unconscious parody of Laura's position: she too is a kind of chthonic bride who reduces Voss's efforts to nought. Further, the native woman is completely anonymous and impersonal, like Laura herself - she appears like a ghost-presence or spirit of the land, and then disappears into the desert country.

And now the landscape itself seems to turn against Voss and shows its destructive face: he is plagued by drought, heat, famine, and the ground

becomes rocky, treacherous, and covered with crawling insects and reptiles. At one point Voss's horse is attacked by a snake, and as it bucks up in terror the rider's forehead is gashed by the branch of a dead tree. Soon after this Voss is kicked in the stomach by a staked mule [p.211f], and has to spend several days recovering from the injury. In the presence of all these disintegrative and painful events, Voss notices that his ever-present earth- (or rather, death-) goddess is smiling and radiant:

... he had become aware that the mouth of the young woman was smiling. It was unusually full and compassionate. Approbation must have gone to his head, for he continued unashamedly to contemplate her pleasure, and to extract from it pleasure of his own. They were basking in the same radiance, which had begun to emanate from the hitherto lustreless earth. [pp.208-209]

Here again we witness the chthonic-destructive and pleasurable aspects side by side: the negative "attacks" of the brute landscape give way to the blissful caress of the Mother Goddess. This is the pattern from here on - there is a constant juxtapositioning of destructive uroboric imagery with erotic-sexual imagery associated with Laura. As the *puer* moves deeper into the matrix these aspects fuse into one pleasure-pain experience which is the true paradoxical response to uroboric incest.

VII

The link between seductive and devouring aspects is perhaps most clearly demonstrated in the tragic fate of Palfreyman. We have seen how the image of the Mother Goddess, in the guise of his partly-divine, partly-daemonic (and physically deformed) sister, has been the guiding force in his psychic life and the impulse which led him to embark on this journey into the mother-world. What Laura is to Voss the anonymous earth-mother sister is to Palfreyman: the personification of desire, the object of impossible incestuous love, and the deathly maternal source to which he longs to return. On the eve of his death at the hands of a tribe of natives Palfreyman reviews his relation to his sister-goddess in the following hypnagogic fantasy:

He [saw himself again] as a small, weak, ineffectual man that his sister had flung upon a bed of violets. There, upon those suffocating

small flowers, he had failed her kisses, but would offer himself, as another sacrifice, to other spears. The close cave intensified his personal longing. One side of him Voss, the other his lady sister, in her cloak that was the colour of ashes. Towards morning her hand, with its unnaturally pronounced finger-joints, took his hand, and they walked into the distant embers, which hurt horribly, but which he must continue to endure, as he was unfitted for anything else. [p.282]

This is a clear example of the workings of the Death Mother in the psyche of the *puer*: she comes to him in the night, a creature of the dark unconscious, and lures him away to a fantasy-world of "distant embers". Of course the approach to the nether-world "hurt horribly" because the fantasy voyage is nothing less than a journey into death. But the *puer* "must endure" the pain of disintegration because it is synonymous with the goal and object of his deepest longing. The entire fantasy is a prefiguration of Palfreyman's death, which occurs soon after. In this regard it is fascinating to note that his sister's devouring kisses are linked with the image of the wounding spear: "...he had failed her kisses, but would offer himself, as another sacrifice, to other spears". This throws considerable light on the events of his actual death. Psychologically, he invites the aborigines to attack him - so that his physical fate can be read as a mere fulfilment of his uroboric fantasy.

At the scene of his death, Palfreyman walks out unarmed - hands outstretched in reverence and exaltation - amongst a horde of aboriginal warriors. He tells Voss he will "trust to his faith" [p.341], and even Voss has to admit that his claim "sounded terribly weak". As he moves toward the natives in long, confident strides, Palfreyman invokes the image of his sister, recalls "the love that he had denied [her]" [p.342], and now feels strangely and ecstatically reconciled to her - and, through her, is united to "all beings". Palfreyman is utterly happy, becoming "clearer" and "more transparent" with each step, until, at the point when the fatal spear strikes his chest, he bursts into a fit of laughter. This is the childish, hysterical laughter of a *puer* who has been finally returned to the matrix. His terrible longing has been fulfilled and he is now - dead; or, more poetically, reunited with the uroboric Great Mother. We can hardly "blame" the aborigines for his death;

on the contrary, they have merely facilitated a dream, or have helped bring a mythic process to its final consummation.²⁹

It is at this point that the party experiences a serious split, where Judd leads a band of followers back toward civilization and where Voss leads Le Mesurier and Harry deeper into uroboric territory. The reasons for this split are psychological: as it becomes more and more apparent that the party is involved in an horrific cult of the dead the unconscious resistance within the band of *pueri* is constellated again and causes several of the members to turn back in fright. This unconscious undercurrent was first noted in the dream of Turner, where he rejected the sacrificial knife and the idea of self-mutilation. Not surprisingly, it is Turner who strives to create the split-off party, and who suddenly urges Judd and Angas to support him in a bid for safety and refuge. We might say that Turner's instinctual fear has been aroused by the horrific images before him - Palfreyman's ritual death, Le Mesurier's madness, Voss's obsession - and that this uprising element has now thrust his own dissolution-striving aspect into the background. Turner tells Angas, who has partly to be won over by his colleague, that Voss and his inner circle are intent on "mad things" and strive to "Blow the world up" [p.255]. "'People of that kind will destroy what you and I know'" says the voice of conscience, or the now-converted persona-type. "'It is a form of madness with them'" [p.255]. Finally Judd is forced to recognize the cult-like, "mystical" nature of the expedition, and decides to flee from "the deserts of mysticism" to "his own fat paddocks" [p.345].

But the mutinous party does not survive: Turner and Angas die agonizing deaths on the return journey, and Judd himself "survives" only in the flesh, for his mind is tortured and insane by the time he reaches civilization. Even as he first arrives at his property Judd finds that his wife and boys have died, and that his "fat paddocks" are ruined. This is only to be expected in White's fiction - for once the masculine consciousness has approached the field of the uroboric mother (even, as in Judd's case, where this is done unknowingly) its world is destroyed and rendered impotent by the inner

experience. In White the unconscious exerts a formidable disintegrative power, so that even one step in its direction means death for the conscious ego. The mutinous *pueri* die or disintegrate like the others, only their deaths are without ecstasy because they have turned their backs on the prospect of uroboric incest.

After this disruption "the division led by Voss seemed to move with greater ease" [p.358]. This is understandable because the unconscious resistance to the expedition has been removed or "exorcised" by the mutinous party. Now the dissolution-striving aspect moves all the more readily into annihilation. Finally Voss's party reaches a circular plain of small stones, which is the "mythic place", the goal of the journey, where their ritual deaths and suicides are to be enacted. Naturally the circular plain is a symbol of the matrix, into which they now pass. As they approach this sacred site there are a number of "numinous" events which coincide with their entry. The leader notices that the aborigines are beginning to line up on either side of the party, as if to provide a guard of honour for their mythic homecoming:

... the German noticed ... through that haze of heat, the deeper haze, it appeared, of black forms ... And always moving. Like corporeal shadows.

Voss dared to smile.

As the expedition advanced, it was escorted by a column at either side. [p.362-3]

Just as the wild, rosy children greeted the horsemen as they rode through the celestial gates of Rhine Towers, here too the ancient "children" of the Earth Mother facilitate their entry into the mother-world. These, presumably, are the same natives who killed Palfreyman - so that a perverse element is introduced by Voss's satisfied smile; he shows no fear or resistance to his ensuing death. And now the Goddess herself makes an appearance as Voss moves into the uroboric field:

So he rode on through hell, until he felt her touch him.

'I shall not fail you,' said Laura Trevelyan ...

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

[p.363]

Laura's comforting presence and assuring comment reflect the positive image of the psychological incest which is about to take place. Here for the first

time we find an association between "seeing" the face of the Goddess and the prospect of actual death. In ancient myth and legend the idea of seeing the deity is sometimes synonymous with the image of death: for only the eternal aspect of the self can behold the face of the Immortal. Naturally this is accentuated when the deity concerned is the uroboric Mother, for "knowing" her - in the fullest, sexual sense of the word - is equivalent to physical death, as we have seen in the instances of Stan Parker and Palfreyman.

Then, as they move to the centre of the quartz field, the aborigines close in behind them and they are helplessly trapped inside the matrix: "it was seen that the two columns of natives had come upon their rear, and were standing ranged behind them in an arc of concentrated silence" [p.364]. This is a marvellous image of the transformation from positive "homecoming" to negative "imprisonment" imagery: the inviting passage-way into the matrix collapses around them and now acts as a containing shield which inhibits their escape. Just as, at Rhine Towers, the excited, hand-clapping children gave way to the aggressive tones of Mrs Sanderson, so here the almost playful, "welcoming" natives turn aggressive as soon as the archetypal field has been penetrated.³⁰ Furthermore, Jackie, Voss's aboriginal guide and companion, turns hostile to the German leader as soon as he enters the quartz field. In a complete *volte face* he abandons the enfeebled cavalcade and joins forces with the desert aborigines. Significantly, Jackie now acts as an associate of two native women, one young, with "nubile breasts", the other old and "very ugly" [p.377], who are the figures who arrange for the dismemberment of Voss and the disposal of the white corpses. Once again, the devcuring-aggressive action of the uroboros is conceived in a symbolically "matriarchal" or chthonic-maternal context. When Jackie finally hacks off the head of Voss he is not acting from his own initiative, but is merely "obeying orders" [p.377] which are handed down from the "mothers" of the tribe.

It is fascinating to see how quickly Voss's attitude changes as he moves into the matrix: he abandons his high-powered heroics and his belief in his own will and assumes a complacent sense of surrender in the face of his

impending fate. With the native tribesmen closing in on them, Harry Robarts takes fright and appeals to Voss, his "Lord", to save them. But Voss is forced to reply, "'I am no longer your Lord, Harry'" [p.366]. His tone is one of complete resignation. His "heroics" were appropriate only outside the uroboric field, and insofar as these impelled him toward the mother-world, but once inside this world he becomes submissive. In symbolic terms, Voss has been divested of his adolescent phallus (or libido) and now assumes the characteristics of a compliant eunuch.

Later, when Le Mesurier asks his "deliverer" of his plan, Voss simply replies: "'I have no plan, ... but will trust to God'" [p.379]. At this Le Mesurier stumbles away toward a dead tree and cuts his throat with a pocket-knife. This is a classic image of the *puer* - one is reminded of the god Attis who castrated himself beneath a pine-tree and bled to death. Attis, we will recall, destroyed his manhood in a state of frenzy, hoping that in this way he might regain union with Cybele, the goddess of the earth.³¹ Attis's blood was said to rejuvenate the earth, to please the Mother Goddess, and to cause her to "make the world green"³² and to bring on the spring. These mythical images are at work in Le Mesurier's unconscious: in his Rimbaud-like prose-poem, "Conclusion", he writes "'Flesh is for hacking, ... My blood will water the earth and make it green'" [pp.296-7]. He ends the poem with an incantatory hymn to the Earth-Spirit, expressing his desire for mystical anonymity, to become one with the elements, to merge with the landscape, to be "everywhere" and nowhere at the same time.³³ A mythic process has completely taken control, he identifies himself with the pagan sacrificial god, and in his death he fulfils his predestined role to the letter - he carries out faithfully and almost exquisitely the cult of the Mother Goddess.

As Voss dies he is watched over by an old blackfellow, a shaman of the tribe, who has come to defeat his "white man's magic". Significantly, in a state of near delirium, Voss imagines that this chthonic figure is his beloved Laura:

... in the grey light, it transpired that the figure was that of a woman, whose breasts hung like bags of empty skin above the white man's face. While the woman sat looking down at her knees, the greyish skin was slowly revived, until her full, white body became the shining source of all light. By its radiance, he did finally recognize her face ... [p.383]

It is fascinating that Laura appears here as an aboriginal woman before she assumes the form of a "full, white, immaculate body". This shows that the "dark" and "light" sides of the Goddess are merging into a single paradoxical figure. It is here that Voss has the vision of his bride as the serpent-headed Gorgon [p.383f], a mythic figure with clear associations with death and dismemberment. In ancient legend the Gorgon was known to devour the corpses of men, and anyone who dared look upon her face was immediately turned to stone.³⁴ In archetypal terms, the Gorgon is the Death Mother, the ancient goddess who "married" her male victims in death. As he is slain by order of the aboriginal mothers, Voss dreams that he and Laura are riding together into the distant horizon. As with Palfreyman, his death is an ecstatic one - his uroboric fantasy "comes true" as he merges into the pleroma with his mystical bride.³⁵

It is at this point that White tries to celebrate Voss, to tell us that he is now "truly humbled" [pp. 387, 389], and fit to be received by the Loving Father. Laura, with her own inflatedly "spiritual" grasp on the meaning and purpose of Voss's expedition, echoes this point of view: "... the Lord ... will love him ... now that he is humble'" [p.386]. This is a serious misrepresentation: Voss has not attained true humility, but has simply been castrated or rendered ineffectual by the uroboric Mother. Humility is a positive condition whereby the ego recognizes its true position in relation to the greater powers. It is not a state of psychological weakness, where the ego is annulled by its assimilation to an archetype. White's lofty interpretation of his protagonist's fate is a distortion of the facts. Laura - White's mouthpiece at this stage - even associates Voss with Christ, and sees his career in relation to the Anthropos or religious hero, who "ascends" and becomes one with God [pp. 386-7]. In typical manner, White comes in at the end of the story and *tells* us how spiritual and righteous his character is,

whereas this has not arisen naturally from the ground of the text.

Voss's experiences do not deserve the word "spiritual" because nothing has happened that has involved the reality of the spirit. Spirit or *pneuma*, upon which Christianity is based, is a consciousness-creating factor that lifts the personality to higher realms and carries it toward the realm of the archetypal Father. With Voss, however, the movement has been chthonic and regressive, not developmental. Like Stan Parker, his life has moved downward, surrendering to psychic inertia and to the seductive lure of the Mother. Throughout this process, consciousness has been extinguished, not transformed, much less "spiritualized" into a Christ-like capacity.

VIII

The regressive nature of the inward journey is further noted in the final stages of Laura's career. Laura's inner experience leads her to the very brink of self-dissolution and insanity, culminating in her psycho-physical illness which Dr Kilwinning dismisses as a mere "brain fever" [p.353]. Up until Voss's death she is lured, by her own Ghostly Lover, to the disintegrative depths of the unconscious, by which time her ego has been overwhelmed and annulled. But then, after Voss dies in the desert, a peculiar thing happens: she abandons her inner journey, recovers from the so-called brain fever, and returns to her earlier state of being prior to her involvement with Voss. She emerges from the inner experience as if nothing ever happened, as if she were surfacing from a bad dream or nightmare only to "reawaken" to her former self. Laura at the end is the same person we met when Voss made his first visit to the Bonners' house: she is conservative, shy, cautious, self-protected. In fact in some ways Laura seems more rigidly rational than before - in her role as headmistress of the Misses Linsleys' Academy for Young Ladies she is described as "regimented" [p.411], "stilted" [p.411] and "stern" [p.430]. This is only to be expected in such cases of the *regressive restoration of the persona*,³⁶ because when the inner experience has subsided, when the Ghostly Lover has sunk back into the unconscious and no longer exerts his

disintegrative influence upon the personality, the victim or subject is prone to erect a strong defensive mask so as to protect herself from further inundation.

Laura's attitude to "Voss" suggests that she is done with the unconscious and has no intention to return to it:

The vows were rigorous that she imposed upon herself, to the exclusion of all personal life, certainly of introspection, however great her longing for those delights of hell. The gaunt man, her husband, *would not tempt her in*. [p.404, my italics]

When Colonel Hebden tries to prod her for information about Voss, she takes fright, sees him as the "avenging angel" [p.441], and even denies her intense involvement with the explorer: "'It is all done with. I knew the person in question very slightly. He dined once at my uncle's house'" [p.406]. And again: "'Mr Voss was an acquaintance of a few days, indeed, no more than a few hours, if one stops to consider'" [p.412]. The entire emotional interaction sinks into the unconscious, and she "remembers" only the insignificant factual aspects of their meeting. Voss as Ghostly Lover is now taboo, because she has no way of coping with the disintegrative forces that this figure unleashes in her personality.

We have encountered this phenomenon before: at the end of Theodora's career she too donned a social mask and tried to act "normal" and "adjusted" in relation to her external environment. As I explained in Chapter 2, the restoration of the persona relates to the schizophrenic process: the personality cannot deal with its all-too-explosive unconscious background, and so it quickly erects a mask so as to hold back the floodwaters of the inner world. This is the process followed in each of White's novels: there is an experience of the unconscious, which proves to be overwhelming, and then, if the individual does not actually die as a result (Stan Parker, Voss) he/she is forced to erect a social mask and to pretend that nothing happened (Theodora Goodman, Laura). So long as the unconscious keeps its archaic and primary character, these are the only alternatives available to the personality - it must die, becoming one with the unconscious in uroboric incest, or it must live in defiance of

the inner world. *Voss* ends on this note - "explorers" disintegrate and "huddlers", with the addition of Laura Trevelyan, continue to huddle. The final section of the book is quietistic because all force and dynamism within Laura's character has been lost, along with Voss himself, to the disintegrative uroboric field.³⁷ The novel ends as it began, with an intrapsychic war between ego and unconscious, and a great schism between society and the interior world.

IX

One of the major faults in criticism so far of *The Tree of Man* and *Voss* is that critics have tended to follow the lead of the author himself, to espouse and condone his own views of his work, rather than look closely at the novels themselves. It is disturbing to see how often writers suspend critical judgement in order to make way for the author's views. For example, in relation to *The Tree of Man* White tells us that he wanted to write a book about "an ordinary man and woman", about life in the Australian bush, and immediately critics begin to extol the "ordinariness" of Stan and Amy Parker³⁸ and to represent White as the champion of the "Australian anonymous hero".³⁹ They have commented approvingly on how unlike Theodora Goodman Stan Parker is,⁴⁰ and how his attitudes are "positive", "affirmative" and "social".⁴¹ But this is sheer nonsense. White may strive to present an image of the ordinary man, but this is not what he achieves. Beneath his farmer's disguise, Stan Parker is Bub Quigley, or Mr Gage, or the lost boy in the floods. He is White's gesture toward Everyman, but in reality is a *puer aeternus* who shares *all* the traits which were characteristic of Theodora: he is dissolution-striving, otherworldly, anarchistic, and antisocial. It is simply that Stan Parker is outwardly less eccentric than Theodora. Inwardly he is no less committed to the same mystic longing. By the end of the story his nihilism is very thinly disguised: he is not interested in wife or family, cares nothing about his land, is completely isolated, without friends, and longs only to become one with the elements and to dissolve into the earth. When we scrutinize the text we find that Parker is not "ordinary", "average", "positive", or any of

the things that Australian critics have praised him for being.

We find the same anomaly in the characterization of Voss, who is presented by the author within the heroic context, and who is celebrated across the country - in academic journals and even in school textbooks - as a national hero.⁴² But Voss is not the hero that White, Laura, or Australia wants him to be. The hero is one who is capable of positive, self-initiated action: he chooses, he decides, and then he takes action - usually to the benefit of society and the so-called "common good". But Voss is an obsessed madman whose primary motivation is to extinguish himself and a few others in the maternal source. His aim is not to conquer but to be absorbed. He strives to lose himself in the mother-world - *how* he does this is merely secondary, or incidental. James McAuley realized this when he wrote:

In his egoism and visionary obsession the whole journey is unreal to Voss as a practical enterprise and his companions have no rights in their own being.⁴³

Perhaps it would have been better if, as he had suggested to Laura,⁴⁴ he had gone off into the wilderness barefoot, and alone. In a sense that would be truer, more honest to his original impulse. The great expedition - the preparations, the arrangements - is so much stage machinery, an excess of detail and social obligation which actually runs counter to the spontaneous desire of the *puer* - his need for dissolution.

In the final analysis, Voss is no more convincing as an explorer than Stan Parker was as a pioneer farmer - somehow neither character fulfils the prescribed role, for the roles are heavy with social responsibility and that is what the *puer* shuns at every turn. White is more honest with characters like Theodora Goodman and Hurtle Duffield, who are allowed to live out their anti-social tendencies and nihilistic attitudes in a naked way. But when he tries to create "national heroes" like Voss and Stan he is actually working against himself, against his own mythic force. For White's mode is both anti-heroic and anti-national: he is not concerned with achievement, identity and social structure, but with loss, dissolution, and eternity. His focus is the *puer aeternus*, and he does not "belong" to a nation, or to the heroic

context. The *puer* is a child of the Great Mother, not of national history.

This leads me to my next point: the "Australianness" of White's contribution. In the past critics have been anxious to identify and praise the Great Australian Novel (or Novels), and *The Tree of Man* and *Voss* have been seen as obvious candidates for this title. Yet so anxious were we as a nation to fill the cultural void, that we celebrated White's books on superficial appearances alone, and did not bother to penetrate or understand their meaning.⁴⁵ Despite the fact that the two novels look and seem Australian, they are essentially non-local in their content and values. Stan Parker and Voss are both alienated mystics - they care nothing for society, mateship, family, progress, the "quality of life" - the things which Australians esteem above all else. Neither figure is preoccupied with the fact of Australia, nor concerned about what it means to be an Australian. Stan Parker finds his self-definition in relation to Mother Nature - in relation to an archetype, not to a social milieu. And even his "Nature" is not uniquely Australian - we feel that he might just as well be Elyot Standish, with his legs sunk into the mud at Ard's Bay, or Theodora Goodman, wandering through the semi-desert country of mid-west America.⁴⁶ Always in White the vision of the Great Mother and her mythic world outweighs or even annihilates the human realities of time and space - which is why each novel presents the same image of Nature, regardless of its geographical or social context. For White the Australian continent is an archetypal quantity, a state of mind, and not primarily a concrete reality. He perceives "Australia" through the dream-lens of the *puer*-artist: for him the country is the Great Mother, an archetypal force which is inimical to human society and which devours those who dare penetrate its mysteries. When, at the end of *Voss*, White tells us that society must remain shallow and mediocre, a mere lifeless appendage that will never strike roots in this ancient soil, he is making a statement about the rigid, defensive ego (i.e. his own "Mr Bonner" personality) and not necessarily about Australian life. His bitter and at times excessive criticism of society is at bottom self-criticism, his own attempt to undermine the claims of a fragmentary ego-complex which will never achieve a right

relation to the inner world. What is "seen" outside, in the nation, is a psychological drama between the Mother and the resisting ego - a drama with fatal consequences for the ego, and hence the author's prognosis for "society" is equally disturbing. Consequently, White's relation to this country is not organic - he does not come to grips with reality but simply imposes an archetypal or mythic pattern upon the country of his fate.⁴⁷

The novels, therefore, fail as social realism and should not even be read within their deceptively literal frame. Whenever critics adopt the realist approach there is a narrowing of the work's focus - they read only the "factual" aspects, ignore much of the symbolic dimension, and, in extreme cases, even complain about the symbolic level when it becomes patently apparent.⁴⁸ Thus the realist or humanist reader takes in only what locally established opinion sanctions, and effectively closes himself off to the intrinsic meaning of the work. In some ways, White is responsible for this - by presenting his novels as if they were "true life" stories about Australia he has obscured the deep structure of the works and has created anomalies that otherwise might have been avoided.

While we might find *Voss* and *The Tree of Man* lacking in any overt moral or social focus, the novels do succeed at the level of myth, as archetypal fictions relating to the Great Mother mythologem. To read them as myth is also to read them as fragments relating to the unconscious processes of the author. This does not mean that the novels have an exclusively subjective meaning. There is an inner "objective" level of reality. We must not equate the unconscious *per se* with mere subjectivity. The Great Mother is a structural content of the human psyche; White's works therefore have significance at a collective-archetypal (whether or not Australian) level.⁴⁹ A major problem, however, in the archetypal reading of White, is to identify the mythic structure which underlies the injected or secondary layers of meaning. Because White is not cognizant of his myth, he adds from above a layer of meaning borrowed from Christianity, by which he attempts to explain everything that takes place in the work. But this framework sits awkwardly and

uneasily over the text.⁵⁰ It bears no true relation to his mythic vision - which is why, I imagine, he is forced to dispose of it by the time of *The Vivisector*. Far from asserting the values of Christianity, White's work is a celebration of pagan mythology in its nihilistic, chthonic-maternal aspect. *Voss* is a pagan ritual with a Christianizing wash. The crucial need in our reading is to hack away the dead wood and look for the living, dynamic structure at the core of the work.⁵¹

The point is simply this - trust the tale, not the teller (Lawrence). We must acquire a "feeling" for this kind of differentiation. One "feels" that White is intervening in the story, or one "feels" that the text is allowed a life of its own. Usually, when we arrive at passages where the author gives the narrative action a conclusive interpretation, we can be sure that something is wrong, that the real dynamics have been missed. At such times the tone changes, the author frames a halo around his protagonist, makes him a Christ-figure, and suddenly the "life" of the story disappears. The levels are anti-thetical: whenever White as teller intrudes, the vitality of the tale recedes. There is no effective relation between the two fictional "voices" - which in our terms is one further manifestation of the split between ego and unconscious. The unconscious, the tale, the myth, speaks clearly and precisely about the *puer*-Mother pattern, and the conscious mind of the author confuses this with abstractions about God and Christianity.

In our reading it is important to modify the author's intrusive meddling, by paying closer attention to the symbolic images - what do they say about the vision that is being developed, how do they relate to the mythologem that is unfolding. It is through the *image* - the death-lily, the aboriginal bride, the hunchback sister, the medusa-head - that we reach sensitively into the archetypal structure of the work. More often than not, the image will reveal pathological or daemonic elements that the author completely overrides in his summary statements and religious commentary. It is important to read White's "mothers" - Amy Parker, Mrs Sanderson, Rose Portion - at a mythological level, for these figures act as symbolic monitors to the realm of genuine myth.

Sometimes we have to give his central characters less value than he does, and his minor characters - particularly the shadow-figures - more psychic significance than he will allow. What White emphasizes we have to underwrite and what he undervalues or ignores in his work we have to throw into sharper relief. Only then do we learn to appreciate the difference between teller and tale, and to defend the truth of the imagination against the indulgences of the author.

Chapter Four

Sufferings of the Unborn

Miss Hare was crying and choking ...

'You,' she cried, 'are the devils!'

Mrs Jolley retreated a few paces, and might have escaped altogether if she had not been chained to her protector.

Mrs Flack said:

'For your own sake, I would not care to hear you repeat that, madam. Accusations are very often confessions.'

- Patrick White¹

In *Riders in the Chariot* (1961) the division between the author's religious misinterpretation and the actual life of the tale is carried to a further extreme, creating a serious discontinuity in the structure of the work. In this book the reader has to dig deeper into the text to uncover the narrative myth, because the author has almost systematically obscured our understanding of it by imposing a heavy layer of Jewish and Christian mysticism upon the story. The result of this subterfuge is that most readers are denied access to the matriarchal theme, and must be content with (mis)reading the work as "an essay in Jewish mysticism".² *Riders in the Chariot* - despite its title, its apparent design, and its extraneous mystical jargon - owes nothing to religious tradition, and is not organically related to Judaism or to Christianity. Like *Voss* it is a pagan work in religious disguise. The visionary life of the novel springs not from Judaism but from the author's unconscious mother-complex, and from the various pseudo-religious forms to which this gives rise.

Essentially, the novel is based on the mythic vision that underlies all the preceding works - that of the Great Goddess and her Son. Mrs Godbold assumes the role of the Magna Mater and Himmelfarb, Miss Hare and Dubbo all appear symbolically as her children, off-shoots from the maternal source. The novel focusses on the tragic fate of Himmelfarb, the *puer aeternus* (misinterpreted as a Christ-figure) who is loved, slain, buried and bewailed by the paradoxical Flack-Godbold mother-figure, but both Miss Hare and Dubbo share in his inevitable

fate and are similarly co-ordinated with the cyclical life of the maternal uroboros. To that extent the three mystics are "unborn souls", since they have not yet broken free from the matrix or source, but are still vitally attached to the unconscious and to the Great Round of natural life.³ The idea of the "unborn" has emerged before, in our discussions of Stan Parker and Elyot Standish, and it is a useful concept to bear in mind as we approach the novel, since it provides us with a key to the actual mythic content of the work - and is not, like the Chariot or the Messianic quest, an alien image wilfully imposed upon the text and leading away from its true meaning.

I

'All human beings are decadent,' he said. 'The moment we are born, we start to degenerate. Only the unborn soul is whole, pure.' [p.36]

Robert Hare's words to his uncomprehending daughter express White's philosophy as it has emerged from *The Living and the Dead* to the present novel. His work is based on the idea that human existence is inherently decadent because by becoming conscious and by assuming form the individual separates himself from the pleromatic perfection of non-being, symbolized by the circular uroboros. It is the uroboric state which captivates White's imagination throughout his career, which is why his vision must be deemed nihilistic, regressive and in- (or rather, pre-) human. The state of pleromatic non-existence - which in *Voss* is synonymous with "death", but which here is primarily a "prenatal paradise" - is regarded as pleasurable and desirable because it is associated with the idea of ecstatic absorption into the Mother-of-All. The aim of White's protagonists is to extinguish the self and to be buoyed along by the rhythms of maternal nature. But alas, such a beatific vision is always defeated by the presence of the "teeth mother", who symbolizes the disintegrative movement of uroboric incest. In a sense this archetypal figure is a guardian of human evolution, for if it were not for the devouring mothers of the deep then surely humankind as a whole would succumb to the idyllic vision of childlike paradise and return to blissful

unconsciousness.⁴ We can always detect a flawed mystical vision by the presence of Teeth Mothers, for this suggests that the personality is moving into the source-situation, and is about to be devoured by the mythological figures of early childhood. Rather than moving forward toward genuine religious vision,⁵ White's mystics long for the abyss and are eventually returned, not to God, but to the uncreate source to which they have always been connected. In "life" - so-called - they are fixated in the maternal womb (i.e. are unborn), so that their deaths are not tragic in the strict sense, but merely signify their complete re-absorption into the matrix.

Miss Hare is perhaps the best and clearest characterization in White's work of the unborn soul. She lives close to nature, close to the elements, and, as her name implies, is virtually a creature of the animal world. Our image of Miss Hare is of a "small, freckled" figure scurrying through the undergrowth, or kneeling in silent worship before the mysteries of the earth.

Speckled and dappled, like any wild thing native to the place, she was examining her surroundings for details of interest. Almost all were, because alive, changing, growing, personal, like her own thoughts, which intermingled, stopping and starting, with the leaves, or lay straight and stiff as sticks, or emerged with the painful stench of any crushed ant. [p.15]

She lives in a primitive state of *participation mystique* with her environment: her thoughts "intermingled with the leaves" or assumed the forms of sticks and native objects. Often we find Miss Hare associated with circular, uroboric imagery - she is "curled like a foetus" in the grass [p.22], or she is nestled inside a "tunnel" of undergrowth, where she is "stroked by ferns" [p.12] and "embraced by twigs" [p.17]. Her life takes place in the Great Round and she is a mere extension of maternal nature, or rather she does not have a self which conflicts with it. Like Theodora Goodman, however (who anticipates Miss Hare in every essential respect), she is possessed by a daemonic longing to merge even more completely with the elemental earth and to assume a state of absolute anonymity. Her entire focus is morbidly regressive⁶ - she rejects life in this world and longs desperately for "the ecstasy of complete annihilating liberation" [p.12]. "[Only] when she was ... reduced to light and

shadow was she truly in her element" [p.62]. Her fierce, terrible longing is to shatter herself in the matrix and to be absorbed into nothingness.

Little wonder, then, that a terrifying "Teeth Mother" eventually creeps into her paradise and begins to devour and destroy her [Figure 4]. For she has summoned this figure forth from the depths of the archetypal world. This psycho-symbolic fact is given "realistic" elaboration in the novel - for it is Miss Hare herself who invites Mrs Jolley to share her pre-worldly abode at Xanadu. More than that, she feels compelled to invite her, even against her better judgement.⁷ The point is that the uroboros mystic is never complete without a devouring mother, and although Miss Hare subsequently experiences her housekeeper's presence as an alien imposition, at a symbolic level she has as much right to Xanadu as herself. Mrs Jolley belongs at Xanadu, just as Amy Parker belonged in Stan's garden or Mrs Goodman in Theodora's Meroë.

As soon as Mrs Jolley gets off the bus at the post office corner at Sarsaparilla Miss Hare is shocked and surprised by the glaring and prominent teeth of her future housekeeper. At one point Miss Hare feels that Mrs Jolley's teeth "were growing visibly impatient" [p.40] - which immediately invokes the image of the toothed matrix, bristling with ivory and anxious to get on with its work of devastation. From the outset it is clear that a Teeth Mother has arrived on the scene, and that Miss Hare invests this figure with the daemonic image which overpowers her from within. I say "invests" because it is not always clear whether Mrs Jolley is as atrociously evil as her employer makes her seem.⁸ The problem is compounded to the extent that the narrator is identified with Miss Hare's position, and therefore fails to present Mrs Jolley in an objective light. For him she is pure, unregenerate evil - a creature from the primordial unconscious. As such Mrs Jolley, like her compatriot and fellow evil-doer Mrs Flack, fails as a fictional character - she is two-dimensional, flat. Every action she makes, every swing of her hips, or puzzled tone in her voice, is immediately given an insinuatingly evil

stamp by an author over-hasty to project his own inner darkness upon this maternal figure. It is disturbing to realize that Mrs Jolley is never allowed an opportunity to redeem herself, but is foredoomed from the beginning to the pit of hell. We are forced then to read Mrs Jolley not as a fictional character but as a mythic presence, a negative force which just happens to have assumed human form. For all the reality she conveys to us, Mrs Jolley could well be Miss Hare's hallucination, a kind of diabolical Holstius-figure who has sprung forth, with its own life-story and personal history, from the protagonist's imagination.⁹ When we read of Mrs Jolley's escapades through the creaking corridors of Xanadu, it is as if a terrible witch-presence were undermining Miss Hare's world and had now permeated every corner of the house:

She would appear in doorways or from behind dividing curtains, but very carefully, at certain times. She carried her eyes downcast. [p.69]

Mrs Jolley is little more than a lurking presence, an anonymous, imaginal force. The psychic origination of the terrible mother-figure is even more accentuated when Miss Hare comes to deal with Mrs Flack - a figure whom she has never met in reality, but whose presence she "infers" from her ebullient imagination:

Miss Hare could feel [Mrs Flack's] presence. In certain rather metallic light, behind clumps of ragged, droughty laurels, in corners of rooms where dry rot had encouraged the castors to burst through the boards, on landings where wall-paper hung in drunken brown festoons, or departed from the wall in one long limp sheet, Mrs Flack obtruded worst, until Miss Hare began to fear ... for the safety of her property. [p.78]

This hysterical passage emphasizes the imaginary or fantastic nature of the images that are now confronting Miss Hare from her highly activated unconscious. As the narrative unfolds White becomes less and less a social realist and more and more a writer of fairytale and myth. "Flack" and "Jolley" become interchangeable names for the one mythic force. At any moment we expect the witches to sit naked around a boiling pot and cast a spell upon the innocent mystics of Sarsaparilla. When Mrs Jolley returns

from her frequent visits to *Karma* she appears to her employer as "a communicant returning from the altar" [p.78]. Eventually the housekeeper "assumed monumental stance" and Miss Hare is "almost turned to stone" [p.71] by Mrs Jolley's lethal gaze, a fact which confirms the latter's fantastic, Gorgon-like nature.

But for all her evil power Mrs Jolley - as psychic image, not as person - has a potentially creative and positive aspect. Every encounter with an inward, psychic figure is a fateful experience for the ego-personality, and even the "teeth mother" has an important contribution to make to psychic development. In fairytale and myth the evil-doer is often the prime mover of the story - that force, to quote Goethe, "which would / Ever work evil, but engenders good".¹⁰ It engenders good, paradoxically, by forcing the protagonist to become aware of the evil within his own character, by urging him to break with the past and to move to a new level of self-awareness. Like Mrs Goodman in *The Aunt's Story*, Mrs Jolley is not a mere diabolism of the external world, but a creative experiment of the protagonist's own psychic construction.¹¹ Her task is to act as a kind of external mirror in which Miss Hare might perceive her own self-devouring aspect. The hints are there in the text - "The sound of the two women's breathing would intermingle distressingly at times" [p.41]. Mrs Jolley, the Evil One, presents her employer with a cake, with "For a Bad Girl" written in pink icing at the top, but Miss Hare does not comprehend her meaning.¹² There are other familiar clues -

'I have been in the bush,' Miss Hare confessed.
Mrs Jolley sucked her perfect teeth [p.63],

but again Miss Hare does not recognize the appropriateness of Mrs Jolley's image to her own uroboric longing.¹³ And this, in the final analysis, is what makes their meeting and life together at Xanadu such an abortive and tedious affair - Miss Hare does not deal with her companion at an inner level, but sees her merely as an external, human annoyance. And so Mrs Jolley does not "engender good" because the all-too-innocent Miss Hare refuses to learn from experience, or to realize that this monstrous figure has sprung from her own inner life.

II

Interestingly enough, in her childhood relation to her father, Norbert Hare, Mary carries the daemonic role that she will later meet in projection upon Mrs Jolley. This is a fascinating reversal of roles because it shows how flexible and relative the diabolical image is in White's world - how easily it is transferred from one character to another.¹⁴ It also points to what I have been suggesting - that Miss Hare is possessed by a daemonic force, and so can act as a carrier of this energy for other characters.

Norbert's psychic situation is reminiscent of that of the ego-bound "huddlers" in the previous novel, or that of Elyot Standish prior to his return to the mother-world. He is White's classic persona-type, who erects a strong barricade against the disintegrative forces of the inner world, yet who is constantly plagued by inner disturbances and must eventually succumb to the world he has denied. Norbert's attempt at a barricade is partly symbolized by the construction of Xanadu itself, the European extravagance which is imposed upon the dark landscape of the "country of the dead".¹⁵ By daring to erect such a grandiose structure upon the uroboric field, Norbert's behaviour immediately invokes the devouring aspect of the maternal unconscious. "Norbert's grandest gesture, the one that caused people to suck their teeth, to gnash them, ... was the building of his folly at Sarsaparilla outside Sydney" [p.15]. It is tedious to harp on the image of "teeth" in White's fiction, but it recurs again and again in all the crucial passages. Whenever a character constructs a physical or psychological edifice, the "jaws" of the mother-world are always lurking about somewhere. And so it is with Xanadu - the gnashing teeth of the ladies give way to the destructive tendencies of the landscape itself. Soon after its completion we are told that the "native cynicism" of "the grey raggedy scrub ... immediately began to tangle with Norbert Hare's wilfully created park" [p.15]. Critics have tended to read this conflict as a battle between imposed European values and the Australian landscape - and while I would certainly have to agree in part with this

reading I must emphasize the psycho-symbolic dimension, which, for me, is always the decisive one in White's fiction. As in *Voss*, the landscape must be seen as a mythic presence, something which chews up and destroys the human element.¹⁶ The more elaborate and self-important the conscious structure is, the more tenacious and savage will be the Great Mother's attempts to destroy it.

Since Miss Hare is virtually an extension of the maternal unconscious it is obvious that she should have a destructive effect upon Norbert's life.¹⁷ In his eyes Mary is a sickly, pathetic child - as he confides to his wife, "'Who would have thought I should get a *red* girl! By George, Eleanor, she is ugly, ugly!'" [p.22]. Towards the end of his life the archetypal stature of Mary Hare erupts into full view - as, for instance, when Norbert is forced to exclaim, "'Ugly as a foetus. Ripped out too soon'" [p.56]. Mary functions as the psychologically retarded "unborn soul" whose presence disturbs and aggravates the strivings of the masculine ego-consciousness.¹⁸ On one occasion the mere sight of this foetus-like child munching on a stick of celery is enough to drive Norbert to madness and to cause him to shoot at himself with a pistol. It is interesting that Norbert cries "'Munching! Munch-ing!'" [p.34] as he aims the pistol at his head, for that is the essential activity of the unconscious background in White's fiction - it munches and swallows back what the ego has constructed. Thus when Norbert looks at his daughter he "sees" the devouring-enfeebling image of his own unconscious, just as Miss Hare herself "sees" this negative archetype in Mrs Jolley. In White every character projects the daemonic force onto someone else, and no one (except Theodora for a crucial moment) realizes that it is within himself.

White deliberately obscures the facts about Norbert's death, not so as to confuse the reader, but so that he can allow the symbolic dimension to come to the fore. At the symbolic level, Norbert is destroyed by the forces of the unconscious - a world which is personified by his daughter and so "she" is made to seem responsible for his death. It is interesting that Norbert drowns in the dark and icy cistern, since this is an apt symbol of the over-

powering and inhuman "waters" of the deep unconscious - waters which do not nourish the soul but which freeze and petrify it. Mary rushes to find a pole with which she intends to fish out her father, but in the narrative it is almost as if she were using it to push him still further into the icy water.¹⁹ Yet this is merely how Norbert reads the situation, since for him Mary is the demon of darkness itself. But thereafter Mary carries a tremendous burden of guilt about her father's death, and sees herself, if not exactly as his murderer, then as an agent or instrument in his downfall. At a subjective-psychological level, this shows that the inward mystical figure is beginning to develop a "conscience" about its negative effect upon the ego-personality - a process which is to be further developed in the next work.²⁰ This is an unexpected development in White's fiction, because in the past the *puer* figure had delighted in its disintegrative effect upon the ego-bound world.²¹ But the mystical figure in the author's unconscious is now manifesting a certain self-abnegation and a growing awareness of its nullifying and obliterating effect upon the conscious character. Still, despite the suffering that it feels it continues to disintegrate consciousness as before. The only real change is that the mystical figure alters its tone -- instead of undermining the ego with malicious intent (Voss), it mourns for the loss of the ego-figure and suffers guiltily, yet almost dumbly, for its disintegrative effect upon it (Mary Hare, Arthur Brown).²²

III

When Miss Hare first encounters the Jew Himmelfarb it is during one of her desperate, dissolution-striving excursions into the native bushland. This is an important point because Himmelfarb is possessed by a similar longing to extinguish himself in the source-situation. When the two mystics finally share their life-experiences it is beneath an enormous flowering plum tree in the now forsaken and overgrown orchard at Xanadu. The tree provides a sacred shelter for their meeting and seems to facilitate the communion of souls. Its great flowering branches, which formed a kind of "canopy" [p.89],

"hummed with life" above their heads, as they sat together "on two stones which could have been put there for them at the roots of the tree" [p.91]. It is clear that this is no ordinary plum tree - it is the all-sheltering Tree of Life, the image of Mother Nature, which gathers these child-mystics into its protective embrace. This is crucial because both Miss Hare and Himmelfarb are dominated by the maternal image during their respective careers - both are nurtured by the nutritive Great Mother (as, for instance in the caring they receive from Mrs Godbold) and both are plagued by the devouring mother-image during the latter stages of their lives. So it is characteristic that we should find them in this classic position - they live "under" the maternal image, just as they sit here beneath the sheltering tree. It is further significant, then, that this same tree manifests an overwhelming and superior aspect - not only in its sheer size and grandeur, but also in the "energy-field" which it seems to transmit:

It was perfectly still, except that the branches of the plum tree hummed with life, increasing, and increasing, deafening, swallowing them up.²³ [p.91]

To be nurtured by Mother Nature is also to be drawn into her field and "swallowed" by her vibrant life. Both mystics fail to appreciate that their beatific, innocent situations are highly ambivalent from the archetypal standpoint.²⁴ To be one of the "unborn" means, quite literally, to be trapped in the matrix and to be subordinate to the greater symbolic energy. And so this single image of the sheltering yet overpowering tree anticipates Himmelfarb's inner situation in a fascinating way - it suggests the paradoxical image of the Dual (Good and Terrible) Mother which is to dominate his life-story and his future career at Sarsaparilla.

In discussion with Miss Hare, or so we must imagine it,²⁵ Himmelfarb recalls his early youth and immediately uncovers the central image of his childhood landscape - his mother Malke Himmelfarb:

For Mordecai the man, his mother remained a sculptured figure. Whether, in fact, life and fashion had influenced her sufficiently to create a continuously evolving series of identities, his memory presented her as a single image: black dress; the

high collar of net and whalebone, relieved by a little, seemly frill; the broad, yellowish forehead, marked with the scars of compassionate thought; eyes in which the deceits of this world were regretfully, but gently drowned; the mouth that overcame secret ailments, religious doubts, and all but one bitterness. [p.99]

Here it is clear that Himmelfarb is recalling not so much an actual person, but an inward archetypal image. This is particularly evident in the way in which she is described as a "sculptured figure" (a phrase also applied to Laura Trevelyan) and further suggested when we are told that his memory "presented her as a single image" whereas "life" would have presented her as "a continuously evolving series of identities".²⁶ She is a fixed, archetypal presence in Himmelfarb's memory, and is strongly imagined in this descriptive passage. We soon learn that the mother's influence far outweighed that of the father, the worldly Moshe, who fades into insignificance by comparison:

It was evident from the beginning that the boy was much closer to the mother, although it was only much later established that she had given him her character. To casual acquaintances it was surprising that the father, so agreeable, so kind, so generous, did not have a greater influence. ... But it was out of the mother's silence and solitude of soul that the rather studious, though normal, laughing, sometimes too high-spirited little boy had been created. [p.99]

We have noted that in White's world the father is either physically (as in *The Living and the Dead*) or psychologically absent. White's characters inhabit a fatherless world, a point of far-reaching psychological significance which will be taken up in the concluding chapter. Of course, when the father is absent, the child falls all the more readily into the influence of the mother and, beyond her, into the realm of the mother-image.

The critical event of his early memory is that of his mother leading him ceremoniously to the centre of a geometric carpet, where she presents him to a Galician rabbi so that he may receive a sacred blessing:

In the obscure room, talking to the foreign rabbi, for the greater part in a language the boy himself had still to get, his mother had grown quite luminous. He would have liked to continue watching the lamp that had been lit in her, but from some impulse of delicacy, decided instead to lower his eyes. And then he became, he realized, the object of attention. His

mother was drawing him forward, towards the centre of the geometric carpet. And the rabbi was touching him. The rabbi, of almost womanly hands, was searching his forehead for some sign. He was laying his hands on the diffident child's damp hair. Talking all the time with his cousin in the foreign tongue. [p.97]

This is a significant experience because one can see here the important connection between the figure of the mother and Himmelfarb's spirituality. We must attempt to "see through" the personal facts as it were, and reach the deeper, archetypal content of this event. As depth-psychology has shown,²⁷ the earliest childhood memory usually masks a primordial image which is loaded with great significance for the child. Here the image is that of Mordecai as the son-priest of the Great Mother, who escorts him to a sacred place so that a divine figure may bestow boons upon him and endow him with spiritual power.²⁸

It is crucial to realize, however, that the mother, who "had grown quite luminous", appears to be undergoing some epiphany herself. There is an unconscious transference between them - he is the carrier of her spiritual side (or animus), and thus she glows with an inner light because her own spirit is being venerated. The fact that the rabbi himself is a close relative of the mother and the interesting detail that she speaks to him in Hebrew would seem to indicate a continuity between mother, rabbi, and spiritual source. This suggests that her cousin-rabbi and priestly-son are somehow aspects of herself, and that the blessing is in effect passing from herself to herself. Mythologically, this ceremony could be seen as part of an ancient cult of the Great Goddess, a celebration of her capacity to renew herself with her own spiritual source [Figure 8].

This then is the primordial image which stands at the back of Himmelfarb's memory and which subsequently exerts a profound influence upon his psychological development. Here especially we see the beginning of that pattern by which the mother comes to dominate her son by forcing him into the image of her spiritual animus, which he is compelled to act out in later life.²⁹ Himmelfarb's future spiritual commitment must be seen in this matriarchal

context - he remains throughout the son-priest of the Mother, unconsciously forced to re-enact the tragic fate of Attis-Adonis.

In his youth, before submitting to his mythic fate, Himmelfarb felt the demands of his mother's spiritual idealism as a stifling force which kept him tied to the Jewish faith. Even at six years of age he was impelled by the mother to turn toward religious matters and to begin a scholastic study of the sacred scriptures, despite protestations from the father, who would have his son turn to more worldly matters: "'Do you want to load the boy already?' [he would ask] 'And worst of all, with Hebrew?'" [p.101]. The use of the word "load" is interesting here, since it seems to relate metaphorically to the load of the mother's animus. As an older boy Himmelfarb was naturally drawn towards the outer world, social involvement and sexuality, but his mother would continually draw him away from life and force him to remain "religious", so that at this point

... the mere mention of his mother involved him more deeply than ever in the metaphysical thicket from which he was hoping to tear himself free. [p.112]

As a means of establishing and reinforcing his own instinctive masculinity, Himmelfarb was forced to seek refuge at the local brothel where he would indulge himself in the pleasures of the flesh and attempt to experience his own manhood. Perhaps as an over-compensation for the castrating influence of the mother, Himmelfarb's exploits at the brothel tended to be exaggerated and over-energetic, so that even the whore has to remark "'You Jews!... The little bit they snip off only seems to make you hotter'" [p.108].

The burden of the mother's animus is increasingly experienced as a kind of metaphysical affliction, and this is something which is unconsciously projected upon the figure of the little dyer (appropriately called Israel), a destitute Jew whose skin and hands are afflicted with indigo, the colour which is traditionally associated with spirit:

[The dyer's] skin was bathed in indigo [and] the palms of his hands were mapped indelibly in purple. The man's material affliction impressed itself on his conscience the evening the dyer slipped while crossing one of Moshe's handsome rugs. The

boy felt himself to be in a way responsible. As his hands slithered on the old Jew's greasy coat, he grabbed hold of what seemed a handful of rag, and just prevented the guest from falling. But his own fright and nausea were in his mouth ... [p.109]

Here we see that such an intensely negative identification has been established with the dyer that Himmelfarb "felt in a way responsible" for his fall and pitiful condition. After this Himmelfarb escapes from the room to wash his hands, and by this gesture we sense (when we recall the dyer's contaminated hands) that he is in some way attempting to rid himself of his own "spiritual" contamination. But then, significantly, the mother follows him and bids him to return:

'Dry your hands quickly now,' she coaxed..., 'and come back to us. We must not allow that poor man to guess.' [p.109]

But as she spoke she "saw her words salt the wounds" because of course *she*, not so much the dyer, is the source of his own affliction.

The dyer becomes an even more important figure in Himmelfarb's later life, because it is through him that Himmelfarb comes into contact with Reha Liebmann, the woman whom he eventually marries. As a result of a chance meeting in a street the dyer instructs the now worldly and highly successful Dr Mordecai Himmelfarb to make contact with the Liebmann family, so that he might regain contact with a more traditional life-style and return to his neglected Jewish faith. It is clear that the dyer symbolizes Himmelfarb's own regressive aspect; a personified fragment of his psyche which wants to lead him away from the world and back toward his maternal fixation. At first Himmelfarb rejects the dyer's advice, but eventually it triggers off a powerful longing to return to the psychic past and to embrace his mother-fixation in the form of Reha, a woman who is in every way identical with Malke Himmelfarb. As he moves off to Reha's house we are told that "he could not have been more relieved, not to say elated", so that the idea of the "return to the mother" is experienced as an aspect of his fate which he is unable to resist.

As I have suggested, his marriage with Reha³⁰ is virtually incestuous in that she is symbolically an extension, or a "double" of his own mother. And

like Malke she has a demanding spiritual animus which expects great things of Himmelfarb - she expects him to perform as a religious hero who will bring honour to the Jewish community:

'But we - some of us - although we have not spoken - know that you will bring us honour.'

She took his fingers, and was looking absently, again almost sadly, at their roots. She stroked the veins in the backs of his hands.

'You make me ashamed,' he protested.

Because he was astounded.

'You will see,' she said. 'I am convinced.'

And looked up, smiling confidently now. [p.126]

These words of inspiration are perhaps better seen as an animus-curse - she is carrying forward the "bewitchment" of the mother, forcing her husband into a powerful mythic role. Her animus expectations inevitably induce a sense of spiritual impotence in Himmelfarb, a feeling that he will never be able to fulfil the image that is demanded of him.³¹

Reha attempts to mask her demands under an attitude of self-condemnation, by emphasizing her own spiritual inadequacy: "'I am afraid'" she is moved to tell her husband, "'[that] I may fail you'" [p.125], whereas the unconscious corollary of this - I fear you will fail me - is what comes closer to her true feelings. This becomes clear toward the end of their relationship, when Reha begins to despair at Himmelfarb's inability to fulfil her expectations:

And she would hang her head ... because she sensed the distance between aspiration and the possibility of achievement, and she was unable to do anything to help him. [p.141]

Interestingly enough, the mother's spiritual demands were similarly disguised under a martyr-like attitude of self-reproach. Malke's final communication with her son was by way of a letter in which she expressed her remorse at his father's defection from the Jewish faith, and emphasized her fear that he too might turn renegade:

Oh, Mordecai, I can only think I have failed him in some way and dread that I may also fail my son. [p.116]

Soon after this communication the mother dies of an unspecified illness, but we are left in no doubt that the cause of her death is her husband's defection,

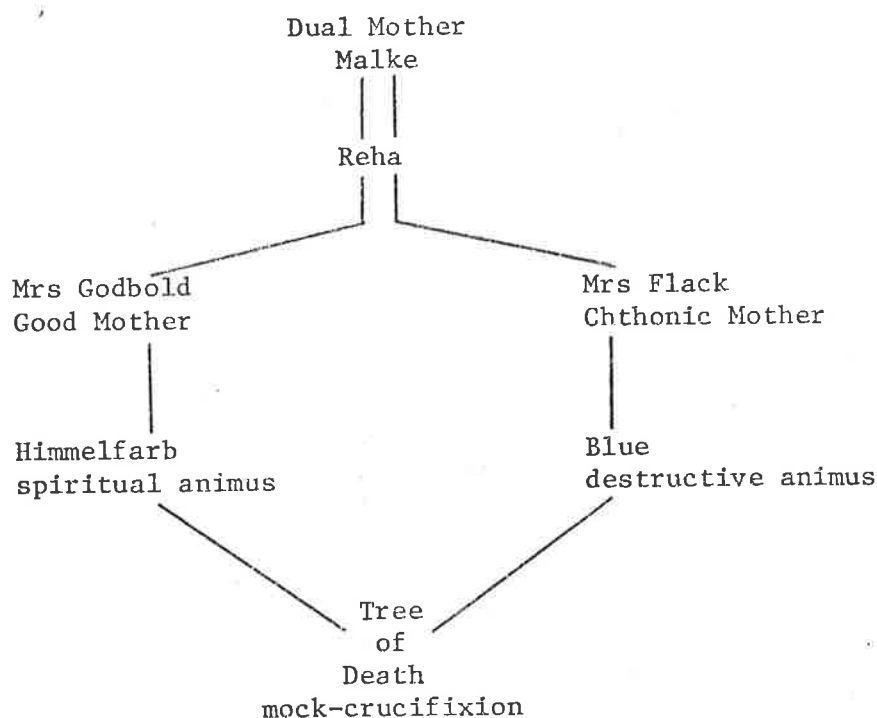
which wrought a spiritual affliction too painful to bear [cf.p.118]. This indicates that her love for her husband was conditional on his fulfilling her expectations, and when he failed to do this she was forced to turn away from life itself. In this sense we see that the mother's cry of remorse actually contains its corollary, a cry of rage: My husband has betrayed me and I dread that my son too will betray me.

Since this is the mother's final plea it serves to intensify the grip of her animus and to exaggerate his sense of obligation to his wife, for the debt to the mother has now been transferred onto her. Then his guilt is sealed for ever by a dreadful sequence of events: Himmelfarb is made to seek refuge at a friend's house on the night of a Nazi raid, during which his wife Reha is seized by the gestapo and never seen again. Himmelfarb takes full responsibility for this horrific deed, and sees himself as Reha's betrayer. He is so broken by the guilt that he contemplates suicide, eventually surrenders himself to the Nazi authorities, is sent to the gas chambers (where he narrowly escapes death) and soon finds himself on a *kibbutz* with distant relatives in the Middle East. Although all through this sequence the narrator tends to emphasize Himmelfarb's guilt in relation to his wife's fate we must not be led to believe that that is the sole cause of his burden. Essentially the guilt arises from a crippling sense of obligation to the *mother-image*, and the "fact" of Reha's seizure (which to my mind is an unsatisfactory literary contrivance)³² is merely added onto this, being the final consummation of his life of guilt. Like Palfreyman in *Voss*, he spends the rest of his short career attempting to atone for his "betrayal" and trying to secure moral retribution. And like his exemplar he finds his fulfilment in Australia, where he is to sacrifice himself -- psychologically, and ultimately, physically -- to the maternal image.

V

Himmelfarb's "life-sentence" in Australia is to live out the role of the maternal spirit, to serve the Great Mother³³ and to allow himself to be put

to death by her destructive animus. In the personalistic terms of the novel, his task is to "serve" Mrs Godbold by performing the expected and required spiritual role, and to submit to the wicked intrigues of Mrs Flack and be bound to the Tree of Death by her son-animus Blue. To the casual observer it may not be immediately apparent that Flack and Godbold share a secret relationship, that they are parts of the one Goddess-image - Mrs Godbold is the *inspiratrice* and nourisher, and Mrs Flack the enfeebling agent of destruction. That is to say, the two aspects which were originally contained in the paradoxical figures of Malke and Reha (i.e. bewitching-constricting, and nourishing-supporting aspects) have split apart and now confront the central character as separate personages:



This has been a characteristic feature of White's fiction - whenever an archetype manifests a certain ambivalence or paradoxical nature there is always a tendency for the author to split the central figure into two distinct entities (e.g. Laura/Rose, Bonner/Voss). This disintegrative tendency allows him to emphasize the respective psychological traits of either "aspect", yet the overall effect is harmful at the fictional level. For instead of having a few intensely realized and highly complex characters he has a multitude of

pseudo-characters, or caricatures. And so instead of Reha (or Malke) loving and hounding him at the same time we now find Himmelfarb loved by Mrs Godbold and hounded by Mrs Flack. We have, then, dramatic plurality at the cost of psychological complexity. Unconsciously, the author is aware of this - for from here on the appearances of loving kindness emerging from Ruth Godbold, are constantly matched by the relentless intrigues and conniving schemes of Mrs Flack. Thus, the author is compelled to keep the psychological forces in relationship, even if he separates the fictional characters.

Like Malke and Reha, Mrs Godbold has a spiritual animus which longs for the light of transcendence and which strives upward toward spiritual heights. Her lust for transcendence is aptly expressed in her favourite hymn:

I woke, the dungeon flamed with light,
My chains fell off, my heart was free,
I rose, went forth, and followed Thee. [p.229]

This tasteless, almost grotesque hymn points to the rather inferior nature of her spirituality - it is a lofty, spiritual escapist idealism sung by a woman who is herself the embodiment of all that is dark, heavy, earthy, and mundane. Her spirituality is a kind of gross over-compensation for her otherwise earth-bound existence - she is the earth itself longing to soar into the beyond:

So the massive girl ... might have been some species of
moth, or guardian spirit, poised on magnolia wings before
huge flapping flight. [p.242]

But, despite rare moments of elevation while listening to organ music in a church, her enormous and voluptuous frame remains where it belongs -- on the maternal earth, and in the daily round of existence. Thus when Himmelfarb takes up residence near her tumbledown shack in Sarsaparilla it is a great opportunity for Ruth Godbold to project her animus-spirituality upon the Jew. All Mrs Godbold's un-lived life - the soaring ascension of the animus, the longing for transcendence - is now forced upon Himmelfarb and serves to accentuate his already animus-contaminated spirituality. And so it is this kind of exaggerated, distorted spirituality that Himmelfarb is forced to live out in his religious career. His spiritual life, it appears to me (a fact

not so far noticed), is inauthentic and pretentious. Instead of genuine spirituality there is other-worldly aspiration - a kind of obsessive compulsion for the ethereal and the macabre. It is a mere gesture toward spirituality, or how "the spiritual life" might appear to a *puer* through the distorting lens of a mother-complex.³⁴ Spiritual discipline becomes an attempt to escape from earthly reality; preoccupation with eternity is distorted into a disregard for time, even a denial of all temporal things. As we found with Stan Parker and Palfreyman (White's other "religious" characters), Himmelfarb's spirituality is flawed and does not stand the test of psychological analysis.³⁵ Needless to say, Mrs Godbold's religion is not Christianity, any more than Himmelfarb's is Judaism: hers is the pagan worship of the maternal spirit, and his is the animus compulsion of sonship.³⁶ However, since the Mother does not have much comprehension of the spirit, she is content to read the *puer*'s experiences at a high level - for her, he is equivalent to the Messiah Himself, a modern-day Redeemer, a Charioteer of the heavens.

And in the background of Himmelfarb's "spiritual" life there lurks the terrible mother Mrs Flack, because the pagan god (or his imitator) is always slain by the dark side of the Mother Goddess. Himmelfarb is pitifully unaware of his psychological situation, and of the dark maternal aspect which is soon to crush him. Hence Mrs Flack remains throughout a secretive and subversive figure, a mistress of sorcery and doom unknown to his waking consciousness and never "encountered" in daily life. Yet while Himmelfarb enjoys the veneration and attentions of the "good" mother, Mrs Flack is lurking behind the scenes, her presence all the more powerful because she remains unseen:

'Beggar me!' shrieked Mrs Flack

'There!' she suddenly hissed, and restrained her friend's skirt.

It was as though an experienced huntsman had at last delivered a disbelieving novice into the presence of promised game.

The two ladies stood in the shelter of a blackberry bush to observe the house in which the foreign Jew was living ... Then, if you please, the door opened, and out came, not the Jew, that would have been electric enough, but a woman, a woman ...

'Why,' Mrs Jolley said now, 'what do you know! It is that Mrs Godbold!'

Mrs Flack was stunned [Then] the owner himself emerged. The Jew. The two ladies clutched each other by the gloves ... The phlegm had come in Mrs Flack's mouth, causing her to swallow quickly down.

'Who would ever of thought,' Mrs Flack just articulated, 'that Mrs Godbold.'

Mrs Godbold and the man were standing together on the steps of the veranda, she on the lower, he above, so that she was forced to look up, exposing her face to his and to the evening light.

It was obvious that the woman's flat, and ordinarily uncommunicative face had been opened by some experience of a private nature, or perhaps it was just the light, gilding surfaces, dissolving the doubt which life leaves behind ... [T]he Jew himself began to acquire a certain mineral splendour as he stood talking, even laughing with his friend, in that envelope, or womb of light. Whether the two had been strengthened by some event of importance ... their audience could not tell. Mrs Jolley and Mrs Flack could only crane and swallow, beside the blackberry bush, beneath their hats, and hope that something disgraceful might occur.

Mrs Flack sucked incredulous teeth. She was quite exhausted by now.

'Tsst!' she added, quick as snakes.

Mrs Godbold had begun to turn.

'See you at church!' hissed Mrs Jolley.

'See you at church!' repeated Mrs Flack. [pp.213-216]

This passage sums up aptly what I have been describing in abstract terms: the intrinsic connection between nourishing and devouring mothers in relation to the spiritual *puer*. While the nourishing Mrs Godbold comes to Himmelfarb to nurse and support him, and (as we learn later) to bandage his hand which he has damaged at Rosetree's factory, the spectral figures spy on the innocents from behind thorn bushes and make all kinds of devouring, gulping, swallowing, and attacking gestures. Obviously it is absurd to read this episode as social realism: it is a kind of dream sequence, a mythic fantasy relating to the *puer*'s symbolic world. If we could accept Malke's adoration of her son in a partly realistic frame it is impossible here to accept Mrs Godbold's gazing veneration of Himmelfarb in any other than a mythic context.³⁷ Her gestures are as pointedly mythic or fantastic as those of the teeth-sucking mothers in the undergrowth. She stands, significantly, one step below her high-soaring boy-god, looking up at him as only an earth-mother could do, offering love and support if he will continue to satisfy her spiritual expectations. And, as I have indicated, the Teeth Mothers in the background represent the regressive-daemonic image of the *puer*-mother relation - that aspect which is overlooked by the author, but added and accentuated by the tale itself. In this regard,

Mrs Flack's sexual innuendo is not entirely inappropriate - for the son-Mother association is eminently incestuous in a symbolic sense. Even here we find the ecstatic *puer* nestled in a "womb of light" and nurtured and entreated by the Great Goddess. Mrs Flack's gossip adds (in a perversely literal form) the missing ingredient to the idyllic picture: the ambivalent, incestuous-reductive aspect of the uroboric situation. As ever, the dialogue between Mrs Flack and Mrs Jolley degenerates into a sharp, monosyllabic exchange, a chant-like ritual between hissing snakes.

At odd points we strike passages such as this, where the reader is forced to deal with a world of pure fantasy. This gives the book a very uneven texture, for some parts of the "biographies" (especially the European experience of Himmelfarb and the early life of Mrs Godbold in the English fen-country) are couched in a realistic frame, and in some places the story appears to take on the verisimilitude of nineteenth-century fiction. Still, behind these realistic sections lie mythic images - as I have shown in Himmelfarb's boyhood - which form the basis of the biographical and narrative sequences. But whenever the teeth-mothers emerge the realistic frame collapses and the novel releases its raw, mythic structure. From this we can conclude that the novel generally represents a co-existence of realism and myth, but that the realistic frame is fragmented whereas the mythical structure is continuously present.³⁸

But the failure of the realistic context and the tendency toward pure fantasy and caricature partly results from White's fragmentation of the mother archetype. According to the formula, Mrs Flack has a rigidly defined role to fill, and so, in her own way, does Mrs Godbold. Malke Himmelfarb was convincing as a fictional character precisely because she manifested both sides of the archetype in her paradoxical character. Flack and Godbold seem unreal because they are fragments and are limited *a priori* by their good/bad signification.³⁹

VI

Away from Himmelfarb, however, Mrs Godbold does manifest a certain ambiguity which releases her from the stereotyped role of nourisher and nurse. In relation to her husband Tom, Mrs Godbold is still essentially mythic - but in a broader sense, for here she functions as the overpowering mother who smothers and destroys her companion by an unredeemed maternal instinct. That is to say, behind the scenes of the central drama and away from the purview of the innocent mystics, Mrs Godbold shows something of her "Mrs Flack" nature, her ability to subdue and overpower men. Tom is virtually a pawn in Ruth Godbold's hands - a plaything or a pet which she outmanoeuvres and dwarfs in every way. The peculiar thing is that, like Malke Himmelfarb, Ruth appears to be wholly at the service of her worldly and degenerate husband. Yet beneath her selflessness lies a secretly castrating and dominating power which has a numbing effect upon her man:

'But I would bear all your sins, Tom, if it was necessary. Oh, I would bear them,' she said, 'and more.'
That made him leave off. He was almost frightened by what he meant to her. [p.263]

In her passionate efforts to redeem her husband she completely undermines his strength and makes him appear like a child-subordinate in her keeping. She is, like Mrs Lusty in *The Ham Funeral* and Miss Grigg in *The Aunt's Story*, one of White's terrible "good mothers" - whose very goodness and caring nature represents a supreme danger to the ego-consciousness which falls victim to it. She is Mother Nature in her voluptuous, overbearing aspect, who makes an emotional meal out of those upon whom she lavishes her loving attentions.⁴⁰ Even in their love-making Tom Godbold is reduced to a tiny, helpless Attis-Adonis figure who is enveloped and overwhelmed by the greater forces of the Goddess:

[Ruth Godbold held] him on her breast. She buoyed him up on that dark sea. He floated in it, a human body, soothed by a mystery which was more than he could attempt to solve.⁴¹ [pp.262-3]

Her husband's task is to be her phallic attendant, to fecundate the Goddess so

that she may remain permanently with-child and able to assert her primordial dominance.⁴² Tom is eventually crushed by his fearsome, archaic companion and vainly expresses his psychological disturbance in bouts of physical violence, thereby expressing the rage of the *puer aeternus* against the Mother Goddess. He is also forced to frequent Mrs Khalil's brothel in an attempt to win back his manhood and assert his instinctive masculinity. Here we will recall that as a youth Himmelfarb was forced to turn to whores and brothels in an attempt to flee from the castrating influence of the mother. We might say that the Ruth/Tom Godbold relationship represents, in a highly exaggerated and dramatized form, one aspect of Himmelfarb's own relation to the dominant figure of the Mother. And when, in an act of apparent goodwill and loving-kindness, Mrs Godbold goes to Khalil's brothel to collect her husband and bring him back home she actually destroys the last remnants of his manhood:

'You done a lot to show me up, Ruth, in our time, but you just about finished me this go.' [p.286]

After this incident Tom flees from Mrs Godbold, never to return to his Sarsaparilla shack or to his family. When, years later, we find Mrs Godbold weeping beside the disease-ridden body of her late husband we can only read her anguish and remorse in mythic terms: she is the mourning Isis or Cybele who weeps for the son-lover whom she herself has destroyed.⁴³ In this sense her incessant wailing in a city street is a further expression of her emotional indulgence - it marks the end of a mythic cycle and is not a true expression of human feeling. Mrs Godbold is possessed by an archetypal content, and so her life and mode of behaviour is lived according to a pre-existent, mythological pattern.

Thus we find that Mrs Godbold manifests, in her "private" life as it were, the full range of characteristics which are typical of the Mother Goddess. But, as she is presented in the central drama, the author restricts his character to the single role of nourisher and nurse. He cannot have a death-dealing mother attending his child-mystics because this would defeat his worship and veneration of the maternal source and raise serious doubts about the desirability of the "unborn" situation, which he seeks to celebrate. And so he foists the negative

maternal image upon external sources, Mrs Flack, Mrs Jolley, and "society" which allows him to present the pagan Mrs Godbold as a good Christian, or even as Mary protecting her flock of divine souls. Once again⁴⁴ we arrive at a fundamental tension in the novel, a contradiction between author and text. The tale wants Mrs Godbold to appear as a living, paradoxical figure, but the author demands that she appear as a simple figure of allegory.

VII

It is during her visit to Khalil's brothel that Mrs Godbold encounters the drunken aborigine Alf Dubbo, and extends to him such loving kindness as we have already seen her give to Miss Hare and Himmelfarb.⁴⁵ Dubbo is the third and final "unborn soul" or uroboros mystic in the novel, the aboriginal complement to the European Himmelfarb and the visionary artist who will record the passion of the mystic community in symbolic images. In many ways Dubbo is identical to Himmelfarb - both are Mother's sons and share the same pagan, matriarchal background, but whereas Mordecai is born of a "white" goddess, Dubbo is the child of the Black Madonna, the chthonic, earthly, primordial mother.⁴⁶ Dubbo too undergoes an "education" of a sort, supervised by the Reverend Timothy Calderon and his widowed sister Mrs Pask, who hope to make the boy into a spiritual redeemer. Thus, like Himmelfarb, great things are expected of this young boy-god, who is subsequently pushed and coerced into religion, and forced to act out in his own life a spiritual mission which his elders failed to realize in theirs.⁴⁷ But despite the Christian framework which is imposed upon him by Reverend Calderon (and later by Reverend White) Alf Dubbo is no Christian or messenger of the spirit - he is a child of pagan mysteries, as is evident in the following sequence:

The parson told of spiritual love and beauty, how each incident in Our Lord's life had been illuminated with those qualities. Of course the boy had heard it all before, but wondered again how he failed continually to appreciate. It did seem as though he could grasp only what he was able to see. And he had not yet seen Jesus Christ, in spite of his guardian's repeated efforts, and a succession of blurry colour-prints. Now he began to remember a night at the Reserve when his mother had received a quarter-caste called Joe

Mullens, who loved her awful bad, and had brought her a bottle of metho to prove it. Soon the boy's memory was lit by the livid jags of the metho love the two had danced together on the squeaky bed. Afterwards his mother had begun to curse, and complain that she was deceived again by love. But for the boy witness, at least, her failure had destroyed the walls. He was alive to the fur of darkness, and a stench of leaves, as he watched the lightning-flicker of receding passion.

'Earthly love is not the faintest reflection of divine compassion,' the rector was explaining. 'But I can tell you are not concentrating, Alf.' [p.321]

This could stand as a general statement about the position of Christianity in White's fictional universe: it is a thin overlay, of good intentions and limp ideas, below which lies the vaster world of pagan mysteries - the image of the Ecstatic Mother and her world of passion and raw energy. The dialogue between Reverend Calderon and Dubbo is a testimony to the grinding conflict between White's moral conscience and his artist's intuition - but the latter always wins out because it has the full force of the author's psychic energy behind it. The Christian framework is simply imposed upon the image of the Mother - it does not transform the pagan element, or relate to it in any way, but merely floats above it.⁴⁸ And the boy's mind easily drifts back to the maternal fixation in his "memory" or psychic past. White's unconscious is not stirred to imaginative heights by Christianity, but by the highly-charged image of the Goddess, who in this sequence takes the form of the seductive and amorously sexual "black madonna". She is the goddess of love and vitality, the invoker of instinctual forces, even if these are celebrated with the aid of methylated spirits and a degenerate male consort. As the son witnesses this passionate love-scene he is transfixed and captivated: he is made to feel alive and "expansive" (her love-play had "destroyed the walls" of the shelter), his perception is heightened ("he was alive to the fur of darkness, and a stench of leaves"), and he is buoyed along by that same passion which inspires his mother. Psychologically, he is "at one" with the whole episode - no mere observer he is emotionally participating in the event. Dubbo is inspired and impelled by the prospect of incestuous union: he is the son-lover of the Goddess, and the sacred witness to her ecstatic rites.⁴⁹

Dubbo's first painting while still a lad in the protection of Reverend

Calderon and Mrs Pask is of tremendous significance for our present study. Not only does it express his own inward relation to the maternal-image, but it also encapsulates the primordial relation of every White mystic to the source-situation and to the archetype of the earth-mother. We first learn of his painting through his dialogue with Mrs Pask, who is shocked and horrified by his pagan vision:

'But what,' she asked, still breathing hard, 'whatever in the world, Alf, is this?'

Looking at his paper.

'That is a tree,' he said when he was able.

'A most unnatural tree!'

He touched it with vermilion, and it bled afresh.

'What are these peculiar objects, or fruit - are they? - hanging on your tree?'

He did not say. The iron roof was cracking.

'They must mean *something*,' Mrs Pask insisted.

'Those,' he said, then, 'are dreams.'

He was ashamed, though.

'Dreams! But there is nothing to indicate that they are any such thing. Just a shape. I should have said mis-shapen kidneys!'

So that he was put to worse shame.

'That is because they have not dreamt yet,' he uttered slowly.

And all the foetuses were palpitating on the porous paper. [p.317]

This drawing, which might be called The Tree of Unborn Souls, sums up in a unique way the relation between unborn soul and the maternal source.⁵⁰ In part it reminds us of the earlier image of the two mystics sitting beneath the all-containing tree at Xanadu, but here the archetypal situation is more symbolic and inhuman: the foetus-like forms are actually dangling on the tree, like "fruits" of the maternal source [Figure 9]. In a sense, White's entire work has pointed toward this single image, and the various meanings it suggests. Firstly, the unborn state suggests the security and shelteredness of the uroboric situation: one is protected, fed, and nourished by the world-tree. Secondly, there is poetry and mystery here: the painting is otherworldly, mysterious; the unborn figures are dreamlike ('mis-shapen') and opaque. Finally, however, there is an ambivalent aspect suggested in the overall conception of the work, a morbid tone to the dangling and palpitating foetuses, which is reflected in Mrs Pask's comment: "'I am afraid it is something unhealthy,' [she] confided in her brother" [p.317]. Are the foetuses the early forms of "fruit"

which will mature and leave the parent tree, or are they fixated at the embryonic stage, unable to detach themselves from the source? In all probability, the latter is indicated by the drawing, and by the context of the novel. In White the maternal source holds fast to its offspring - it will not allow them to develop, but only to make fleeting appearances in the world as *pueri* or *puellae*,⁵¹ "children of the maternal tree". In this regard it is fascinating that Dubbo describes his foetuses as "dreams ... which have not yet been dreamt", because depth-psychology defines the *puer* as "an anticipation of something desired and hoped for ... a dream of the mother, an ideal which she soon takes back into herself".⁵² The *puer* does not develop - the tree fixates him, keeps him bound to a state of eternal youth, and then returns him to the darkness of the matrix. And so the tree provides nourishment and shelter but keeps its child-victim bound to its image, just as the tree at Xanadu gathered the mystics to itself, only to overpower them in its awesome embrace. The maternal source is simultaneously a Tree of Life and Death, and those who remain blissfully unborn - or in a state of psychological incest - are subject to its paradoxical and ambivalent nature.

Dubbo's life is played out between these aspects of the maternal image: the mother as provider-nurturer, and as devourer-destroyer. After leaving the rectory he is taken in, consoled and nourished by Mrs Spice, the elderly hag at the Mungindribble rubbish dump, and yet he contracts syphilis and other diseases while living as her son-lover - diseases which eventually destroy him.⁵³ Then he is nourished and supported by Hannah, the motherly prostitute of Abercrombie Crescent, but she ultimately betrays him, secretly arranging to sell several of the major canvases, among which is his first attempt at *The Chariot-thing*. In both instances the mother-figure nurtures and contains while subduing the *puer* and, in the case of Hannah, destroying his spiritual essence.⁵⁴ Here we are reminded of the situation of Mr Gage in *The Tree of Man*, the *puer*-artist whose visionary works were similarly savaged and "consumed" by the negative mother-image. Dubbo - although the "author" of the mystical tree of unborn souls -

is himself one of its chief victims, and never escapes from its paradoxical force. Despite the fact that White makes Dubbo undergo a miraculous "conversion" to the Christian faith, he remains for us a child of pagan mysteries, an unborn soul who is caught up on the maternal tree.⁵⁵

VIII

It is Himmelfarb who is forced to realize most explicitly and agonizingly the full meaning of Dubbo's vision, and the ambivalent aspect of being a "child of the tree". For him the maternal tree can become equally the blossoming and fruit-bearing tree at Xanadu, or the knarled and mutilated jacaranda at Rose-tree's factory upon which he is "crucified" and hoisted above the ground like a dangling corpse in Figure 9. He is bound to the Tree of Death at the behest of Mrs Flack - who is, as I have indicated, not so much an external human person as a mere personification of the negative aspect of maternal nature. And the act of subjugation is performed by Blue, Mrs Flack's illegitimate son and unconscious servant, just as Voss was slain by the aboriginal boy Jackie, acting on orders from the chthonic mothers of the desert tribe. The point is that the Goddess herself does not wield the fatal blow - she arranges for her masculine consort to perform the bloody deed, just as, in pagan mythology, the wicked Set acted on orders from Isis, and, in the Attis-Adonis myth, the young god was slain by the animal-chthonic representative of the Goddess.⁵⁶ This in no way comprises the matriarchal context of the *puer's* death, it simply extends the maternal field by incorporating its masculine counterpart.

It should become apparent from what I am saying that Himmelfarb's passion is not a Christian drama, or a re-enactment of the Jesus story, but a modern expression of the pagan sacrifice of the maternal spirit. The Phrygian Attis was bound to the Tree of Death, and because his passion seemed to ape and anticipate that of Jesus of Nazareth he was subsequently called the "pagan Christ".⁵⁷ Even his annual festival and mourning took place at Easter, on March 23 in the pagan calendar.⁵⁸ Ostensibly, Attis-Adonis and Christ seem identical, but they are worlds apart in their meaning and symbolic context.⁵⁹

If we confuse Himmelfarb with Christ, we are succumbing to appearances and are not looking to the mythic structure of his passion and subsequent death. The image of being bound to the Tree of Death has appeared before in White's fiction - in the image of the dead man in the Willunya floods, and in the suicide of Mr Gage. These images in *The Tree of Man* were completely authentic because they arose naturally out of the fictional ground and were not forced into a religious or transcendental model by the author. With Himmelfarb, the *fact* that he is bound to the Tree is in accord with the mythic process of the story, but the grand religious scenario that is built up around it is objectionable and unjustifiable.⁶⁰

The events immediately preceding the subjugation of Himmelfarb are of extraordinary interest from the mythological point of view. The Lucky Sevens, a gang of workers from Rosetree's factory, led by Blue, get drunk on the day before the Easter vacation after having won the lottery. On their return to the factory they make their way through the streets of Barranugli in ritual style - clanging dustbin lids, banging drums, and one of the Sevens plays a shrill tune on a fife. Then they happen upon an actual circus which has pitched its tent opposite the factory, and witness several of the clowns performing a "public hanging" on the platform of a lorry. At first they imagine that the hanged figure is an actual clown, but later they realize that it is merely a life-size dummy, which one of the clowns tosses into the tent. This is a fascinating sequence - not to be dismissed as drunken roguery or as unrelated to the central drama. In the festivals of Attis in pre-Christian times the worshippers of the *puer*-god would become intoxicated by wine and take to the streets in song and merriment - even the instruments used were drums, cymbals, and flutes.⁶¹ The central object of the festival was to offer sacrifices to the Earth Goddess, so that she might replenish the earth after the barrenness of winter and help bring on the spring. Frazer⁶² reports that a human effigy, a male figure, was hung upon the pine in the likeness of Attis, and that this symbolic rite was followed by an actual human sacrifice - usually the death by hanging or crucifixion of a virginal youth, or a eunuch priest who had lived his life in the service of the

Mother Goddess. This ancient ritual is in enigmatic agreement⁶³ with the activities of the Lucky Sevens as they make their way from the incident of the hanging clown to the crucifixion of Himmelfarb. Further, as we have seen, Blue performs the mock-crucifixion for the sake of Mrs Flack, the chthonic goddess, who coaxes him to participate in a blood-ritual for her delight and to satisfy her voracious appetite.⁶⁴ Blue "remembers" her demand for sacrifice when he reappears on the factory floor and finally leads Himmelfarb out toward the jacaranda:

Towards the present travesty of tree, its mutilated limbs parched with lichens of a dead, stone colour, with nails protruding in places from the trunk, together with a segment of now rusted tin, which somebody had hammered in for reasons unknown, it was agreed by consent of instinct to push the victim. [p.409]

It is interesting that they push Himmelfarb "by consent of instinct" to the mutilated tree, because a pagan archetype has seized hold of the group and they find themselves unconsciously fulfilling its archaic pattern. The lopped, abused jacaranda is no Cross of Calvary, it is a symbolic extension of the daemonic Mrs Flack, a force of nature which is devouring, ugly, and grotesque. The fact that Himmelfarb is utterly powerless and impotent before the field of the chthonic mother indicates that the *puer* is destined to be undermined by the negative uroboros, just as he was originally inspired and sent forth by its positive aspect. His "spirit" was borrowed from Nature, and is returned to Nature through the agency of Blue. "The Mother gives and the Mother takes away".⁶⁵ With his death the maternal uroboros bites its tail and puts an end to its own creative element [see diagram p.191].

In this regard it is fascinating to look at the role played by Mrs Godbold at the time of Himmelfarb's subjugation. "At that hour", we read during the passion sequence,

Mrs. Godbold took the sheets which she had washed earlier, and ... began to iron [them], and soon had them ready in a pile ... She remembered ... how the women had received the body of their Lord.

And would lay the body in her whitest sheets, with the love of which only she was capable. [p.411]

But how, we may well ask, was she to know that her boy-god was at that moment

being destroyed? There is almost a secret link between herself and Mrs Flack: she "knows" what the other figure has arranged, and has prepared herself in advance for the consequences.⁶⁶ The left hand of the Goddess subdues the maternal spirit, and the right hand attempts to sweeten the blow he has been dealt, to lay his wrecked and wounded body in freshly laundered sheets, and then to bewail his death. Yet is there not also an element of subjugation in her passionate attentions - an overeagerness to "receive" his body, to surround it in sheets and smother it with love? Often it is hard to tell the left hand of the Goddess from the right - both seem to be "left" and undermining. As they are presented by the author Mrs Flack and Mrs Godbold are supposed to be completely opposed and antagonistic, but their symbolic connection is sensed by the clockwork-like precision with which each fulfils the appointed task. The "devouring" and "mourning" sides of the Goddess⁶⁷ work in perfect harmony to bring about the desired end: the termination of the *puer*-cycle and the regeneration of Nature through the sacrifice of the pagan god.

As he dies in Mrs Godbold's shack, already corpse-like inside her illustrious sheets, Himmelfarb dreams that he is at last reunited with Reha - the earlier bearer of the maternal-image. Like Palfreyman and Voss, Himmelfarb only achieves complete fulfilment in death, because "marriage" with the beloved maternal-image implies that the son be completely re-absorbed into the matrix. Here we see how the processes of Nature and the unconscious longings of the *puer* actually meet and coincide: Mother Nature longs to devour him, and he longs to return to Her bosom. There is no real conflict - no human will to clash with "fate", because the *puer*'s greatest satisfaction is to satisfy the "will" of the Mother and to complete her mythic cycle.

Appropriately, Himmelfarb is buried by Mrs Godbold, by arrangement with the local authorities, and does not receive a burial befitting a Jew. When Haim Rosenbaum (Harry Rosetree) comes to claim the body Mrs Godbold is pleased to inform him that she has performed the necessary functions, and has given him what she describes as a "Christian" burial. But it is clear from the narrative that this is not a Christian event, but a pagan and earthly ritual:

'I walked to the ground - it is not far - with a couple of my more sensible girls. *And was there to receive him.* It was that clear. It was that still. You could hear the magpies from all around. The rabbits would not bother themselves to move. There was a heavy dew lying from the night, on grass bushes. No one would have cried, sir, not at such a peaceful burial, ... and afterwards we was glad to dawdle, and feel the sun lovely on our backs.' [p.446, italics added]

The accent here is on earth, plants, the animal kingdom - nature itself, in a joyous and celebrative tone, bears witness to the defeat of the "natural" or maternal spirit. And once again Mrs Godbold's eagerness to "receive" the body is suggestive of her chthonic, sacrifice-demanding (or "Mrs Flack") aspect - she personifies the hungry earth which swallows down its token sacrifice.⁶⁸ Himmelfarb does not have a Jewish or religious funeral because he has never followed the course of the religious spirit. Mrs Godbold was "right" to intervene in this way and to assert herself in the face of Himmelfarb's apparent "Jewishness". Nature gave birth to him, nurtured him, and slew him - so must "she" take him back into herself.

IX

Throughout we have noted a fundamental disjunction between the author's religious frame and the deep structure, and now this is thrown into sharp relief. The story speaks to us of the failed Attis and White asserts that his character is a triumphant Christ. This problem has been in evidence from *The Aunt's Story* onward: we reach the end of the protagonist's life, at which point he is (almost invariably) defeated by the Chthonic Mother, and the author celebrates this in spiritual terms. In each novel White mistakes the *ecstasy* of uroboric incest for the *triumph* of spiritual awakening. Both states are productive of ineffable ecstasy, but whereas White's is the ecstasy of disintegration and anonymity, the religious state is the ecstasy of integration and wholeness.⁶⁹ As a *puer*-artist White is wont to see uroboric incest as the goal and fulfilment of life itself - so that wherever it occurs in his work he celebrates it as if it were the highest point of spiritual endeavour. But from the religious standpoint it represents no achievement at all, but merely the

extinction of the human spirit in the anonymous source-situation.

Thus we have to deal with the perversity that defeat is read as triumph, and that, moreover, the defeated *puer* wears the mantle of spiritual success. Hence in Dubbo's eyes - who now becomes the author's Christianizing instrument - the hanged *puer* is the "Saviour upon the tree" [p.413], which inspires Dubbo to religious reverie and which prompts his miraculous conversion to the faith of Timothy Calderon:

As he watched [the man suspended in the tree], the colour flowed through the veins of the cold, childhood Christ, at last the nails entered wherever it was acknowledged they should. So he took the cup in his yellow hands, from those of Mr Calderon, and would have offered it to such celebrants as he was now able to recognize in the crowd. [p.412]

Not only is this a distortion of the narrative sequence it is a misrepresentation of Christian dogma, which has nought to do with this pagan god, the spirit of nature who is put to death and bewailed by the mother-lover.⁷⁰ White is now at war with the reality of the text and his emphasis on transcendence and redemption is completely at odds with the fact of the devoured and consumed nature-spirit.⁷¹

It is well, then, that we cast a cautious eye on the affirmative and inflatedly "religious" passages [pp.451-461] which describe Dubbo's canvases of the passion sequence and the mystical community of Sarsaparilla. However, if we sweep away the imposed schema, we witness certain genuinely mythic aspects in Dubbo's visionary works - which suggests that the matriarchal substratum is constantly present, even though it be distorted and overlaid by an alien framework. For instance, there is an evocative and resonant image of Mrs Godbold - "the Mother of God waiting to clothe the dead Christ" - with her enormous breasts dribbling and overflowing with her maternal substance:

As he painted his pinched nostrils were determined to reject the smell of milk that stole gently over him, for the breasts of the immemorial woman were running with a milk that had never, in fact, dried. [p.454]

This image helps to restore the novel to its mythic base: the Great Mother, with her full and voluptuous breasts, imaged as the ever-constant source of nourishment and support. There is even a sense of the overbearing nature of

her nourishment, since Dubbo has to "reject" the "smell of milk that stole gently over him". Her lovingkindness is too strong, and the energy which flows from the breasts tends to surround the *puer* like a fixating substance. It is fascinating to read that her "milk" had "never dried". In a sense, none of the child-mystics has been weaned from her nourishing source. The *pueri* are dependent on the Mother's strength for their psychic being; each is still a human fruit on the maternal tree.

Dubbo's portrait of Miss Hare, the madwoman of Xanadu, gives further dimension to this theme. She is imaged as an unborn soul inside a vast cosmic womb:

He painted the Second Mary curled, like a ring-tail possum,
in a dreamtime womb of transparent skin, or at the centre of
a whorl of faintly perceptible wind. [p.455]

This symbolic image encapsulates my earlier discussions of Miss Hare: she is like an embryonic ego-germ inside the great round of eternal nature.⁷² Her state is delicate and vulnerable because a mere transparent membrane protects her from the vagaries of life. She is not in human reality at all, but is somehow outside time, living in a mythic world which is at one with the pleromatic source. The Aboriginal mythology referred to here is far more appropriate to her situation than the Christian: the concept of the Dreamtime (or rather, the Dreaming) is an aboriginal equivalent to the ancient Greek idea of the Uroboros, the primordial situation prior to the creation of man, when the world was filled with archaic and mythological beings. The Dreamtime, like the uroboros, is imaged as a prehistoric reality, a time "before" the development of consciousness - but Aboriginal authority⁷³ insists that this "time" also exists in the present, and extends into the future as well. Thus the term "Dreaming" is more relevant, because it allows for a confluence of past, present, and future - an eternal now. White's world re-evokes this eternal now, and although it is often felt to relate to the "past", in the sense of a lost image of childhood (*The Aunt's Story*), or life-in-the womb (*The Tree of Man*), it remains present in the unconscious of the adult individual, which is

why Miss Hare can be sixty or seventy years of age, and yet still remain one of the "unborn". She lives *psychologically* in the source-situation, a child of the depths and of night.

White spoils this delicate and poised image of Miss Hare by insisting on the Christian schema: he tells us more than once that this embryonic possum-figure is supposed to represent the Second Mary, or the Second Servant of their Lord.⁷⁴ How she can be Mary Magdelene and a ring-tail possum at one and the same time is difficult to imagine - a clear indication of the absurdity of the religious frame in relation to the narrative structure.

In Dubbo's final painting White makes a desperate attempt to reunite the novel with its title, and with the redemptive imagery surrounding the theme of the Chariot. We have seen from our analysis how little the motif of the Chariot actually impinges upon the novel's basic structure: it occurs only here and there, in the delusions of Miss Hare, the hymns of Mrs Godbold, and in the readings of Himmelfarb and Dubbo, and every fresh appearance is as unconvincing as the last - it is never presented with all the force of a natural symbol.⁷⁵ The story itself makes it clear that no Chariot flies above the skies of Sarsaparilla - if it ever existed, the "devouring mothers" have plucked the flying-thing out of its heavenward trajectory and reduced it to nothing. [Mrs Jolley displays her superior wit and strength by turning the whole business into a farce: "'Who is not wicked and evil, waiting for chariots at sunset, as if they was taxis?'" p.88.] In mythological terms, the maternal uroboros has gulped at the winged spirit and swallowed it back into itself.⁷⁶ In spite of this, the author is determined to argue that the spirit has triumphed, and so Dubbo manages to paint the Chariot of Redemption before he expires from a tubercular haemorrhage. But White's "artist's intuition" nevertheless exerts certain restraints on his conscious enthusiasm. Dubbo cannot completely realize *The Chariot-Thing*, which remains indistinct and blurred: "Just as he had not dared completely realize the body of the Christ, here the Chariot was shyly offered" [p.458]. The horses, too, which were supposed to

be "touched with gold" and blazing with heavenly light (according to White's original plan) are executed in a darker, more sombre tone: "[They] could have been rough brumbies, of a speckled grey, rather too coarse, *earthbound* might have been a legitimate comment ..." [p.458]. It seems that Dubbo's Chariot does not want to get off the ground - it remains strangely "earthbound". The tension here is great: White's image-making capacity will not lie, even as he tries to manipulate it to his own ends. But the tension is finally obliterated by a typical Whitean assertion: "So they were carried on, along the oblique trajectory, towards the top left corner" [p.459]. Dubbo's painting could not affirm the exalted movement, so White steps in and pushes the chariot off into the heavens. The assertion, with its introductory conjunctive, "So they ...", is reminiscent of White's "willed affirmation"⁷⁷ of Dubbo's Christian faith: "So he took the cup ..." [p.412]. This crucial "so" does not follow from what has gone before, but is simply injected into the text as part of the author's devising framework. The literary vision will not support the happy dream of transcendence because, unbeknown to the author, the story has long since lost its spiritual force. The crucifixion of Himmelfarb did not guarantee spiritual rebirth - rather was it, according to the pagan ritual, a symbol of the defeated spirit and the triumph of the maternal earth.⁷⁸

X

The deaths of the *pueri* all point, not to resurrection and the redemptive vision, but to the dissolution of the human spirit and its subjugation by chthonic forces. Miss Hare literally dissolves into the elements - one report suggests that she was carried away by a running stream, others that she simply died in the undergrowth, like a furred animal. The text indicates that her original prophecy has been fulfilled: the earth can no longer bear her up, so she sinks into it, blissfully:

Her instinct suggested ... that she was being dispersed, but that, in so experiencing, she was entering the final ecstasy.
[p.439]

Miss Hare had stepped into the cold waters of the southern

river, where trout had nibbled at her till the state of anonymity was reached. [p.464]

But, as we have learnt to expect, never far from the reality of the death-seeking mystic is the image of the brutal, crushing matrix which devours the child-soul which returns to it. Here we see this image projected upon "society", or rather "progress" as it consumes the once-sacred grounds of Xanadu:

Just before the house was completely razed, the bulldozers went into the scrub at Xanadu. The steel caterpillars mounted the rise, to say nothing of any sapling, or shrubby growth that stood in their way, and down went resistance... Gashes appeared upon what had been the lawns. Gaps were grinning in the shrub-beries. ... A mobile saw was introduced to deal with the larger trees [and] the sound of its teeth eating into timber made the silence spin, and they were sober individuals indeed, who were able to inhale the smell of destruction without experiencing a secret drunkenness. [p.477]

Thus as Miss Hare dissolves into anonymity the property of Xanadu is ritualistically devoured by the monster of *materialism*. Here it is modern technology which provides the image of "teeth" and the toothed matrix, which had hitherto been carried by Mrs Jolley. The daemonic, inhuman force which subdues Miss Hare's territory represents, as it were, the missing perspective in the author's vision of uroboric dissolution. In the foreground of his mind is the bliss and ecstasy of uroboric incest and then the tale throws up daemonic imagery to account for the devouring aspect which he so astutely and consistently avoids. Mary Hare is no "rider" in the Chariot - on the contrary, her journey is downward, into the maw of the earth, and the screeching tractors and chain-saws mark her passage of disintegration.

Dubbo is similarly consumed by chthonic forces. While struggling with his painting of the Chariot he suffers a tubercular haemorrhage, and as he signs his name at the bottom of the canvas he vomits up his last effulgence of blood. As with Le Mesurier, the visionary artist in *Voss*, he expires in a pool of blood - an Attis-like image of the defeated *puer-god*. "Blood", as we have seen, is linked with Mrs Flack and the devouring mother: blood is spilt, or shed, for "her" sake and for the regeneration of the earth.⁷⁹ Further, we learn that Dubbo's paintings were sold by his teeth-sucking landlady Mrs Noonan,

who sent the works to an auction where they "fetched a few shillings, and caused a certain ribaldry" [p.461]. Here we will recall that Hannah, the prostitute, had sold several of his major works - including *The Chariot-Thing* - for her own profit, and that his last attempt at the Chariot was among the works sold by Mrs Noonan. Symbolically, the negative mother-image is always lurking in the background, anxious to undermine the Chariot-vision and to contradict White's assertions of transcendence. The mother-figure "feeds" on the productions of the *puer* for her own gain, just as the technological monster fed upon Miss Hare's property for the sake of material progress.

Thus, in the death-sequences of Himmelfarb, Dubbo, and Miss Hare it is earth, matter, *mater*, and chthonic nature which reigns supreme - the uroboros turns on itself and devours its spiritual aspect.⁸⁰ The only remaining "spiritual" figure is Mrs Godbold - but how could she die, when she is Mother Nature itself? She merely passes through a kind of spiritual death, just as the earth goddess has to forego her masculine, light-bringing side at the beginning of the winter cycle. Her animus, personified in Himmelfarb, "dies" at an internal level, leaving her reduced and spiritually exhausted. The triumph of the negative uroboros is suggested in many ways - the area around her shack is "choked with blackberry bushes, ... strewn with jagged bottles and rusted springs" [p.487]. The wattles in the nearby creek are "raggedy", and the pale winter sky "watering with cold". Nature has lost its vibrance - in mythological terms, it has lost its masculine phallus, its intensity.⁸¹ As the story draws to a close Mrs Godbold is pictured at Xanadu, trying to recapture glimpses of her former spiritual life. But she cannot ascend to spiritual heights, for she is now caught up in the chthonic cycle of the turning uroboros:

If, on further visits to Xanadu, she experienced nothing comparable, it was probably because Mrs Godbold's feet were still planted firmly on the earth. She would lower her eyes to avoid the dazzle, and walk on, breathing heavily, for it was a stiff pull up the hill, to the shed in which she continued to live. [p.492]

She has fallen back to earth, and to the mundane round of daily activities. The spirit has gone out of her - but whereas this amounted to physical death

for the *pueri*, Mrs Godbold continues to exist for she had enough of the "earth" in her to survive the impact with reality. The spiritual cycle has come to an end, but mother nature plods along in her relentless course, despite the sheer weight and materiality of her winter period.

Almost as if to compensate for the author's meddling in the central drama, his gestures toward redemption, the tale provides us with a final coda in which we find innumerable examples of the triumph of the maternal image over the spirit. After the destruction of the Sarsparillan mystic community the landscape is suddenly overtaken by the brick boxes of suburbia: "Two or three days, or so it seemed, and there were the combs of homes clinging to the bare earth" [p.486]. As in *The Tree of Man*, the take-over of the suburban villas has little or nothing to do with external reality: it is mythic realism relating to the infestation and spread of the negative *mater*-image. As we might expect, the Flack-and-Jolley conspiracy is associated with the take-over of suburbia - Mrs Jolley reels with delight when she learns that the "brick homes" are about to invade the property of her one-time employer, and she and Mrs Flack celebrate by making regular visits to the Xanadu Estates. It is in this same coda that we learn that the mothers of Mildred Street were responsible for the deaths of their respective husbands. According to Ernie Theobalds, Will Flack did not "fall" from the roof of a house but committed suicide because he could no longer tolerate the persecutions of his wife. And we learn from a letter from Mrs Jolley's daughter that the notorious woman drove her husband to his death - the letter suggests that his heart attack was subtly and carefully programmed by the death-dealing mother. Of course, we have suspected this all along, but it is stated here for the first time.

In several other ways we detect the triumph of the terrible mother. Towards the end of the book there is a gathering in a Sydney restaurant of three rich women: Mrs Colquhoun, Mrs Chalmers-Robinson, and Mrs Wolfson. This meeting is an awesome "conference of the mothers", where the daemonic creatures - who are given the titles "the Satin Bon-bon", "the Crab-shell", and "the Volcano" - gather together to pass final judgement on the life of the spirit. Mrs Wolfson,

alias the Satin Bon-bon, is in fact the latest guise of Shirl Rosetree, the quickly and successfully re-married widow of Haim Rosenbaum. Mrs Wolfson, playing the game of life to her own advantage, is a kind of reincarnation of Mrs Rapallo, the supreme illusionist and imposter "whom time and circumstance had failed to trip" [AS, p.154]. All three women have outlived their husbands - and those who have not re-married have managed to survive comfortably on their husbands' fortunes. This fact puts them on a par with Mrs Flack and Mrs Jolley - and the pattern of the surviving or "predatorial" mother is announced when the conference declares "the men went first" [p.482], a formula arrived at without evident sadness or remorse.

During the course of their conference the mothers undermine the entire "spiritual" drama that has passed: Mrs Wolfson makes derisive remarks about the "Jew" and the "abo bloke", and Mrs Colquhoun ridicules the "madwoman" of Xanadu. These are merely "gossip" remarks - but we have learnt how potent gossip can be in White's mythic world: when a suburban mother takes a "spiritual" figure to task it is as if the daemonic unconscious itself were pronouncing sentence on the endangered spirit. We even learn, from the chatter of Mrs Wolfson, that Rose Rosetree, the girl befriended by Himmelfarb during his Passover visit, has suffered a severe mental breakdown, and is currently resident in the local asylum. Rosie, of course, was a *puella* who communicated with Himmelfarb about nuns and visions. Her breakdown is representative of the defeat of the spirit in *Riders in the Chariot*.

I suspect that this strongly negative emphasis in the final coda is a kind of unconscious compensation for White's attempt to present the major action in a positive light. It is as if an autonomous literary voice were forcing the author to shift his emphasis from the fantasy of redemption to the reality of the defeated spirit, and so he is moved to include a plethora of relatively minor negative incidents before he closes the story. The final chapter is not essentially a place where the author ties up the loose ends of the novel, but a place where the one mythic image is sounded in a variety of ways: the maternal uroboros devouring its own spiritual side.

XI

White criticism has been at its least productive in relation to *Riders in the Chariot*. There are several exegetical essays⁸² which present contradictory views on White's use of the Chariot symbol and the Jewish Kabbalah, and there are allegorical studies⁸³ which attempt to unravel the Christian framework and define White's religious meaning. But none of these assessments reaches into the archetypal structure or deals with the real myth that underlies the work. The business of analysing White's "religious symbolism" is a pointless and fruitless occupation. The author injects this formula into the narrative from above, and the literary critic "uncovers" it in his analysis and thinks he has found the true meaning of the work. All he has done is to dig up the dog's bone that White planted in the beginning.⁸⁴ The point is that while author and critic play hide and seek with the bone, the living substance of the text is missed altogether. This also means that the true symbolism of the work is overlooked, for the religious layer is not symbolic in the true sense, but merely allegoric; it is made up of signs, not symbols. And the irony is that White fails as an allegorist, as a dealer in signs, whereas he succeeds, and one must say admirably well, as a symbolist writer. Because criticism has focussed on the disturbing issue of White's allegory it has highlighted - albeit unwittingly - his central weakness, and his real strength has been ignored.

When *Riders in the Chariot* is read at its fundamental, mythic level - not according to the author's intended meaning, but according to what the tale itself has to say - it takes on a power and a resonance which previous readings have denied it. It is, at the deepest level, a spontaneous and wholly authentic representation of pagan mythology: the pagan element which underlies our superficially Christian culture and which carries forward into the modern era the ever-present mysteries of natural life. At this level, too, it has a surprising and refreshing unity which is not immediately apparent when we view the work allegorically⁸⁵ - the theme of the unborn, and the *puer*-mother relation, is carried through all the sequences with the same mythic and evocative power.

Of course the overall effect is blurred by the forceful imposition of the allegorical layer - and it is this alone that prevents the work from being deemed a masterpiece - but the mythic movement of the work is, in itself, the stuff of great literature and able to evoke powerful emotions in the mature reader. Thus I maintain that the psycho-mythological approach, while pointing as never before to the failure of the novel's presentation and outward design, actually serves to redeem the work at a mythic level and to bring it to life beneath the stilted incrustations of allegory.

Negative responses to the novel have focused on the characterization of Mrs Godbold - she is, critics say, an unlikely candidate for spiritual vision and therefore unconvincing as one of the *illuminati*. But in the terms in which I have analysed the novel this problem does not arise. From the mythic standpoint, Mrs Godbold is not a misfit amid enlightened souls, but the central maternal figure around which the *pueri* attain their definition. She is the Great Earth Goddess and it is not her function, or her task, to ascend to spiritual heights. The three "fly-weight" mystics are extensions of her spiritual animus - they live out the drama of the Mother's spiritual life, and succumb to an inevitably tragic fate. In this sense, the lives of Miss Hare, Himmelfarb, and Dubbo are "dreams" of Mrs Godbold. She is the lynch-pin around which all else moves, the static centre of the moving world.

The author, however, working against the grain of the novel, makes a few glib gestures toward Ruth Godbold's transcendental stature,⁸⁶ and it is this that has provoked the critical controversy about her characterization. White was partly forced to this move by the quaternion structure of his imported model - Ezekiel's vision has four "riders", and so four it must be. But the four-fold pattern is foreign to the novel - which is based on a six-fold structure, of three mystics and three mothers. The story presents Mrs Godbold as part of a maternal triangle, with Mrs Flack and Mrs Jolley as her evil counterparts. Thus, if we base our assessment on the allegorical frame, Mrs Godbold must be regarded as a failure, a character who does not win her seat in the

Chariot, but as the tale presents her she is a convincing embodiment of a pagan earth-mother who participates in the ephemeral and cyclical life of the *puer-spirit*.⁸⁷

The same can be said for Himmelfarb - as the author presents him he is a ludicrous figment of allegory - but in the tale he is a completely convincing embodiment of the pagan god, a figure who was both inspired and reduced by the Great Goddess, and who faithfully lived out the mythic role. It is, then, ironic that the author, who should be defending his protagonist, actually defeats him by insisting on the Christian frame. Himmelfarb's worst enemy is not Ada Flack, but White himself. The author abuses his character (viz. Theodora Goodman) by forcing him into a mould that is not suited to him - by making him appear transcendent, whereas his whole mission has been natural and earthly - to return to the earth what sprang forth from it.

Miss Hare hardly needs any extricating from the allegorical mould, and so she must be regarded as the most "pure" and freshly imagined character in the novel. Despite a brief and abortive appearance as the "Second Mary" she remains a child of the maternal tree, an unborn soul. She appears to elude, or reject, the author's allegorical frame, just as she rejects Himmelfarb's notion that she is one of the sacred *zaddikim*. At Himmelfarb's suggestion she blushes in shy embarrassment - and that, I would say, is how the tale reacts to the author's grand design. It is embarrassed and tries to shrug it off, but White keeps persisting, to the detriment of the created work.

In the portrait of Dubbo this tension was particularly marked. At first he rejected the Christian frame that was foisted upon him by Timothy Calderon and Mrs Pask. He tells Mrs Godbold that he need not wrap himself in the gorgeous robes of religion, when he can find his own way as a visionary artist.⁸⁸ But then Dubbo is forced to succumb, not to Mrs Godbold, but to White himself who now acts as the unseen Timothy Calderon, manipulating his character into the required role. Still, the author's move does not come off, and we remember Dubbo not as the Peter who denied his Lord, but as the aboriginal artist that he

is, the witness to pagan mysteries and the creator of the Tree of Unborn Souls.

If the novel fails it is not because of its central vision, which is authentic enough, but because the author has failed to understand his vision. The novel is a battleground between author and text - the tale points down, toward chthonos, and the narrator up, toward heaven. It is hard to imagine a more complete philosophical contradiction within a single fictional work. For this reason, the novel is a kind of literary trap for the unwary reader - who may be too easily lulled into White's religious frame and made to accept the work on the narrator's terms. For the reader who has become aware of the basic flaw, the work is a highly complex structure, and it demands close attention and utmost caution at every point. The story is a dark labyrinth and the Ariadne thread is unusually hard to find - yet it is there, not in the religious systems but in the sequences of images which make up the texture of the work. As in every White novel, we must trust the image to yield its own wealth of meaning and association, and not rely on a self-deceiving author to guide us through the work.

Chapter Five

The Crisis of Consciousness

His top half felt all afloat in a starry firmament of ideals and young voices singing; the rest of his self was heavily sunk in a swamp where it must, eventually, drown. - John Updike¹

If *Riders in the Chariot* represents a consummation of the *puer*-Mother mytheme in White's work, *The Solid Mandala* [1966] brings to a climax an equally important psychological relationship - that between the *puer* and the rational ego. Since *The Living and the Dead* we have noted an essential discrepancy between an uroboros-seeking aspect (Elyot the child mystic and Voss, for instance) and a rigidly defensive personality (Elyot the scholar, Mr Bonner) which rejected the idea of the inner journey and clung to its rational position. In *Voss* it was clear that the masculine ego rejected the inner path for good reason, since it was synonymous with self-annihilation and uroboric incest. The mother-complex, which ruled the interior landscape, proved too strong for the ego and defeated it every time the inner way was undertaken. This meant that the personality was forced either to hold fast to a sterile ego-structure, or to abandon itself to the matrix. There seemed no possibility of a middle way between the opposites, of achieving a state of integration where the ego remained in the sphere of human consciousness yet could draw from the rich sources of the mother-world. But in the present novel this middle way - which is known in analytical psychology as "individuation" - is presented for the first time. White's unconscious seems to have undergone a profound change at the time of *The Solid Mandala* - certainly no other novel manifests the positive psychic image which is embodied in the vision of Arthur Brown.

Arthur offers Waldo, the ego-figure, the possibility of wholeness and creative union (*not* fusion) with the deep unconscious. For the first time in our study the symbol of the round, here assuming the form of the glass marble, takes on mandalic significance and does not function exclusively as an uroboros.

Here the circle-image assumes a paradoxical aspect and functions, in different contexts, as an uroboros and as a mandala.² For Arthur the glass marble is a mandala, a symbol of the potential unity of himself and his brother. For Waldo it appears to function as an uroboros, a symbol of the devouring unconscious and of negative uroboric incest.

The paradox here hinges upon the psychic dissociation at the heart of the novel. The ego-personality (Waldo) has broken away from the unconscious and struggles to create an independent life of its own. When it looks over its shoulder at the unconscious background it sees only a negative landscape - a retarded brother, a devouring female matrix, and an instinctual world threatening to engulf it. That is to say, it sees only the shadow of its own mother-complex, so that everything "inner" is for it tinged with negativity and fear. For Waldo Arthur's solid mandala is a mere boy's toy or marble, which is best left in the playground where it belongs. It symbolizes regression and psychological retardation - i.e. fusion with the mother-image. Waldo reads the unconscious in terms of its uroboric-regressive character, the quality which has dominated White's psychic universe hitherto.

However if Waldo would look closer at the psychic background he would discern some positive features which are hidden behind the cloak of infantilism and negativity. He would discover that his dill brother is in essence a "divine child", a messenger of the Self and a carrier of the jewel of wholeness.³ He would find that Arthur's task is not merely to hound and undermine him, to draw him back into infantile territory, but to connect him with the "shadow" so that he might be truly creative and linked to the sources of vitality. But because the mandalic or positive aspect is hidden from the field of the rational ego it is disclosed only in the "Arthur" section of the novel [Part 3], which deals with the mysteries of the unconscious as perceived by the shadow-brother. In the "Waldo" section the circle-image reads as an uroboros and is associated with the idea of matriarchal incest.

What this paradox reveals is that White's unconscious is no longer wholly

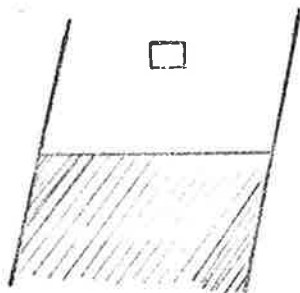
dominated by a mother-complex. He has served his "sentence" to the maternal image and now there is an opportunity to individuate. The constellation of the helpful shadow⁴ radically alters the mother-bound character of the inward personality. Arthur's tendency is toward consciousness and integration, whereas every *puer*-figure before him - whether Miss Hare, Harry Robarts, Voss or Bub Quigley - has moved toward unconsciousness and dissolution. Strangely, it appears that the classically "masculine" aspects of the personality - the urge toward development and self-realization - have fallen into the unconscious and are now attributes of the shadow-psyche. The novel depicts a situation where the conscious ego has shirked its heroic task, and where the unconscious rises up with the neglected psychic traits that should belong to the ego-complex.

The creative unconscious, it appears, can no longer support White's psychic standpoint - his philosophy of dissolution and religion of the Great Mother. It demands that he develop, adopt a more constructive attitude, and create a self which is independent of the maternal image. The deadlock battle between Arthur and Waldo indicates that the author has reached an individuation crisis - a forboding situation because the unconscious at this point will not tolerate deception or compromise. It demands nothing less than the complete reorientation of the personality. *The Solid Mandala* is for this reason White's most personal book - and its tone of urgency reflects the mounting anxiety in the ego-structure. When the personality is offered the mandala this is a crucial time which is rarely repeated in the life of the individual. It is a sacred moment, when the ego must enter into dialogue with fate and choose its future course. In this story the offer of the mandala is rejected and so the question of individuation is never again an issue. After this work the ego-personality is all but obliterated and overshadowed by the mother-image, which comes to the fore and co-ordinates the final phase of White's career. This then is the only novel where the mandalic quest, and the idea of conscious integration, becomes a major fictional problem as well as a personal burden for the writer himself.

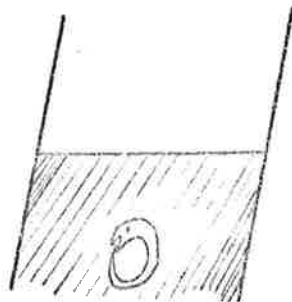
Arthur and Waldo, however, are not simply allegories of White's inner states, representing his "conscious" and "unconscious" selves. Each is also

a microcosm, a potentially complete individual containing within himself that lost "half" which is mirrored in his respective twin. Waldo can be viewed as a complex fictional character, who is "Waldo" in his ego-personality and "Arthur" in his unconscious mind.⁵ Similarly, Arthur is, as it were, greater than he seems - in his inner world he contains a personified psychic content which is in many ways similar to his brother.⁶ Thus as well as an allegorical doubling (two persons living one life) there is a two-fold symbolic pattern (two persons leading individually complex lives) which makes the relationship of the Brothers Brown a highly intricate and fictionally satisfying affair. If the brothers were no more than allegorical figures, two "halves" of the one psyche, they could not be regarded as complete fictional entities, nor could they develop because they would have no potential for inner growth. Arthur shows that some development is possible at the internal level - in spite of his brother's resistance. Still, Arthur's progress is always relative to Waldo's predicament. The external twin remains a reflection of the inward counterpart, which indicates that the symbolic dimension does not actually escape from the allegorical domain. The twins are individual psyches *and* they are personified fragments of the one personality. We have always to be aware of the two levels at work simultaneously within the one narrative sequence.

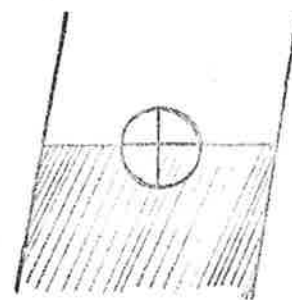
In order to clarify and summarize a highly complex fictional situation I would like to represent the various psychic states put forward in the novel in diagrammatic terms:



1. The rational ego
- divorced from
the depths



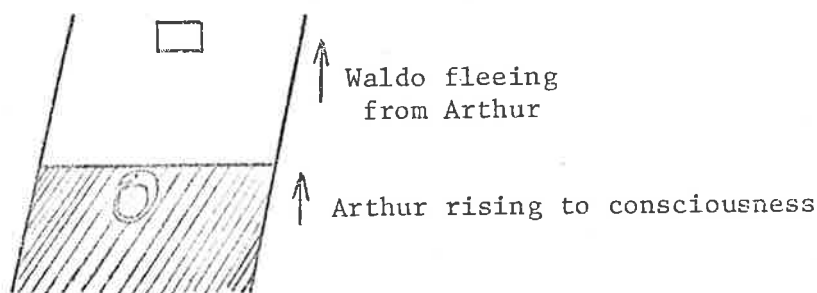
2. The uroboros
- fusion with:
the unconscious



3. The mandala
- union of ego
and the unconscious

Diagram 1 represents Waldo's "conscious" position: he is caught up in the sterile prison of the rational ego, far above the field of the maternal uncon-

scious. Arthur, on the other hand, is a *puer aeternus* in the circular uroboros, a child of the depths and of instinctual life. Waldo too (though he will never admit it), shares the situation represented in Diagram 2: in his innermost depths he is synonymous with Arthur, or Arthur *is* Waldo's hidden self. The third diagram represents the ideal state which is anticipated in Arthur's vision but which is ultimately rejected by Waldo. This is the spiritual goal of individuation, as of Buddhist philosophy and Western mysticism, the point between the opposites, where above and below, conscious and unconscious, rational and irrational, are united in the transcendent image of the paradoxical Self. The mandalic state is created when the two sides of the divided man - "Waldo" and "Arthur" - come together in creative union at the threshold of the psyche. Arthur is prepared to sacrifice his uroboric containment and move up toward the threshold, but Waldo is not prepared to lower his ego-position. The result of their conflicting movements is an extremely tense inner situation:



4. The movement within the fictional psyche

Obviously no mandalic state can ever be achieved as long as Waldo continues with his flight-reaction to the uprising inner world. Waldo is as determined to escape from Arthur as Arthur is to unite with Waldo. It should be clear from the foregoing why Waldo puts up such an acute resistance. He fears that the unconscious wants to devour him, to wrench him out of his upper position and take him below the threshold. Moreover - and what is perhaps more to the point - he fears that he could not stand the test of individuation, that he would not be able to encounter the powerful mother-world without succumbing to its absorptive attraction. Individuation, as Jung was at pains to point out, requires a strong ego which can contact tremendous mythic forces while maintaining its own ground in the sphere of consciousness.⁷ Ironically, the strength Waldo

needs to combat the devouring tendencies of the unconscious (or to defeat the mother-complex) is forthcoming from the unconscious itself. Arthur says: " ... if you should feel yourself falling, I shall hold you up, I'll have you by the hand, as I am the stronger of the two" [p.210].⁸ What Waldo requires is "psychological faith",⁹ a belief that the entry into the unconscious will not be completely disintegrative, and that Arthur's mandalic aspect will come to his aid. The uroboros may transform into a mandala, but the ego is not to know that before it risks the archetypal descent. There can be no guarantee of success in the psychic realm. In fairytale and myth the protagonist is always forced to deal with the unconscious in its "ugly" form (as beast, frog, idiot wayfarer, etc) before it reveals its positive countenance.¹⁰ Waldo must encounter the unconscious as infantile shadow and uroboros before it reveals itself as divine child and God-image. The distinguishing mark of the mature ego is its readiness to risk the unknown, to enter darkness and threatening night. But, "Where danger dwells, there salvation lies".¹¹

Waldo has to enter the matrix to recover his higher masculinity, his creativity and spirit, which is currently "knotted" at the core of the uroboros. At the centre of the marble kept for Waldo is a knot which Arthur intuitively relates to his brother's inner condition. It is an extremely cogent symbol of the mother-complex, especially since in mythology the union of Rhea and Zeus (the classic mother-son conjunction) is symbolized by two serpents knotted together in an erotic embrace.¹² Waldo faces the dilemma of the spiritual quest: to win true freedom he must turn to where he is bound and recognize his inward fixation. The pattern of symbolism suggests that this is the only way that he can achieve his individuality. In spite of this positive indication -and the encouragements of his shadow-brother - Waldo denies the call to adventure - and loses everything. A further irony of individuation is that if one does not sacrifice for the sake of growth, one is sacrificed to growth gone wrong. Waldo is devoured by the maternal unconscious: he does not move voluntarily toward it, but is dragged down into it by the sheer force of the

constellated psychic contents. The feminine, the body, the instincts, "Arthur" - all combine to bring about his tragic demise. Arthur's marble remains an uroboros - not because it was always so - but because Waldo failed to allow it to reveal its mandalic character. The uroboros can only become the mandala if an ego-personality goes out to meet it and accepts the task of self-development and inner transformation.

I

In their early childhood the brothers were psychologically identical, two *pueri* swimming in the maternal round of unconsciousness:

In the beginning there was the sea of sleep of such blue in which they lay together ... nesting in each other's arms the furry waves of sleep nuzzling at them like animals. [p.215]

Waldo had not yet become "Waldo", but was merely an extension of the uroboric world, or a different version of Arthur. Even as a growing schoolboy Waldo maintained an integral relation to Arthur, and was "lost without his twin":

Sometimes Waldo buried his face in the crook of Arthur's neck, just to smell, and then ... they would start to punch each other, to ward off any shame [O]n evenings of sickly light, before Arthur had returned, Waldo approached the looking glass, his face growing bigger and bigger, his mouth flattening on the throbbing glass, swallowing, or swallowed by, his mouth. Until he would hear Arthur, books falling on the kitchen floor ... And Waldo would drag himself out of the mirror's embrace, and run to meet his brother... [T]hey wrestled together, and laughed, and even their breathing was inextricably intertwined. [pp.32-33]

This is one of our clearest expressions of the inward, symbolic role of Arthur Brown in Waldo's life. As the rational twin approaches the looking glass his mirror-self begins to appear like Arthur: fleshy face, large sensual mouth, even a hint of an overbearing aspect. The fact that the mouth appears to be "swallowing" him indicates that the inner self has begun to take on an ambivalent character. And then, almost as if this image had materialized before him, Arthur runs into the kitchen, drops his books on the floor and begins to wrestle with his twin. Thus already at this stage the brothers are becoming quite distinct - Arthur appears as the supraordinate factor, the feminine container, and Waldo as the contained yet developing masculine ego. But the

twins are also mutually interdependent and appear to delight in each other's company.

As Waldo develops he gradually experiences Arthur as a regressive influence, a handicap to his own growth and upward striving. This "growing apart" of the twins is not to be given a sentimental reading, as many readers are wont to do, believing that Waldo "should" have remained at one with his brother.¹³ The fact is that psychological growth necessitates the break-away and detachment of the ego from the infantile situation. The pubertal ego seems instinctively to cling to father-symbols and so-called "masculine" behaviour in order to strengthen his own position. Everything which is alien to the nascent ego - the feminine world, eros, irrationality - is feared and given a negative connotation. Hence at this point Waldo is compelled to denigrate his brother: "'You're a big fat helpless female'" [p.42]. "Waldo", we are told, "could not bear to listen to Arthur breathing the way he breathed ... He could not bear what he had to bear, his responsibility for Arthur" [p.41]. The ego experiences the psychic background as a stifling force, and longs to free itself from it.

But as Waldo tries to detach himself from the unconscious it becomes darker and more threatening than before. As soon as the ego-personality dares to assert itself, the maternal unconscious is negatively constellated: the so-called "devouring mother" moves to reclaim her renegade son, to draw him back into the uroboros. Thus at this stage the youth's world is often filled with robbers, invaders, malevolent ghosts, witches, and a whole range of negative figures who symbolize the regressive tendencies of the deep unconscious. It is against this psychological background that we can best appreciate Waldo's childhood essay, 'What I see on the Way to School':

"There is the old stone tumbledown house amongst the pear trees where nobody lives any longer, the roof has gone, which looks like a house in which somebody might have committed a few murders ..."

He almost could not bring himself further, in front of all those others. And Mr Hetherington. And Johnny Haynes. Some things were too private, except perhaps in front of Arthur.

"Sometimes when it is early or late," Waldo's voice came bursting, "I have thought I saw the form of a man hurrying off with a basin of blood."

Here Mr Hetherington grunted in that fat way.

"Of course it is only the imagination. But I think this person, if he existed, would have murdered the many children he lured in through the black trees." [pp.43-44]

This has something of "the catcher in the rye" in it: a malevolent being lives in a ghostly house and attempts to lure children into his murderous domain. Mythologically the figure could be seen as a creature of the underworld, one of the shades who demand blood-oblations from the living and who capture unwary travellers who stray near the nether-world. The story suggests that Waldo has moved to the stage of the "struggler"¹⁴ in psychic development, where the libido must be on constant guard to avoid being overtaken by the negative uroboros.

After Waldo reads the essay to his class we find a marvellous conjunction of realism and myth. Johnny Haynes and Norm Croucher, the bullies of the school, decide to act in accordance with Waldo's tale and draw blood from his body in the manner indicated in the story:

'Come on, Normie, we'll show Waldo what we got in our bloody basin. That bloke hadn't reckoned on one more murder. Amongst the pear trees,' he added. Waldo heard the knife click. [p.44]

At the mythic level we could say that Waldo's present psychic situation is constellating a daemonic archetypal field, and that his classmates simply act out the image of the inner antagonist or pursuer. But then there is an ironic twist. Arthur, Waldo's perpetual antagonist and Doppelgänger, breaks in on the scene and attempts to save his brother from the bullies. And although he flattens Norm Croucher and Johnny Haynes in a magnificent display of strength Waldo is disgraced by his brother's intrusion. This is simply because Arthur's "saving" of his twin highlights Waldo's own vulnerability and dependence: it shows he is unable to stand alone - a realization which is more humiliating for him than the attack by the bullies. Although Arthur rises up over him in redemptive glory - "It was as if the flaming angel stood above them, or flailed and flickered" [p.45] - Waldo will not allow Arthur's positive transformative character to come to his support. He will not receive the unconscious in any form because this contradicts the masculine ego's notion of self-sufficiency and the hallowed illusion of its own independence.

After this Waldo's resentment toward his brother is more intense than ever:

'Leave me!' Waldo shouted. 'How many times have I told you not to hang on to my hand?'

'But when you walk so fast!'

Arthur was shuffling and running, bigger than Waldo, a big shameful lump. [p.45]

"But when you walk so fast!" - this is the plaintive cry of the unconscious as it sees the conscious ego racing too far ahead of it. The masculine spirit is bent on development and will not "wait" for the shadow-brother to catch up, especially when the inner counterpart represents a threat to its "known" and rational position: "Waldo would have liked to go permanently proud and immaculate, but his twin brother dragged him back repeatedly behind the line where knowledge didn't protect" [p.46]. The ego cannot afford to be drawn below the threshold of consciousness because it associates the downward movement with disorientation and absence of identity. It cannot be dirtied by unreason and mystery, but wants to remain "proud and immaculate" in the shadowless light of consciousness.

It is about this time that Waldo decides to write a play, a "Greek tragedy", to be enacted under the classical pediment of the Brown house in Terminus Road. Waldo has literary pretensions throughout his career, but he is unable to realize his potential creativity because it lies bound up in the deep unconscious - caught up in his "Arthur" personality and unavailable to his conscious mind. When he tells Arthur that he will not allow him to act in his play (the hubristic ego excluding the archetypal figure) Arthur decides to write his own "tragedy", and enacts it then and there upon the stage-like veranda of the house. His play is about a cow ("A cow's as Greek, I suppose," said Dad, 'as anything else'), or more particularly about a stillborn calf, and the despair of its failed mother:

'This is a big, yellow cow,' he told them. 'She's all blown out, see, with her calf. Then she has this calf. It's dead. See?'

There was Arthur pawing at the boards of the veranda. At the shiny parcel of dead calf.

Everyone else was looking at the ground by now, from shame, or, Waldo began to feel, terror.

'You can see she's upset, can't you?' Arthur lowed. 'Couldn't help feeling upset.'

It was suddenly so grotesquely awful in the dwindling light and evening silence.

'Couldn't help it,' Arthur bellowed.

Thundering up and down the veranda he raised his curved, yellow horns, his thick, fleshy, awful muzzle. The whole framework of their stage shook.

'That's enough, I think,' said Dad.

Arthur stopped at once, as though he had been going to in any case.

Dad got up and limped inside. You could hear him lifting the porcelain shade off the big lamp. [p.40]

In a sense this play is the metaphorical equivalent of Dubbo's Tree of Unborn Souls in the previous story. We have to do with the same psychic factors: maternal source and unborn soul, but here the Tree and human fruit metaphor is exchanged for that of cow and calf. This image has its precedent in *The Tree of Man*, where the family cow (Julia) gave birth to a succession of still-born calves, and where Amy Parker, the cow-like mother figure, suffered a series of miscarriages and remained childless for a number of years. There the image related to the inner world of the fictional psyche and here it is the same: the ego-principle in *The Solid Mandala* is regressively bound to the matrix, and cannot live its own life. Waldo Brown, Dad, Arthur - each character is attached to the source-situation and is unable to be born into the conscious world. Arthur's play is a symbolic testimonial to the agonizing state of the masculine ego in White's fiction. And if George Brown gets up and walks away it is because the play mirrors his own tragic situation too clearly, and is too painful to bear.¹⁵

At the psychological level, it is interesting that the cow parades around the stage in utter desperation, deeply disturbed by the death of its offspring. In *The Tree of Man* and *Riders in the Chariot* we found that the reverse of this was true: the maternal background was a darkly ambivalent force which held fast to the nascent libido, and did not want it to leave the matrix. If before we found a regressive mother-image that inhibited life, now we have a defective ego that cannot, or does not want to, live. The obstacle to growth in this novel is not the mother, but the ego itself which blocks its own development.¹⁶

In the present context it is clear that Arthur (appearing in his symbolic role

as maternal container) identifies with the cow's despair. In the "Arthur" section - where the same event is retold through Arthur's eyes - his identification with the animal is more precisely delineated:

As he stamped up and down, pawing and lowing, for the tragedy of all interminably bleeding breeding cows. By that time his belly was swollen with it. He could feel the head twisting in his guts.
[p.230]

The implication should be clear: if Arthur is the containing matrix, Waldo is the contained, stillborn ego, the "shiny parcel of dead calf".¹⁷ This single image anticipates their life together, and even foreshadows Waldo's death, since he dies in Arthur's embrace, as his brother tries to awaken him to life. And Arthur experiences his brother's death as his own doing, just as the animal in the play appears to be taking the responsibility of the calf's death upon itself. But the point is that the ego-figure is inherently flawed; it will not live, but remains caught up in eternity.

Waldo is astounded by Arthur's play, and remains standing under the classical pediment long after the others have departed:

Only Waldo lingered on the stage which no longer contained their wooden play ... He could not help wondering how Arthur of all people had thought about it. Ridiculous, when not frightening.
[p.40]

Waldo's response is one of fascinated horror: he is struck by the grotesque performance but does not know why. This has been the typical response of White's ego-personality to the symbols that arise from the unconscious - it is moved by them, but in an unknowing way. Whether we refer to Theodora's response to the trochilus-dragon image, or to Stan Parker's reaction to the dead man hanging in a tree - the pattern of uncomprehending fascination remains the same. The ego simply does not know what to do with the uprising, irrational material, it cannot assimilate or dialogue with it. This surely is the greatest tragedy of all in White's fiction: not that the ego is devoured, but that the unconscious throws up guiding or therapeutic imagery which is never recognized or assimilated by the personality.

Waldo is also shocked by the evident creativity of his shadow-brother - after all, his own play is still a mere fancy, a projected possibility, whereas

Arthur's is already conceived and executed before them. Intra-physically, the ego-figure is full of dreams and ambitions, and the "Arthur" figure has none, yet it is the dill brother who is spontaneously creative and able to express his innermost thoughts. But Arthur's creative expressions will remain crude and rough until he can mobilize his Waldo-personality, his reason and conscious capacities, so that the images of the unconscious can be shaped and given aesthetic form. Until each can constellate the inner counterpart - or until the brothers can work together as a creative unit - Waldo will remain a sterile aesthete, with little or no creative talent, and Arthur will remain a crude artist, close to the mythic imagination, but lacking in discipline, taste, and intellectual rigor. These are the purely aesthetic consequences of psychic dissociation, but they are extremely important in a novel which addresses itself to the specific problem of creativity, and to the wider conflicts at work within the author's own unconscious.¹⁸

The conflict between the brothers ceases at certain points in the novel - not because resolution is achieved, but because Waldo simply gives in to his brother out of sheer exhaustion:

That night Arthur tried to drag him back behind the almost visible line beyond which knowledge could not help.

Arthur was taking, had taken him in his arms, was overwhelming him with some need.

Waldo should have struggled, but couldn't any more. The most he could do was pinch the wick, squeeze out the flickery candle-flame.

The stench of pinched-out candle was cauterizing Waldo's nostrils. But he did not mind all that much. He was dragged back into what he knew for best and certain. Their flesh was flickering quivering together in that other darkness, which resisted all demands and judgements. [p.47-48]

Here we find that Waldo "should have struggled, but couldn't any more". He is a helpless, exhausted child-ego in the embrace of his maternal brother. But this state of surrender is to be sharply differentiated from that of mandalic totality or creative co-existence [diagram 3]. It simply marks the temporary collapse of the ego-personality, its resignation to "Arthur", to darkness (Waldo himself snuffs out the candle), and to unconsciousness. At such times Waldo slips into the maternal round [diagram 2] and merges with

his Arthur-self. "He was dragged back into what he knew for best and certain" - i.e. he returns to where he "belongs", to his own uroboric personality. But at first light Waldo resumes his ego-position. Then his brother becomes once more the antagonist and Waldo attempts to defend his rationality, until "night" takes him back into Arthur's embrace. This is the relentless course of the infantile ego: it oscillates between flight and resignation; between its bid for freedom and its surrender to an uroboric fate.

II

It is only to be expected that Waldo, with his tremendous fear of the feminine-maternal unconscious, should experience a resistance, even an hostility, toward women, sexuality, and the female womb. Many of his forebears - Elyot, Voss, Palfreyman - experienced a fiercely irrational mysogyny because the female was felt to be the carrier of the devouring maternal image. What assails White's protagonists from the inside is projected outside and expressed as a universal loathing of the opposite sex. For Waldo woman is a devouring force and the vagina is seen either as an absorptive-seductive maw [pp.103, 184, 189] or as a disease-ridden organ associated with "syph" and "the pox" [pp.116, 122, 173]. When Johnny Haynes and his wife come to visit the elderly (and by now almost paranoid) Waldo he muses that "the wife or whore, was going to give [her husband] syph or a stroke" [p.191]. That is to say, womankind is seen as the despoiler of man, and sexual intercourse is linked with primary-archaic fears of castration.¹⁹ To enter woman is to enter hell - it is little wonder then that Waldo refrains from heterosexual activity throughout his career. The only surprising thing is that White does not have him engage in homosexual activity, since Waldo has the classic psychological disposition for the homosexual lifestyle. We can only assume that White was reluctant to disclose his homosexual preference at this stage in his work, and thus was forced to repress his character's libido and have him lead a drily celibate, passionless life.²⁰

When Waldo first encounters Dulcie Feinstein his response to her is completely archetypal and preconditioned:

She was plain. If not downright ugly. Waldo would have hated to touch her, for fear that she might stick to him, literally, not deliberately, but in spite of herself. [pp.89-90]

Here we find an image of the feminine as a repulsive field - something which would "stick to him" if he were to touch it. Psychologically this relates to the feminine as an undifferentiated mass, which would absorb an approaching masculine ego-consciousness. At a mythological level the image reminds us of the fate of Theseus, the Greek hero who journeyed to the realm of the Mothers, only to grow fast to the rocks when he first made contact with the chthonic-maternal ground.²¹ Theseus' fate points to a situation where the masculine spirit is too easily absorbed by the maternal realm.²² The ego cannot withstand the attractive power of the unconscious - and so the maternal field, in our case womankind, appears as a glutinous, absorptive, devouring force.

We find this image of the Devouring Female emerging in the following passage, but here it is with increased archaic power and affectivity:

He did look back just once as Mrs Saporta, increasing, bulging, the Goddess of a Thousand Breasts, standing at the top of her steps,²³ in a cluster of unborn, ovoid children. The giant incubator hoped she was her own infallible investment. But she would not suck him in. Imagining to hatch him out.

'I'm past the incubation stage!' he called.

So much for Dulcie Feinstein Saporta and her lust for possession. He was tempted to look back again, to see whether his scorn had knocked her bleeding to the steps. [p.157-8]

This passage is enigmatic for many reasons. Waldo imagines that Dulcie is a Terrible Goddess with a passionate desire to "possess" him, whereas in reality she has just rejected his marriage proposal and has escorted him to the door. It is fascinating that her *rejection* constellates this "devouring" image - proving how irrational his response to woman is, and how completely out of touch with reality this intellectual figure can be. A daemonic internal image - the giant incubator of unborn souls - has erupted into full view, overwhelming the real person and causing Waldo to react to a mythic presence, to be engaged in mythic action. He finds himself fleeing from a Many-Breasted Goddess,

shouting abuse at her as he turns away in fright. Interestingly enough, he defines his own mythic situation (as a child-subordinate of the Goddess) by a negation: "'I'm past the incubation stage!' he called". According to Erich Neumann, the doomed hero at the "struggler" stage gives himself away by claiming to have transcended the thing that continues to hold him fast: the dark matrix of the Mother. As he says of the failed Hippolytus, "he remains unconsciously bound to the Goddess, although he defies and denies her with his conscious mind".²⁴ The fact that Waldo's psyche fabricated such an hysterical and unreal exchange with Dulcie is proof enough that he is still an ego-germ which is dwarfed and overwhelmed by the maternal image.

But at the same time as having a great fear of the feminine Waldo displays a secret yearning for that "Other" world, since much of his psychic energy is bound or "knotted" up in the mother-complex. This emotional ambivalence is particularly marked in his relationship with Mrs Poulter. When she first moves into the house in Terminus Road Waldo's immediate impression was that his neighbour

had stupid-looking calves, which Waldo thought he would like to slap if he had been following her up a flight of stairs. Slap slap. To make her hop. [p.140]

Similarly, as the twins are on their walk down Barranugli Road, Waldo catches sight of Mrs Poulter in the bus and feels that she is "an inalterably stupid creature" [p.61]. Yet this same stupid creature exerts a powerful fascination upon Waldo, as we discover in the scene where he is found spying upon Mrs Poulter through the bathroom window:

It was so dark, it was understandable he should have been drawn to the square of light. He couldn't resist it. And there stood Mrs Poulter, normally so high of colour, turned waxen by the yellow light inside the room. Her breasts two golden puddings, stirred to gentle activity. For Mrs Poulter was washing her armpits at the white porcelain basin ... Waldo saw the draggle of jet in the secret part of her thighs. [p.61]

This reflects the agonizing state of the mother-bound ego: consciously it resists the matrix, yet secretly it is possessed by the maternal image. Although White does not link this scene directly with his Tiresias theme it

is related to it. At one point in his career Tiresias surprised Athene at her bath and was later punished for his importunity by blindness and, later, by being transformed into a woman.²⁵ Psychologically, the movement into the feminine region is fatal for a masculine ego which is not prepared for the encounter. It is "blinded" (i.e. loss of consciousness) and transformed into a woman (overwhelmed by the contrasexual archetype). Tiresias-like, Waldo is overtaken by the apparition of the woman at her bath, he loses his rational attitude and becomes obsessed by the goddess-like form - "he had never felt guiltier, but ... could not have moved for a shotgun" [p.61]. So too is he momentarily transformed into a woman in a later scene in the story, thus completing his mythic destiny as a victim of the Mother Goddess.

The transvestite scene represents a climactic point in the drama between Waldo and the internal feminine personality. For a time he is completely absorbed by an uprising, archaic-maternal figure, which causes him to abandon his masculine disguise and to adorn himself in his mother's ballroom dress:

To the great dress. Obsessed by it. Possessed. His breath went with him, through the tunnel along which he might have been running. Whereas he was again standing. Frozen by what he was about to undertake. His heart groaned, but settled back as soon as he began to wrench off his things ... [p.193]

Here Waldo is robbed of his freewill and is totally at the mercy of the invading inward content. And adorned in his mother's dress and holding her broken fan Waldo carries out a grotesque ritual in which he is transformed into the goddess Memory, mother of the muses:

When he was finally and fully arranged, bony, palpitating, plucked, it was no longer Waldo Brown, in spite of the birthmark above his left collarbone Memory 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 ... She could afford to breathe indulgently, magnificent down to the last hair in her moustache, and allowing for the spectacles.

When Waldo Brown overheard: 'Scruff! Come here, Runt! Runt? Silly old cunt!'

Arthur's obscene voice laughing over fat words and private jokes with dogs. [p.193]

The mother-personality here rises to unprecedented heights in Waldo's career.

The figure is described in grotesque, theatrical, quean-like terms, but this is because Waldo's inner life *is* grotesque and morbid. It has been shut up for so long in the dungeon of the unconscious that it has grown old, bizarre, and archaic. Yet the figure is reeling with energy and libido, because the mother-complex silently devours most of the energy which springs from the deeper recesses of the psyche; it squanders the libido before the ego-personality can get at it. Thus this ancient goddess Memory is shimmering and glowing with life - it radiates out from her, as though she were a source of vitality.

It is highly significant that at the climax of this transvestite scene, with the unconscious personality seizing full control, Arthur and his dogs should intrude upon the ghastly ritual and force Waldo to return to his former state. Symbolically, it is inevitable that Arthur should intervene, for he is part of that same archetypal field which is currently invading Waldo's ego-personality. Arthur must intrude because the entire realm of Waldo's unconscious - the mother-complex and the infantile shadow - is being constellated and so must come into being. Arthur as fact lumbers down the sidewalk of the house, but Arthur as symbol erupts into Waldo's mind as a result of his psychological descent. In the "Arthur" section we find that the all-seeing twin identifies himself with Waldo when he catches him "celebrating something" through the bedroom window: "Oh he might have cried, if he hadn't laughed ... at himself in Waldo's blue dress. Bursting out of it. His breasts were itching" [p.291]. Here then we find a conjunction of fictional roles - Waldo becomes Arthur and Arthur becomes Waldo - the brothers are fused again in the uroboric round, in the depths of the maternal unconscious.

Naturally, the transvestite episode ends in despair - Waldo tears off the "wretched dress" and returns to his male disguise and his ego-life. He is humiliated by Arthur's intervention, throws the dress into a corner, and hopes he has not been caught out. This follows the same rhythm as before: a sudden descent into the unconscious and then an immediate leap to his higher position above the threshold of the inwelling matrix. There is no sign of

self-awareness in this schizophrenic ritual, much less any suggestion of his ever achieving individuation or psychological wholeness.

III

But while Waldo stagnates in his dissociated condition Arthur strives to make himself whole by exploring his mandalic vision and by attempting to mobilize his latent capacity for consciousness. As an expression of his solidarity with the feminine unconscious Arthur has given solid mandalas (the cloudy blue and the speckled gold) to Dulcie and Mrs Poulter. The knotted mandala is the one he has reserved for Waldo, but his brother refuses to accept it.

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.

After he had given two, in appreciation, or recognition, the flawed or knotted marble became more than ever his preoccupation.
[p.228]

At one level the knot at the centre represents Waldo's tie to the mother-world, but it also symbolizes Arthur's own imprisonment in the matrix. This is why Arthur becomes so insistent about the knotted mandala by the time the twins reach manhood. He senses that neither can develop until the knot (or fixation) has been untied.²⁶ But perhaps Arthur can untie it himself. For him, unravelling the knot would mean becoming independent of the source, developing his own masculinity, and achieving a conscious relation to his own existence. In other words, his pattern of individuation would represent the opposite pattern to that which Waldo is required to follow. Arthur needs to rise above the feminine-maternal world, to gain a foothold in the upper sphere [diagram 3], whereas Waldo must descend and consciously activate his own femininity. Arthur's path of development is through *logos* and the masculine spirit. As yet he is completely "at one" with Nature, and has a kind of oceanic personality. The "wisdom" he possesses - which commentators have tended to overinterpret and distort²⁷ - is not his own; it is the wisdom of Nature, of primordial, instinctual life. To become an individual, to

individuate, he must work against Nature and develop self-reflection and consciousness. And so the inward process at work within Arthur takes the form of a secret quest for self-understanding, a conspiracy of knowledge.²⁸

Arthur first uncovers the definition of the mandala in Mrs Musto's encyclopedia. It tells him that the mandala is a "symbol of totality" and that it is believed to be "the dwelling of the god". "Sometimes," the reference continues, "its geometric form is seen as a vision (either waking or in a dream) or danced" [p.238]. This intellectual formula can hardly convey the meaning of the mandalic image, but it does inspire Arthur with new ideas - in particular the idea of "totality" and that of the dance.²⁹ He is impelled to seek out the meaning of the mandala, but does not know how to go about it. Arthur can hardly approach Waldo, because Waldo detests his brother and would not support Arthur's symbolic quest. Highly memorable is his attempt to seek guidance from his father:

'Tell me, Dad,' he said, 'there's something I want to ask you.'
 George Brown looked at first as though he had been hit.
 Then he let out his breath, and said: 'If you can't ask me, son, I don't know who you can.'
 'What,' he asked, 'is the meaning of "totality"?'
 Again George Brown might have been recovering from a blow ...
 Dad took the dictionary down.
 'Accuracy in the first place can only be called a virtue,'
 George Brown recommended ...
 Dad read out: 'Totality is "the quality of being total".'
 He looked at Arthur.
 'That is to say,' said Dad, he could not clear his throat enough,
 'it means,' he said, '"that which is a whole",' adding: 'Spelt with a w - naturally.'
 Then Arthur realized Dad would never know, any more than Waldo.
 It was himself who was, and would remain, the keeper of mandalas,
 who must guess their final secret through touch and light. [pp.239-40]

This passage reveals the ineffectuality of the father-figure in White's fictional world. Archetypally, *logos* is the Father's realm - the repository of tradition and wisdom is meant to be his, and the questing ego (in classical myth) is able to draw from this source to help it in its search for self-realization. But "Dad" is no man of knowledge or wisdom. He is himself a victim of unconsciousness, and the only "knowledge" he has access to is superficial and intellectual - mere common sense, which is of no real value. What

the individuating personality needs is wisdom and insight: spiritual knowledge capable of unravelling the mysteries of the inner way. And so Arthur, without the father principle (inwardly or externally) is forced to battle on alone, to "guess" the secret of the mandala by touch and light. But from a mythic standpoint it is a foregone conclusion that he will not succeed. For the nascent ego, struggling against enormous odds (the "Mother" and the forces of psychic inertia), needs archetypal support in its heroic adventure. In myth the negative or doomed heroes (Theseus, Hippolytus, Narcissus, Attis, Adonis) are the "fatherless ones"³⁰ - those who attempt the inner journey without a *senex*-figure or spiritual force to guide them. The masculine principle is in abeyance in White's world - it does not represent a viable counterweight to the feminine-maternal element, and so cannot be called upon to support Arthur's individuation.

Furthermore, as I have indicated earlier, Arthur's progress is always relative to Waldo's. While Arthur shows signs of a developing ego-awareness his "other half" is still personified in his twin brother. The shadow-brother has made the first move toward growth and change, but now everything is dependent upon the so-called "conscious" brother to participate in the individuation process. Arthur senses this, along with his own inadequacy ["If only the curtain of his mystery hadn't stuck halfway up" p.239], and so begins an epic campaign to get his brother to "see", to turn inward and recognize the reality of the psyche.

Arthur invents all kinds of devious means to urge Waldo to turn within. But each attempt is seen by Waldo as a subversion, a threat to his already precarious situation. There is, for instance, the song about the well, where Arthur reveals his insight into Waldo's innate fear of the depths.

'I am the bottom of the bottom,'

Arthur sang,

'But shall not dwell
On which well.
Might see my face
At the bott-*urrhm!*' [p.134]

It may be wrong to appropriate too much intentionality to Arthur's pranks and rhymes, but one does feel that this song contains Waldo's problem in a nutshell.³¹ Waldo will not contemplate the unconscious because he "might see [his] face / At the bottom!".³² The shock of recognizing his mother-bound personality, the reflected face in the "waters" of the unconscious, would be too much for him. It is this fear of the unchartered depths which inhibits his development.

At this point Arthur makes a desperate bid to urge his brother to accept the knotted mandala, so that they might work together on the *opus* of realization:

Arthur had turned, and was towering, flaming above him, the wick smoking through the glass chimney.

But his skin, remaining white and porous, attempted to soothe. Arthur put out one of the hands which disgusted Waldo ...

Arthur said: 'If it would help I'd give it to you, Waldo, to keep.'

Holding in his great velvety hand the glass marble with the knot inside.

'No!' Waldo shouted. 'Go!'

'Where?'

There was, in fact, nowhere. [p.169]

This presents Arthur in his prophetic, archetypal role - a figure "towering and flaming above him" (cf. "the flaming angel" in the Johnny Haynes scene) - who could be interpreted either as the supraordinate messenger of the Self, or as the bearer of the uroboros. Waldo's curt dismissal at the end indicates that he continues to see only the negative side of Arthur's symbolic role. But the final sentence suggests that he will have to deal with his brother no matter what value he attributes to him. The ego can never shake off the unconscious; it is wedded to it for eternity.

As this scene is retold in Part Three, from Arthur's point of view, we are made aware of the shadow-brother's growing despair and hopelessness:

'If it would help I would give it to you, Waldo, to keep,' Arthur said.

Offering the knotted mandala.

While half sensing Waldo would never untie the knot.

Even before Waldo gave one of his looks, which meant: By offering me a glass marble you are trying to make me look a fool, I am not, and never shall be a fool ... so my reply, Arthur, is not shit, but shit! [p.273]

Arthur is tired of being dismissed as an idiot, though the language of the circular symbol, the seemingly "infantile" glass marble, is the only one he knows. He cannot approach Waldo in any other way. It is partly because he realizes that Waldo "would never untie the knot" that Arthur continues with his own search, however futile, however ridiculous.

By way of *The Brothers Karamazov*, *The Upanishads*, Japanese Zen, and Jung, Arthur hopes to "storm his way, however late ... into the obscurer corners of his mind" [p.280]. But he is not at all suited to intellectual pursuits. His lumbering mind cannot deal with abstract thought: "As for the Indian lotus, he crushed it just by thinking on it" [p.281]. The shadow-brother is trying to do the work that should be done by Waldo. Arthur enters the realm of the intellect, Waldo's own sacrosanct and personal arena. He even works, between breaks from Allwrights' store, at the Public Library, where he is the cause of amusement amongst the library staff. It is at this stage that Waldo catches Arthur reading at a desk and where he reveals his paranoid stand against his brother's mission of realization:

'What will it do for you? To understand?'

'I could be able to help people,' Arthur said, beginning to devour the words. 'Mrs Poulter. You. Mrs Allwright. Though Mrs Allwright's Christian Science, and shouldn't be in need of help. But you, Waldo.'

'Everybody's got to concentrate on something. Whether it's a dog. 'Or,' he babbled, 'or a glass marble. Or a brother, for instance. Or Our Lord, like Mrs Poulter says.' ...

'Afraid.' Arthur was swaying in his chair. 'That is why our father was afraid He was afraid to worship some thing. Or body. Which is what I take it this Dostoyevsky is partly going on about.'

Suddenly Arthur burst into tears.

'That's something you and I need never be, Waldo. Afraid. We learned too late about all this Christ stuff. From what we read it doesn't seem to work, anyway. But we have each other.'

He leaned over across the table and appeared about to take Waldo's hands. Waldo removed his property just in time.

'You'd better get out,' he shouted. 'This is a reading room. You can't shout in here.' ...

'Please,' he repeated, and added very loudly: 'sir!' [pp.199-200]

Arthur has sensed the urgency of their situation, and now puts it nakedly before Waldo for the first time. He has arrived again at the crucial point: fear. It is because Arthur's diagnosis is so accurate that Waldo is forced to order him out. But before he goes Arthur insists that Waldo need not be

afraid, because they "have each other". In other words - or so I read it - Arthur assures Waldo that he would not fail him if he should decide to turn within, to uncover meaning and spiritual value. Arthur accurately supposes that the orthodox religious way ("all this Christ stuff") is not for them - they must seek redemption through the inner, psychological path. *The Solid Mandala* affirms that the spiritual focus for modern man is no longer the Church, or faith, or anything "external" - it is himself, or rather his "inner" self, the brother within. Still, Waldo fails to separate the essence of Arthur's discourse from its infantile and fragmented presentation: it remains absolute nonsense to him.

IV

The final and almost epic event in the life of the twins is the walk down Barranugli Road - an event which is woven throughout the scenes of the first half of the novel, to provide a thread of continuity as well as to act as an allegory of their life's journey. The walk appears to summarize the disturbing and at times agonizing relation between the brothers - for while Waldo sees the walk as his attempt to destroy Arthur, to drive him to a heart attack, Arthur views the walk as his final attempt to get Waldo to turn toward the urgent and pressing psychic realities. The ironic twist is that it is Waldo who dies at the end of the walk - for Arthur's dramatic exposure of the contents of the unconscious proves fatal for Waldo's defective and infantile ego-personality. The walk therefore encapsulates the contradictory strivings of the brothers [diagram 4], and its outcome points to the fate of the rational self which continues to resist individuation when it is being demanded by the brother within.³³

Arthur's first move is to bring up the problem of Mrs Poulter and Waldo's relation to the maternal-feminine.

'I wonder why Mrs Poulter is so awful?'
 Arthur, puffing, threatened to topple, but saved himself on
 Waldo's oilskin.
 'I don't say she's awful!'
 'If you don't say, its likely to fester,' said Arthur, and

sniggered.

....
'It's splinters that fester,' Waldo answered facetiously.
'Perhaps,' said Arthur, and sniggered again. [p.28]

Waldo is reluctant to express his hatred of the maternal principle. He cannot articulate it because it is an irrational, psychic problem - but Arthur warns that what cannot be expressed is likely to fester. Here Arthur displays his superior psychological insight and his awareness that Waldo is refusing to admit to an important inward factor. In this instance Arthur functions in his paradoxical capacity: he is the divine child with a profound awareness of psychological reality, and he is the infantile shadow who goads his brother and who "sniggers" at Waldo's inability to face up to the maternal unconscious.

Arthur then turns his attention to the problem of Waldo's writing. He realizes that his brother's creativity is "festering" (along with his femininity) in his inner world and tries to urge Waldo to write about "simple things" so that he might release his creative energy. He invites him to write about "Mr Saporta and the carpets, and all the fennel down the side roads" [p.30], because, he says, simple things "are somehow more transparent - you can see right into them, right into the part that matters". Waldo, predictably, is shocked and disgusted by his brother's advice: "He could have thrown away the fat parcel of his imbecile brother's hand" [p.29]. Waldo cannot believe that the shadow-brother could be anything other than a source of annoyance and antagonism. He retorts: "'What do *you* know?'" , indicating that Arthur, his handicap, his burden, could never help him in his work, much less provide him with genuine inspiration.

But Arthur remains persistent:

'You know when you are ill, really ill, not diphtheria, which we haven't had, but anything, pneumonia - you can't say we haven't had pneumonia - you can get, you can get much farther in.'

'Into what?'

It tired Waldo.

'Into anything.'

The wind coming round the corner, out of Plant Street and heading for Ada Avenue, gave Waldo Brown the staggers. Arthur, on the other hand, seemed to have been steadied by thoughtfulness.

He said: 'One day perhaps I'll be able to explain - not explain, because its difficult for me, isn't it, to put into words - but to make you *see*. Words are not what make you see.' [p.57]

Arthur again directs Waldo inward, into the centre of things, the essence of experience. But the realm beyond words, the path to the silent matrix, is for Waldo a journey into disintegration and night. His fragmented ego could not cope with the archetypal descent, whether through illness (as Arthur suggests) or through acceptance of the irrational dimensions of experience. Although he would find poetry enough to fill his notebooks and fulfil his creative dreams, he is not willing to return to the unconscious and be rejuvenated by the source.

At this point Arthur directs the discussion toward his own need, his desire to become conscious and achieve self-awareness:

'I dunno,' Arthur said. ... If he stumbled at that point it was because he had turned his right toe in.

'Mrs Poulter said,' said Arthur.

'Mrs Poulter!'

Waldo yanked at the oblivious hand.

'She said not to bother and I would understand in my own way.

But I don't, not always, to be honest. Not some things.' [p.58]

By implication, Arthur links his own quest for self-understanding with his urgent beckoning of his brother toward the inner world. Arthur needs his brother to turn inward so that he too might see. The reference to Mrs Poulter is most intriguing: she tells Arthur "not to bother" with his work of realization. Here Mrs Poulter acts as the Great Mother who is antagonistic to knowledge and *logos*,³⁴ and Arthur's differentiation from her suggests that he is moving away from the uroboric and maternal image.

But again Waldo refuses to become involved, "he would not listen any more", though Arthur himself was "tired of telling" [p.58]. Both parties are exhausted: Waldo by demands he cannot meet, and Arthur by rejection and disappointment. At this stage Waldo suddenly recalls the purpose of the long walk: to induce a heart attack in Arthur's big, old-man's body. Waldo increases the pace of the walk, while Arthur, "trotting like a dog" [p.63] behind him, tries desperately to keep up. And as they turn a corner at great speed Waldo is almost collected by a passing vehicle, which causes them to steady themselves and finally to turn home. This gives further dimension to the symbolic theme: although Waldo is trying to abuse Arthur he merely

endangers himself by his course of action. The truck slams into the flap of his oilskin as he attempts to drive Arthur to his death. Denial of the shadow-brother is ultimately a denial of self; the desire to "kill" the unconscious is a form of self-murder.

And it is to self-destruction that his thoughts now turn:

But he would arrive, and after they had struggled with the gate, and pushed the grass aside with their chests ... he would go as straight as possible in, and collect the box from on top of the wardrobe, that old David Jones dress box in which Mother had kept the little broken fan and some important blue dress [N]ow he would make it actually his, all those warm thrilled and still thrilling words falling from their creator's hands into the pit at the bottom of the orchard into ash smouldering brittly palpitating with private thoughts. [p.118]

This is by now a familiar pattern: if he cannot defeat Arthur, or resist him successfully, he gives in to the unconscious and turns self-destructive. If the ego cannot remain "proud and immaculate" in the upper sphere, it "chooses" to lose itself in the depths, to self-destruct. This is apparent in his desire at this point to enter the "devouring" female womb, to have sex with "some lovely lousy girl", and "get the pox and not do anything about it" [p.116]. This shows that the inertia of the psyche, the downward drag of the mother-complex, is finally defeating his masculinity and his resistance to the lower world. Also, the image associated with the anticipated destruction of his writing is uroboric and chthonic-maternal: he would push aside the grass with his chest and destroy his papers in the earth-pit at the bottom of the orchard. This denotes a sacrificial ritual in the likeness of the *puer*-god: a journey into Nature and a surrendering of his creative essence to the primordial earth. In reality his masculine spirit has always dwelt in the depths of the matrix (just as his writings have long been stored in Mother's dress box)³⁵ but here he contemplates consigning his *logos* aspect even deeper into the uroboros.

And as the twins return to their house in Terminus Road³⁶ we find Waldo unable to resist Arthur's demands for "love" and "unity". However the "unity" achieved here, as before, is not mandalic but psychologically incestuous and uroboric:

Arthur was waiting to trap him, Waldo suspected, in love-talk.

So that he broke down crying on the kitchen step, and Arthur ... led him in, and opened his arms. At once Waldo was engulfed in the most intolerable longing He could not stop crying.

Arthur led him in and they lay together in the bed which had been their parents', that is, Waldo lay in Arthur's vastly engulfing arms, which at the same time was the gothic embrace of Anne Quantrell³⁷ soothing her renegade Baptist. All the bread and milk in the world flowed out of Arthur's mouth onto Waldo's lips. He felt vaguely he should resist But Arthur was determined Waldo should receive. By this stage their smeary faces were melted together. [p.208]

Here the uroboric "fusion" of the brothers is stated as never before: Arthur is identified with Anne Brown, the mother, Waldo becomes her son-husband and the resultant psychological image is the incestuous union of Mother and *puer*. That is to say, the positive, mandalic aspect which Arthur brings to bear on the situation is overwhelmed by Waldo's "intolerable longing", his secret desire for self-extinction in the uroboros. When Waldo gives in to Arthur he surrenders to his own mother-complex, not to Arthur's mandalic vision. Thus while Arthur works to the benefit of the ego-personality, the ego works to its own demise. It is pitifully unaware of what the shadow-brother requires it to do, or of what it means to attempt the true union of opposites.

From here Waldo's course is a steady decline into the matrix. Arthur's demands become greater as he makes a last bid for individuation and psychic development. He recovers the blue dress, which Waldo had thrown into the laundry after the transvestite scene, and now holds it up before him, "so that Waldo might see his reflexion in it" [p.212]. Waldo protests vehemently - "'Put it away!' he shouted. 'Where it was!'" - but this dreadful image of his maternal fixation has already reawakened his guilt and anxiety. Here Arthur acts, as always, as the Psychopomp (psychic mediator) who digs up the past and thrusts its images before the ego-personality. And now there is the discovery of Arthur's so-called blood-poem, which appears in the story as a kind of "extension" of the recovered dress:

Arthur threw away the dress.

Which turned into the sheet of paper Waldo discovered in a corner.... On smoothing out the electric paper at once he began quivering.

Then Waldo read aloud, not so menacingly as he would have liked,

because he was, in fact, menaced:

"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"

This was the lowest, finally. The paper hung from Waldo's hand.
[p.212]

It is as if all the contents of the unconscious have at last burst forth in a spectacular procession of images. And these images appear to be interchangeable: the dress "turned into" the blood-poem. In the psyche everything is intermingled and interrelated, so that its contents sometimes merge into a symbolic continuum. The blood-poem and the dress are both expressions of the maternal world, which reflect aspects of Waldo's hidden yet dynamically alive psychic complex. The poem evokes the image of the teeming maternal womb, the "cycle of blood" in which all life is bathed. It is a kind of hymn to the *magna mater*, evoking her destructive aspect (as Vivisectionist), her life-sustaining aspect (the Madonna), and her perpetually mourning character (Cordelia). There is a tone here which is strongly reminiscent of the figure of Mrs Godbold: the mother-woman who virtually supports the world with her toil and suffering, yet who does "not complane (sic) because [she] cannot have it any other way". Arthur says that the poem was written to "celebrate their common pain" [p.294] - and we can only assume that he was trying to come to grips with the meaning of the mother figure, to bring to consciousness this potent image from the depths of their shared psyche.

Waldo is enraged by the blood-poem, not merely because it activates his psychic complex, but because it is a literary form which threatens his own role as the "secret poet" of the Brown family. Although the poem is crude and unaesthetic - Arthur confesses that it "was never ever much of a poem" - it does possess (like the cow-play of his youth) a certain mythic power, a "living" quality which contrasts it with the drily intellectual fragments contained in Waldo's dress box. After he turns away from Arthur to examine his own writings, Waldo is forced to admit that his poems are "lustreless" and that "time had dried ... his papers", whereas "Arthur's drop of unnatural

blood continued to glitter ..." [p.212]. Only the poems which well up from the depths of the imagination have life or soul; those created by the conscious mind wither away, are ephemeral. Waldo's fragments may be grammatically and formally precise, but without *psyche* they can never aspire toward true poetry. Here again we see the aesthetic outcome of psychic dissociation: sterile aesthete on the one side, crude myth-maker on the other. At this Waldo decides to destroy his writings in the manner already elucidated in his waking fantasy:

About four o'clock he went down, Tiresias a thinnish man, the dress-box under his arm, towards the pit He stood on the edge in his dressing-gown. Then crouched, to pitch a paper tent, and when he had broken several match-sticks got it to burn.

....

It was both a sowing and a scattering of seed. When he had finished he felt lighter, but always had been, he suspected ...

[pp.212-213]

The sacrificial aspect of his actions is highlighted by the reference to his "sowing" and "scattering of seed". In returning his creative essence to the matrix he is, as it were, fertilizing the earth and causing his "seed" to fall upon it, in the manner of Attis-Adonis, from whose blood the maternal earth was restored. Like Le Mesurier and Dubbo before him, his art-work was destined to be devoured by the mother and to be used to glorify her image. Thus does Arthur's poem act as a kind of testimonial to Waldo's career: his work is assimilated to the "blood-layer" of the psyche and to the maternal image which is evoked in Arthur's verse.

At this point, his self-destruction almost complete, he turns his rage toward Arthur. In desperation Arthur offers the glass marble, but Waldo rejects the idea as foolishness ["I never cared for marbles. My thumb could never control them" p.214]. Waldo then makes his attack upon Arthur, and in his attempt to subdue him he kills himself - dying, we must suppose, in a paroxysm. This pattern is strongly suggestive of an ongoing tradition in "Doppelgänger" literature: beginning with German Romanticism (Jean Paul Richter, E.T.A. Hoffmann) and extending through to Poe, Wilde, and Dostoyevsky. In Poe's "William Wilson" the ego-figure is haunted throughout his career by

a double (of the same name) and in an attempt to free himself he seizes his antagonist and plunges a sword into his bosom. He then looks into the mirror and realizes that he has slain himself; the phantom-figure is a mere hallucination, and he falls to his death.³⁸ White's model is more sophisticated than this melodramatic sequence, but the effect is the same: the personality is at war with itself, it is its own worst enemy. If the shadow-figure cannot work with the ego toward the establishment of a greater personality, it works against it. But the Doppelgänger tradition - and White's novel - affirms the irrepressibility of the second self; it must play a part in the psychic economy, either for good or for ill.

V

Waldo's death signifies the dissolution of the ego-complex into the matrix.³⁹ This means that the fictional psyche returns to the situation represented in diagram 2. Arthur is now alone, without his life-companion, and his own potentiality for ego-consciousness appears to disintegrate with the death of his brother. He seems to have lost his rationality and his entire relation to human and social reality. He too descends into the matrix, not in death, but in madness, a kind of psychological death.⁴⁰

After fleeing from the scene of Waldo's death he embarks on a psychophysical journey into the underworld. He becomes an idiot-child blubbering on street corners. He sleeps in dark alleys, under towering grass, and is urinated on by wandering drunks (one of whom mistakes him for a corpse). He contemplates appealing to Dulcie for help, but realizes that his tragedy is too great for her to bear; he must journey alone through his desolation, and through the desolated streets of a nightmare suburbia.⁴¹ It is during this phase that he loses the knotted mandala, which indicates that the mandalic vision is lost forever.

Part of Arthur's burden at this stage is what can only be described as a psychosis of guilt. He imagines that he has killed his brother ["... he, not Waldo, was to blame. Arthur Brown, the getter of pain" p.294]. In one

sense this is true. As the shadow-figure who brought the ego-personality to the brink of ruin he is partly responsible for Waldo's death (cf. the Norbert/Mary Hare episode). But it can also be argued that Arthur was merely attempting to urge his brother to "see", to realize and accept the contents of his unconscious mind. Certainly there was nothing malicious in Arthur's method - there was urgency, but not malice. Arthur's intense guilt is symptomatic of his present disintegration - the psyche engulfs him in a wave of self-pity, sentimentality, and infantilism. He is now a helpless child, wrecked by experience; an unborn soul in the deep unconscious.

But as Arthur undergoes the agony of disintegration another process is at work in the fictional psyche. We have seen in previous novels, especially in *Voss*, that the defeat of the masculine ego is experienced in a highly positive light in the realm of the mother-image. When the ego dissolves the Mother becomes triumphant - as in the jubilant welcome experienced by Voss in the desert landscape, the ecstatic tone of Nature in the last section of *The Aunt's Story*, and in Mrs Godbold's delight at having "received" the broken body of her son-lover. The ego's loss is the Mother's gain - its death is experienced as a "homecoming" to the unconscious, a happy reunion with the source. It is here that Mrs Poulter comes into her own - she reveals a decidedly uroboric character at the end of the story, joyous that Waldo has passed away and that Arthur has become her very own unborn child, an ego-germ in her vast embrace: "... it was necessary to take him in her arms, all the men she had never loved, the children she had never had" [p.311]. Significantly, Arthur encounters the ecstatic Mrs Poulter at the end of his suburban *nekya*. After the ego moves through the gates of dismemberment it experiences the oceanic comfort of the Great Mother: she soothes all wounds and promises never to betray the heart that loves her. Poor Arthur is completely seduced by Mrs Poulter's lavishing kindness - but he does maintain his integrity to some extent, especially in regard to the value he placed upon Waldo and his "conscious" personality:

'I don't think, Mrs Poulter, I could live without my brother. He was more than half of me.'

'Oh no,' Mrs Poulter said. 'No more than a small quarter.'
[p.310]

Here we witness the subtle undermining of the Great Mother figure - she denigrates the value and meaning of the masculine ego.⁴² Mrs Poulter has strength and centrality at this stage because all libido has now shifted into the maternal uroboros - inflating "her" position as never before. We must, therefore, read Mrs Poulter not as a mere neighbour in Terminus Road who happens to undergo psychic transformation, but as a personification of the maternal uroboros which has been energized by the sacrificial deaths of the brothers.⁴³

A crucial moment in the final chapter is where Arthur and Mrs Poulter contemplate one of the glass marbles and see their faces reflected upon its shiny surface: "... she saw their two faces becoming one, at the centre of that glass eye, which Arthur sat holding in his hand" [p.312]. This indicates that the marble, once potentially a mandala, has finally become an uroboros, mirroring the "unity" of the maternal world, the conjunction of the Mother and her unborn child. Much of the success of the central symbol is due to its inherent fluidity and mobility at the anagogical level: it can just as easily anticipate the mandalic union of ego and unconscious as it can symbolize the uroboric fusion of Mother and son. However unless the reader can adapt to the challenging alternations of rhythm and meaning he may be easily led astray. Because the text does not make it clear that the marble now appears in a wholly different imaginal context⁴⁴ the reader may be inclined to interpret the conjunction of Mrs Poulter and Arthur in the "glass eye" as the successful completion of the novel's mandalic vision. Unless the reader has paid careful attention to the symbolic development he may be tempted to distort the meaning of the final *coniunctio* - as has already occurred in much criticism of the novel.⁴⁵

In fact, it is surprising that White does not celebrate the final scene in explicitly "mandalic" terms. In every former work he has misinterpreted

uroboric defeat as mandalic triumph - has argued that the failed and castrated *puer* is a successful spiritual visionary. But he resists this temptation here - providing for the first time a wholly authentic and measured account of the uroboric drama. There is no religious "inflation" of his theme - there is ecstasy and excitement as a result of the ego's homecoming, but Arthur is not presented as an Illumined Being, nor is he equated with Christ or Anthropos. Mrs Poulter does suggest that Arthur is her new-found object of worship, but this is acceptable within the context of the Mother-*puer* mythologem ["She would carry him for ever under her heart, this child too tender to be born" p.311]. In Mrs Poulter's life the *puer*-fantasy finds its own level - it is not the pretentious and indulgent drama that it was in *Voss* and *Riders in the Chariot*. White has achieved a new maturity in regard to his theme, a maturity which allows irony and detachment to lighten the previously dense texture of his apocalyptic moments:

When Sergeant Foyle came in, there was that Mrs Poulter kneeling beside Arthur Brown There she was, wiping and coaxing that nut, as a woman will cuddle a baby, provided it is hers, after she has let it mess itself And as she half-turned, rising half-sighing on a probably needle-riddled foot, taking the weight off her numb knees, he was reminded of a boyhood smell of cold, almost deserted churches, and old people rising transparent and hopeful, chafing the blood back into their flesh after the sacrament. [p.313]

Never before would White allow the "detached eye" to provide an external perspective to the mother-son mystery. Sergeant Foyle's thoughts, and the references to Arthur as a "nut" and helpless infant, enable the reader to keep a sense of proportion in relation to this uroboric and psychologically infantile process. The pathological element is now accepted as part of the matriarchal-uroboric pattern.

Undoubtedly this sober, realistic attitude has been fostered by the stark facts of the novel - which deal with failure, defeat, and infantilism. It would be patently absurd for the narrator to make gestures toward wholeness and realization in the light of what has gone before. The reader is not invited to see Arthur (as he was asked to see Theodora) as a mystic or visionary misunderstood by an insane society. As he goes off to an asylum

muttering about orange ju-jubes, his guilt, and his love for Mrs Poulter, the reader does not feel that Sergeant Foyle or "society" is doing him an injustice. His insanity is treated gently and sympathetically, but it is insanity nonetheless. White does not attempt to disguise it.

VI

From a structural and thematic point of view I would argue that *The Solid Mandala* - this often misrepresented and more often underrated novel - is White's best work. For the first time the author has come to terms with his subject, he no longer directs and manipulates the course of events, but allows the tale to speak for itself, and to reveal its own pattern of meaning. The language is open and refreshing - by no means as mannered as it was in *Riders in the Chariot* - and the events are treated with almost epigrammatic neatness and precision.⁴⁶ One feels, too, that White has at last found his true literary genre. This work does not pose as a religious novel (*Riders*),⁴⁷ an historical account (*Voss*), nor as an "Australian epic" (*The Tree of Man*). It is nakedly and decisively a psychological or psycho-mythological fiction - it carries forward and perfects the literary paradigm that was first established in *The Aunt's Story*. It is very similar to that earlier crucial work, but lacks its basic weaknesses as well as its pretentious ending.

There is a (for White) remarkable absence of imported religious symbolism. Arthur's glass marble is a far remove from Himmelfarb's Chariot - it grows naturally and organically from the fictional ground,⁴⁸ and is not in conflict with the matriarchal character of White's mythic world. Arthur can be devoured by the uroboros and the marble can still act as an appropriate symbol for his situation, but Himmelfarb cannot be defeated and ride in a Chariot of Redemption. The glass marble, with its paradoxical structures of meaning, is White's ideal symbol and his most aesthetically and psychologically valid representation to date.

A criticism often made against this novel is that it seems very "literary" and "symmetrical".⁴⁹ One can see that the novel is highly symmetrical: the

Arthur-Waldo relationship, the "mirroring" of their experiences, and the two major sections devoted to their *Doppelleben*. But I am prepared to argue that all this is not due to White's manipulation of his story. The inner world of archetypes is ordered and symmetrical - it is not the chaotic profusion that the rational mind finds it to be. This is especially so at the time of an individuation crisis (which this work marks) where the two "halves" of the greater personality rise up into consciousness and demonstrate their intrinsic "brotherliness" and twin-like character. And when the *mandala* is at the threshold of consciousness - itself a highly organized and ordered archetype, as any Tibetan drawing will show⁵⁰ - the propensity toward symmetry will be strongly accentuated. The fact that we tend to associate order with "contrivance" points to a marked prejudice in literary criticism: that the imagination is not "supposed" to reflect order, for it is a world which obeys no laws. I believe, with Jung, that the imagination manifests a natural inclination toward order and that it does, in fact, follow definite laws. These laws are not rational, but they are laws nevertheless. The very existence of comparative mythology and the science of images suggests that the human unconscious, in all cultures and in all times, is oriented around certain structural principles. For my part the symmetrical quality of *The Solid Mandala* points not to its stilted "literariness" but to its dynamic, pure, mythic life. The work represents an eruption of myth into a profane world, into the hallowed halls of a secular fiction. And in this we find its central achievement.

Like all great works, however, it can only be encompassed by a paradox. It is White's most personal and reflective book, yet it is also his most mythic and archetypal contribution. By exploring his own inner depths he has plumbed the sufferings of humanity, has touched on the urgency of the task of wholeness, and the natural resistance of the rational ego to this supra-rational goal. This surely is the prevailing *Zeitgeist*⁵¹ or spirit of the time - there is a new task at hand, a call to wholeness; yet how many of us, like Waldo, fail to appreciate or understand that call? The failure of White's

personal individuation is itself a collective problem - so that, at bottom, what is most uniquely "his" is most evocatively "ours". The novel has the sense of being both disturbingly personal (in both senses) and profoundly archetypal.

Chapter Six

The Goddess in Search of Herself

What the conscious does not do, the unconscious personality, or its mythological equivalent, must take upon itself. - M-L. von Franz¹

With the collapse of the ego-structure in *The Solid Mandala* individuation of the masculine personality comes to an end in White's fictional world. The male figures from here on are caught up in the matrix and exist in a state of permanent psychological incest. Hurtle Duffield, Basil Hunter, Eddie Twyborn, all have an easy access to the maternal womb,² yet each is overwhelmed and destroyed by that same ecstatic source. Duffield senses that he has spent his entire career inside a "padded dome, or quilted egg, or womb ... He continued dragging round the spiral, always without arriving" [VS, p.165].³ Basil Hunter is described as being "womb-happy" [ES, p.263]⁴ and lives in a perpetual incestuous fantasy. Like Duffield he is held fast in the mother and unable to develop a masculine identity: "He [saw] himself in the belly of a spiritual whale: unlike Jonah's, his would not spew him out till she died, and perhaps not even then"[p.501]. Eddie Twyborn languishes in an orgy of autoeroticism, infantilism, and homosexuality, but he has no real personality of his own - he takes on the character of the mother-image and lives as a female figure. Everywhere the fictional ego is swamped by forces over which it has no control - it is assimilated to the mother-world. And so from *The Vivisector* [1970] to *The Twyborn Affair* [1979] we exist in a new fictional universe - a world where the ego continually exhausts itself in bouts of lust and sexual depravity. The incest-taboo, which is imperative for psychological stability and growth, has been removed altogether and the personality disintegrates in an incestuous-sexual field.⁵

But the Mother Goddess seizes the opportunity to facilitate her own development. When the ego-personality aborts its own individuation the individuating impulse falls back into the unconscious and is made to serve

the archetypal images. This was already apparent at the end of the previous work, where we found the Mother about to embark on a new kind of existence:

Then she turned, to do the expected things, before re-entering her actual sphere of life. [SM, p.316]

The tragedy of the masculine psyche becomes the comedy of the maternal unconscious: the Mother benefits from the descending libido and uses it to create a new dimension, her own "sphere of life". With the newly won energy she can embark on an epic journey of self-discovery - as she does in her various guises as Alfreda Courtney, Hero Pavloussi, Elizabeth Hunter, Ellen Roxburgh, Joanie Golson and Eadie Twyborn. And in each case the Mother turns toward her inner depths and strives to come to terms with her pagan, instinctual side, to integrate the chthonic element of her personality.

This is to be expected, since the influx of instinctual energy into the fictional psyche necessitates that the mythic deity achieve a new relation to primitive nature. From the beginning of White's career the Goddess has been split into light and dark sides - one "conscious part given to spirituality, goodness and love (Laura Trevelyan, Mrs Godbold, "Nature", or "God"), while the other "dark" side led a malignant life in the unconscious, becoming daemonic and destructive (Rose Portion, Mrs Flack, Amy Parker). Love and sex, *agape* and *eros*, spirit and body, are aspects of the mother-image which have always been split apart. There were "secret" indications that the Mother was trying to move toward wholeness - Laura and Mrs Godbold covertly revealed pagan and instinctual elements - but these were ignored by the author, who was intent on idealizing and Christianizing his *imago dei*. With the collapse of White's conscious structure and the limiting "Christian" frame of reference the maternal archetype is now in a position to reveal its complete, awesome character.

However the primitive side of the Mother Goddess has been so long repressed and maligned that it exerts a wholly destructive influence when it rises up into the fictional world.⁶ Throughout the novels of the 1970s

the Mother struggles in vain to integrate her "Hecate" nature. For some reason her pattern of development is continually frustrated; the lower, instinctual side cannot be incorporated into her conscious personality, nor be divested of its archaic aspects. Only in *The Eye of the Storm* does the Mother achieve a satisfactory relation to the lower realm, but in the other three novels she must be content with partial or incomplete attempts at integration.

It must be emphasized that White's relation to this mythic process is passive and instrumental. The Goddess's search for completion is an autonomous and self-directed drama, and is experienced by the author merely as an imaginative flight, an impulse to create fictions that deal with the development of this mythic personage.⁷ He simply renders into aesthetic terms an archetypal mystery which clearly lies beyond his comprehension or understanding.⁸ Individuation, or the active participation in archetypal imagery, is no longer possible for him. All he can do is to allow the Goddess to reach a new level of being through him, to be the instrument of *her* individuation.

1. The Servant of Hecate

He was ... exhausted by what had turned out to be, not a game of his own imagination, but a wrestling match with someone stronger.

- White, *The Vivisector*¹

Duffield's art is not about himself, nor his own development, but about the self-evolution of the maternal image. His paintings record the gradual incarnation of Hecate, the Divine Destroyer, as an archetypal reality and her need to be recognized as a central mythic force. The fact that his works act archetypally and collectively is expressed in the frenzied enthusiasm with which numerous admirers (within his own country and abroad) purchase his canvases and worship them as if they were fragments of divine revelation. These figures are almost exclusively women, and they find in Duffield's works an expression of processes going on in the depths of their own being.

In *The Vivisector* (1970) woman, or the female image, is in process of radical transformation, and Duffield's career is dedicated to this archetypal movement. He experiences his art not merely as an occupation or act of will, but as a burden which is forced upon him. Images well up from his unconscious and he is impelled to transform them into works of art.² His *muse*, if you will, is the Great Mother herself, thrusting her archaic material up from the collective unconscious and forcing him to attend to her service.

I

Hurtle Duffield begins life as the son of two mothers, and it can be argued that he never escapes the motif of the Dual Mother during his career. Born as the son of Bessie Duffield, washerwoman and wife of a "no-hope bottle-o" [p.235] of Mildred Street, Hurtle soon becomes the adopted child of Mrs Alfreda Courtney, the wealthy mistress of Sunningdale - an overly-refined, moralistic socialite who is engaged in a private war against evil and all forms of social injustice. She has, however, an unrecognized instinctual and erotic need - which her (ineffectual) husband Harold is unable to fulfil. When the Courtneys adopt Hurtle the innocent youth becomes the target of Alfreda's erotic burden, the carrier of her unconscious passion and sexuality. In fact, Hurtle becomes the vehicle through which Mrs Courtney ("Maman") is able to meet and contact her "lost half", her estranged personality. He makes possible an (albeit bizarre and extreme) transformation of her character. So, in a different way, does this radiant boy-god help fulfil the unconscious desires of Mumma Duffield. This massive woman is in many ways similar to Mrs Godbold - mundane, earthy, married to a derelict, yet with a deep spiritual need, an animus desire to soar and transcend her material existence. From the beginning it is clear that Hurtle, of all her seven children, is her favourite. His good looks and assertive, inquisitive nature make him a logical object for the projection of the mother's animus.³ And so Hurtle is the one who is given the opportunity to begin an early education, to learn

his Latin verbs and French nouns even before he enters primary school. The family has to sacrifice a great deal in order to support this high-flying and precocious youth - but everything is sanctioned by Mumma ["'It's the edgercation that counts'" p.14]. Eventually the mother sacrifices him completely - by selling him to the Courtneys for a few hundred pounds. This does not mean that she has become selfless, concerned solely for his future career. On the contrary, the *puer* serves her best by leaving the fold and achieving status and recognition in the world ["'I pray - every night - for a better life for our boy ... I would give Hurtle, if the opportunities were there'" p.54]. She has the secret satisfaction of knowing that her animus has left the ordinary realm, and found a place in a higher reality.⁴

Thus his removal from Mildred Street to Sunningdale fulfils the pattern of the earth-mother's animus and marks the beginning of his servitude to Mrs Courtney. This is the ever-recurring pattern of his life: he is handed to and fro between mothers or surrogate maternal figures, and is required to perform vital tasks for each one of them.

II

Upon arriving at Sunningdale Hurtle is given a lecture by Mrs Courtney on the subject of avoiding immoral behaviour, sexuality, and the "dark" side of human nature. Duffield is amazed at why such an obviously sensuous, even voluptuous woman - always devouring expensive sweets or gulping at hot chocolate and spilling it down her "creamy bosom" [p.123] - should be so obsessed about moral issues. She is passionately involved in numerous "humane" societies, is secretary of the R.S.P.C.A. and supports the Church and other bastions of civilized morality. It is evident that Mrs Courtney's campaign against evil is a projection of her own inner conflict upon the field of society.⁵ She is engaged in a fierce battle against her own lower or "natural" side, which is threatening to disrupt the idealism of her conscious attitude.⁶

Yet there is an ironic twist in her social campaign, as in her personal

neurosis. Her particular obsession is cruelty to animals - especially in the form of vivisection. This image suggests, not the quelling or removal of instinct, but the protection of animal nature from the vagaries and destructive "advancements" of civilized life. "Cruelty to animals" touches her to the quick ["'Oh! It's *heart*-rending,' she moaned, 'what I've seen with my own eyes'" p.34], because in essence she is the torturer of the animal within, and is brutally undermining her instinctual side. This symbolic dimension is emphasized by the fact that Maman cares little for real animals ["... she didn't care for dogs: they dirtied her clothes, and sometimes knocked her over" p.135] but is obsessed only by the *image* of the tortured animal [see Figure 10]. When in a London street she encounters the model of a dissected dog in the anti-vivisectionist display window Maman launches into such an emotional frenzy that "she herself might have been [the martyred dog] stretched on the operating table" [p.135]. As in every neurosis, she is both victim and tyrant, the harmed animal and human torturer.

Maman's unconscious, primitive aspect is also personified in her daughter Rhoda, the dwarfish, creature-like child who is associated with cats,⁷ animality, and instinctive behaviour. Rhoda's ugly, deformed body, with its humped back and pointed, rat-like face - one side covered with moles, the other with "a big birthmark the colour of milk chocolate"[p.62] - is a fitting expression of the mother's own grotesquely misshapen animal nature. Maman makes gestures of lovingkindness toward Rhoda, and refers to her as the "cross" she has to bear, but in reality she brutalizes her daughter and attempts every possible means to help "civilize" her appearance:

'Did you do your board exercises? Did you? I know it's unpleasant, but it's for your own good. Did Nurse see that you lay on the board?'⁸

Rhoda made some watery sounds. Her head trembled on her frail neck ... She started a high crying

Mrs Courtney herself had begun to whimper like a little child, her lovely face crumpling into an old rag. She looked as though she were about to creep on all fours, to make herself long and thin like some animal children were tormenting.

It was then that Rhoda spat. It gummed itself to her mother's face. One end of the spit was swinging. [p.37]

This sequence is an apt description of the inner drama within Maman herself: she demands that her instinctual self submit to the "civilization" process, and then this same animal force turns against her and plasters a gob of spittle on her face. As a result, Alfreda is reduced to a helpless creature on all fours, "like some animal children were tormenting". Again, in tormenting instinct⁹ she brutalizes herself, causing her sophisticated persona to be destroyed by the outburst of animal passion. The implication throughout is clear: instinct will not conform to social and conventional expectations - it demands its own right to be, its sphere of reality, and cannot be got rid of by a moralizing consciousness.

Alfreda's repressed instinctuality emerges from time to time in bouts of compulsive erotic behaviour, and in sexual impulses which are invariably directed toward Duffield. In unguarded moments she coaxes him to sensualism ["'Don't be afraid to touch, darling, if it gives you pleasure'" p.88] and lures him into a world of intense erotic and incestuous excitement:

She suddenly moved her hand to the nape of his neck, and shoved his head in amongst the limp dresses. The sensation was at first one of blinding, then of a delicious suffocation as his face was swallowed by the scented silky darkness, through which Mrs Courtney's voice continued somewhere rustling. [p.89]

But all the while she seems completely unaware of her behaviour, of what she is doing to her adopted son, since she continues to lecture him on the necessity for correct and moral behaviour [p.154]. The erotic drama goes on unacknowledged, acquiring dynamism and force, and culminating in her sexual assault [p.166f] which causes Duffield to leave Sunningdale.¹⁰ It is interesting that after her drunken attack she assumes the posture of her humpbacked daughter, "hunching up her back" [p.166] as she runs out of the room. At this point the autonomous personality breaks through and she becomes identical with Rhoda, the shadow-goddess or "humpbacked queen" [p.98].

Towards the end of his phase with Courtneys Duffield has a revealing dream which appears to summarize Maman's psychic situation:

[A flayed] sheep was hanging on the post ... Maman was there, dressed for dinner. She was wearing the spray of diamonds in

her hair. She was crying horribly, while busy too. As she pulled the guts out of the sheep, ... the blood shot over the tails of her sables: it clotted amongst the sapphires. *Where is Rhoda?* she kept on calling, *I am looking for Rhoda she hurts me so.* Maman by now was the colour of the skinned sheep, its beautiful cave of green and blue, her blood lips opening like the heart itself. *Help me Hurtle,* she called... *I am your blood-mother* Her hair had parted wider than the parting and the skull was beginning to split. [pp.106-107]

This is Duffield's dream, yet it is Maman's problem, confirming the deep mythological bond between them. Hurtle hardly has a self of his own: he is co-ordinated with the maternal image. The dream speaks largely for itself: Maman is the vivisector, the pagan goddess covered with blood,¹¹ yet even as she is engaged in this grotesque ritual her consciousness is still with her sophisticated self ("Where is Rhoda? ...she hurts me so"). The dream posits no solution to her dissociated condition: the more moralistic and protective she becomes the more savagely is she assimilated to the chthonic, blood-layer of the psyche. The Hecate-image is rising with a vengeance into White's fictional frame. And Maman's resistance is futile: the invading content will split her apart, or (the dream indicates) is already beginning to do so.

III

From this point Duffield's life and art becomes increasingly involved with matter, darkness, primitivity, and physicality. He becomes obsessed with the form of Rhoda, her humped back and the tuft of pink hair between her thighs. During their holiday in France he paints, not the orthodox beautiful landscapes, but rivers of mud and mournful estuaries [p.130].¹² He stores his paintings under the bed, "amongst the fluff, against the slopping chamber-pot" [p.131]. And he becomes preoccupied with perverse forms of sexuality, and with everything archaic, dark, excremental, and degenerate. He is impelled to give literal and artistic expression to the Hecate-image and to the unredeemed side of the Mother Goddess.

In the person of Nance Lightfoot it is as if Maman's shadow had suddenly assumed complete, bodily form. Mrs Lightfoot, the whore with whom

Hurtle has a brief and tragic affair, has one distinguishing feature: an insatiable appetite for sexual excitement (which she calls "love"):

'Oh God,' she kept gobbling and crying. 'Love me - what's yer bloody - love me - *Hurtle!*' gnashing and biting and sobbing, until he took possession. [p.186]

She is rather like a loathly damsel in fairytale or legend, a personification of the repressed and forgotten aspect of psychic reality, an embodiment of un-lived life, who has come to voice her terrible demands. Of course, Nance is not merely Maman's shadow: she is the shadow of White's entire career, which has repressed sexuality and eros at every turn.¹³ With the collapse of the incest-taboo and White's "religious" edifice the tides of passion are released - but in an uncontrolled and disintegrative way. The passion personified in Nance is unbridled, brute, and chaotic; it overwhelms herself as surely as it does her ponce. And so we are not completely surprised when Mrs Lightfoot commits suicide by throwing herself into a rocky gully. The animal nature, held for so long in the fictional unconscious, is self-destructive when it first manifests itself.¹⁴ The "dark" side of the Mother has raised its head, but is still far from achieving integration with the conscious or civilized aspect.

The conflict is later transposed into a different fictional context. In mid-career Duffield is financially and morally supported by Mrs Olivia Davenport, who is another version of Mrs Courtney - an over-refined, sophisticated and sexually frustrated heiress. Like Maman, Mrs Davenport conceals an animal nature which has been injured by repression and neglect. Appropriately, we discover that Olivia Davenport is Boo Hollingrake, a childhood friend of Rhoda's, and a girl remembered by Duffield for her "lashing thighs" and associated with "the smell of rotting leaves" [p.156] as she brought Hurtle to his early orgasm upon the leaf-mould at the back of Courtneys' house. Here White employs a device which he is to use with greater success in *A Fringe of Leaves*: the refined gentlewoman is "really" another person, or at least she conceals a dark, coarse nature, which has

been partially (though not completely) overlaid by a civilized persona.¹⁵ The heiress is in search of her "lost" primitive side, her childhood spontaneity and passion, and she employs Duffield in order to help her recover this dimension of herself.

Olivia Davenport covets those works of Duffield which deal most explicitly with chthonic-sexual and bodily imagery. She purchases his entire series "Animal Rock Forms", depicting shapes which are reminiscent of "a configuration of large, soft, passive breasts"[p.280], and acquires a crucial early work "Marriage of Light" - which featured "the burnt-out cleft of Nance Lightfoot's formal arse"[p.187]. She also greedily devours a central canvas, "Pythoness at Tripod", depicting Rhoda standing naked and grotesquely misshapen beside a bidet. On first approaching "Pythoness" Mrs Davenport is profoundly moved:

...They pulled up together in front of Rhoda Courtney. ...When she had looked, Boo closed her eyes; she began to sway her head; she began to moan convulsively, and with an uncharacteristic lack of restraint. He was reminded of Nance on the occasions when she had reached a true orgasm. So, now, Boo Hollingrake sounded both appeased and shattered by her experience. [p.292]

The painting has obviously aroused her inward passion, her instinctual life, which is so lacking in her refined existence. The fact that she is called "Boo" indicates that the shadow-self has taken possession, has suddenly been activated by the image of Rhoda. Duffield's art becomes a kind of drug - her only way through which she can contact her inner self. As she says of this work: "'It's not only as a painting that it haunts me, it's part of my life ... that [I've] lost, Hurtle'" [p.293]. She even asserts, "'I wonder whether I don't understand your paintings better than you do yourself'"[p.281]. This statement is by no means as pretentious as it at first appears. In view of the psycho-mythological context in which Duffield is working I would say that Olivia Davenport is in a far better position to understand his paintings, which have to do with transformations occurring within the feminine-maternal image.

Mrs Davenport is so pleased with Duffield's contributions to her

personal development that she arranges for him to meet her friend Hero Pavloussi, wife of a Greek shipping magnate, who similarly learns to feed upon the artist's creative vision for the sake of her own individuation.¹⁶ Of all the women in the novel, Hero Pavloussi most nearly corresponds to White's original idealized image of the mother goddess. She is delicately built, sublimely beautiful and, of course, Greek. Greece has long acted as the idealized spiritual country, the place of ecstatic, dissolution-striving characters (Moraitis and Katina Pavlou, for instance) and the country most often associated with divine love and *agape*. Madame Pavloussi's fall from her sublime position into the world of animality and eroticism signifies the sudden descent and disorientation of White's fictional deity.

Hero, who is "so anxious to own a Duffield" [p.318] purchases two minor works and eventually seizes upon his masterpiece "Lantana Lovers under Moon-fire". The conception and execution of "Lantana Lovers" is the pivotal episode in the story. It begins with his memorable meeting with Mr Cutbush in a city park, with the grocer's conversation punctuated by the cries of lovers from the lantana-filled ravine below. As he walks back toward his Flint Street house Duffield notices Cutbush masturbating into the ravine - "a gunner-grocer shooting sperm at marked lovers" [p.269]. These are the details upon which Hurtle constructs his painting - in every respect a testimony to the power of the Chthonic Mother in his mythic world. The moon has long been associated with the mother-image (cf. *Voss* and *The Aunt's Story*) and is, of course, the central symbol of Hecate and Aphrodite.¹⁷ Symbolically, Duffield's career is governed by the lunar power. There is a big, heavy moon on the night he paints Mr Shewcroft's suicide [p.100], and his encounter with Boo Hollingrake takes place beneath a "crescent moon"[p.153]. Nance Lightfoot is associated with the lunar force, and her dreadful suicide occurs on the night of a full moon. It is fascinating that Duffield describes the central object of his canvas as "the big-arsed moon shitting on the lantana lovers" [p.269], when he has already depicted Nance as "a great formal arse" [p.187] in his "Marriage of Light". Both Nance and moon are connected with raw

instinctuality and the "excremental" or underworld side of human reality. Both emit an untamed, disquieting energy into the world - the kind of energy which causes the grocer to masturbate in the park and inspires the cries of sex-crazed lovers. The inhuman element is emphasized by the dark depths of the gully, the wild profusion of lantana, and by the savage, *attacking* nature of the moonlight. The reference to the grocer's ejaculation "scattered in vain on barren ground" [p.263] suggests that his passion has no human goal or connection - it is infused and returned to a "natural" source. In "Lantana Lovers" we are confronted with harsh, unrelated instinctuality - an archetypal *eros* which has yet to be subject to human contact and modification.

Hero Pavloussi is able to intuit the mythic dimension of the work: "' ... the moon is in one of its destructive phases The Divine Destroyer ... yes,' she said, 'it is true. There is that side as well'" [pp.336-38]. And she adds: "'I know what it conveys to me ... I recognize something of what I am'" [pp.335-37]. But intellectual acceptance is one thing, and emotional integration another. When Madame Pavloussi's lunar aspect appears it is an untamed, brute force which leads her to her ruin. Duffield is shocked (but also delighted) by the animal passion released in this petite and stately woman when she first arrives at his house and studio:

She had been so hungry on arrival he had hardly closed the door on the street before she fell on him ravenously, propelling him with her greed somewhere that remained unlocated till he thumped against the padded shoulder of an old dusty sofa ... While her corkscrew-tongue kept trying to drag from his throat an imagined resistance to her thirst. [p.348]

Her sexuality is bestial and undifferentiated, as is further evident in her preference for sado-masochistic sex and perverted forms of anal-erotic behaviour [p.350f]. As Hero herself admits, her "daemon" [p.349] has been let loose and she becomes a mere "monument to lust and depravity" [p.351]. She develops a haggard, worn appearance, becomes a chain-smoker and alcoholic, and is eventually discarded by her husband Cosmas, who returns to live with his mother in Greece.

Later in the story she too returns to Greece (with Duffield) on a ridiculously literal journey of redemption. Hero is desperate to re-affirm her connection with "Greece", spirituality, and grace, and seeks out nuns and saints on the island of Perialos to help cure her afflicted soul. But Hero is sundered forever from her former exalted state. The senile abbess of the Convent of the Assumption does not understand her story or her moral plight, and merely attempts to drain Madame Pavloussi of her financial resources. The miracle-working saint Theodosios is nowhere to be found: all she finds is a pile of human excrement beside his altar, an all too obvious sign of her own richly putrid psyche. Hero chooses to remain in Athens, still hoping to draw spiritual and moral strength from the country of her birth, but she continues to disintegrate. After Hurtle's departure she is put in an asylum, where she suffers from malnutrition, and subsequently dies of a cancer of the womb. Her deeply repressed and distorted animal nature has run its savage course and she ends, like Mrs Lightfoot, a victim of the chthonic depths.

IV

Mrs Alfreda Courtney experiences a similar fate. During Hurtle's involvement in the war, and soon after the death of her husband, she succumbs to her repressed erotic urge and has a voracious affair with Julian Boileau, a young man barely older than her adopted son. Eventually she marries Julian (although during the courtship she pretends he is Rhoda's consort) and the newly-weds go off to live in an apartment in London. As a result of her all-consuming lust for comfort and sensual pleasure the family ends up bankrupt and in a general state of crisis. Alfreda Boileau dies - according to Rhoda's report - in an unregenerate, distraught condition. Again the bestial element wreaks its revenge, and destroys the Mother's highly refined and civilized existence.

Rhoda too is assimilated to the instinctual and shadowy depths. When

Duffield encounters her in a dark lane in Sydney she has become the complete hag: deformed, stunted, beady eyes, dressed in tattered clothes and stinking of the offal that she is feeding to a mass of stray cats and toms. She is an absolute incarnation of an unregenerate Hecate, an image which she has carried since early childhood and to which she remains eternally bound.

A more problematical figure is Olivia Davenport. By the end of the story she has regained contact with her underlying or "former" personality, and now chooses to be known as Boo Hollingrake. Her reversal of character expresses itself in a kind of socially acceptable transvestism: she dresses in men's clothes, preferring dark suits and ties, and pursues a career of rampant lesbianism and globe-trotting extravagance. Her submission to the instinctual layer is perhaps less devastating than that of Hero Pavloussi or Alfreda Courtney. But she is a far remove from integration: untransformed bestial and sophisticated aspects jostle unhappily together, creating at best a kind of workable neurosis or dissociation. She is described at Duffield's retrospective exhibition as a "masked Fury" [p.587], a woman sharply divided into persona and animal passion.

Duffield's own inundation by chthonic-lunar forces has been noted throughout. His psychological condition is best expressed in his own terms: his "Self-Portrait" covered with human excrement and urine [p.249]. Filth and perversion have obliterated his personality, and made him a mere vehicle for archaisms and infantile autoeroticism. He knows no humanly related passion: only rape-like lust¹⁸ and animality.¹⁹ His possession by a collective lunar archetype also manifest as an obsessive predilection for the pathological, the sick, the deformed ["his mouth furled in a juicy funnel as though to suck up the milky tones of Rhoda Courtney's sickly flesh" p.270]. And when he is not destroying himself by his total capitulation to this psychic process, he is being visibly preyed upon by the external carriers of the Hecate-image. In his final encounter with Maman

we are reminded of Goya's "Saturn" when she "took his head in her hands, as though it were a fruit, or goblet, [and] began gulping at his mouth" [p.166]. And Mrs Lightfoot is described at one point as "the insatiable goddess, who only didn't think of tearing bits off her victim and throwing them into the blue waters of the cove" [p.213]. Externally and inwardly he is assailed by terrible chthonic forces.

The predominance of the Hecate-image is further expressed in the multitude of cats with which the artist is surrounded after his re-association with Rhoda. The old woman arranges to have her fourteen cats brought to Duffield's house in a wire cage and their imprisonment and subsequent release reminds us of the fate of the instinctual energies in White's universe:

They were carried growling, moaning, into the little morning-room: the other side of the wire mesh their flat-eared, pale-eyed hatred continued to consume the darkness in which they crouched . . .

Rhoda began unfastening the hateful wire for the cats to squeeze out of their prisons. Some of the beasts slunk away in search of refuge . . . One big, one-eyed, one-eared tom eased himself backwards and sprayed the sofa without his mistress appearing to notice. [p.455]

The instinctual element, long "caged" up in the fictional unconscious, has been released, but, wounded and distorted like the "one-eyed, one-eared tom", it contaminates and violates everything it touches. The violence of instinct in *The Vivisector* is proportionate to the original repression of the chthonic-feminine in the earlier works.

The only redeeming element in the seething world of the novel is Kathy Volkov - and even she is almost caught up in the fatal embrace of *physis*. During her sexual affair with the elderly artist she is already (at age thirteen) described in degenerate terms: "a vulgar little schoolgirl-tart" [p.494]; "blundering down the stairs: his aborted spiritual child" [p.466]. If Kathy retains her spiritual and moral integrity it is only because her career forcibly removes her from Duffield and the immediate world of the novel. The later Duffield-Volkov relationship, in which the painter idealizes Kathy as an immaculate and inspired Goddess, is a minor re-enactment of the Voss-Laura affair - where distance alone kept the agonizing

sexual question at bay and allowed the positive *agape* aspect to come to the fore. Had Kathy remained as a physical presence, and not merely as idea or illusion, she too would have been enveloped in the quaking bog of instinctuality.

The goddess-figure in White is still far from integration and wholeness. The chthonic side has erupted into view but this is as yet untransformed and impossible to integrate. If the inscription upon Hurtle's dunny wall, "God the Vivisector, God the Artist, God ..." [pp.307, 397] hints at some ultimate unity in his fictional deity²⁰ this is certainly not achieved - except perhaps intellectually or abstractly - in the present novel. The "Divine Destroyer", the Hecate-image, has temporarily eclipsed the spiritual and positive face of his World Mother.

V

In this work White returns to the paradigm of the pretentious ending, making Duffield appear as if he is straining toward the ultimate in religious experience [" ... reaching towards this vertiginous blue ... endless indigoddd" pp.616-17], when he is merely dissolving into the disintegrative field of the maternal unconscious. Throughout, by overt statement and his choice of epigraphs,²¹ White has conceived his protagonist in the mould of the creative genius, the artistic seer who dissects reality with knife-like precision and foists his magnificent vision upon an uncomprehending world. But Duffield is less "the Vivisector" than he is vivisected - himself the ravaged victim of a vengeful goddess.²² Duffield is at best a decadent-romantic artist,²³ at worst a psychotic or dropout. He has been seized by a mythic power over which he has no conscious or human control.

The eruption of the unconscious is reflected as much in the style as in the content. The general design of the work is sprawling, the story highly repetitive,²⁴ and much of the prose turgid and self-indulgent. In the concluding quarter, as Thelma Herring has noted,²⁵ artistic freedom becomes licence and the narrative is overcome by a diarrhoea-like outpouring

of words and an unrestrained free-association technique. One only wishes that White's former "philosophy of silence" would be put to practical use and made to regulate the disturbing flood of syntax. Then there is the sentimentalism which seems to destroy the work's integrity. When Hurtle re-discovers Rhoda there is a massive sentimental movement which carries through to the end of the story. As bohemian artist and long-lost sister walk hand in hand back to the Flint Street residence the novel is transported into a hazy, melodramatic, and nostalgic fantasy. The psychological reason for this should be clear: when the libido is imprisoned within the mother-image (or her psychological equivalent)²⁶ feeling remains undeveloped, infantile, and sentimental.²⁷ Whenever that interior world of feeling is regenerated, as by the reappearance of Rhoda, the narrative is overtaken by sentiment and inferior emotions. Thus for me *The Vivisector* is a very disappointing work. I am unable to think of it as a major White novel. It has merely contextual significance within the canon, marking the collapse of ego-consciousness into instinctuality and the disorientation of the mother-image.

2. Emergence of the New Mother

'What I remember from each of these dreams is the light I found flowing around me - like water - then, on some occasions, as though emanating from myself ... If I took on a form, I don't believe I was ever more than a skiapod.'

- Mrs Hunter in *The Eye of the Storm*¹

The Eye of the Storm (1973) is an altogether more accomplished work. Here the narrative force is sharper, the prose livelier, and the work has a sense of integrity and wholeness that the previous novel lacked. In White form appears to be largely conditioned by the nature of the underlying archetype - a disjointed archetype in *The Vivisector* created a confused, disharmonious structure, but here the archetypal image attains a new level of integration and there is a corresponding increase in formal and literary cohesion.² Although this novel is lengthy it is not excessive or repetitive:

one can at all times sense meaning in its digressions, purpose in the accumulation of detail, and a deep intelligence in its overall design. Its tremendous structural edifice has not been "built around" the central character, but appears to emanate from her, as it were, in a living and authentic manner. She stands at the centre of all action, the goddess of fantasy and dream, shaping the tale as though a product of her own dreaming.

I

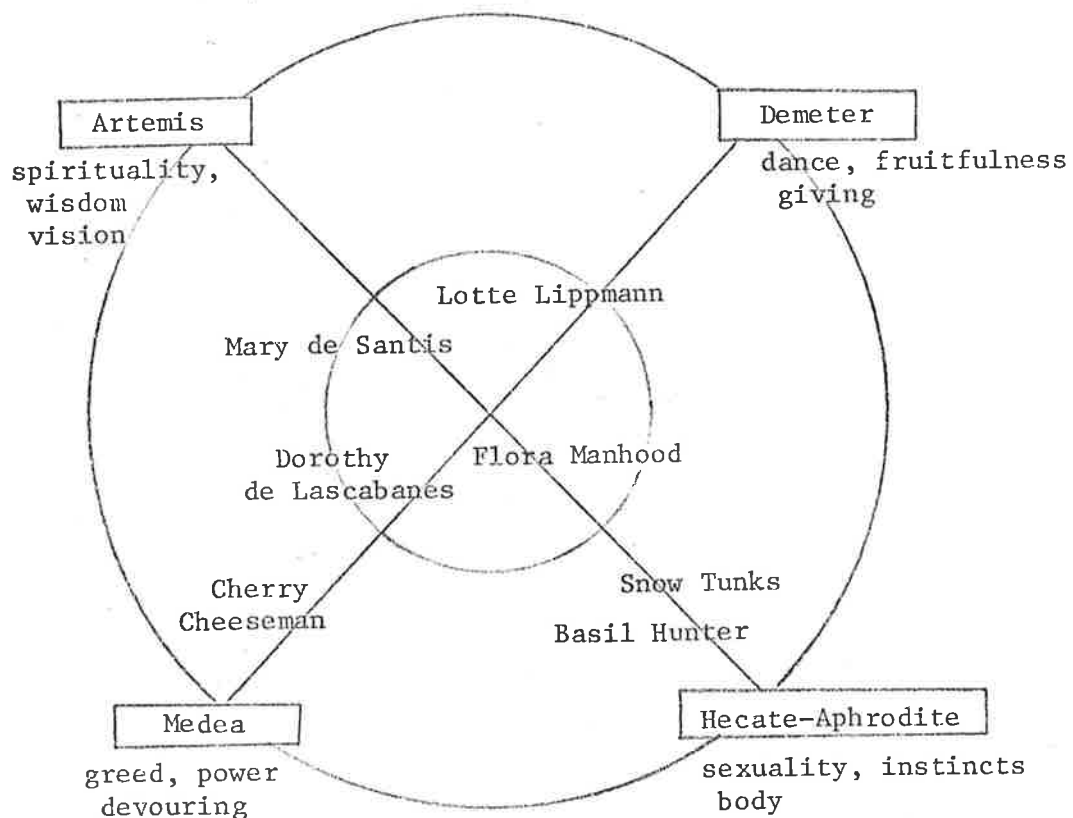
In the figure of Elizabeth Hunter we find the first completely integrated embodiment of the dual or paradoxical mother figure. She unites in her all-inclusive being many of the pairs of opposites which have lain dissociated in the fictional psyche. But because this new, total image is only just beginning to rise up into conscious reality Mrs Hunter remains a strangely fluid, amorphous character. Her proximity to the deep unconscious is reflected in her mode of being: always sleeping, dozing, half-waking, almost dying. She spends more of her life³ in the night-world than in the conscious state. She is intimately connected with the realm of *memoria* and is constantly engaged in a reconstruction of time past, as in an anticipation of future events. She appears to be all things to all people, and her various masks are as incongruous as they are numerous: bed-ridden geriatric, domineering mother, helpless infant, lustful mistress, glamorous socialite, "old witch" [p.83], "mummy" [p.45], "barbaric idol" [p.116], "ancient queen" [p.398], "chrysalis" [p.9]. She can be experiencing mystical fulfilment at the eye of the storm and sitting on the commode at her Centennial Park residence at the same time. Eternity and time, sacred and profane, all human categories are transcended or obliterated as she makes her sublime journey toward integration and wholeness. Never before has White created such a complex, liminal or "threshold" character. But the contradictions and complexities inherent in the mother archetype are such

that it would be difficult to conceive how else he might have accommodated the incarnation of the Great Goddess into fictional reality. Only a vastly extensive figure such as Mrs Hunter is large enough to act as the vehicle through which this mythic personality can be made manifest.

I have already suggested that the life of the novel springs from the psyche of the central character. In a sense all the characters in the story can be seen as extensions of Elizabeth Hunter, personified fragments of her total nature. This is not to deny the relative autonomy and independence of the minor characters, but simply to suggest that they attain their self-definition in relation to a greater whole.⁴ Since Mrs Hunter is in the main an amorphous, mythic presence in the novel, it is left to her "acolytes" [p.73] or "priestesses" [p.14] to enact the struggle toward integration at the *human* level of reality. We are never really shown how Mrs Hunter has wrought her intense liminality and dimensionality - she has simply "acquired" it by virtue of her archetypal standing. Her movement toward wholeness and self-fulfilment is carried out with almost incredible ease;⁵ she has an assurance and a capacity for self-understanding which is rarely the lot of human beings.⁶ And so it is the representatives of the goddess - Sisters Flora Manhood and Mary de Santis in particular - who have to suffer the trials of development and battle against human limitation in order to attain even a semblance of Mrs Hunter's integration. Each of the "human satellites" [p.431] approaches individuation from a sharply defined and limited standpoint, and in this regard they carry forward the tedious search for completion initiated by the women in the previous novel. If Elizabeth Hunter is largely an imaginal figure living in a psychic reality, her several attendants and servants are human persons engaged in the social world. They are real figures; she the ideal.

The diagram below attempts to represent the complex field of the Mother Goddess in *The Eye of the Storm*. Mrs Hunter herself is not cited because she includes all the intrapsychic standpoints that are here designated as

fictional characters and mythological figures.⁷ Behind each character is an archaic goddess who appears to typify the general attitude and function of the four "types" of women represented in the story. Two structural axes have been established - one according to the spirit-instinct polarity, and the other according to the tension between nurturing-devouring aspects of the feminine archetype. As we might expect after *The Vivisector*, the spirit-instinct conflict is the central focus of attention, and the other axis is of somewhat minor significance in comparison. These axes



constitute lines of tension that cause stress and anxiety in the lives of the fragmentary or human characters, and are reconciled only within the supraordinate figure of Mrs Hunter.

The relation of the "fragmentary" to the "whole" personality in this novel affords an extremely lucid representation of the psychological relationship between the conscious ego and the archetypal centre of the human psyche.⁸ Although each character accepts the unqualified superiority and centrality of Elizabeth Hunter, there is an underlying element of fear

and awe in their relation to her. In every case the partial figure feels dwarfed and enfeebled by the greater personality. This is accentuated by the fact that Mrs Hunter, being the whole, can look down upon as it were and point her finger at the limitations and weaknesses of the partial figures. "You can't escape me" [p.10] she warns her nurses and attendants, who often shy away from the brutal truths which she relentlessly brings forth. It is here that the novel plays upon her psychic and intuitional powers - her ability to see deeply into the lives of others. Her visionary capacity is ironically juxtaposed against her physical blindness; she "sees" into others even though her eyes are closed to the world. Her attendants stand in awe and terror of her "blind yet knowing stare" [p.108]. In this regard Mrs Hunter is the symbolic centre of the personality, that inward core which sees what the partial self is doing, which wrenches it out of its complacency, stirs it to action ["She whipped you on" p.546], and forces it to see what it does not want to see - its own "shadow" or undeveloped side. Thus in relation to the shy and refined solicitor Arnold Wyburd, Mrs Hunter is a constant source of embarrassment, reflecting for him the baser side of human nature⁹ and forever raising sexual questions at inopportune moments. Earlier in her career she had seduced her solicitor as a mere "exercise in desire"[p.37], much to the futile resistance of his conscious mind ["... he closed his eyes - to shut her out because she wasn't Lal"). When the conventional Lal Wyburd visits Mrs Hunter in later years her "torturer" informs her that "'Arnold was hairless - so smooth'" [p.517]. Much of the excellent humour in the novel derives from Mrs Hunter's ability to shock the minor figures with her candid remarks. Whether the satellites love or despise Mrs Hunter is ultimately dependent upon their willingness to face the unknown in themselves. For Dorothy de Lascabanes, a character resistant to growth and change, the oracular mother is an atrociously malevolent figure, always cutting her down and appearing to defeat her personal interests. Others, like Sister Manhood, adopt a more positive - if partially ambivalent - view:

'From what you told me, you always hated that old woman.'
 'Yes!' she cried. 'No - I didn't *hate*! She understood me
 better than anybody ever. I only always didn't like what
 she dug up out of me.' [p.554]

The point is that the human ego can never experience its relation to the higher power as being completely favourable. It is inherently partial, limited, flawed, and will always regard the promptings of the archetypal figure as a personal rebuke, at best a challenge.

II

Mrs Hunter's instinctual-sexual nature is emphasized throughout the story. She is generally known to have had numerous affairs, always executing her sexual involvements with masterly skill and efficiency. Even at the age of seventy-two, while on Warmings' island, she dazzles Edvard Pehl with glimpses of her "still formidably sensuous body" [p.391]. Her sexuality contrasts strongly with that of Hero Pavloussi or Alfreda Courtney in that it is completely under her control - it is not a wild daemon which drives her to ruin, but a contained vital force which finds its fulfilment in a composed and healthy manner. She is not - like her forbears - consciously opposed to sexuality, nor is she unconsciously obsessed with it. She accepts it as a part of her complex nature, a moving, dynamic energy from which she draws her strength and to which she returns to be renewed. Mrs Hunter's Hecate-Aphrodite aspect is mirrored in her favourite nurse, the young and pretty Flora Manhood. As the name "Flora" suggests, she is earthy, sensual, virile, and prolific. Flora is associated with the female genitals, maternity,¹⁰ the menstrual cycle, blood [p.530f], rhythm, movement, colour¹¹ and "life" as an instinctual process. She is plagued by men of all ages and social classes - doctors, lawyers, famous actors, derelicts, and old men on buses - who are spontaneously drawn toward her radiant sexuality. In her behavioural pattern she is as instinctive and amoral as Nature itself. It is Flora who is responsible for Mrs Hunter's physical appearance. She is "keeper of the wigs" [p.116], sole guardian of the stately jewel case, and

supervisor of cosmetics and facial attentions. Of all the Sisters it is Manhood who is most often imaged wiping Mrs Hunter's lower parts after she has messed herself, or who is engaged in discussions on bodily and excretory functions. Mrs Hunter delights in Flora's sensual nature, enjoys touching her body [p.82],¹² and - most embarrassingly for the nurse - seems able to plot her sexual career with devastating accuracy. After a lustful morning spent with the chemist Col Pardoe Mrs Hunter informs the nurse that she can detect her recent sexual encounter: "' ... after a woman has been with a man you can smell her - like a doe after she's been to the buck'" [p.84]. The relation between Manhood and Mrs Hunter is like that between the "sacred whore"¹³ of Aphrodite and the Great Goddess herself.¹⁴ Flora is the human embodiment of her own erotic nature.

Mrs Hunter also enjoys a rich and productive spiritual life, which finds its fullest expression in her experiences at the eye of the storm on Brumby Island [p.409f] - experiences which are to be re-lived and consummated at the point of death.¹⁵ Her spiritual aspect is personified in the figure of Mary de Santis, the nun-like nurse whose background is connected with Greece, Smyrna, and religious mysteries.¹⁶ De Santis is the night nurse, is constantly associated with solitude, silence, meditation, prayer, and selfless devotion. In the above diagram I have associated this character with the Goddess Artemis, because she is pure, chaste, forbodingly independent, and darkly mysterious like the virginal goddess of Nature.¹⁷ Mary is also associated with the moon,¹⁸ the night sky, birds, roses, and dew. At the outset it may seem incredible that the worldly Mrs Hunter contains any virginal or Artemesian aspect. Yet despite her involvements with others, and her marriage to Alfred 'Bill' Hunter, she remains strangely isolated, removed, aloof. She tells the night nurse that she never really loved her husband [p.20], and that her endearing obsession was for solitude and aloneness.¹⁹ In the later stages of her marriage her acquaintances had read her striving for emotional independence as reflecting an essential coldness and egotism ["Lal Wyburd ... interpreted as selfishness every

attempt anybody made to break out of the straitjacket and recover sanity" p.29]. The ancient concept of "Virgin" - a title sometimes bestowed upon Aphrodite herself²⁰ - was not used in the sense of a *virgo intacta* but of a pure, whole, and independent woman. It was meant to describe not a bodily condition but a state of mind, a pristine or uncontaminated soul.²¹ In this original sense, Mrs Hunter shares in Mary's spiritual virginity, her Artemesian quality.²² At certain points in their relationship Mrs Hunter becomes "exquisitely united" [p.11] with her night nurse, and de Santis appears to act throughout as a constant indicator to her own intimations of *agape* and sacredness.

But precisely because Mrs Hunter's character encompasses the opposites of spirit and instinct she is an enigmatic and awesome figure to both Manhood and de Santis. Each nurse suspects in her nature something which is unknown and unfathomable, some deep contradiction of their own specific and limited orientation. Although Manhood finds in Mrs Hunter an image of "life" and "beauty" she is also haunted and disturbed by what she senses as a deeper, spiritual dimension. Manhood is bewildered because she herself is pure instinct and had never been bothered by the more abstract reality until her encounter with Mrs Hunter. For her the "Old Thing" (as she calls her patient) comes to represent the totality of being - or her own greater wholeness:

Momentarily at least this fright of an idol became the goddess hidden inside: of life, which you longed for, but hadn't yet dared embrace; of beauty such as you imagined, but had so far failed to grasp ... and finally, of death, which hadn't concerned you, except as something to be tidied away, till now you were faced with the vision of it. [p.116]

Increased contact with this complex figure causes Manhood to become restless, to demand something "more" of life, to attempt to overcome her personal limitation. Her sense of incompleteness expresses itself in bouts of depression and irritability, and in a certain rebelliousness towards "society" (which she believes has kept her chained to the role of the dumb and pretty woman). She rightly senses that her relationship with Col

Pardoe is superficial, that it is "cheap and easy" [p.172]; a typical example of sex or desire without love. In her effort to escape from Col (or from her former self) she leaves her bed-sitter at 'Miami Flats' and seeks refuge at the home of her cousin Snow Tunks, her only relative in the Sydney area. Snow, the albino bus-conductress, is involved in a sado-masochistic subculture in the inner districts and frequently has "butch" women stay at her house. She tries to lure Flora into her orgiastic life-style, but after a memorable threesome with Snow and her "dyke" Alix, Sister Manhood defects from her cousin's house, realizing that she "did not belong to this community of seething flesh"[p.180]. Her state throughout this phase is one of creative unrest - continually on the move, seeking new experiences and a release from her stereotyped existence. And while Mrs Hunter initiates this unrest she also acts as the pivotal centre of her world,²³ the supportive transformative image which enables her to de-structure her life without succumbing to complete disorientation and collapse.

Mary de Santis is forced to undergo a similar awakening to her potential wholeness. While Mary experiences great spiritual kinship with her patient, Mrs Hunter is a constant reminder of chthonic nature and instinctuality, with her failing excretory organs and ageing animal body.²⁴ Because these are aspects which threaten de Santis's "spiritual" identity, Mrs Hunter's bodily presence is experienced as Mary's Antagonist, representing a neglected instinctual world which appears to be "pursuing" her:

Doubts seldom arose at night, because love ... will invest the most material house with numinous forms and purposes Whereas this morning, as she descended deeper into this stuffy well, Sister de Santis was unreasonably pursued by faint faecal whiffs, by the insinuating stench of urine from an aged bladder; while the light itself, or iron thorns, or old transparent fingernails, scratched at her viciously. [p.16]

The nurse feels safe at "night" (in the spiritual realm), but is disturbed by "morning", "daylight", and *bios*. And because "life" is suppressed it announces itself in purely irritating and degenerate ways: faint faecal whiffs, stench of urine, and imaginary attacking forms at the window.

The fact that the light itself "scratches" at her indicates that the life-force has grown against her, and that it is imperative that she free herself from her rigidly spiritual mould.

It is Flora Manhood who acts as the catalyst to Mary's later confrontation with instinctual life. One evening after Sir Basil Hunter's arrival at Moreton Drive, Manhood involves "St Mary" [p.190] in a frivolous though disturbing conversation:

Putting on her street dress she decided to provoke stuffy old Mary. 'I wouldn't mind sleeping with Basil Hunter.'

Sister de Santis knew she was blushing, but managed to laugh coolly enough. 'I expect he has the lot to choose from.' ...

'Oh, it's easy for you! Have you ever had - have you ever *wanted* a man?'

'Surely that is my affair?' It should have sounded more casual, but Sister de Santis had pricked herself with a safety pin on sitting down at the dressing-table to unfold her fresh veil. [p.149]

Before she leaves the dressing room Manhood realizes the hurt she has caused her colleague, and offers clumsy words of conciliation: "'Sorry, darls, for my indecent curiosity. I'll leave you to the pure pleasures of night duty with Mother Hunter'" [p.150]. But her night duty proves to be agonizing as she wrestles with thoughts of her sexual inferiority, her general unattractiveness to men and her alienation from body and instincts. During her anguish Col Pardoe calls at the house in search of his renegade lover. When Col turns to leave de Santis attempts to delay his exit, "like a woman deep in the country trying to hold a stranger whose departure would leave her alone" [p.168]. She becomes fascinated by his sensuality, the pores of his skin, the whorl of hair upon his neck ("how would it *feel* if you touched it?"), and his casual, earthy manner. After he turns away, her sexual frustration and inferiority turns to anger: she slams the front door, paces frantically around the hall, and dashes herself against the leather padded arm-chair. After several hours of brooding and agitation she is finally impelled to strip off her nun-like outfit in order to release her unruly animal passions:

She began unbuttoning her uniform, tearing at the straitjacket beneath to free her smoothest offerings. Which [Col Pardoe], or

anyone, would have rejected, and rightly. Though dimpled under pressure, and arum white, their snouts pointed upward to accuse the parent sow.²⁵ [p.169]

Her instinctual nature erupts as never before, and her breasts, imaged as independent bestial forms, appear to point upward to "accuse" her repressive consciousness. Later she scrambles up the staircase, still struggling with her torn and loosened clothing, arriving almost naked and wretched at the foot of Mrs Hunter's bed.²⁶ Here she prays for grace and for "the recovery of what had passed for sanctity" [p.169]. Her onesidedness leaves her impotent in the face of the animal forces - her only recourse is to hope that the eruption will pass away. The impulse to flee to the "sanctuary" [p.169] of Mrs Hunter's bedroom emphasizes the dependence of the partial or limited self upon the presiding symbol of wholeness. In times of crisis the fragmentary ego can only find solace by returning to the archetypal centre of the personality, in which its own conflicting tendencies have attained a much higher degree of balance and integration. If Hero Pavloussi was destroyed by a psychic situation similar to Mary's, it may be because she had no objective or archetypal symbol which could act as a source of support throughout her personal conflict. Mrs Hunter functions as the *imago dei* who offers meaning and integrity to the conflict-torn characters who revolve around her.

III

The next phase in the lives of de Santis and Manhood focuses upon the figure of Sir Basil Hunter. Ostensibly, Basil Hunter returns to Australia at the behest of Mitty Jacka, in order to secure a fortune from his mother, which will enable him to continue his career as actor and playwright. But in actual fact Sir Basil has suffered a psychological collapse, and is no longer concerned with either career or livelihood. He merely longs to return to the mother-country, as it were, in order to lose himself in infantilism, primary narcissism, and incestuous-orgiastic sexuality. The motif of the incestuous return is literalistically expressed in his coupling

with his sister Dorothy de Lascabanes in his mother's bed at 'Kudjeri'.²⁷ In his infantile sexuality, his tremendous nostalgia for the past and longing for self-extinction²⁸ Basil reveals his assimilation to the chthonic-sexual aspect of the mother-world.

In relation to the Sisters of Moreton Drive, Sir Basil represents an intense concentration of "Hecatean" or instinctual energy (see diagram). Flora Manhood, as we have seen, is automatically attracted to him at the sexual level. But Flora attempts to utilize this (two-way) attraction for "higher" purposes. In her own limited and crassly physical way she concocts a plan through which - she hopes - she will procure "love" from Col Pardoe and avail herself of a more meaningful life-style. She plans to visit Sir Basil to have intercourse with and be made pregnant by him, intending to claim Col as the father of the child²⁹ and so establish for herself a family unit in which love will grow. The inherent contradiction in her desire to win "love" by an act of mechanical, loveless sex never seems to enter her mind. Sir Basil shows himself to be the buffoon he is by fulfilling the plan and even by falling in love with his scheming partner ["'Don't you feel this is real, Flora?'" p.312]. He fails to see how he is being used and manipulated by her, just as, at the inner level, he cannot see how he is being exploited and co-ordinated by the mother-image.

When Sister Manhood returns to work after her coupling with Basil, Mrs Hunter - who apparently has "smelt out the whole circus" [p.304] - is shown to be in a highly celebrative mood. It is as if, at the mythic level, she has herself been renewed and invigorated by her son's intercourse with her acolyte and sexual "double". She orders Manhood to bring her the case of jewels and asks that she keep for herself the pink sapphire ring - originally a gift from her husband. In ancient times, according to Frazer,³⁰ women worshipping in the temples of Aphrodite were required to prostitute themselves to a stranger prior to their marriage - fulfilment of this ritual task was believed to incur the "blessing" of the Great Goddess and to ensure her support in maternity, childbirth, and marital love. Strangely, Flora

Manhood sees Mrs Hunter's gift as a talisman and clearly associates it with fertility and motherhood.³¹ Further, the "Lilac Oracle"³² requests that the ring be used to seal her engagement with Col Pardoe, whom she anticipates will become her husband. A mythic pattern is here consummated between priestess and goddess - fulfilling the rites of fertility and paving the way to the devotee's fuller experience of love in her future marriage.³³ Fortunately for Flora, her symbolic union with the Goddess's son does not lead to pregnancy. When her menstrual cycle returns [p.530] she realizes that she now has the opportunity to have children with a man to whom she can become personally related. Her achievement of this goal, however, must be reserved for later in the discussion, for it is her experience of Mrs Hunter's death which finally lifts her up into the fullness of love.

If Flora Manhood makes use of Sir Basil as a stepping-stone upon which she moves to a higher level, Sister de Santis uses him as a means through which she is able to descend from her spiritual plane and come to terms with bodily nature. On the face of it, de Santis calls on the actor to protest against the current scheme - put forward by Madame de Lascabanes - to shift Mrs Hunter from her present house to the more economical village for geriatrics. But she becomes so preoccupied with her own needs that she forgets all about her intended mission of goodwill. There is no suggestion of overt sexual or genital contact - that would be too far removed from her character - but she does draw greedily, if surreptitiously, from Sir Basil's obvious sensuality. Not knowing how to act in the presence of this worldly man the inexperienced Sister begins to emulate "the ladies seen at dinner parties" [p.334], and quickly becomes tipsy from "unaccustomed drink", launching - perhaps too often for etiquette - into raucous fits of laughter and gaiety. Sir Basil himself is thoroughly bored by the antics of this nun-like spinster, but he manages to act the role of the interested party long enough for "St Mary" to experience something of her instinctual nature. Walking barefoot with her companion along the seashore de Santis recovers a "joy in life" [p.336] which she finds

reflected in the "steam-boat tooting towards the jetty", and the "launchload of children dangling their hands in transparent wavelets" [p.336]. Towards the end of their meeting she finds herself "more than a little drunk" [p.343] and at one point falls to the ground, bursting her stockings at the knees and causing her hair to fall around her. She is forced to remember her crisis on the night of Col Pardoe's visit ("there were times when her breasts ... were still pointed at her"), but here there is a greater sense of resolution, a less destructive encounter with instinct and of course an underlying sense of joy from the release of her repressed nature. When Basil attempts to help de Santis to her feet he feels he has "defiled this pale nun" [p.344], whereas he has in fact aided in her individuation. True, she is far from a state of ideal balance, but she has at least managed a partial coming-to-terms with the neglected element. Her purchasing of the great orange hat - which others find unattractive and inappropriate ["there was something sort of sacrilegious about de Santis in this orange hat" p.319]³⁴ - is nevertheless a sign of her willingness to admit colour and life into her night-world of spiritual idealism.

IV

A further structural tension in the novel is that between devouring and nurturing aspects of the goddess-image (see second axis in diagram). However, this appears to be a non-individuating axis in that it is constituted of fragmentary characters who make no real progress toward integration. The nurturing side of the Great Mother (her "Demeter" aspect) is personified in Lotte Lippmann, the Jewish cook and housekeeper at Moreton Drive. Her devotion to her employer is unequalled and she extends nourishment and tender concern to everyone who enters the sacred precinct of Mrs Hunter's house. To the "Lilac Oracle" herself she is less housekeeper than resident dancer and artiste,³⁵ since she regularly performs and sings for her mistress, re-enacting routines learnt while living as a cabaret dancer in central Europe. Her presence adds to the general sense of

celebration and ritual in the "house become shrine" [p.146]. However Mrs Lippmann is so self-effacing and humble that she appears ineffectual and downtrodden. As Mrs Hunter ironically observes, the Jewess "had grown accustomed to carrying a cross of proportions such as no Christian could conceive" [p.525]. She is always crying, moaning, worrying, or mortifying herself with self-doubt and personal confusion. She seems to lack a central core, to be watery and diffuse, knowing herself only in relation to others.³⁶ Consequently, with such an ill-defined and weak nature, she cannot accept criticism in any form - and so does not benefit from Mrs Hunter's brutal though transformative wisdom. Of all the "fragments" in the story Lotte is perhaps the most fragmentary. But her nourishing capacity is a vital force of the novel, and a stylized portrayal of one aspect of the Mother Goddess's nature.

It may be difficult at first to recognize any "Demeter" element in Mrs Hunter's personality - but it is there. In her earlier life she enjoyed dancing and celebration, and her "giving" capacity is evident in her gifts of the sapphire ring to Flora, the satin sash and party dress to de Santis, the ball-room gown to Lotte Lippmann, and the cheques (of five thousand dollars each) to Basil, Dorothy, and Lal Wyburd. Moreover she "gives" the fragmentary characters the greatest gift of all - wisdom, insight, and the opportunity to discover themselves. Whether they accept or reject is their own doing, but the invitation to join in the mystery of wholeness and participate in her own greater liminality always stands.

We are perhaps made more aware of Mrs Hunter's Medea-like aspect: her brutal, devouring, and power-seeking character. In one of her dialogues (or monologues) with de Santis she tells how as a girl she had owned many kinds of dolls and enjoyed exerting her power and will over them, and how, in later life, she "'longed to possess people who would obey me - and love me of course'" [p.156]. But in spite of its brutalities and excesses it is this same power which enables her to control her own inner "persons", to order the various conflicting selves and attributes around a central

image of wholeness. And because at the mythic level she *becomes* that image of wholeness,³⁷ it is reasonable to assume that she would exert power and authority over the partial and fragmentary figures. It is interesting to note that those characters who find Mrs Hunter most "devouring" - Dorothy, Basil, Arnold, Lal - are the ones who are least equal to the challenge of her wholeness. When weak or insubstantial personalities approach an archetypal figure they are invariably assimilated to its greater force:

They accused her of devouring people. Well, you couldn't help it if they practically stuck their heads in your jaws. Though actually she had no taste, or sustained appetite, for human flesh. [p.87]

She is not intentionally malevolent or daemonic, but becomes so when others are stupid or blind enough to fall victim to her power. If she makes a meal out of Alfred 'Bill' Hunter it is because he is a markedly lesser figure and cannot provide a masculine counterweight to her feminine strength.³⁸

The character who personifies the power element in the Mother Goddess - and who is, ironically, most deeply maligned by the Medea-like aspect of the central figure - is the Princesse de Lascabanes. But the power-principle in Dorothy ["a horse-faced version of Elizabeth Hunter" p.50] tends to be a purely personal, avaricious force which is not put at the service of individuation or used to control inward forces. It is a travesty of the power-principle, or power for its own sake rather than for psychic development.³⁹ Dorothy's marriage to Hubert de Lascabanes was not for love or concern, but for the purpose of acquiring the title of "princess". (In part this mirrors her mother's pattern, for it is suggested that she married 'Bill' Hunter for his wealth and position.) The marriage quickly collapses, leaving the princess to live the life of the gay divorcee in her adopted France. But Hubert, it appears, had title and prestige but little wealth, and when her resources run dry she is forced to return to Australia to draw from the fortune of her dying mother. It is Dorothy's scheme to get Mrs Hunter out of her wealthy mansion and into the Thorogood Village. Her fear

is that the mother will live on indefinitely and squander her own share in the Hunter estate. She enlists the support of Sir Basil and eventually forces the wary Arnold Wyburd into accepting the proposed plan. Madame de Lascabanes does not become fully aware of the brutality and selfishness of her scheme until she meets her childhood friend Cherry Cheeseman (nee Bullivant) at a party that has been arranged in honour of the princess. Mrs Cheeseman is a slightly more extreme version of herself - intent on power, prestige, and making the right social connections. Dorothy is shocked by the superficiality and self-interestedness of her hostess, but the climax of the encounter is when Cherry tells her that she has recently disposed of her geriatric mother at the Thorogood Village. Dorothy is disturbed when she is told that old Mrs Bullivant died immediately after her transfer to the asylum, and is appalled by the callous attitude of her daughter. When the projection upon Cherry finally "bounces" and she is made aware of her own degenerate, "murderous" impulse she is seized by panic, nausea, and is forced to escape from the party. Like Flora Manhood in her encounter with Snow Tunks, she has met a more potent version of her own character, and is made painfully aware of her wretchedness and limitations.⁴⁰ But unlike Sister Manhood Dorothy does not learn from experience, but continues to indulge her onesided orientation and lust for power as before. She goes through with the proposed plan - which prompts her mother's death and results in her securing half of the fortune. However the ancient goddess, not to be denied her rightful glory, dies before they are able to move her to the asylum. She "arranges" her own death - just as she arranged her life - to suit herself and to create the best possible situation through which she might realize her wholeness.

V

When Basil and Dorothy inform Mrs Hunter of their plans she accepts the news with apparent resignation and begins to set into operation a complex ritual of integration. During the few days that the Hunter children

are staying at 'Kudjeri', Mrs Hunter ties together the loose threads of her life and then dies upon the stately commode like an Abyssinian Queen⁴¹ upon her throne. She dies at the height of her power and at the centre of a world organized around her. Her first move is to have Lotte Lippmann perform her Demeter-like dance of celebration, for which she has Flora Manhood make up her face and adorn her in her favourite jewels and lilac wig. Lotte performs the dance on two occasions, at the beginning and end of her death-sequel. Mrs Hunter is totally blind by this stage, and so does not "see" Lotte dancing for her. All that is important is the fact of the dance, and that it is arranged on behalf of herself. Actually, her blindness is a distinct asset, for she can experience the dance inwardly, at an idealistic level of fantasy, and so does not have to witness the shoddy and grotesque movement that is being performed at her feet.

Mrs Hunter then performs several acts which contribute to her sense of completeness and which ensure her symbolic continuation in the lives of those around her. She invites Lal Wyburd to visit her so that she may bestow her turquoise necklace upon her - the necklace worn during the storm on Brumby Island. Lal regards this as an unexpected act of kindness - but Mrs Hunter basically seeks to perpetuate the memory of the island, and is using Lal for this purpose. This is evident in her abrupt manner during the meeting: as soon as the presentation is made Mrs Hunter demands that her friend leave her. She has no place for idle conversation anymore; every act must now be simple, pure, and inspired. It is here that Mrs Hunter gives the ball-room dress to Lotte Lippmann and the satin sash to Sister de Santis - further indications of her desire to perpetuate her being in the human world.

At the point of death Elizabeth Hunter experiences an illimitable integration of all levels of her existence. Past and present unite as she is carried back into the eye of the storm, and she is made to re-affirm the intensity of her Artemesian self, her connection with mystery, silence, and eternal nature. Like the actual experience on the island, this death

episode enables her to experience the at-one-ment of her spiritual and instinctual selves, the union of Hecate and Artemis aspects into a greater whole. References are made in this hauntingly beautiful sequence to the primitivity of her personality - there is the torn dress, the wet and matted hair, the exposed breast⁴² and the wretched, creaturelike attitude of her body; there are the images of torrential rain, wind, drenched sand. And the spiritual dimension is invoked by the images of weird, uncanny light, the seven black swans (sacred to Artemis) which feed from her hands, and by the awesome, all-pervading sense of eternity which infuses every aspect of this mythical landscape. Spirit and nature, the divine and the chthonic are here brought together into an ideal and almost incomprehensible totality.

Her death even suggests a reconciliation of fate and will - not a mere submission to fate and eternity, as was evident in earlier novels. Her vast strength and will are not mercilessly annihilated by the apotheosis, but are intensified as it were, so that she is able to experience a kind of conscious death: "Now the real business in hand was not to withdraw her will, as she had once foreseen, but to will enough strength into her body to put her feet on the ground and walk steadily towards the water" [p.532]. Her will is said to be "the equal" of "the seven swans massed around her"; she is the equal of "this endlessness" in which she is "enfolded" [p.532]. Her death is not at all the nihilistic, daemonically devouring experience that it was for Stan Parker, Voss, Miss Hare, or any of White's *pueri*. It is a confirmation and affirmation of all that she has been and of everything that she has become.

In this way the mother figure arises from the psychic catastrophe of *The Solid Mandala* and earlier novels, and attains a complete and courageous individuation. She lives the forthright, heroic and positive life that White's male characters (especially Waldo Brown and Arthur) could not live. From the authorial-subjective standpoint, she does what White's ego-personality ought, could, or would like to have done, but did not do.⁴³

VI

The achievement of unity in Mrs Hunter's apotheosis is "carried forward" as it were in the actions and attitudes of Sisters de Santis and Manhood. The devotees work harmoniously together after the goddess's death, as if to reflect the new integration of spirit and nature in the maternal image:

The two nurses exchanged remarks, both practical and comforting, in subdued voices. Sister Manhood brought a fresh sheet to cover the body. After they spread it, and smoothed it over the major peaks and ridges, Manhood trimmed the nails. But it was de Santis who laid the handkerchief over the face. As their hands touched during their work or they bumped against each other, or rubbed shoulders in passing, Flora Manhood came closest to expressing the love she might have been too abashed to feel for Elizabeth Hunter. [p.548]

Here the human representatives of the Mother are united in lyrical interplay, in devoted attention to the body of the numinous figure. They both seem transformed by her apotheosis, but Manhood in particular appears elevated into the mystery of love and the world of inwardness embodied in Sister de Santis. As we often find in fairytale and myth, the "acolytes" experience the triumph of the archetypal figure as a boon to their own personal quests for integration.⁴⁴

After executing her final duties Manhood leaves Moreton Drive and wanders through the streets of Sydney, feeling uncertain about the future, yet also strangely fulfilled and renewed. During her walk she comes across Snow Tunks lying drunken and wretched in the gutter outside a hotel. Snow is suffering as a result of her "bust up" with her current lover Kay or Carla (she can't decide which) and pleads with Manhood to take her into her keeping. But Flora flees from her miserable cousin and all that she represents. This episode may appear allegorical and operatic but it does effectively evoke the change in Manhood's character. In mythic terms, the goddess's instinctual side has attained a new level of differentiation: Mrs Hunter's triumph has caused the Hecate-Aphrodite personality to rise above sheer animality and lust, to find a correct, complementary relation to the Spirit Woman (de Santis) and Artemesian love. There is no

indication, however, that instinct will be taken up into spirit, that it is in danger of losing its primitive and chthonic foundation. Flora remains decidedly erotic and sexual, and our last glimpse of her is in Col Pardoe's apartment, with her lover squeezing his face between her firm thighs. Her decision to marry Col suggests that her sexuality is now related and linked with love; it is eros redeemed.

Nor does Sister de Santis show signs of becoming uncharacteristically instinctual and erotic. She continues her life of devotion and asceticism, but with an inward acceptance of the physical dimension, revealed in the last scene of the book in her refreshingly sensual engagement with morning roses, dewy leaves, garden, and birds (alighting on her head and forearm) as she distributes the "excess of seed" at the front of the Hunter residence. This scene invokes the image of Mrs Hunter surrounded by swans and gulls at the eye of the storm, and so adds to the sense of triumph and resolution at the end of the story. But, as I have stressed, the Sisters attain only a relative wholeness, which is in accordance with their essential partiality in the context of the novel. They remain chthonic and spiritual, but each figure has a little of her counterpart within her character. This reminds us of the classic Chinese Yang-Yin sign, where the opposites, brought together to form a unity, preserve their essential nature while yet manifesting small elements or "hints" of the opposite side within their separate realms. The novel suggests by implication that only the mythic figure can encompass the opposites in an absolute sense, whereas human beings must be content with more relative degrees of individuation.

VII

A central feature of this novel is that the attainment of unity is not accompanied by any theological conceptualizations or authorial rhetoric, but is allowed to suggest itself subtly through image, tone, and narrative action. The vision of wholeness is never stated or *formulated*,⁴⁵ but wells up spontaneously from the fictional ground. I believe there is a

psychological basis to this objectivity and aesthetic purity. The wholeness attained does not have any direct bearing on White himself: the author is merely an observer, allowing a mythic process to reach its self-determined goal. The individuating impulse has been taken over by the unconscious personality, and hence we no longer find authorial commentary about its fulfilment or realization.⁴⁶ At this stage the mother-image takes the lead in every way, expressing its own pattern of development in the imagistic and nonintellectual language which is the archetype's natural form of self-expression.

3. Descent to the Underworld

'Every woman has secret depths with which even she, perhaps, is unacquainted, and which sooner or later must be troubled.' - Miss Scrimshaw in *A Fringe of Leaves*¹

In *A Fringe of Leaves* (1976) the Mother's search for herself takes on a markedly social-realist accent, since the novel is modelled on the actual experiences of Eliza Fraser, who was forced to undergo a classic descent into the psychic underworld after her ship was wrecked off the coast of what is today Queensland.² Here the archetypal or mythic drama assumes an historical guise, socio-cultural importance, and therefore effects a little more "conviction" than usual in the average reader.³ But despite its external appearance the story represents a fictional extension of the ongoing mytheme, and the course of Mrs Roxburgh's life is determined not by fact but by the psycho-mythological movements within the mother-image.

The novel is unique in that - in accord with its imaginative reconstruction of "real" events and places - it creates an archetypal topography for the various psychic *loci* of the feminine-maternal character. "England" (associated throughout with the elder Mrs Roxburgh) is the place of the civilized and refined mother, and "Australia" ("a country of thorns, whips, murderers, thieves, shipwrecks and adulteresses" p.280) is the land of the chthonic mother, ruled over by Hecate-Medea and inhabited by an ancient

matriarchal race.⁴ The journey to Australia is a Nekyia⁵ or descent, and Mrs Roxburgh's seizure by aboriginal tribesmen reminds us of Persephone's violent abduction into Hades. Her remarkable adaptation to the ways of the uncivilized blacks further suggests something of Persephone's life among the shades in Hecate's realm.⁶ The return to civilisation, first to the penal settlement of Moreton Bay and later to England, marks her return to the "upper" or light side of the maternal character and to conventional patterns of morality.

However despite this Kore-like movement between human and chthonic realms Ellen Roxburgh does not achieve any real integration of darkness and light⁷ within herself. The possibility of integration constantly eludes her - it appears that her character is too limited or narrow to reconcile the opposites into a greater whole. And so in relation to *The Eye of the Storm* this work signifies the relative regression of the mother archetype to former styles of dissociation and incompleteness. The individuating impulse is evident throughout, but it does not lead to the creation of a unified personality.

I

As in previous novels, it is the subsidiary masculine figures who support the protagonist in her personal quest and who make possible her experience of the paradoxical dimensions of her being. Initially it is through Austin Roxburgh that Ellen Gluyas is able to rise above the dreariness of her workaday world at Land's End and achieve refinement and status as mistress of the Roxburgh estate in Cheltenham. The marriage with Austin is experienced by the poor and uneducated farmer's daughter as her first opportunity for self-development, a complete break with the past and a chance to realize the potential woman inside her. This transformation - aided by the mother-in-law - is achieved with great mastery and skill, and as we encounter her at the beginning of the story she appears to have

convinced herself and others of her legitimate claim to civility and sophistication.

But already in the first scene there are signs that her civilized life is becoming sterile and boring, that she has lost touch with an essential vitality and spontaneity. She continues to enjoy the luxuries of her Roxburgh existence, but now there is a secret yearning for her "Gluyas" self and for the instinctual element. These yearnings are realized through her contact with Garnet Roxburgh, the "shadow" brother of Van Diemen's Land,⁸ and ultimately through her association with Jack Chance, escaped convict and "native" inhabitant of the Australian landscape.

Retrospectively, Austin Roxburgh is another form of Harold ('Decent') Courtney or Alfred Hunter, the upper class estate owner who endows riches upon the female protagonist and who encourages her Christian and moral idealism. Garnet and Jack are the new *puer* figures in the likeness of Duffield and Basil Hunter - they are the socially deviant men who live under the sway of Hecate-Aphrodite and who facilitate the protagonist's descent into bodily nature. Throughout the later fiction the father-son pair⁹ is systematically co-ordinated to meet the needs of the mother-figure, and nowhere is this more apparent than in Ellen's career: the marriage with Austin to secure moral and financial stability, the exploits with Garnet and Jack to win erotic and instinctual life, and the subsequent marriage with Mr Jevons, English gentleman and wealthy merchant, to regain contact with society, morality, and ego-consciousness. Of course Mrs Roxburgh is not brutally exploitative in the manner of Alfreda Courtney or Dorothy Hunter - it is rather that "fate" provides her with masculine figures in order to help her fulfil the necessary tasks for self-development. This is a projection of the conditions operating for the mother-figure within the author's psyche - the masculine personality is always at her disposal and is made use of in various ways according to the demands of her individual quest.

II

When Mrs Roxburgh first encounters her brother-in-law in Hobart Town she is at once repelled and attracted by him. Her "Roxburgh" personality finds him uncouth and disagreeable ["Garnet paraded the assured insolence of a lapsed gentleman" p.28] but her "Gluyas" side is immediately drawn to him: "He had about him something which she, the farmer's daughter and spurious lady, recognized as coarse and sensual" [p.74]. Her real need at this stage in her career is to activate her natural sensuality, which has been stifled throughout her married life. But her resistance to Garnet is due to her fear that the recovery of instinct will destroy her "Roxburgh" persona, undermine her marriage, and take away the stability and self-identity that her civilized existence has given her. She can see no way of uniting her sophisticated and instinctual selves, and so forces herself to dislike her brother-in-law, to reject his primitive farm and bushland, and strives to remain indoors in constant attention to her weak and ailing husband. But as the weeks pass at 'Dulcet' the call of the Australian bush and her own "Gluyas" side becomes stronger. Ellen finds herself responding positively and even nostalgically to the antipodean environment:

Hens were allowed the freedom of the streets, and an ambling cow almost grazed a wheel of the buggy with her ribs. The scent of the cow's breath, the thudding of her hooves, and the plop of falling dung, filled Ellen with an immeasurable homesickness. Had it not been for the uncommunicative stares of respectable burgesses and the open scowls of those who must be their slaves, she might have been driving Gluyas's cart to market. [pp.73-74]

Later she takes to walking alone across Garnet's property, and at one point discovers a "tunnel" of damp undergrowth and moss which leads to a small clearing of decaying leaves and bark. It is here that Ellen, "received" by the landscape [p.81], has a dream about making love with Garnet - a figure who, in the dream, is not so much a human being as a mere shadowy extension of the landscape itself. Upon awaking Mrs Roxburgh is terrified by the dream, and by her presentiment of a "moral crisis" soon to overtake her, and runs back to the side of her upright husband. However the demands of

her instinctual personality become all the more insistent as she attempts to repress them. Soon after the Christmas Day celebrations Ellen feels compelled to saddle the "frisky mare" [p.99] and ride off toward the enclosure where she had lain and dreamt about Garnet. On the way she becomes seized by an uncontrollable passion, lashes the horse to a wild gallop and, approaching the remembered clearing, slides free of the saddle and lands "spread-eagle"¹⁰ on the miraculously soft leaf-mould" [p.101]. As she lies upon the forest floor in a state of expectation and excitement Garnet comes to her "rescue" and the dream of passion is realized. "She closed her eyes ... to bask beneath the lashes in an experience of sensuality she must have awaited all her life" [p.103]. The irony is that Garnet considers himself engaged in an act of seduction, and later apologizes for taking advantage of her. But for Ellen he was "less her seducer than the instrument she had chosen for measuring depths she was tempted to explore" [p.104]. As with every *puer* in the later novels, Garnet is the unconscious servant of the female protagonist, and a crucial contributor to her process of development.

III

The psychological descent which takes place at 'Dulcet' is merely the prelude to the underworld experience which Mrs Roxburgh is forced to undergo on the Australian mainland. As the Roxburghs make their way back to England aboard the *Bristol Maid* the "none-too-seaworthy-brig" founders on a reef off the Queensland coast and the passengers and crew are forced to take to the boats. It is upon the waterlogged long-boat that Ellen Roxburgh is delivered of the child she has carried since the beginning of the journey - but it is stillborn, and the infant is given a rather tragic and amateur sea-burial by Captain Purdew and the crew. Eventually, after being carried up and down the coast by an unpredictable tide, the wretched and starving survivors land upon an island and are greeted by a tribe of savages who spear the men to death and take Mrs Roxburgh captive. It is significant that only the woman survives the encounter with these "shades" of the Underworld. In White the

Nekyia invariably results in the destruction of the masculine factor¹¹ and the ultimate regeneration and transformation of the feminine-maternal principle.

The symbolic aspect of Austin Roxburgh's death is emphasized by the dream which Ellen has prior to their confrontation with the aboriginal tribesmen. She dreams that the ship is caught in a terrible storm and that her husband, huddled fearfully in his cabin, is killed by a falling beam which punctures his heart. Synchronistically, Ellen is awoken from the dream by Austin's cries of pain and anguish: "'It's the pain Ellen! Oh God, the most awful pain yet'" [p.141]. The frail Austin Roxburgh has suffered throughout his life from a series of psychological attacks, a kind of unspecified mental illness or neurosis. It is clear from the context of his life-story¹² that these "attacks" are the symptoms of his own repressed instinctual nature, the destructive eruptions of dark, unruly emotion. Thus, as with Palfreyman's death in *Voss*, the attack made upon him by the savages is the consummation of an internal psychic process and not a mere external mishap or unsuspected crisis. The aborigines act in accordance with the chthonic-maternal archetype which destroys him from within.¹³

Ellen Roxburgh is seized by the aborigines and the women of the tribe begin to ritualistically strip the clothes from her body until "she was finally liberated" [p.218]. Already in the long-boat Ellen had realized that her civilized persona was being stripped from her and that she was "returning, and not by slow degrees, to nature"[p.188]. Then, as now, she resigns herself completely to the process of de-humanisation and soon adapts to the primitive life-style. As a slave to the tribe she is often depicted as a wretched, naked creature, foraging for food amongst bushes, or climbing eucalypts in search of possums and honeycomb. Her hair becomes matted and invested with lice, her fingernails broken, and her skin blackened and hardened under the harsh antipodean sun.

At a mythic level, Ellen is re-enacting the process of radical reversal which has been evident in the mother archetype since *The Vivisector*. The Mother falls from her Christian elevation into a pagan and instinctual realm

which represents the lower or Hecatean aspect of her character. Ellen's differentiation from the Christian context is emphasized by the "conversations" or fantasy-dialogues she has with the figure of old Mrs Roxburgh, where the mother-in-law's gentility and refined language are pitted against her newly recovered Cornish dialect and uncivilized manner. In her act of (voluntary) cannibalism she reveals most starkly and terrifyingly her descent to chthonic levels of reality. In fact in certain ways it is suggested that she sinks to a level even more primitive than that lived by the aborigines themselves. The women force Ellen to do the unpleasant things that they do not want to do. She acts as the mother and nurse of the disease-ridden children, who suckle greedily at her long and leathery breasts, and is eventually adopted as a kind of "demoness" by the shaman of the tribe. Highly memorable are the scenes where this almost supernatural creature becomes the centre of ritual celebrations:

They anointed her body regularly with grease and charcoal, and plastered her cropped head with beeswax, and stuck it with tufts of down and feather
The blacks were for the most part lost in open-mouthed wonder as they examined the exhibit from every angle, but a flock of big white parrots alighted on a neighbouring tree, shrieking and discoursing, their sulphur crests raised in disapproval of a monster such as might have roused the derision of country folk at a fair. [pp.239-249]

The aborigines look with horror and disbelief at their "work of art" and archaic personage; even the native birds shriek in apparent disapproval. In *White the Mother Goddess* frequently falls to a level of being which is inferior to that of primitive man.¹⁴ At her lowest she is identical with an inhuman darkness, an abysmal realm of archetypal reality.

IV

Jack Chance appears to Ellen Roxburgh on the night of the great corroboree arranged to mark the movement of her adoptive tribe from the island to the mainland. Jack seems like any other savage participating in the dance, although he is physically larger than the other men, and

further distinguishes himself by his trickster-like deeds and the little hatchet carried in his woven belt. Ellen realizes that he must be an escaped convict who has become assimilated to the aboriginal world, and is quick to take full advantage of the situation: "'Bring me to Moreton Bay,'" she commands, "'and I promise they'll give you [a] pardon'" [p.252]. Jack, at first too much of a "native" to understand her words, recognizes her need and decides to carry out her request.

Jack appears to serve the protagonist in two essential ways. Firstly he acts as the rescuer, freeing Mrs Roxburgh from her enslavement to the aborigines and facilitating her return to white society. But he also allows her to move closer to her inner darkness, to realize - even more completely than during her period of captivity - the chthonic depths of her personality. Thus Jack is simultaneously the servant of Mrs Roxburgh *and* of Ellen Gluyas, the figure who makes possible her full experience of sensuality and her ultimate return to civilization. Never before has the mother-figure exploited the masculine element in such a comprehensive manner, using him to ascend to civility as she furthers her descent into the psychological underworld.¹⁵

Ellen Roxburgh's love-making with the escaped convict reminds us in part of Hero Pavloussi's sexual life with Duffield. It is aggressive, animal-like sexuality which seems unrelated to human tenderness or concern:

She began such a lashing and thrashing, her broken nails must be tearing open the wounds which had healed in his back She would have swallowed him had she been capable of it. [p.269]

She finds most exhilarating the crude, primitive mannerisms of her lover, who "handled her as though she had been a wheelbarrow,¹⁶ or black woman" [p.268]. Clearly, her sexuality is undifferentiated because *eros* had been absent in her former life ["her body might never have been touched, not even by her husband" p.267] and now reappears with a vengeance in her exploits with the convict.¹⁷ Even Jack himself appears overshadowed by the depths of passion released in Mrs Roxburgh. He becomes "mystified"

by her lust and is forced to remark at one point: "'When I rescued a lady, I didn't bargain for a *lubra*'" [p.285].

Ellen is also plunged into the depths of evil and moral darkness when she experiences a psychological identification with Mab, Jack's former lover and victim. As Mab, a kind of mistress of the English underworld, Ellen becomes the associate of pimps, prostitutes, robbers, sword-swallowers and all the weird denizens of the lower realm. In later fantasies she trudges with Jack through the sewers of London, looking for "articles of value" amidst rivers of excrement and populations of rats [p.293f]. Ellen enters this realm of darkness with the same unrestrained vivacity which characterizes her sexual life at this point. It seems that the entire substratum of the unconscious has burst forth in a flood of instinctuality, depravity, and nightmarish sequences of fantasy.

Neither the sexuality nor the moral darkness released during her journey with the convict appear capable of being reconciled with her "Roxburgh" personality. The darkness encountered in her *Nekyia* is inhuman - extending far beyond her "Gluyas" self - and is therefore unassimilable by her conscious personality. Ellen lacks that transformative and stabilizing image of wholeness which Flora Manhood enjoyed in the person of Mrs Hunter, and which enabled her to differentiate human passion from raw instinct and animality. In this novel *eros* falls down once more to the level of bestiality embodied in Snow Tunks and Nance Lightfoot, and shows no real potential for transformation.

As such, when Ellen Roxburgh approaches the outskirts of civilization she is forced to undergo another dramatic reversal of personality. The civilized persona reasserts itself and the contents of the lower plane are returned to the unconscious in their originally archaic condition. At this point Ellen is no longer concerned with her convict-lover - he has served his purpose in the chthonic world of Nature, and is of no further use to her in the "upper" realm of ego-consciousness. Quite suddenly, the moral and social issues become paramount for Mrs Roxburgh, and she

realizes that she does not want to live in polite society with this "convicted murderer" and "shambling human scarecrow" [p.297].¹⁸ She even doubts whether she could summon enough personal conviction to win Jack a pardon from the authorities, and regrets having "rashly promised" it in the beginning. Despite Ellen's attempts to hide her true feelings, Jack rightly senses her complete reversal of attitude: "'Your heart isn't in it, Ellen. It's like as if you'd went dead on me'" [p.292]. And so when they arrive at the settlement at Moreton Bay Jack turns away from Ellen and runs back into the bush. He realizes that he can win neither love nor freedom from this woman who has betrayed him. He has fulfilled his fate as a servant of the mother-figure, and now must return to the anonymous landscape from whence he came.

V

As she recovers from the exhaustion wrought by the journey Ellen is at first not certain whether she is Mab, Ellen Gluyas, or Mrs Austin Roxburgh. She undergoes a temporary mental crisis in which each of her separate selves jostles for a place in the totality of her being. But it is clear that her "Roxburgh" persona will triumph, and that the other aspects of her psyche will disappear from view. Her fundamental inability to integrate the dark or baser elements is projected outside herself upon the social situation. Many times we are told that society will henceforth condemn her to a limited and confined existence, that she was "returning ... to the prison to which she had been sentenced" [p.324], or that she had "accepted once more the fate or chains that human beings were imposing on her" [p.346]. This sense of moral imprisonment is in part self-imposed, and not wholly foisted upon her by society. True, the return to society necessitates a new adjustment to her civilized nature, but the regression to rigidity and limitation which this return appears to entail is a projection of her own regression to the "Roxburgh" side of her personality.¹⁹ The

problem is not so much society as it is her own dissociated state and propensity toward extreme reversals of moral orientation.

In *White* there has always been a tendency to blame society for psychological regressions which properly belong to his protagonists. In *Voss* Laura's dramatic transformation from nature mystic to staid headmistress was similarly projected upon the external environment - the reader was asked to see "society" as the brutal, limiting factor, demanding a turning away from the internal realm, when the decision to adopt a rigid and formal persona was Laura's own defensive move in the face of her unruly inner world. Society appears as a rigidly sterile and imprisoning force only because the protagonist herself has a defective conscious personality which cannot assimilate the lower or "natural" layers of the deep unconscious.²⁰

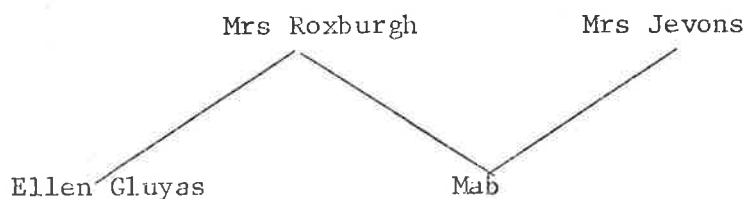
And so it is the representatives of society who appear to systematically effect her re-assimilation to the limited "Roxburgh" persona. Mrs Oakes encourages her to "sleep and forget" [p.301] the entire inner journey, the descent into chthonic nature, and Mrs Lovell strives to direct her thoughts to table manners, pretty clothes, and prospective marriage partners. And it is through the chaplain Mr Cottle that Ellen is urged to turn her attention to the Christian faith and attend Pilcher's "unconsecrated chapel" [p.348]. As she stands at the entrance of the chapel she "hears" the voice of her old mother-in-law urging her to step forward into the building, and later the voice ["Ellurunn, she heard the name tolled ..." p.352] appears to direct her to the altar, where she prays for the restoration of her former faith.²¹ The moral and highly refined mother-image has been constellated and she now moves rapidly toward reconstituting the ethical and religious bases of her former existence.

She is undergoing the same process of psychological "elevation" that she had experienced as a girl, when she shed her "Gluyas" self to become the sophisticated mistress of 'Birdlip' house. And just as a wealthy gentleman had facilitated her upward climb then so here an Englishman of "substantial means" [p.355] appears before her on the London-bound ship and

offers her his support and the possibility of marriage. Ellen discovers that George Jevons is the owner of a large estate at Camberwell, and she is invited to install herself at the mansion upon arrival in England. She welcomes this "'ready-made homecoming'" [p.360] and sees Mr Jevons as the steady "rock" [p.363] upon which she will construct her future life. As Ellen makes her speedy return to the Old World her estrangement from the lower realm of passion and instinct is evident in her highly sophisticated attitudes and mannerisms. She chastises Miss Scrimshaw for her occasional "vulgarity" [p.362] and lapses in taste, and finds herself engaged in "spontaneous moralizing" [p.324] with the young children whom she encounters on the ship. Most revealingly, her alienation from the underworld is suggested in her present resistance to the memory of her convict-lover: "she almost dared not sleep lest Jack Chance the convict appear in a dream and offer her his love" [p.358].²² For Ellen - or the future wife of Mr George Jevons of Camberwell - all is done with the lower realm and a life of moral and psychological incompleteness is fully embraced.

VI

Ellen's career represents an extremely disjointed pattern of development, despite all the support accorded to her by the male "servants" of her separate selves. Generally, the pattern is one of repetition without resolution:



There are several radical reversals, shifts from upper to lower levels of personality, but no real attempts at integration or wholeness. Compared with Elizabeth Hunter's career - or even that of Flora Manhood or de Santis - Ellen's is a disappointing failure. All the various selves have been

explored and encountered, but there is no presiding intelligence to make them into a whole. Ellen shows what might have happened to the Sisters of Moreton Drive had they not been supported by the wisdom and guidance of the fully integrated mother-figure.

VII

I must therefore disagree with the many reviewers and critics who extol Ellen's achievement of wholeness, and who claim that White has at last created a character in whom psychic and social reality have been reconciled.²³ Perhaps it is because her see-sawing career ends on the "social" plane that critics have found in the story an endorsement of society and an affirmation of the human world. But it is quite clearly a regressive return to society²⁴ - an abdication of inner reality as a result of personal inadequacy. The novel can be appreciated for its expert and precise delineation of the conflicting selves of the central character, but not for its achievement of an integrated vision.

4. The Journey Ends

All my misses, if they could be gathered up, embodied like this insubstantial ball of hair, would make a monument of futility.

- Eudoxia Vatatzes¹

In White's most recent novel, *The Twyborn Affair* (1979), the mother goddess is still in a state of psychological dissociation. The fact that the novel covers old ground - and is almost tedious in its repetition of past patterns - is strangely suggested by the first few lines of text:

'Which road this afternoon, madam?'
 'The same, Teakle - the one we took yesterday.'
 'Bit rough, isn't it?' her chauffeur ventured.
 'We Australians,' Mrs Golson declared, 'are used to far rougher at home.'

The mother-figure is about to embark upon the same psychological journey - the one taken "yesterday", as it were, by her previous fictional counterparts. And like her forbears Mrs Golson takes a "rough" path, a descent into the

underworld, in order to recover her chthonic-instinctual aspect. And as we have seen countless times before, the downward path leads her to an erotic male figure who is himself the very embodiment of the Hecatean world. The fact that this "male" is disguised as a woman only makes the mythic dimensions more apparent - the mother is really in search of herself, of her *own* instinctual side, which is merely "carried" by the *puer* figure. But, as we found with Mrs Courtney, Hero Pavloussi, Ellen Roxburgh, and others,² the *eros* embodied in the mother's son is essentially unassimilable by the "refined" Joanie Golson, despite her relentless attempts to integrate this aspect into her conventional and sophisticated pattern of existence.

She makes numerous journeys down the "stony, rutted road" [p.12] at St Mayeul, hoping to catch a glimpse of Eudoxia/Eddie in his tumbledown villa *Crimson Cottage*, and once even ventures to trespass upon the property and peep into an open window.³ At a later stage she manages to drink tea in the lounge of the Grand Hôtel with this desirable young figure, but Joanie is so choked with emotion and longing that she hardly knows what to do or say. A further visit to *Crimson Cottage* is foiled by the presence of her "decent" husband 'Curly' Golson, and by the anguish and frustration evident in Angelos Vatatzes, Eudoxia's aging Greek lover. Before she is able to realize her longing the erotic *puer* vanishes from St Mayeul and is never seen again. Although Joanie is hard on his trail in Australia - and almost catches him at his parents' house in Sydney, and again on a property in the Monaro district - she can never finally set eyes upon the elusive figure. In mythological terms, this is a curious reversal of the Apollo/Daphne myth: where the mother figure pursues the male object of desire through many different "worlds" and cultural contexts, but where the marriage or *coniunctio* is never achieved. As in the myth,⁴ the pursuer is too elevated and "bright" to encapsulate the darkness of feminine-instinctual *eros*. Although Eadie Twyborn has slightly greater success in her search for her chthonic nature, the mother-image in this work remains burdened by an immeasurable longing, a desire for a self-fulfilment which is never grasped.

I

Like *The Vivisector*, *The Twyborn Affair* has as its central character not the questing Mother Goddess but the erotic *puer* who is assimilated to the maternal unconscious. However in this work the *puer* is even more pathologically overcome by the Hecate-image. Whereas in the earlier novel the son maintained some personal identity in the face of the invading archetype, here he is completely merged with the mother-figure.⁵ Eddie Twyborn parades as Byzantine Empress, hetaira, Madame Vatatzes, Mrs Eadith Trist - anything but his true masculine self, which is revealed in the middle section of the story and proves too pathetic and valueless to maintain. The archetypal image has captured so much of his psychic energy that he seems fully alive, real, only when living in the likeness of the Goddess herself. The situation is of course reminiscent of Waldo Brown at his transvestite worst - at moments when, overwhelmed by the mother-personality, he dispenses with his fragmented consciousness and lives "intensely" and "magnificent" [*SM*, p.193] as a female figure. Naturally the contrasexual guises of Waldo and Eddie are archaic, even "royal" in their dress and demeanour, because they are possessed by an archetypal content which is extra-human and intrinsically god-like. They do not simply become women, but the Goddess Memory (in Waldo's case), or the Empress Eudoxia - and parade with all the lavish gestures, the bizarre and flamboyant behaviour that we have come to expect of homosexuals and transsexuals in our own time. *The Twyborn Affair* may well prove to be of some value in probing the archetypal situation of the homosexual character, in helping all of us reach a fuller understanding of the psychological process that causes a man to throw off his masculinity and free the seemingly more "real" self inside him.

If White was still too reticent, or personally embarrassed, to allow Waldo to live a homosexual life in *The Solid Mandala*,⁶ here he appears to make up for lost time and to present an extraordinarily detailed account of this mode of sexual behaviour. (It should be borne in mind that in the years between these novels there has been considerable change in public

attitudes on relevant-subjects.) In certain respects, the sexual encounters between Eddie and Monsieur Vatatzes, Don Prowse, and Philip Thring are not unlike those between Duffield and his various female lovers. The sexuality is tough, aggressive, kinky, with a sado-masochistic tone. In the sexual act it is as if the *puer* would destroy himself in the ecstasy that he is generating. Every coupling is a regression to the primal situation, a fierce thrusting into the matrix as well as a rage at having been ejected from the womb in the first place.⁷ Angelos and Eddie long to "devastate, to destroy each other in the ... voluptuous pleasure of friction" [p.24]. Sexual practice is simply an externalization of negative psychic processes, a demonstration of the incestuous libido which conspires to bring about the destruction of the masculine personality in orgiastic experience. In Eddie's world the developmental processes are set in reverse: sexuality leads to violence and disintegration, and "life" itself leads backward to infantile archaisms, depravity, and self-dissolution. Eddie has his mind fixed constantly on death, and as the self-styled "Amateur Suicide" [p.80], frequently contemplates ending his agonizing career. Eddie is White's most pathological creation to date, but is by no means exceptional for his regressive condition. It is merely that the pathological element is explicit in his portrayal, whereas it was relatively submerged (and disguised under "mystical" pretences) in White's earlier characterizations.

Since Eddie is psychologically "consumed" by the maternal unconscious it is to be expected that he would be plagued by externalized or projected images of the Destroying Mother. In fact, we first encounter the central character through a reference made to the intrusive visit of Mrs Golson, as noted in his diary entry of February 7, 1914:

A day which should have been idyllic grew increasingly black, ending in storms, after a real Visitation. Could not believe as this sporty motor surged up our hill that it was Eadie's pal J.G. sitting in the back seat ... Why should I be persecuted? Eadie has sent her. A. says no, Eadie couldn't have, it's nothing but coincidence.

But just when I'd begun to order my life ... this emissary comes

to smash it to pieces. Nothing so brutal as a soft, silly woman.

Everything, I now see, has been leading up to this act of aggression. Gentle perfection is never allowed to last for long. The more laboriously it has been built up, the more painfully it is brought down. [p.22]

It is clear that Eddie is investing the ridiculous visit with emotions that do not properly belong to it. He relates to her Visitation as Miss Hare related to the arrival of Mrs Jolley at Xanadu, or Stan Parker to the intrusion of Amy into his "mandalic" garden - the mother-woman is experienced as an emissary of darkness, whose presence destroys the blissful cocoon of ecstasy in which the *puer* is nestled. Joanie Golson's connection with the maternal image is peculiarly reinforced by her association with Mrs Twyborn; Eddie even fears that his mother has "sent" Joanie to haunt him. In White's later fiction the various maternal figures are often materialized as associates or "acolytes" of the personal mother - they appear commissioned by Her⁹ to fulfil certain symbolic tasks. As in *The Eye of the Storm*, the actual mother remains removed from the *puer's* world, and he is forced to experience various aspects of her archetypal character through relationship with the secondary figures.

The fact that Joanie Golson has constellated the "devouring" character of the deep unconscious is evident in the dream Eddie has after her visitation:

That very real [nightmare]: the shutter has flown open, the whole cliffside a churning mass of pittosporum and lantana scrub pressing in upon, threatening all man-made shoddiness. The giant emu's head and neck tormented by the wind. As its plumage is ruffled and tossed, its beak descends repeatedly, almost past the useless shutter, almost into the room where I am lying in my narrow bed, fright raised in goose-pimples, when not dissolving into urine. [p.33]

Here the landscape, the foliage and scrub, and the giant dream-bird all appear to be "pressing in upon" and "threatening" Eddie's world. The fact that Mrs Golson has become a predatorial emu with a fearsome beak emphasizes the non-human image at the core of his psyche: it is chthonic nature itself which invades and violates him. We might compare the monstrous bird with the image of Nance Lightfoot as the nightmare creature who appeared to be "descending" upon and "gulping" at the body of her victim-lover. Both Duffield and Eddie are pursued by figures which reflect the daemonically destructive forces that

are unleashed when the ego merges with the mother-world. The *pueri* imagine they are living in an ideal erotic state ("Gentle perfection is never allowed to last for long") when all the while they are being consumed by instinctual-incestuous forces.

The so-called Second Coming of Mrs Golson causes Eddie to consider fleeing from St Mayeul from fear that she will ruin his existence at *Crimson Cottage*. The mother-figure actually does inadvertantly tear down the gate at the front of the house, which instills a sense of imminent doom in the hearts of the occupants. The threatening-destroying aspect is further evident in the incident where 'Curly' Golson almost runs Eddie and Angelos down as he drives recklessly along one of the coast roads of St Mayeul (p.42). And later, as Eudoxia/Eddie walks gaily along the sidewalk outside the Grand Hôtel the lethal gaze of Mrs Golson from an upper-storey window is enough to cause the *puer* to stumble off the kerb and twist his ankle. Here White reverts to the almost occult presentation of the devouring mother: the woman has such dreadful power that her stare can instantly reduce the *puer* to helplessness.¹⁰ Mrs Golson rushes to Eddie's "rescue" and leads him into her private salon, where she greedily devours his obvious sensuality and becomes energized by his presence. And here there is a remarkable turn of events - Eddie himself is shown to have a secret longing for his "pursuer":

What, I wonder, would have happened if I had thrown myself amongst the sables, the brooches, my face burrowing into that Medici frill, or deeper, into the powdered cleavage? Would I have given Eadie cause for jealousy? [p.60]

Here we see quite clearly how he longs for the very thing which overpowers him: the dark matrix of the mother-world. Joanie is the dreadful predatory monster, yet also the desired womb into which the *puer* would fling himself. And again we find the overt reference to the personal mother ("Would I have given Eadie cause for jealousy?"). Eadie stands "behind" Joanie Golson as an image of the Mother Goddess, the ultimate goal of his desire and central object in his incestuous career.

But the chain of destructive events unleashed by Mrs Golson's appearance continues as before. Angelos falls ill on the night of her "official" visit at *Crimson Cottage* and next morning, amid storms and devastation winds which run havoc through the garden, Eddie and Angelos escape to a *pension* ('My Blue Home') in the south of France. At this stage the *pueri* are confronted by innumerable images of the devouring mother. On the train journey the lovers share a cabin with an enormous, domineering woman and her litter of children, one of whom (a two-year-old son) suffers from chronic asthma. In the presence of the suffocating mother and the locked cabin, Angelos suffers an attack of claustrophobia, and cries "'Ma - soffoco! Soffoco!'" as he rushes to open the window [p.119]. The *pension* in which Angelos dies of a heart attack is conducted by Madame Sasso and Mrs Corbould, two more devouring women who regularly engage in dialogue about "the husbands they had buried, [and] womb complications" [p.124], and who survive happily on inherited fortunes. As Angelos dies Madame Sasso notes quite perversely that his withered hand "was not unlike the claw of an elderly cock, the kind which can be served as several courses after stewing" [p.126]. Clearly, Angelos' decline, which begins with Mrs Golson's intrusion and ends with Madame Sasso's reign of power, is conceived within the familiar matriarchal context. Angelos, although an elderly man, is psychologically a *puer* who falls victim to the fatal, subduing aspect of the maternal world.

Eddie himself is thoroughly reduced and bewildered by experience at this point. The sense of doom which pervades his life is reinforced by the external upheavals which surround him as France moves inexorably toward war. For him, as for Eliot in *The Living and the Dead*, the Great War acts as a literal manifestation of the world-destroying power which undermines him from within. At the outbreak of war, Eddie resumes his masculine appearance and is enlisted in the army; is co-ordinated with the orgy of destruction which sweeps across Europe. Yet he survives the "mythic war" [p.70] and as we see him next he is on board a ship bound for

Sydney. His return to Australia is not so much an attempt at a new beginning as it is a mere re-exploration of his incestuous fixation and psychological degeneracy in a "masculine" form. He falls from his rôle as Empress Eudoxia and becomes instead the servile son and phallic consort of the Mother Goddess. "Life" in Australia involves him in an animal existence lived wholly at the instinctual-erotic level.

II

Eddie's "phallic" nature is evident from the first scene of Part Two, as he paces up and down the deck of the ship. His springy, jaunty walk, and his "stiffly erect" carriage [p.135] immediately provokes the attention of the women aboard the vessel. In one sense the women are made to appear like a pack of sexually frustrated bitches drawn irresistibly to the prize spaniel. Margs Gilchrist drools every time the Lieutenant walks past, and "looked ready to gobble him up" [p.135]. Angela Parsons, her companion, feels equally desirous and is "fascinated" and "awed" by his sexual presence. At the masked ball Margs seizes Eddie as her partner, and "thrust a campaigning vulva as deep as possible into his crotch; her rather flat little breasts ... bumping and grinding against his chest" [p.141]. He is simply regarded as an object of instinctual energy; a kind of animal, dog-like connection unites him with the opposite sex. Eddie is linked frequently with the dog-motif throughout the middle section. We have already seen that Hecate's animal aspect was represented in ancient mythology as a dog or "whelping bitch" [Figure 10], and it is of further significance that Her male attendants - the men serving the rites of fertility in her temples - were called *kelabim*, "dogs".¹¹ The Goddess exploits the men as sexual instruments, as carriers of the radiant phallus, the object of fertilization and sensual fulfilment. And so the male votaries (who were sometimes dressed as women) are reduced to "dogs" fulfilling an animal function.

The dog-motif is particularly marked when Eddie makes his way home to

Eadie Twyborn, a figure who, in her Hecatean or chthonic aspect, is constantly associated with domestic terriers and strays. Eddie's first glimpse of his mother is of her on all fours in the rose-garden, companioned by her favourite animals:

And there was Eadie, crouched on her knees with a trowel in her hand, her beam broader in one of those skirts she had invariably worn, a miracle of Scottish weave and an intermingling of dogs' hair clotted with compost or manure. Oblivious as far as you could tell. As were the six or seven little red dogs, scratching, swivelling on their rumps, sniffing, one of them lifting a leg behind Eadie's back on a border of sweet alyssum.¹²

[p.147]

Here we find Mrs Twyborn as an instinctual creature, linked with earth, compost, manure, and dogs. It is this side of the Mother that Eddie has returned home to serve - to become, in a sense, another of her "dogs", or her erotic attendant. As Mother and *puer* embrace Eddie feels that,

it was she who was beginning to take the initiative, while he, the passive object of her intentions, was drawn into the labyrinth of wrinkles, cigarette fumes and, more noticeable, a gust of early whiskey.

Wasn't this what he had come for? He closed his eyes and let it happen. [p.148]

We could not wish for the incestuous drama to be put more plainly than this. In fact often in this work the *puer*-Mother theme is made rather too explicit, is spelt out with an almost chilling clarity. It is as if the mother-complex itself can no longer dress in the refined garments of symbolic fiction, but reveals itself in this very literal, tasteless, and unambiguous fashion.¹³ In earlier works the incestuous longing was heavily disguised; here it erupts forcefully into the narrative and even the most unpsychological reader cannot help but see it.

Both Eddie and Eadie become embarrassed and overwhelmed by their mutual attraction. Even the rather insensitive Judge Twyborn is disturbed by the situation and urges his son to seek employment and participate in the real world. Eventually Eddie finds a position working as a jackeroo on a property owned by Mr Lushington, a close friend and associate of the Judge. It is here that Eddie "serves" the Mother by becoming the erotic companion and lap-dog of Marcia Lushington, a woman who is renowned for her Circe-like

dealings with men.¹⁴ In her company men appear to behave and act like animals - the manager Don Prowse, one of her chief victims, is described variously as a "bull" [p.289], "dog" [p.217], and "human animal" [p.219]. She is the sorceress who reduces men to the status of pets and beasts, and in her service Eddie is "not [her] lover, but some lean and ingratiating breed of hairless dog, licking her wrists, expecting an exchange of caresses" [p.291].

Marcia's "devouring" character is grotesquely underscored by the graveyard at the back of her house, filled with the graves of her own children. These children - a number of boys bearing identical names - are the products of her various lustful encounters and none manages to live beyond two years of age. This further reflects the theme of the unborn child or *puer* who is conceived by the Mother but not allowed to live in the human world. For Mrs Lushington¹⁵ the reproductive cycle - from seduction to parturition - is a kind of sport designed to meet her erotic needs and not a process whereby new life is created. Again in White we find the implicit equation, sex (and life) = death.¹⁶ The maternal womb is devouring and will not bring forth.

Eddie is young enough to be Mrs Lushington's son, and as he makes love with his "mistress of thrashing thighs and voracious mouth" [p.255] he imagines that he is returning to his mother's womb [pp.222, 232, 234]. Marcia's maternal significance is emphasized by the relationship between herself and Mrs Twyborn, and at the end of Part Two, after Eddie flees from 'Bogong' and returns to his transvestite existence in another hemisphere, the two mothers exchange letters about the incidents that have passed. In her letter, Eadie makes no attempt to hide her envy of Marcia's affair with Eddie, and confesses that she has felt bereft and incomplete since his departure. Eddie, however, has escaped from the Mother only at the physical level. Psychologically, he has terminated his life as a male figure and is re-assimilated to the Hecate-image, this time as Mrs Eadith

Trist, the mistress of a London brothel. As Eadie herself remarks in the letter: "He is swallowed up. Whether in death or life, it is the same" [p.302].¹⁷

III

The final section of the novel is an excruciatingly literal account of Eddie's re-absorption into the instinctual realm and his eventual "marriage" with the Mother in death. During his London phase Eddie acts out his psychic fixation by establishing a kind of "temple" to Hecate-Aphrodite, in which the goddess of nature is served in orgiastic and frenzied sexual practices. The women employed by Eddie/Eadith are described as "whore-nuns" [p.328], the bawd herself as a "cult", and the brothel as a "sexual institution" [p.318]. In matriarchal times, such temples existed in order to exonerate Hecate and the lower world, and the women acting as harlots were always forced to wear veils and to remain completely anonymous while in Her service. In this way the female became all womb - a mere personification of fertility and instinctual life. The whores at the Beckwith Street house are similarly anonymous, nymph-like creatures. The bawd's deputy, Ada Potter, wears a cameo of nymphs and satyrs at her throat [p.323], as if to signify her identification with the pagan realm. Many of the wretched whores are un-named, and are merely designated by the colour of **their** pubic hair ["the black orchid from Sierra Leone", "the contrasting tuft of pink oxalis from Leamington" p.324]. Of course the men who patronize the brothel are equally anonymous - they have a merely animalistic interest in the sexual act. But the sexuality here, as elsewhere in White, is nihilistic and destructive since it is conceived in terms of the son's incestuous entry into the mother. Every paying customer is a son longing to be dissolved into the maternal womb. The bawd notices at one point that the civil servants, Cabinet Ministers, policemen, and adolescents who visit the house are all "lusting to be consumed" [p.332]. Eddie/Eadith feels that he has set up the establishment

in order "to seduce a whole society determined on its own downfall" [p.321]. In White's world, everyman longs for self-extinction and society itself is viewed as merely marking time before its inevitable descent into the matrix.

The brutal, sadistic side of the sexuality at Beckwith Street is emphasized by the fact that Bridie, the club-footed slut who specializes in whips and chains, is the most sought-after figure in the brothel. "'Some gentlemen'" says Bridie proudly, "'some of 'em come in their pants at sight of me surgical boot'" [p.332]. Other whores copy her techniques and soon sado-masochistic sex is the specialty of the house. Generally, the women are conceived as voracious, aggressive figures who attempt to devour their clients with passion:

'My trouble is,' Annabel gulped almost the whole of her martini, 'I need men - a constant supply ...' [p.312]

'God,' said Elsie, 'I might bite off the first cock I catch sight of.' [p.325]

[While] waiting for clients Ida would split the phallus-shaped pistachios and pop them ... into her greedy mouth. [p.327]

The castrating-murderous aspect of the brothel is made horrifyingly explicit in the incident involving the death of a patron at the hands of the Sierra Leone negress:

Brigadier Blenkinsop ... had in fact died astride Jule the negress. She could not resist boasting, 'Had a general die on top of me last night. You should've heard the clatter his medals made as he left off spurring me on.' [p.361]

The brothel is a place where the male ego succumbs to the death-ecstasy of orgasm, or is reduced by an outburst of incestuous frenzy.¹⁸ The house itself is a Hecatean womb of destruction, and at every point the regenerating aspect of sexuality is overwhelmed by images of death and decay: the bloodied whore who aborts her foetus with a knitting-needle [p.350], the smells of "spent cigarettes, stale cigar, dried semen, and human shit" [p.310], and the scores of rats and mice that run through the building [p.314].

All of this is a kind of externalized drama of the processes at work

within Eddie's unconscious, a re-enactment of his inner situation in concrete images and actions. Throughout Part Three we are given no insight into Eddie's own character, he has become peculiarly flat, two-dimensional, a mere presence. It is as if he has no personality at all; he has become identical with his world, existing in a state of *participation mystique* with the environment. Only a few dreams give evidence of an "inner" life, and these are nightmarish fragments, pointing to the pathological condition in which he is caught.

In one of the dreams Eddie enters a room filled with "benign light" and a sense of "warmth and closeness", in which he finds a beautiful young mother bathing her recently born child. The dreamer is thoroughly fascinated by the scene and kneels down beside the woman to help her wash "this most radiant of all children" [p.352]. But suddenly the room becomes dark, gloomy, and the dreamer's heart is filled with terror and remorse. The fleecy carpet upon which he is kneeling turns to "grit, stones, road-metal", and the gentle mother herself is changed into a monstrous figure, from whose mouth gushed "dishwater, sewage, putrid blood" [p.352]. The dream is a highly explicit statement of the *puer*-Mother relation in Eddie's life. What *appears* to the dreamer to be a desired state, a beautifully intimate and comforting relationship, is actually an horrific nightmare which evokes images of filth and revulsion. The apparently kindly mother is transformed into a Kali-like devourer and creature of the abyss. The dream shows how he is being inundated by chthonic forces welling up from the mother-world.

Later, while asleep in the lavish guest room of Lady Untermeyer's mansion, Eddie dreams that he is in a war-time scene in France, and is hotly pursued by enemy soldiers and barking dogs. The dogs, he felt, "were some large vindicative breed straining at leashes to scent, and on being released, to attack and destroy" [p.376]. With Gravenor, his "lover", he makes a desperate escape across the moon-lit, war-ravaged landscape and

decides to hide himself in a mossy hollow at the foot of a hill. But the move is futile because in an instant the enemy appears on the rise above him, and the vicious hounds were "pouring down into the hollow" [p.376]. Eddie is mortally wounded by shell-fire, and dies an agonizing death as the blood streams out of his body and seeps down into the earth. This is clearly an intimation of his death, since he is soon to be killed by shell-fire during a bombing raid on London. But the war functions here, as in Part One, as a metaphor of psychic devastation, as the world-destroying force which is active within his unconscious. The chthonic-matriarchal aspect of this attack is evident in the images of pursuing dogs, moonlight, blood, and by the fact that he dies in a hollow in the earth. The dogs can be seen as Hecate's hounds, filled with raving passions and anxious to "attack and destroy" the helpless *puer*. They are representatives of the instinctual energies which are unleashed when the son makes his return to the mother - here imaged in terms of a descent into a womb-like hollow in the earth.

IV

Eddie's subsequent death takes place in the context of his literal return to the personal mother. Toward the end of his career he encounters Eadie Twyborn in a London street, and thereafter visits her regularly at the Grenadier Hotel. Eadie is delighted to "receive" her son, even though he is dressed as a woman and is engaged in immoral practices. In fact Eadie tells Eddie that she has always wanted a daughter, and hopes that the two of them will return to Australia and involve themselves in mother-daughter rituals: "'As late as this perhaps we'd find we could live together. I can see us washing our hair, and sitting together in the garden to dry it'" [p.425]. This relates directly to the mythic theme: the Mother is in search of *her* own instinctual side, and she experiences her "daughter's" return in terms of a possible increase in sensual fulfilment and erotic

vitality. Eadie has become increasingly refined and "spiritual" in her later life, and eagerly welcomes this opportunity to re-explore her lower nature.¹⁹ But of course from the *puer*'s point of view this long-awaited consummation of his incestuous fantasy²⁰ can only lead to his complete assimilation to the maternal depths. As we found at the end of *The Solid Mandala*, the Mother celebrates the return of the son to her matrix, but the son himself is ruined by Her ecstatic embrace.²¹ The outer "facts" of Eddie's death are merely circumstantial: what is significant is that he is struck down as he makes his last visit to Eadie Twyborn before the two of them set off to board a ship bound for Australia. The narrative sequence reveals that the son's marriage with the Mother is a marriage with death, and that the fulfilment of the incest urge leads inevitably toward self-dissolution.

V

It is appropriate that our discussion of the novels should end with this resounding image. In a sense, every White novel has moved toward this same pattern: the incestuous return that is a devouring. The most disturbing thing about this work is that the protagonist - while faced with the most explicit imagery imaginable - is not able to dialogue with or benefit from it in any way. Nor does the author seem to want to learn from experience - rather, there is in this work an indulgent wallowing in pathological mental states. The unconscious is constantly warning, guiding him with its insights and images, but none of it is received by his conscious awareness. He remains, like Eddie or Duffield, the passive observer of his own disintegration; watching himself be consumed by incestuous-instinctual energies.

At the formal level *The Twyborn Affair* is a compelling and fascinating novel. While there are occasional lapses in the aesthetic design (especially in Part Three) the prose is for the most part finely wrought, and White's ability to evoke atmosphere and a sense of place is as evident as ever

before. But the actual substance of the work leaves much to be desired.²² The only "course" followed by narrator and protagonist is a steady decline into psychological and moral degeneracy. In part this is because White's symbolic constructs have collapsed, giving way to literalisms of all kinds. The *puer*-Mother theme has been reduced to a family romance, the psychic drama is enacted between a son, his mother and her "pals" Joanie and Marcia, and the quest for the matrix or source becomes a literal orgy of sexuality. What was previously a sacred drama confined to the realm of the psyche has become a burden of the flesh, and a distortion of physical reality.

From *The Aunt's Story* onward White's work has been concerned with creating imaginal space, and with transforming libido from concrete into symbolic forms. In the later fiction this labour has been undone, and we return to the world of Elyot Standish prior to his experience of Ard's Bay, when he was still caught up in the literal trappings of his incestuous longing. In many ways *The Twyborn Affair* is similar to that early work - both are autobiographical, set in early to mid century, and both are minor works because the author's imaginative powers are greatly reduced by the literal focus of the mother fixation. White's fictional career has been an experiment in symbolization, or an attempt of the unconscious to create symbolic analogues for psychic processes. If the experiment fails it is simply because the author has not realized what the psyche has been attempting to do, and so has not been able to sustain or nurture the life of the imagination.

Conclusion:

White's Art and the Dynamics of the Psyche

In this concluding chapter I would like to summarize the foregoing as well as explore several theoretical issues which have been assumed or implied throughout the course of the study. These include the general role of the unconscious in White's creative process, the problem of defining White's literary genre, and the tale/teller relationship and the bearing this has upon our assessment of the fiction. I will also explore the symbolization process and its relation to the central mythologem, and offer a brief comment on critical methods which have so far been applied to Patrick White. Finally, there will be an examination of the Absent Father in the novels, and a statement on the cultural implications of White's vision.

The novels as products of the unconscious

'I don't believe artists know half the time what they're creating. Oh yes, all the tralala, the technique - that's another matter. But like other people who get out of bed, wash their faces, comb their hair ... they don't act, they're instruments which are played on, or vessels which are filled.'

- Rhoda Courtney in *The Vivisector*.¹

White has often said that he experiences his art as a kind of alien will, a burden which is forced upon him by an unknown source. Writing for White begins and ends in mystery. He does not consciously arrive at an idea or narrative line and proceed to write about it; rather is he seized by an impulse and is driven to give it aesthetic form. Of course this is the romantic notion of "inspiration", of which Coleridge, Blake and Nietzsche (among others) have spoken with such glowing and memorable descriptions.² But to our secular minds the idea of the poet's Muse or *inspiratrice* seems archaic, old-fashioned, and superstitious. If I had been writing in a former time (i.e. prior to the Intellectual Enlightenment) I would undoubtedly

have chosen to speak of White's Muse, to argue that the Mother Goddess was responsible for his impressive output, that it was She who was behind the scenes, coaxing and compelling the author to attend to Her creative life.³ Instead, I must adopt the more scientific language of our era⁴ and speak of the relation between the author's conscious mind and the deep unconscious. The psychological approach is encouraged by the author himself, who makes use of the theory of the unconscious in his expositions on the creative process:

My novels are largely works which rise up out of the unconscious; I draw very little on actual situations or people.⁵

The characters are not based on real people, they simply well up from the unconscious and somehow a novel forms out of that.⁶

The suggestion is that his art is something which comes from an imaginal realm, somewhere "below" the sphere of the rational mind, and which "rises up" into consciousness. It is this invasive quality of his art which makes the creative act a tedious, even painful affair for White.⁷ The author feels as if he is being inundated with something beyond his immediate mental environment, that he is under attack from his unconscious. It is understandable, then, that White is frequently informing us how much he hates his artist's life and his subservience to imaginal forces.⁸ His situation is one where freewill is at a minimum, his life and career is co-ordinated with greater forces; everything is conditioned by fate.⁹

White tells us that his novels "usually begin with the characters; you have them floating about in your head and it may be years before they get together in a situation".¹⁰ These "characters" are the contents of his own unconscious, the psychic figures (*puer*, ego, Mother) which form the basis of his interior life and around which every novel is constructed.¹¹ We have observed that a White novel is usually structured according to the "life" of the central character, and almost always ends with his death, or with some significant break (insanity, transformation) in his career. Every novel records the life-story of an imaginal figure, an inward personage

who makes his debut upon the psychological stage and lives out the potentialities that are inherent in his immediate situation. White says that he is rarely certain how the protagonist's life will end once he has begun the novel.¹² There is no "plot" as such,¹³ but an attitude of aesthetic receptivity to the personage, an allowing of the protagonist to follow the course of his own destiny.

It is clear from this discussion that White's novels are not allegories, as several critics have suggested.¹⁴ Allegory presupposes that the author is in the supervisory or initiatory role, that he is exploiting a character as a "personification" of his own idea or point of view. Even where allegory is attempted - where the author introduces received structures into his fiction - the characters themselves reject the foreign structures and follow their completely autonomous course in spite of the author's designs. It is always the will of the unconscious (i.e. the tale) that is done, never that of the teller himself.

Neither are White's works what his "religious" critics would have them be: "wisdom literature" (Veronica Brady), "essays in mysticism" (Colin Roderick), "theological fictions" (Roger Shar), or "theosophical explorations" (Peter Beatson). None of these categories is appropriate because they too put White in the central position, viewing him as an instructor, as wise man or seer, instead of a writer who is grappling with something larger than himself, something he does not properly understand.¹⁵ Furthermore, these honorific titles overlook the subjective factor in the work. White's novels are not commentaries on "the Nature of Man", but *self-representations of the author's unconscious*. They are not "about" religion or psychology, but are primarily spontaneous expressions of White's psychic situation, reflecting the archetypal forces at work in his inner world.¹⁶

This of course is not to imply that the novels are entirely personal and subjective. They deal with objective psychological processes as perceived and experienced by an individual writer. White's inner life

is in one sense the inner life; his unconscious psyche also "ours" and the heritage of mankind. The struggles between the son and the mother-image are not uniquely his: they are the stuff of literature and dreams, the substance of mythology and fairytale. Throughout this study I have referred to "White's mother-complex", but a more precise term would perhaps be: White's experience of the mother-complex. The complex itself is autonomous, a given mythic fact. All that truly belongs to White is the context within which that objective fact is encountered, or how the complex is handled. In the final analysis his "signature" upon the "archetype"¹⁷ is his morbid obsession with the mother, his refusal to learn from experience, and his unwillingness to co-operate with the internal developmental or maturation process.¹⁸ The *puer* is an *a priori* construct of psychic reality, but White's relentless clinging to the childlike or even unborn state is his peculiar pathology, his personal flaw. Thus in his work there is a mixture of neurosis and myth, a fusion of personal and archetypal contents.¹⁹

. . .

The thesis that the novels are self-representations of the author's unconscious is a challenging one, and I do not expect this view to meet with immediate approval nor even to be clearly apparent. I would therefore like to respond to three points which might be raised against the argument, and to throw more light upon the determining role of the unconscious in White's art.

a) The work factor in the creative process

To say that the novels are autonomous products of the imagination is not to imply that they were written automatically, in a trance state or fit of inspiration. "Autonomous" refers to content, to the nature of the vision, not to method, or to how the books were written. The creation of visionary or archetypal works takes place in several stages. First there is the initial incubation period, which is largely subliminal, taking

place below the threshold of the artist's consciousness. Then there is the gradual conception of the work, a few ideas and images become clear, perhaps there are a few notes. This early phase may take quite some time - as White says, "it may be years before [the characters] get together in an actual situation".²⁰ And then begins the execution of the work, which for White takes place in three phases, an initial draft, a second attempt (both in longhand), and a third type-written manuscript containing revisions and additions to the second draft.²¹ White has said:

My first draft of a novel is the work of intuition, and it is a chaos nobody but myself could resolve. Working it up after that - the oxywelding - is more a process of reason.²²

And elsewhere:

When you first write the narrative it might be unconscious, but when you come to work it over you do it more consciously.²³

Visionary art is a dialectical process between the primary impulses of the unconscious and the formative powers of the artist. This dialectic in no way compromises the archetypal quality of the work - it simply means that an aesthetic consciousness is brought to bear upon the material, in order to shape it and give it coherence and design. The notion that effort and aesthetic formalization sullies the pristine nature of the vision is a common misconception which is a legacy of Surrealism, Dadaism, and other popular movements which have attempted to embody the life of the unconscious in literary and visual art. What cultists of the imagination fail to appreciate is that the unconscious itself seeks expression in the world of form, that it desires to be "received" and accepted by the collective consciousness. If the material remains in a crude shape - as a series of disconnected ramblings and images - then the psychic process itself could not rightly be said to have reached completion because it would be unappealing and unassimilable by the cultural canon.²⁴ The unconscious content may be foreign and even antagonistic to society,²⁵ but if it can be presented and integrated at an aesthetic level then the artist has done much to facilitate the incarnation of this archetype into the human world.

The important thing is that the substance of the work, the "vision" is authentic. Throughout his various re-workings and revisions White remains true to the archetypal content, even though some ill-conceived interpretation (imposed in the final draft?) may often obscure the psychic processes that he is himself delineating. There is constant aesthetic attendance upon the unconscious and its visionary material, despite the intellectual misapprehension of its meaning.

b) The social context

The presence of a social context in the novels may at first seem to suggest that White is a realist writer concerned with happenings in the outer world. But "society" in his fiction is less an objective external reality than an imaginal presence, a "character" in the broadest sense. Society is either an ego-bound world which resists the interior landscape (as in *Voss*, *A Fringe of Leaves*), or it is a devouring force which threatens to destroy the sensitive *puer aeternus* (as in *The Aunt's Story*, *The Tree of Man*, and *Riders*). In the first instance society is an extension of the Bonners and the Pringles, in the second it is synonymous with Mrs Flack and Mrs Jolley. That is to say, society is either the paranoid male ego or the mindlessly devouring mother writ large. Depending on the fictional context, the social milieu is a mere archetypal background for a particular psychological constellation. Of course in certain places White approaches social realism - as in Himmelfarb's European story, or Ruth Godbold's childhood experience - but always and everywhere the realistic element is subordinate to powerful archetypal patterns.

We might fairly say that whenever *emotion* enters White's depiction of "society" the focus shifts from a real to an imaginal context. Emotion issues forth from the psyche, and "behind" the emotional current an archetypal image may always be detected. Thus in *Riders* the descriptions run smoothly until the social environment is projected in a forboding, hostile, and then finally hysterical light. The image of the Destroying Mother is activated and by way of mythological apperception is projected upon and

"received" back from the external world. The same process takes place in *Voss*, but in a different psychological context. There the unacknowledged content is the masculine ego which is violently opposed to the incest urge and to the prospect of merging into the maternal image. This content is similarly projected upon and "found" in society, since the author cannot accept it as part of his immediate frame, nor admit that *Voss* and the *pueri* are fearful of their imminent self-dissolution. Thus whatever is lacking in the conscious frame becomes projected, distorted, and "enlarged" upon the background screen of society. White proceeds to attack society for its evident hostilities and antipathies, when the psyche itself is responsible for what he sees "out there".

In one respect, White is the victim of his artist's sensibility, his incredibly rich and active imagination. The interior world is so powerful that it clouds and distorts everything around him. He is similar to primitive or early man, who found in his environment the spirits or gods which possessed him from within. White is caught up in a state of unconscious identity with the world, where inside and outside are fused in a psychic continuum. Like the little boy lost in the Wullunya floods he sees the world "under coloured glass" [*TM*, p.94] - i.e. through the dream-lens of the imagination. He constantly surveys an external world which is automatically transformed by imaginal forces.

c) The use of historical models

A third objection might be that White's use of historical models contradicts the notion that his works are spontaneous products of the imagination. My own response to this point is well expressed by Erich Neumann:

The fact that the poet's conscious mind uses extraneous material for the creative process ... does not disprove the inner associations presupposed by the archetypal interpretation, for the selection and modification of this material are decisive and typical of the psychic situation. Just as residues from the previous day are elaborated in dreams, so the existing literary and historical material is worked up by the "editor" in the unconscious in order to assist the self-representation of the psyche.

We are concerned with White's use of the figure of Leichhardt in *Voss*, and his employment of the known story of Mrs Fraser in *A Fringe of Leaves*. In each case we have seen how cogently the unconscious controlled the "selection" of material, and how it subordinated this material to its own ends. At the time of writing *Voss* White's imagination was obsessed with the idea of uroboric dissolution, of merging ecstatically into an archaic landscape, and his unconscious transformed the historical data according to this prevailing mytheme. So too at the time of writing *A Fringe of Leaves* the creative unconscious was predominantly concerned with the idea of the interplay between civilized and primitive sides of the maternal archetype, and so the tale about Eliza Fraser's descent into the aboriginal world and her return to white society was an obvious model upon which the imagination could construct its symbolic tale. Neumann draws a parallel between the poet's use of historical matter and the dream's utilization of "objective" data from day-world experience. This seems to me to be an extremely insightful analogy: for in either case the "primary" material (i.e. the factual content) is made secondary by its subordination to an imaginal process.

Thus even where White is at his most "objective", telling stories of old Australia, the unconscious is silently at work, conditioning and directing the extraneous material at hand. The "world" is taken by the psyche and reshaped according to its own needs and requirements. The creative process exists in order to facilitate the expression of the unconscious, which constantly seeks to create semblances of its own hidden life.

Teller and tale

The fact that White fails to grasp the meaning of his work is itself a testimony to the autonomy and authenticity of his vision. He creates the work at a formal level, but the content lives a life of its own, an archaic complex alive in the psychic depths. In novel after novel the

same movement is established: the *puer* enters and is devoured by the mother-image, and the author misinterprets this as apotheosis and triumph, as the reunion of man with his God. The "marriage" of mother and son is one of the earliest mythologems in Western legend. The Oedipus myth is itself a late derivation of the incestuous drama, which can be traced right back to the neolithic and upper paleolithic eras.²⁷ It depicts a world where Nature is omniscient and all-powerful, and where the masculine spirit constantly succumbs to Her strength. There is not yet a Divine Spirit or Father-God to stand by and support the son in his quest. Thus, in the myth, the son does not mature beyond adolescence, he remains vernal, phallic, supporting the Goddess in her natural cycle and finally yielding to Her in death. In other words, the spirit does not escape the primal situation, is caught up in matter,²⁸ the great round, and so never finds transcendence through relationship with an extramundane factor. The mythologem is therefore decidedly pre-Christian, because Spirit is absent, there is no *puer-senex* connection,²⁹ but merely a son dwarfed and overpowered by the Mother Goddess.

To mistake the *puer*-Mother cycle for Christianity is to put paganism in the place of divine revelation, to misrepresent the cult of the annually dying and resurrecting nature-spirit in terms of the redemptive and transcendent life of the Spirit as revealed through Christ.³⁰ It is to confuse the earthly with the heavenly, to imagine that every son held fast by the maternal matrix (or psychologically unborn) is a religious hero involved in the worship of the Most High. In psychological terms, it is to theologize the mother-complex, to place a childhood fixation upon a religious pedestal and to entirely overlook the retarding factor of the incestuous drama. The son is consumed by the mother-world and he thinks he is returning into God, his ego and individuality is snatched from him and he feels he is becoming "at one" with the divine. Basically, the ecstasy of self-dissolution is confused with the heightened feeling of religious integration and spiritual endeavour.³¹

It is not entirely White's fault that he should be involved in such a radical misunderstanding of religious life. It is also a collective problem, a reflection of Western ignorance of inner reality and of the psychological processes that underlie spiritual experience. We are a secular race - we have no methods or techniques to deal with archetypal forces, no ability to "discriminate between spirits", or to tell one god or complex from another. The inner realm is largely unknown territory to us; we tend to be focused outward, upon the "real" world.³² The only myth which has survived the "Enlightenment" is the Christian one - and while it is a crucial mythologem it is not broad enough to accommodate the full range of conflicts and dramas which are still very much alive within the human psyche. We may call ourselves "Christians", but often the inner life tells another story, is oriented around a different mythical framework.

Of course if we are alive to the symbolic language of the unconscious we can gain a deeper understanding of our conflicts by studying the images which well up from within and by seeking parallels in the world of mythology, art, and literature. White might have found suitable parallels in Frazer's *The Golden Bough*, in pre-Christian matriarchal mysteries and the Attis-Adonis mythologem, in the nature mysticism of Wordsworth, in the philosophical and poetic works of Vaughan and Traherne, in the studies of Bachofen,³³ Briffault,³⁴ Freud, and early Jung. Instead, he turned to the available Western (patriarchal) paradigm - Christianity - and to Judaism, the *Odyssey*, and the "mandala mysticism" of Jung - none of which could be of any real help in promoting understanding of the mother-myth.³⁵ The search for knowledge was strongly evident,³⁶ but somehow White never really discovered an appropriate mythological or intellectual context for his own visionary material. Essentially, he aimed too high - seeking parallels from the "great" Western religious sources which affirm the heroic life and the strivings of the masculine Spirit, instead of from works or traditions which deal with the triumph of maternal Nature and with man's subservience to the natural world.³⁷

The first indication of White's misreading of cultural paradigms is in his employment of the Odysseus theme in *The Aunt's Story*. Homer's story is about the development of the masculine principle, the defeat of chthonic-matriarchal forces (personified by various dragons, goddesses, nymphs) and the ultimate achievement of spiritual independence.³⁸ But what is Theodora but Odysseus-in-reverse? She falls victim to the dragon-mother, to the Siren-like enchantment of chthonic depths, and at the end is completely merged with the maternal image. True, Theodora is on a journey, like Odysseus, but hers leads to disintegration and insanity, not to higher levels of being.

Thereafter followed a series of myths and symbols which were equally incongruous to their contexts: *Hamlet* in *The Tree of Man*, Christianity in *Voss*, Judaism, Kabbalah, and the Chariot of Fire in *Riders in the Chariot*. With the support of these models White was able to convert defeat into triumph, and regression into spiritual enlightenment.

But if the authorial commentary suggested that the spirit had triumphed, the imagery of the novels made it clear that *nous* had in fact been consumed by *physis*. At the point of ecstatic dissolution the tale would spontaneously produce images of the disintegrative matrix by which the *puer* was being destroyed: the "jaws of roses" (*The Aunt's Story*), the vibrant, overpowering life of Nature, the salivating mouths and gnashing teeth of women [cf. Fig.4], the imprisoning houses of suburbia [cf. Fig.7b], the daemonically destructive nature of inanimate objects, things, and "materialism". White could never properly integrate these images into his central theme, and so they were forced to constitute a kind of shadow-myth, which was always projected outside the protagonist's world and carried by society, women, and external phenomena. It was never recognized that these representations were part of the central quest of the *puer*, that he actually longed to be destroyed by the mother, to be sucked into the uroboric womb, and dissolved into the maternal realm. Thus the ultimate cost of psychological misreading was mysogyny, hatred of society, and anti-materialism.

The pathology of the myth was split off and invested in external reality. The forces that overpowered and destroyed from within were foisted outside the "spiritual" drama and carried by secondary fictional figures.³⁹

This misreading of the theme could not continue forever. Eventually it had to be made perfectly clear to White that the inward mythologem was not what he imagined, not a happy dream of man's reunion with God, but an agonizingly incestuous drama between mother-image and son. And this message, or revolt, had to come from the imagination itself, from within the fictional world. *The Solid Mandala* is the work where this unveiling takes place. Here the inner life assumes personified form in the figure of Arthur Brown, the "retarded" shadow-brother who rejects the Christian frame⁴⁰ and who urges White (as Waldo, the "conscious" twin) to "see" exactly what is taking place in the deep unconscious. Arthur attempts to show Waldo that he is caught up in a psychic complex (the "knot" at the centre of the marble), and that he must extricate himself from it before any spiritual maturity can be achieved. *The Solid Mandala* is a very desperate novel, which reflects the urgency of the inner self (and White's potential genius), its longing to be freed from its present uroboric-infantile condition, and to be "met" and understood by ego-consciousness. Arthur senses that if Waldo does not achieve realization, he will not either; that individuation is a dialogical process requiring the participation of conscious and unconscious.

The shadow-brother, however, is not malicious about its "exposure" of the inward psychic complex: it tactfully (even lovingly) shows the ego-personality the dark forces that are alive below the threshold of consciousness. On the epic walk Arthur points to all the pressing realities: the central place of the maternal figure, the "festering" nature of unresolved complexes, the ego's inability to "see" the simple truth, and finally his own need to reach fulfilment through his brother. But of course the walk - and Arthur's "apocalypse" - leads to tragedy. The conscious ego is not equal to the task of understanding, it cannot, or does not want to, find out the reality of its situation. The contents of the archetypal world

are so highly charged that they destroy the very fabric of the ego's world. Immediately Waldo's thoughts turn to self-destruction: the burning of his papers, the spilling of his essence into the earth, the tall grass towering above his head. The fatal blow is made when Arthur shows Waldo the mirror-studded dress in which he (Waldo) carried out his grotesque transvestite ritual. "He was holding in front of him the sheet of ice, so that Waldo might see his reflexion in it".⁴¹ And the final collapse comes when Waldo discovers Arthur's blood-poem ("all Marys in the end bleed"), a veritable invocation to the Mother Goddess in her paradoxical attributes.

For the first time in White's career the *matriarchal* nature of his interior realm is made fully apparent, the orthodox religious frame is discarded, but the ego cannot cope with the awful revelation. At the end of the story we find many images of the ego's disintegration: Waldo's body is devoured by dogs, Arthur is overpowered by Mrs Poulter, and the glass marble itself becomes an uroboros reflecting the fusion of the *puer* with the Great Mother. The ego has been devoured by the maternal archetype, or in fictional terms, the teller has been extinguished in the tale. If the ego could not come to terms with the matriarchal content, the myth itself seizes full control and perforce co-ordinates the author to meet *its* needs. White no longer develops, only the Mother Goddess reaches development through him.

The collapse of symbolization

With the disintegration of ego-consciousness into the matriarchal field White's novels become simultaneously more mythic and less symbolic. The novels become more mythic to the extent that the Mother Goddess now takes the upper hand and carries out Her archetypal quest for integration throughout the works of the seventies. Yet at the same time the novels become poorer in symbolic content because the symbolization process

has been aborted by the dissolution of consciousness. This point is crucial and must now be explored in greater depth.

In a sense symbolization and individuation go hand in hand, or are two ways of talking about the same thing. "Symbolization" is the process whereby the contents of the inner world acquire symbolic form, or become represented as psychic objects. "Individuation" is simply the experience of these symbolic forms, the human personality's encounter with forces beyond itself. Both processes are concerned with the *sanctification* of experience by one's participation in numinous or archetypal events. When individuation begins one is embarked upon a symbolic life, one senses a living connection with higher or greater forces. The *puer*-type male (the subject of our present study) feels himself connected to an eternal image, to a World Mother (regardless of whether he calls this "God" or "Goddess"), and his desire to be reborn through Her, or to penetrate Her mystery, is carried out through mystical ritual, through concentration upon numinous symbols, and through communion with pristine Nature. He is freed from his personal fixation, his desire for the "real" mother, and now participates in an archetypal mystery - son becomes *puer*, and mother Eternal Nature. In this way the blind, instinctual impulse is transformed and the psychic energy is allowed to flow into higher channels.⁴² But when individuation is terminated by the ego's assimilation to the unconscious the symbolic drama comes to an end. The longing for the Mother is still apparent, but everything is now literalized. When this occurs the sacred ritual turns into an orgy of sexuality, worship becomes fornication, sanctity becomes sodomy.⁴³ The symbols of the Mother no longer appear, or the psyche has lost its capacity to transmute biological impulses into symbolic patterns of experience.

Up until the time of *The Solid Mandala* White had managed to replace the personal fixation (so apparent in the career of Elyot Standish) with symbolic ritual, to have his characters engage themselves with symbols of the Great Mother.⁴⁴ In Theodora's case this became a longing for Abyssinia,

in Parker's a desire to merge with Nature, in Voss's an obsession with a mystical Goddess-Figure. In *Riders* the son's longing became a nostalgia for mystery and silence, a worship of Mother Nature and a desire to be enfolded in Her embrace.⁴⁵ The *pueri* all longed for mystic anonymity, for the death-ecstasy of maternal containment.

But after *The Solid Mandala* the mother-myth is robbed of its symbolism - everything is acted out at a profane level, in literal sexuality. Duffield finds satisfaction only in fornication and orgasm ["O God he loved his Katherine Volkov gliding together through never smoother water" *VS*, p.481], and Basil Hunter involves himself in constant incestuous rites and practices. By the time of *The Twyborn Affair* the entire *puer*-Mother theme is a family romance between Eddie and Eadie.

Thus, the dissolution of consciousness (as expressed in Waldo's tragedy) leads also to the dissolution of symbolic forms, for without consciousness the inner life cannot be represented at an abstract level, but can only express itself "naturally" through instinctual processes. What properly belongs to the psyche falls into the lower world and becomes a burden of the flesh, for it can no longer be upheld in the subtle realm. White's career ends where it began, in the world of the "personal" mother-complex, where the archetypal image is still wholly subsumed by its human carrier. The uroboros bites its tail - or that which brought forth psyche has taken psyche back into itself, into the darkness of *physis*.

And the central mythic theme - the mother's search for herself - is also burdened by literalisms of all kinds. Her quest is for the most part carried out at the external, physical level. Her desire to protect her animal nature from harm becomes a literal concern for endangered animals [cf. caption to Fig. 10]. Her exploration of instinctual nature is carried out in orgiastic sexuality, or her longing to "unite" with her own feminine *eros* becomes a lesbian attraction for other women (as with Olivia Davenport, Joanie Golson, Eadie Twyborn). Descent into the psychic underworld becomes a trip to Van Diemen's Land, or (for Mrs Golson) a

futile and repetitive journey down "a stony, rutted road" in a primitive setting. And the mother's desire to resume her former sophisticated state becomes a return journey to London or Athens (as with Ellen Roxburgh and Hero Pavloussi). Everything takes place unconsciously - i.e. through external phenomena.⁴⁶ Somehow the mother too is without psyche, without access to the internal realm which can only be revealed in symbols and through symbolic exploration.

Because of this loss of symbolic reality the writing itself tends to become somewhat flat and two-dimensional. The prose in, say, *The Vivisector* or *The Twyborn Affair* lacks that quality of inwardness which was so strongly marked in *The Aunt's Story* and other major works. In Theodora's world every event was also a psychic experience, it pointed beyond itself to other realms of significance, but in Eddie Twyborn's world events (regardless of their inner associations) are presented merely as events, as external happenings. The language is no longer poetic and evocative, but primarily descriptive and prosaic. The later novels are therefore much easier to read and more accessible to the general reader. Critics have commented approvingly on this change of style,⁴⁷ but it must be emphasized that it comes only as a result of the collapse of symbolization. There is of course something inherently perverse in applauding a visionary writer for "getting rid" of his symbolism and for becoming easier to read. What is essentially a decline in artistic and psychological achievement becomes at the hands of realist or "humanist" critics an advance in literary skill and general readability. It is a relief to find the novels no longer congested by imposed intellectual constructs, but the entire symbolic dimension has been lost to the realm of physicality and concretism. We must not think, however, that White has become the "social realist" that certain critics apparently wish him to be. He remains to the end a psycho-mythological writer, concerned with the representation of the unconscious, even if this material no longer emerges in a symbolic context, but in the constrained forms of "natural" imagery and "literal" action.

Critical problems in approaching White

I would now like to make a few general remarks about White criticism, and point to some specific problems that keep recurring in critical analyses of the novels. Essentially, the problems have to do with outmoded literary paradigms, and with applying to White ideas or assumptions which are inappropriate to his art.

a) The question of "influences"

White criticism has been constantly preoccupied with the search for "influences", hoping to find in this writer or that the "ideas" upon which his art is "based". To date, "cases" have been made for White's utilization of the writings of Blake, Simone Weil, C.G. Jung, T.S. Eliot, Nietzsche, Gabriel Marcel, Sartre, and Gershom Scholem. While it may be valid to argue that these writers present possible parallels to White's art, it is quite another thing to suppose that they represent "source materials". One is frequently disturbed by the way in which parallels are converted into influences, and by the assertions that are then made by the critic who has "found" the external key.⁴⁸ For my part, the question of extraneous influences is itself unprofitable, because it directs our attention outside the imaginal field, toward the world of intellectual ideas. If ever there was a writer whose vision is almost exclusively conditioned by inner, imaginative experience it is Patrick White. Of course at the formal level we can point to Hardy, Lawrence, Joyce, and Proust as influences upon his style - but I cannot think of one writer or philosopher who has significantly influenced his vision. It is astounding to what degree the inward archetype has formed and shaped his literary world. In every novel the presence of the mother archetype can be felt, as the true "structural" base of the work as well as its "theme". And this is hardly borrowed from Freud or Oedipus - it is White's own inward experience, or the archetypal inwardness of his work.

b) "Religious" criticism

The problem with "religious" criticism is that it is based on White's misconception of his work, it emphasizes what is actually extrinsic to the imaginative vision. The "religious" critics overlook the narrative archetypal structures and seize upon White's oracular statements. They read the novels, not as autonomous works, but as products of White's "thought". Examples of this method are Peter Beatson's reading of *Voss*, where he collects all the snippets about God and Christianity so that the novel ends up appearing like a theological essay, and Susan Moore's reading of *Riders*, where all the scriptural references are brought into radiant exegetical perspective. But in neither case is the religious frame relevant to what goes on in the novel. We therefore have "critical" essays which skim off the bits of super-added thought, and where the tale itself sinks into oblivion. This kind of criticism is subject to the intentional fallacy, which assumes that the author is identical with his work, and that the novel must be judged according to what the writer "says" it is about.

What we are dealing with here is not only a problem of critical perception, of how we "view" the novels, but also of critical language. How can we delineate a matriarchal myth if we have no language with which to approach it? Clearly, the old Judaeo-Christian vocabulary is inadequate. We do injury to the material whenever we misapply abstract theological terms to its vivid symbolical imagery. The novels speak of devouring and being devoured, of returning to a maternal source and being caught here. What, then, are the value of terms like "grace", "transcendence", "salvation"?

If we want to remain in touch with the tale, and not allow it to disappear in a vapour, we have to remain in close contact with its images, with the actual substance of the prose. In practice, this means employing in our analyses an image-based terminology. Our terms do not necessarily have to be "Jungian", but they must be plastic, visual, metaphoric. If they stray too far in the direction of abstract intellectualism we find ourselves far above the imaginal ground and easily misled by the author's interpretation

of events. We need more actual participation in what the imagination is putting forth, and less reliance upon what the author tells us is taking place.

c) "Social" criticism

A large body of criticism devotes itself to "social" issues, and analyses the work in terms of what it has to tell us about "national identity", "the quality of life", and "man in society". This misdirection in White criticism has been fostered by the "pragmatic" school of critics which has dominated the Australian literary scene to date. This school, based on a nineteenth-century social-realist tradition, assumes that art is concerned exclusively with the mimetic impulse, and that the novel exists only in order to reflect the goings-on in the real world. It tends to assume that all "good" Australian writers are social realists, and is embarrassed by "mysticism" and "symbolism" whenever these appear in Great Australian Novels.⁴⁹ The more rigid adherents to this view even argue that White's "mysticism" is a misnomer, that he is at bottom an agnostic, and that the major novels are deeply disguised satires of religious life.⁵⁰ These arguments, which fly in the face of all the evidence, are impelled not by insight and the search for truth, but by the narrow desire to uphold and support the prevailing literary paradigm. White's fiction is the round peg which must be fitted into the square hole, and critics are often desperate enough to carve out a few edges to see that it fits. Not only is this method grossly damaging to the novels, but it also contributes to the perpetration of crude and inflexible modes of thought.

If all art is viewed as being a kind of ornamented form of sociology, and if the literary imagination is merely a device by which the writer "improves" on life, then the visionary impulse is entirely misunderstood and misinterpreted. White himself has said that,

The realistic novel is remote from art. A novel should give one an illuminating experience; it shouldn't set out what you know already.⁵¹

Great art seeks to explore the core of reality, not merely the obvious face

of life. Its realm is the internal dimension, the imaginal realm of archetype and dream. We need to become aware of the fundamental significance of archetypal and mythic truth. No culture (as Blake insisted) can survive on a practical-realist basis, for vision alone gives life. We must dispense with the deep-seated prejudice that "myth" is a synonym for "that which is untrue", and that fantasy and dream are merely for children and the superstitious. Man is more than a social animal - he also participates in imaginal reality, and any true "humanism" ought to accommodate this inward dimension of our nature.

The Absent Father

White's matriarchal vision, although undoubtedly conditioned by a personal mother-complex, is in fact intimately associated with the *Zeitgeist* and the problems of the time. We live in an age of strong cultural upheaval. The masculine dominants of our Western patriarchal society appear to be declining, and are rapidly being eclipsed by the long-suppressed contents of the deep unconscious. In symbolic terms, the Father is failing, losing his power, and the Mother Goddess is rising up as never before, claiming her rightful place with a colour of vengeance.⁵² We find the Mother's claims reflected in many aspects of contemporary life: in the new concern for Nature and "natural" living, in the revolution in sexuality and the new attitude toward the body and the instincts, in widespread anti-intellectualism and the concern for free expression, in the new interest in occultism, magic, and natural religion.⁵³ The very fact that we look to "the unconscious" today is a turning toward the matrix or source, a sense that the cultural canon has failed us and that we must look elsewhere for wisdom and support. "Unable to go backwards to revive the dead father of tradition, we go downwards into the mothers of the collective unconscious, seeking an all-embracing comprehension".⁵⁴ Nietzsche declared "God is dead" and turned toward pre-Christian mystery cults to find meaning. D.H. Lawrence abandoned the faith of his Fathers, and drew his inspiration from nature-mysticism and sexuality.

Everywhere in modern art and literature there is a sense of radical dissatisfaction with conventional patriarchal modes of being.⁵⁵

But as consciousness turns "back" to be rejuvenated by the source it often happens that it loses itself in the primordial depths. When this occurs the "return" is no longer an advance, but an absolute regression. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the novels of Patrick White. Every major character returns to the maternal source and is extinguished in its darkness. Life moves backward, toward anonymity and uroboric containment, and there is no progression toward individuality. Something fundamental has gone wrong with the mystic process. Consciousness has not the strength, nor even the desire, to separate itself from the mother-realm and to return again to the upper world. This flaw is an archetypal one: there is no Father to extricate the son from the maternal embrace.

In all myths of individuation the hero must return to the mother-realm to find renewal and rebirth (his own 'anima' in the form of the young maiden) and then do battle with the "dragon" of the underworld. This "dragon" -- encountered in a pseudo-external form -- is in one sense the son's own satanic longing for extinction, for self-dissolution through incest with the mother.⁵⁶ The son must "defeat" his own uroboric longing before he can win his freedom and higher masculinity.⁵⁷ Generally, he needs archetypal support before this heroic deed can be accomplished. The ego by itself is not capable of defeating the dragon-mother. In the myths the required strength and steadfastness come from the Father -- either direct from Him (as in the Christian story) or through His female representative (Athene in the Odysseus and Perseus myths, Wisdom in Hebraic mythology). The archetypal support takes the form of spirit, wind, fire, *logos*, or knowledge. The son is "reminded" by the sacred power that he has descended into matter for a purpose, but there is a work of redemption to pursue, and that he must not wallow in the inertia of unconsciousness and "natural" existence. The Father initiates the *opus contra naturam*: a light is struck in the belly of the whale and the captive is freed, the Word descends from

heaven and the redemptive process begins, the hero is given a magic sword and frees the maiden (St George) or an entire people (King Arthur) from darkness and imprisonment.

But where the Father is absent the hero does not fulfil his individuation. Theseus, unaided by Zeus or Athene, descends to the underworld and gets stuck there; he rests awhile and finds he is glued to the rocks. Actaion, also unaided, enters the realm of untamed nature and is devoured by his hounds. Adonis - one of the "mother-born" - is co-ordinated with the natural round and is destroyed by the boar, Aphrodite's animal counterpart. White's characters are doomed, fatherless heroes who succumb to an earthly fate, or who are in some way imprisoned by the maternal world. The "natural" thing in man is the incest-urge, the movement back toward the source; the "unnatural" (given by the *senex*) is the incest-taboo, the separation from matter and the striving toward spiritual independence. Left to his own resources, the son's fate is Oedipal and pre-Christian: he denies the father-world and "marries" the mother. Or, in other words, the longing for ecstasy and bliss overrides the will to individuation.

In White's fiction the only *puer* who recognizes his imprisonment and who attempts to do something about it is Arthur Brown. He experiences his uroboric state not as bliss and fulfilment, but as an agonizing and stifling condition. He longs for development and for the freedom which self-realization could bring. He seeks help from the father, and consults encyclopaedias and modern philosophers, yet nothing gives him the insight he needs. Dad simply takes down the dictionary and gives him limp, uninspired advice. "Dad" is the ineffectual *senex*, the conventional consciousness which knows nothing about the inner world and which cannot provide fatherly support to the questing *puer*. He signifies a father-principle which is defunct, no longer related to Spirit or Logos, because he is himself caught up in the maternal realm. George Brown's dullness and ineffectuality, his asthma and his subservience to his wife all point to the fact that he is caught up in the mother-world. This enslavement to unseen forces is not

allayed by his "enlightened" and "modern" mind, his refutation of religion and disbelief of metaphysical reality. On the contrary, his hubristic denial of the irrational merely makes him all the more subject to what he refuses to see:

After he retired, Dad would sometimes recall, in the spasmodic phrasing which came with the asthma, his escape by way of Intellectual Enlightenment, and the voyage to Australia ... but in the telling, he would grow darker rather than enlightened, his breathing thicker, clogged with the recurring suspicion that he might be chained still. [SM, p.145]

The "other" reality is rejected, but this of course does nothing to free the individual from internal psychic forces. In White the father does not fulfil the necessary *senex*-function, does not aid the growth of the son, since he is himself held fast in the maternal realm. Nor is there any Father-God or Redeemer who points the way to salvation and spiritual life. Nature holds sway - her darkness remains undisturbed, her rule unchallenged.

Notes and References

Introduction

- 1 Jung, personal communication to Marie Louise von Franz, quoted by Edmund D. Cohen in "The Dangers of Analytical Psychology", *C.G. Jung and the Scientific Attitude*, p.138.
- 2 Examples of this kind of analysis are James Kirsch, *Shakespeare's Royal Self*, and Barbara Hannah's study of the Bronte sisters, *Striving Towards Wholeness*.
- 3 In this category I would place White's "Jungian" critics: Ingmar Björkstén, A.P. Riemer, and Peter Beatson.
- 4 It is surprising that there has been no theoretical explorations into Jungian criticism, only "practical" applications to this or that writer. (NB. Northrop Frye's notion of "archetypal" criticism is not Jungian.) Until theoretical problems are confronted the methodology must remain inert and embedded in errors and complacencies.
- 5 For Jung's method of handling products of the unconscious, see his *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, p.152f.
- 6 Generally, people take their own symbolic material at too "high" a level. They are not too keen to admit to problems, fixations, pathologies, but prefer to see themselves already at the threshold of psychic integration.
- 7 See Glossary, "matrix".
- 8 See Appendix, "Uroboros is not Mandala".
- 9 These critics include Judith Wright, Patricia Morley, Peter Beatson, James McAuley, Ingmar Björkstén, and J.F. Burrows. Cf. Björkstén: "Carl Jung's depth psychology and archetypology have served as literary guides" [*Patrick White*, p.1].
- 10 A.P. Riemer, "Visions of the Mandala in *The Tree of Man*", *Ten Essays on Patrick White*, ed. G.A. Wilkes, p.116.
- 11 White himself wrote in a letter to me, "Anything Jungian in *The Aunt's Story* can only have come out of the unconscious" [White, letter to D.J. Tacey, September 28, 1975].
- 12 Cf. Conclusion, "The novels as products of the unconscious".
- 13 White, in a letter to D.J. Tacey, February 14, 1976.
- 14 White, letter to D.J. Tacey, September 28, 1975.
- 15 Cf. D.H. Lawrence's maxim: "Never trust the artist. Trust the tale". This is particularly good advice to the reader of White's novels.
- 16 The term "algebraic symbol" is borrowed from A.A. Phillips in his seminal essay, "Patrick White and the Algebraic Symbol", *Meanjin*, Vol. 24, No. 4, 1965.

Chapter One

- 1 C.G. Jung, *Mysterium Coniunctionis*, p.92.
- 2 Cf. S.Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, and R.Stein, *Incest and Human Love*. See also Jung, "Symbols of the Mother and of Rebirth", in *Symbols of Transformation*.
- 3 Cf. Erich Neumann, "Leonardo and the Mother Archetype", in *Art and the Creative Unconscious*.
- 4 Thus the Freudian reading of the incest pattern encapsulates a typically human response - i.e. a mishandling - of a symbolic problem.
- 5 *The Living and the Dead* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967). Subsequent references are to this edition:
- 6 This passage is a reminiscence of the past, taking place several months after his mother's death.
- 7 It must be emphasized that White does not "know" about any of this - he is as much unconscious of the incest tendency as Elyot. That is why the incest motif is never clearly stated, but can only be inferred from the structure and meaning of the text.
- 8 Cf. Jung: "Since the son is not conscious of his incest tendency it is projected upon the mother" (*Symbols of Transformation*, p.294).
- 9 See Glossary, "matrix".
- 10 "Literalism" is a commonly used psychological term for the concrete expression of symbolic ideas.
- 11 The mother archetype is again represented as a circular body of water in *The Tree of Man* (p.436).
- 12 Regarding the symbolism of the bay, cf. Jung, *Symbols*, p.271f.
- 13 Cf. Neumann, "The Central Symbolism of the Feminine", in *The Great Mother*.
- 14 Regarding the maternal nature of the tree, cf. Jung, *Symbols*, p.219f.
- 15 There is also a negative aspect here, which will be discussed at the end of the chapter. The image of his legs planted deep in the earth suggests that he is, like a tree, fixated and held fast by the earth-mother.
- 16 These can be seen as the precursors of Arthur's marbles in *The Solid Mandala*.
- 17 The difference between uroboros and mandala will be discussed further in Chapters 2 and 5, but the reader is strongly advised to consult the Appendix, which is an important conceptual aid to the developing argument.
- 18 Those critics who examine White's "mystical" aspect (especially Patricia Morley, Peter Beatson, Thelma Herring, Ingmar Björkstén, *et al.*) have misread his central symbol. Such confusion is partly understandable because uroboros and mandala seem identical, particularly to anyone unfamiliar with the language of symbolism. Both, after all, are "magic circles" and point to an all-encompassing experience of "unity".

- 19 Mrs Macarthy is another of White's terrible-mother figures: "You dreaded Mrs Macarthy's kiss. Just as you dreaded her voice.... Mrs Macarthy talked a great deal, spitting always through the gaps in her teeth, rushing at things ..." [p.81].
- 20 As we will see in later chapters, White identifies with the spiritual or "light" aspect of the Mother (e.g. Laura Trevelyan) and rejects her dark, chthonic aspect (Rose Portion). The efforts to heal this split - which permeates the "major" phase of White's work - are reserved until the end of his career, when he is forced to accept the dual nature of his central archetype.
- 21 Cf: "He had discovered also that she was four years older than himself. And this gave her a surplus of superiority. He was still young enough to stand in awe of age" [p.122].
- 22 The same is true for when he encounters the mother of the inner world, as we will see at the end of the chapter. When he makes his symbolic return to the mother he does so in a blind, infantile way and is virtually assimilated to the powerful mother-world.
- 23 Cf. Marie-Louise von Franz, *The Problem of the Furer Aeternus*, part 2, ch.3, for a discussion of this aspect of the mother-bond.
- 24 Here I am referring to the uroboric pebbles of Ard's Bay.
- 25 James Hillman, "Feeling and the Mother-Complex" in *Jung's Typology*.
- 26 Here Elyot's life closely mirrors that of White himself. In an autobiographical essay the author tells us how, after leaving Cambridge where he had taken a degree in modern languages, he settled in London to become a writer but was fast becoming "that most sterile of beings, a London intellectual" ("The Prodigal Son", *Australian Letters*, I, No.3, 1958, p.38).
- 27 Cf. Stein: "... the severity of the incest wound can be measured by the degree of fear one has about losing rational control, whether or not it is directly related to sexuality" ("The Incest Wound", *Spring 1973*, p.135). See Glossary, "incest wound".
- 28 This present study does not focus upon the lives of Eden Standish or Joe Barnett because it is concerned primarily with the mother-complex of Elyot Standish. For a fuller discussion of Eden and Joe see my article "Denying the Shadow as Day Lengthens: Patrick White's *The Living and the Dead*", in *Southern Review*, XI, No.2 July 1978.
- 29 Actually, symbol is not the appropriate term here - we should say "sign". A symbol is an image which points to something as yet unknown, whereas the sign stands for something known. Here we use the word "symbol" in the colloquial sense - as White uses it in the novel.
- 30 The same situation is reflected in *The Ham Funeral* (1947), where a highly distorted sexual energy is projected upon Mrs Lusty: "Down below, a fat woman lies crying on the flags, a last slobber of passion on her mouth ... Ugh!" (*Four Plays by Patrick White*, p.68).
- 31 Insofar as White himself is identical with Elyot in this novel, and as he is unconscious of the incest tendency which runs throughout the work, we must also realize that the author's own projection of a demonized incestuous longing is in large part responsible for the negative characterization of Mrs Standish.

- 32 This motif of the incestuous brother-sister pair runs throughout the course of White's entire work and achieves its fullest realization with the "coupling" of Dorothy and Basil Hunter in *The Eye of the Storm*.
- 33 Whether we call it "transformation" or "regression" depends on our point of view. "Transformation" points to the prospective, forward-looking aspect of the process, while "regression" reminds us that the process is, after all, a movement backwards into the psychic past.
- 34 This is the tragic fate of one who suffers from an outstanding mother-complex: he never manages to free himself from the domination of the mother. In relation to Elyot's "return" cf. Jung: "There is always a danger that those who set foot in this realm will grow fast to the rocks.... It happens all too easily that there is no returning from the realm of the Mothers" (*Symbols*, p.310).
- 35 Cf. Jung: "... the danger comes from the mother, because she absorbs the regressing libido and keeps it to herself, so that he who sought rebirth finds only death" (*Symbols*, p.331).
- 36 Thelma Herring quite correctly refers to Elyot's regeneration as a "very vague solution" ("The Odyssey of a Spinster", *Ten Essays on Patrick White*, (ed.) G. Wilkes, p.7).

Chapter Two

- 1 C.G. Jung, *Symbols of Transformation*, p.355.
- 2 Theodora replaces Elyot Standish as White's fictional ego. This important point is taken up and explored at the end of the chapter. Here I can only touch on it briefly, and trust that the reader can accept the logic of this position - or at least suspend judgement until the end of the chapter.
- 3 *The Aunt's Story* deserves - in fact demands - close symbolic analysis because every event, every act (and in some parts, every word) has multi-dimensional significance, is symbolic of an inner psychic process. This means that the present work - which purports to be a complete symbolic study of the novel - must necessarily be a complex, difficult, and lengthy analysis. It is perhaps paradoxical that this single work - the slimmest of White's volumes - should warrant the lengthiest chapter in the present thesis. But its physical size is deceptive - *The Aunt's Story* is by far the most difficult and complex of White's novels.
- 4 The fact that the father has an exclusively positive maternal significance may seem somewhat peculiar, but is by no means incomprehensible. Even in the realm of feminine psychology (which does not directly concern us here) it is not uncommon to find situations where the daughter seeks the "positive mother" in the father: "... a possible result of a faulty relationship to the mother is that the father is expected to provide the positive maternal side. This leads to an unconscious expectation that the man will be the exclusively good "maternal" father to whom the woman can play the loving and protected daughter" (Gerhard Adler, *The Living Symbol*, p.115n).
- 5 The "carry over" of libido is one way of talking about the transformation of psychic energy, its movement from a purely natural-instinctual to a spiritual state, cf. Jung: "The symbolical truth...which puts water in place of the mother and spirit ... in place of the father, frees, the

libido from the channel of the incest tendency, offers it a new gradient, and canalizes it into a spiritual form" [*Symbols*, p.226].

- 6 Here again I must remind the reader that I give the word "incest" a different meaning from that which usually belongs to it. I use the word in the sense of Neumann's uroboric incest: i.e. the urge to get back to the mother, to the source and unconscious background of life.
- 7 Cf. Jung: "... creative fantasy is continually engaged in producing analogies to instinctual processes in order to free the libido from sheer instinctuality by guiding it toward analogical ideas" [*Symbols*, p.227].
- 8 However even after the libido has been returned to the mother (as *Mater Natura*) the human mother continues to bear White's image of the negative maternal archetype. Nature is idealized and the negative side falls back again to the human level.
- 9 Cf: "Theo should have been a boy, they said, the more obliging ones, hoping to make the best. But she herself had never considered what could not have been such a different state" [p.32].
- 10 Cf.: "If you went inside, Father was sitting with his chin on his chest, looking at books. He would sit like this for many hours ... as steady as a tree. Really Father was not unlike a tree, thick and greyish-black, which you sat beside, and which was there and not. Your thoughts drifted through the branches..." [p.23].
- 11 J.J. Bachofen, quoted in Neumann, *Origins*, p.45.
- 12 The fantasy-figure of Holstius, appearing at the end of the novel, is a further extension of the Adonis myth. It is not a myth, however, of which the author is conscious. Rather, it is something which asserts itself autonomously in his work. This will be discussed more fully in the concluding chapter.
- 13 All references are to the Penguin [1977] edition of the novel.
- 14 Abyssinia is to *The Aunt's Story* what Ard's Bay was to *The Living and the Dead*: i.e. the central "geographical" location of the maternal archetype. Strangely enough, there is even an historical connection between the dark world of Abyssinia (now Ethiopia) and the mother archetype: historical studies have shown that Abyssinia was a strictly matriarchal world, and that its ancient capital, Meroë, was ruled over by a dynasty of Queens. White makes no reference to this in the novel, and it is doubtful whether he was even aware of this fact at the time of writing. The connection must therefore be unconscious: White chose a country which had a certain natural appeal as a mother-symbol.
- 15 The author himself does not realize that his world is matriarchal. Through the fictional persona of Theodora Goodman he is trying desperately hard to turn away from the mother and to move towards the father. When Theodora finally accepts the primacy of the mother in her psychic landscape it is only because the author himself has been forced to forego his resistance to the mother-world. Her life mirrors the movements within the author's own psyche - a problem which will be discussed later.
- 16 Even the trees of Meroë, the symbols of the masculine aspect, have "their roots in Ethiopia" [p.20] - that is, they are subordinate to, and draw their life from, the archaic, life-giving forces of the mother-world.
- 17 See Glossary, "pleroma".

- 18 Throughout the present work this early, pre-conscious state of being is the ultimate goal of White's protagonist: she longs to extinguish herself in the depths of unconsciousness. His world - and hers - is anti-human to the extent that "growing-up" is seen as a corruption of this early childhood state - he chooses unconsciousness (the mother) as opposed to consciousness.
- 19 The male figures in White's world are often spluttering and wheezing and gasping for breath. Cf.: "Then you knew *that Mother had won*, in spite of Father breathing hard" [p.42]. Jung discovered that asthma and breathing problems can sometimes be related to a problem regarding the mother archetype: the unconscious background is bearing down upon the personality, suffocating it, so that it can no longer "breathe". He found, as did Freud, Neumann, and Esther Harding, that asthmatic conditions and symptoms of suffocation can sometimes be cured by turning inward toward the psyche and by freeing the ego-personality from the grip of the mother. (In this regard it is not irrelevant to note that White himself is a chronic asthmatic, which may reflect something of his own personal suffocation by the archetype.)
- 20 It is interesting to note that Mrs Goodman is never seen as having any psychological depth or dimension. She does not have problems with her own unconscious because, strictly speaking, she is not a human being, not a full character in White's world. She is pure destruction, pure demonism because she functions merely as an archetype, and has no human life of her own.
- 21 Thelma Herring mentions the image briefly in her study "Odyssey of a Spinster", in *Ten Essays on Patrick White*, G.A. Wilkes (ed.), p.13.
- 22 The trochilus is a small bird, rather like a humming bird, which is mentioned by ancient writers (Herodotus, Homer) for its peculiar habit of picking the teeth of crocodiles for the sake of finding food and bits of nourishment.
- 23 It is interesting to note that in the primitive mythology of New Guinea the crocodile is synonymous with the dragon- or terrible-mother. In certain parts of New Guinea, young boys, in preparation for adulthood, are forced to live in a hut shaped like the mouth of a huge crocodile, symbolizing the devouring aspect of the mother, from which they have to free themselves in order to become men. Cf. Jolande Jacobi, *The Way of Individuation*, p.66.
- 24 Here again we see the "Hansel and Gretel" psychology shining through White's fiction: the attraction to the negative mother's nourishment and then being trapped and held captive by her.
- 25 Could Abyssinia relate phonetically to abyss-in-ye? Certainly in Australian English the two words are phonetically identical. And in the novel Abyssinia does function as the *abys-mal* world within Theodora herself, much more than it does as a geographical location. I remain uncertain on this point, but it is a fascinating idea which is worthy of some thought.
- 26 Cf. Neumann: "All the positive maternal traits are in evidence at this stage, when the ego is still embryonic and has no activity of its own" ["The Uroboros", *Origins*, p.15].
- 27 Neumann, *Origins*, p.45.
- 28 This does not contradict what I said earlier: i.e. that Theodora is trapped in the maternal round. The *desire* for consciousness is not the same thing as actual achievement.

- 29 Cf. Neumann: "Castration and tree-felling, closely associated in mythology, are symbolically identical" [*Origins*, p.58].
- 30 Of course this is an absolute literalism. But it is one way to express the difference between the "spiritual" and the "natural" life.
- 31 Ann Belford-Ulanov, a Jungian analyst, quotes one of her patients - an artist suffering from an acute mother-complex as saying: "'When I get close to her, mother, she gets bigger than life. I go blank. She is like some primordial being who absorbs me into herself" [*The Feminine in Christian Theology*, p.29]. This is an excellent description of the effect that the archetype has upon the infantile or uroboric personality.
- 32 Cf. "Adonis, Attis, Osiris" in *The Illustrated Golden Bough*, by Mary Douglas (ed).
- 33 Cf. Shakespeare on the death of Adonis:
 "For he being dead, with him is beauty slain,
 And, beauty dead, black chaos comes again."
 ("Venus and Adonis").
- 34 Cf. Leonardo da Vinci: "Now you see that the hope and the desire of returning to the first state of chaos is like the moth to the light, and that the man who [longs for this original state] does not perceive that he is longing for his own destruction" [*Literary Works*, quoted in Neumann, *Origins*, p.278].
- 35 Neumann, *Origins*, pp. 96f.
- 36 The relation between Jack Frost's madness and Theodora's desperation is clearly evident when we juxtapose two passages from the novel:
 "She had begun to hate their thin house. You could open the compartments of the thin house and know, according to the hour, exactly what to find, an old woman grumbling at her combinations ..., a young woman offering objects of appeasement, or looking out of the window, or switching off the light." [p.92]
 "Dear All (wrote Jack Frost),
 It come to this. I come home this evening, I seen your faces Winnie, Evelyn, Thelma, and Zoe, I see us all sitting round the table buttering our scones ... Then I say to meself I will pin up them smiles ... [p.97]
- Both passages reflect the same tone of domestic imprisonment and despair, a sense of being "fed up" with the hum-drum round of family life. We could say that Jack Frost lives out the anarchistic-destructive aspect which is merely latent in Theodora's character.
- 37 Cf.: "It was the great tragedy of Mrs Goodman's life that she had never done a murder. Her husband had escaped into the ground, and Theodora into silences. So that she still had to kill, and there were moments when she could have killed herself" [p.95].
- 38 These two aspects keep pace with one another because they are intrinsic and co-existent: thus the more intently she longs to merge back into the uroboros the more destructive and harmful will the "mother's" actions become.
- 39 Cf. Neumann: "Born to die, dying to be reborn, the [*puer aeternus*] is coordinated with the seasonal life of vegetation" [*Origins*, p.44]. The implication here is that Moraitis is a *puer*-spirit who celebrates the idea of returning to the immortal womb of death.

- 40 Critics have pondered over the issue as to why Theodora never marries or finds herself a partner. Thelma Herring suggests that it is because her men are not good enough, that they do not match up to Theodora. And in a sense this is true. But basically Theodora remains a spinster because her *animus* or *spirit* is far too exalted for her ever to find a lover among ordinary men. Her animus-figure can only attach itself to the "highest" and most unattainable of men - that is, to her father, to the Man who was Given his Dinner, to Moraïtis, and later, to her "ghostly lover" Holstius. For an excellent study of the exalted animus and the related father-fixation in feminine psychology, cf. M.Esther Harding, "The Ghostly Lover", in *The Way of All Women*.
- 41 As we saw in her early childhood situation, it was only when Theodora began to develop a separate self that the "mother" began to assume the role of the dark adversary, undermining her every move.
- 42 Mrs Goodman finds Theodora's "strength" quite alarming: "It was ... rather immoral, the strange, withdrawn mood that one could not share. In her failure to find words Mrs Goodman's old, soft-fed stomach grizzled and complained" [p.112].
- 43 We will recall that after the shooting of the little hawk, Theodora had felt psychologically destroyed, but "*there was no longer any pain*" [p.71]. That is, after the fatal moment of destruction, the personality bathes in the pleromatic bliss-state of non-existence.
- 44 Here in essence is the idea of the "divine child" (Mercy) born to spiritual lovers Voss and Laura Trevelyan in *Voss*. But despite the fact that this idea is given fuller expression in *Voss*, I believe (with Thelma Herring) that the presentation of the idea here is "much more discretely handled than the elaboration of the idea in physical terms in *Voss*" ["The Odyssey of a Spinster", op.cit., p.9].
- 45 Cf.: "Lou touched the sundial, on which the time had remained frozen. She was afraid and sad, because there was some great intolerable pressure from which it is not possible to escape. Lou looked back over her shoulder, and ran" [p.259]. The "great intolerable pressure from which it is not possible to escape" is linked up symbolically with her own mother, Fanny Parrott, as we can see from the context from which this passage is taken [pp.256-259].
- 46 She never really achieves a full, mature state of ego-consciousness, but can at best assume an infantile ego-form which is constantly threatened by hostile forces.
- 47 The novel does not directly imply that she longs to re-unite with her father, but there is no doubt that after his death Theodora is obsessed by the idea of dying and longs to return to the dark matrix that consumed her father. There is, however, one important reference to her unrequited love for him. When Theodora meets Pearl Brawne in a city street, Pearl (the one-time housemaid at Meroë) makes especial mention of her father: "'Remember your Dad, Theo, eh?'" - and then we read, "But Theodora would have blocked her ears with wax. She could not bear to face the islands from which Pearl sang" [p.127]. Here Theodora is imaged as having a Siren-like attraction for her dead father. The reversal of the sex roles here (Theodora as Odysseus; her father as the seductive Siren) is interesting from the point of view of my earlier discussion about Theodora's underlying masculine and her father's underlying feminine nature. But the Siren-image is quite appropriate because the attraction of death and eternity is, for Theodora, as irresistible as a Siren-song. She is

- like a failed Odysseus, or Odysseus-in-reverse: she hears the seductive cry of eternity and falls victim to a "watery death" in the depths of the unconscious.
- 48 D.J. Tacey, "The Secret of the Black Rose: Spiritual Alchemy in Patrick White's *The Aunt's Story*", *Adelaide A.L.S. Working Papers*, Vol 11, No 2 1977, p.54. Thelma Herring believes that this intellectual realization points to development in Theodora's character - she describes it as "a great advance in self-knowledge" ["Odyssey of a Spinster", op.cit., p.10].
- 49 Full realization would demand nothing less than a complete re-assessment of her character and of her attitude to life. In particular, her greatest desire, her longing for dissolution, would have to be sacrificed because this represents her unconscious possession by the terrible mother.
- 50 She is still an "old white goat" - i.e. an image of the devil.
- 51 Here again we have the image of stifled *breath*, of choking and suffocation, associated with the image of the mother. Psychologically speaking, the "mother's" presence interferes with the life-breath of the personality. Cf. note 19.
- 52 The *knot*, the regressive tie to the mother, is psychic and cannot be cut with a little silver paper-knife.
- 53 Here I have paraphrased the epigraph to this chapter.
- 54 This is represented most dramatically in the lives of Miss Hare and Himmelfarb in *Riders in the Chariot*.
- 55 I do not believe that White consciously worked out this device, but that it is an unconscious pattern of the work itself.
- 56 This is further reinforced by the following sentence: "It was all very surprising, the accomplished as opposed to the contemplated fact" [p.11]. Here, quite obviously, the "contemplated fact" is correlated with the murder-fantasy, the "accomplished fact" with the actual death, seen as a kind of fulfilment of her matricidal despair.
- 57 Cf. Robert Bly's account of the Teeth Mother in his brilliant essay, "I Came Out of the Mother Naked", in *Sleepers Joining Hands*.
- 58 The South Asian cultures imagined the teeth on the face, but the American Indian culture and the Roman culture (for instance) preferred to put the teeth in the vagina. This emphasizes the sexual-regressive aspect of the return to the mother, but also limits the image somewhat to the domain of masculine psychology. It indicates that what at first may seem a highly desirable thing, the blissful reunion of the "son" (or masculine ego) with the mother's womb, is in fact a negative, devouring experience: the tooth-studded womb castrates (i.e. renders ineffectual) all those who dare to commit the forbidden incest.
- 59 Many people experience moments or even phases of depersonalization, when everything appears unreal (witness *The Wasteland* with its pivotal phrase "Unreal city ..."), but for the schizophrenic this can be an ongoing, perpetual experience. Cf. J-E. Meyer (ed.), *Depersonalization*, p.46.
- 60 Theodora knew herself only as her mother's submissive servant: "She had lived with her mother, and helped her into her clothes. She came when the voice called" [p.11]. Cf. Also: "If she left the prospect of freedom

unexplored, it was less from a sense of remorse than from not knowing what to do. It was a state that she had never learned to enjoy" [p.12]. It should be noted that at the time of her mother's death Theodora is a woman of about fifty years of age - all these years have been spent living with her mother.

- 61 Cf.: "... she could not escape too soon from the closed room, retreating from the *jaws of roses*, avoiding the brown door, of which the brass *teeth* bristled to consume the last shreds of personality, when already she was stripped enough" [p.139, italics added].
- 62 We will recall that the lightning which destroyed the oak tree at Meroë and which threw Theodora to the ground was described in terms of "an act of God" [p.41]. More precisely, it was an act of the Terrible Goddess who seems to be actively pursuing and destroying her. White rightly senses a deity at work in his fictional world, but to my mind he gives it the wrong name - he calls it God, but in reality it is the Mother.
- 63 Actually, I think we can even detect the voice of old Mrs Goodman herself - particularly in the give-away phrase "more seductive than aspirin". In Part One Mrs Goodman is constantly linked with the taking of aspirin in order to ease away the pain of existence: "'Ah, where would we be without aspirin!' Mrs Goodman said" [p.123].
- 64 In other words, this is an example of unconscious wisdom which is unaided by a differentiating, organizing ego-consciousness. It is captured here in its pristine "first-stage" appearance prior to any conscious organization or scrutiny. The author has simply written this passage straight out of his own unconscious.
- 65 Once again we arrive at the archetypal idea of the "seductive witch" as it is expressed in the folk-tale of Hansel and Gretel.
- 66 Cf.: "The garden gave up no secrets, if it had secrets to give" [p.231].
- 67 The sphinx-mother is imaged in the Oedipus myth as the terrible riddle-making Theban Sphinx. Oedipus, however, surprises the sphinx by correctly answering her riddle, whereupon she loses all her power and is killed. But until the ego-consciousness is strong enough to challenge the power of the sphinx-mother, it must remain eternally caught up in her world of enigma and mystery.
- 68 It is even linked to Theodora's childhood landscape by several references to the "fossil shells" of Meroë: "Now at the approach of middle-age and knowledge she regretted the closed stones, the fossil shells of Meroë" [p.165].
- 69 There may also be a phallic-sexual connotation here. In some medieval dramas the fool is depicted with a rubber phallus, often huge but incapable of effecting intercourse. Certainly the General is represented as having a great sexual attraction for Katina ("my bright Varvara") but is incapable of consummating his love.
- 70 This statement could also apply to the earlier incident between George and Julia Goodman. Mrs Goodman's rejection of her husband's friend put an end to the relationship between the Man who was Given his Dinner and George Goodman. There too it could be said that the mother had "killed a relationship".
- 71 It would seem that White has consciously or unconsciously modelled the

reality-level of the "Jardin Exotique" section along the lines of his protagonist's psychological situation. In this way the reality-and fantasy-levels of Part Two become virtually interchangeable. Every drama, whether "inner" or "outer" relates to Theodora's own psyche.

- 72 All the "great" things in White's world lie with the mother, or are otherwise seen as attributes of her world.
- 73 This feeling is commonly represented in dreams by images of being "held fast", where the dream-ego wants to move ahead but finds itself bound to the spot. Literally, one is held fast by an archetypal content more powerful than the ego-personality.
- 74 This reminds us of Elyot's pebbles at Ard's Bay. These too could not be brought up out of their primordial-maternal realm, or only at great cost. Taken from the mother-world they became lustreless, dry, and meaningless.
- 75 The image of the "unhatched egg" links the nautilus with Theodora's childhood uroboros, which was likewise described as an "unhatched egg" [p.22]. Also, the references to the moon are interesting, since in ancient mythology the moon relates directly to the figure of the Mother Goddess (cf. Erich Neumann, "On the Moon and Matriarchal Consciousness", *Fathers and Mothers*).
- 76 Holstius, a male figure appearing towards the end of the novel, is not, strictly speaking, a representative of the masculine-paternal principle. He is the servant of the Great Mother, executing her demands with the astuteness of a matriarchal shaman or priest.
- 77 Goethe (in *Faust*) gives the plural form (Mothers) in order to emphasize the greatness and impersonal anonymity of the mother archetype. I use the term here in order to highlight the fact that Mrs Rapallo is not synonymous with the archetype as such.
- 78 That is to say, the uroboros does not end with the destruction of the nautilus; it merely loses that particularized symbolic form.
- 79 Lieselotte's code of conduct is aptly expressed in her instructions to Theodora: "We have destroyed so much, but we have not destroyed enough. We must destroy everything, everything, even ourselves. Then at last when there is nothing, perhaps we shall live'" [p.168]. This credo may well suffice as a motto for the terrible mother itself, since it summarizes perfectly that archetype's destructive, nihilistic tendencies.
- 80 There is even a mention made of Wetherby's actual mother, whose sole distinguishing mark is her "protruding teeth" [p.163].
- 81 "Miss Grigg sucked her teeth. 'Some people never know,' she said. 'Some people never know there's nothing like food'" [p.229] And we are never completely certain that this munching, food-loving woman does not intend to make a meal out of the delicate Katina.
- 82 This image of Mrs Pavlou ties in well with White's presentation of Mrs Standish, who was similarly depicted as a harsh, unfeeling, child-rejecting mother.
- 83 J.F. Burrows, "'Jardin Exotique': The Central Phase of *The Aunt's Story*", in G.A. Wilkes (ed) *Ten Essays on Patrick White*, p.93. Critics of *The*

Aunt's Story are forever trying to find signs of development and progress in the career of Theodora Goodman, even when they are not there. It would seem that many critics have a naive and relentless belief in "progress" and "human development" which they bring to bear on the study of the novel even at the expense of abusing the actualities of the text. Clearly, Theodora *is* on a path of regression - her path always leads back to the uroboros and never forward into life.

- 84 Sisyphus, a mythical king of ancient Greece, was sentenced to Hades with the punishment of pushing a huge boulder up a mountain, only to have the boulder roll again to the bottom every time he reached the peak. It is a mythical presentation of a common psychological theme: recurrence without resolution.
- 85 The image of the rose has long been associated in the novel with the uroboros and the mother, particularly in Theodora's early childhood.
- 86 Cf. The words of the Man who was Given his Dinner: "'No girl that was thrown down by lightning on her twelfth birthday, and then got up again, is going to be swallowed easy by rivers of fire'" [p.45]. His tone of encouragement is in vain. Theodora *is* swallowed easy, perilously easy, by the river of fire. She puts up no resistance to the devouring of her personality.
- 87 Several critics of *The Aunt's Story* (notably Peter Beatson and John Beston) have suggested that *all* the events of the middle section take place at a symbolic level only, and have no reference to "reality". Everything, they argue, is a fantasy inside Theodora's own head. I can sympathize with this view, but cannot agree with it. While the narrative certainly emphasizes the symbolic level more strongly than the real there is no evidence to suggest that Theodora is not actually in a hotel on the French Riviera and undergoing certain "real" experiences.
- 88 Cf.: "In this dead place that Father had described the roses were as brown as paper bags, the curtains were ashy on their rings" [p.23].
- 89 Says J.F. Burrows: "An ugly little ring, but part of the flesh: Theodora has at last come to terms with her mother" ['"Jardin Exotique": The Central Phase of *The Aunt's Story*', op.cit., p.106]. But the putting on of the ring simply indicates that she is now deeply possessed by the mother, - no conscious resolution has been reached.
- 90 Cf.: "Many mornings *trumpeted* across the bay their strong hibiscus notes" [p.112], We find the motif of trumpeting music sounded whenever Theodora has merged back into the unconscious. The above sentence is taken from the passage following Theodora's experience of the Moraitis concerto. What excites White more than anything is the idea of dissolution, which he always gives a *musical* connotation.
- 91 Cf. Erich Neumann, *The Great Mother*, and Robert Bly, "I Came Out of the Mother Naked". In ancient Greece the corn goddess was known as Demeter-Kore.
- 92 This sharp division between the human and the archetypal, the conscious and the unconscious, is indicative of the negative mother-complex. The devouring "mother" in the unconscious will not extend psychic energy to her children when they are in life, but will give them an overdose of nourishment when they return to her bosom. Hence all of White's "negative" characters remain in life and are sterile. And his "positive" characters (such as Stan Parker, Voss, Arthur Brown) are seduced by the mother into the inner world, but lose themselves in her abysmal depths.

- 93 It is perhaps significant that America, the land of corn and maternal nourishment, is also the home of Mrs Rapallo, "American adventuress" [p.154] and terrible mother *extraordinaire*. This reflects the paradoxical nature of the mother-world, and may even suggest that Theodora - herself a bizarre adventuress on the American continent - is the successor of Mrs Rapallo.
- 94 Cf. The dream-poem: "See, we offer this dispensation, endless, more seductive than aspirin ... in what should be apart, armed, twisted" [p.145]. Once again, the Terrible Mother covers the *fact* of dis-integration and nightmare with the illusion of ecstasy and comfort.
- 95 Peter Beatson takes the opposite view: "[Holstius] does not lead her into new realms of madness or vision, but gives her the courage to return to humanity. Holstius' appearance allows Theodora to say "I am I" with confidence from a deeper level of personality than she had ever known" [*The Eye in the Mandala*, pp.101-2]. Peter Beatson, in his adulatory study of *The Aunt's Story*, merely echoes what White would have us all believe. He is a good example of a critic who is caught under the spell of Patrick White.
- 96 Cf.: "'... true permanence is a state of multiplication and division. As you should know, Theodora Goodman. Faces inherit features. Thought and experience are bequeathed'" [p.284].
- 97 Cf. note 76.
- 98 Cf. J.G. Frazer, "The Ritual of Adonis" and "Attis as a God of Vegetation" in *Adonis, Attis, Osiris*, Part IV, vol 1 of *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*.
- 99 I am not suggesting that landscape and nature *per se* are synonymous with the mother-world. But certainly in Theodora's psyche - and in White's fictional world generally - "nature" functions as a mother-symbol.
- 100 Obviously the idea of a walking tree, or rather a *human* tree, is central to White's next book - *The Tree of Man*. In fact Stan Parker is not unlike Holstius, a figure caught up in the Great Round of nature - an unconscious servant of the Earth Mother. But the idea of a human tree was already present in *The Living and the Dead*, where we found Elyot's legs planted, tree-like, in the earth of Ard's Bay. These images simply indicate that White's libido is held by the mother and that his fictional ego - whether Stan, Elyot, or Holstius - is bound like a tree to the maternal world.
- 101 Here again I would refer the reader to the Appendix, "Uroboros is not Mandala".
- 102 Primitive man finds his unconscious psyche in his surroundings - the world is alive with spirits and uncanny forces because the conscious ego and the world can still everywhere be confounded with the non-ego and the archetypal psyche. This is a purely "natural" state and must not be seen - in the context of childhood or primitive psychology - as a pathological condition. It does, however, attain a pathological tone when it is found in the psychology of the adult civilised being and when it derives from an outstanding mother complex.
- 103 Cf. Jung: "... when the ego is assimilated by the unconscious ... reality must be protected against an archaic, "eternal" and "ubiquitous" dream-state" ["The Self", *Aion*, p.25].

- 104 Jung, commenting on the problem of the uroboric fixation, sums up the situation admirably: "The imperfections of real life, with its laborious adaptations and manifold disappointments, naturally cannot compete with such a state of indescribable fulfilment" ["The Syzygy", *Aion*, p.12].
- 105 Theodora's opinion of Mrs Johnson's face describes her own mask personality very well: "It had adopted that fatal flatness *which is never quite a disguise*" [p.281, italics added].
- 106 Marjorie Barnard ["Theodora Again", *Southerly*, XX, 1959] describes Theodora as a religious saint or mystic. So too does Patricia Morely in her book *The Mystery of Unity*.
- 107 Ingmar Björkstén, *Patrick White*, p.42.
- 108 This phrase is from R.F. Brissenden, *Patrick White*, p.16.
- 109 Cf. Erich Neumann "Mystical Man", in *Spring 1961* [Zurich].
- 110 Brian Kiernan, "The Novels of Patrick White", *Literature of Australia*, G. Dutton (ed.), p.464.
- 111 Kirpal Singh, "The Fiend of Motion", *Quadrant*, Vol.19 (1975), p.90.
- 112 Brian Kiernan, op.cit., p.465.
- 113 Says Kiernan of Theodora Goodman and the Young Man (central character of White's *The Ham Funeral*): "[They] are purged of their inessential social selves and the illusions imparted by society, and are better able to perceive the nature of life" ["The Novels of Patrick White", op.cit., p.466]. Critics unhesitatingly assume that getting rid of the ego-self (which they call the "social" self, as if it had a merely societal importance) is a good thing which brings, virtually by definition, greater understanding. But disposing of the ego-self is more often associated with madness than with heightened vision.
- 114 Here I have in mind the most recent "school" of White critics: Ingmar Björkstén, Patricia Morley, Peter Beatson, Kirpal Singh, Brian Kiernan, Thelma Herring, J.F. Burrows. Of course, there have been the dissenters, the rationalist critics who dismiss *The Aunt's Story* as a work of surrealist indulgence. But these attacks arose mainly in the 50s and early 60s and were based more on a prejudice against modernism and expressionist literature generally than on a critical reading of the text itself. Today, however, we have swung away completely from this early view and have become credulous admirers of the master's work. The rationalist reaction of the early days did not produce any substantial criticism of *The Aunt's Story*, only bitter, smarting attacks. Virtually all the "depth" studies of the novel have been written by the spell-bound admirers of White.
- 115 The classic modernist position is put forward by Thelma Herring: "Though she has to defer to those who prescribe the reasonable life and insist on taking her into custody, Theodora wins the game for her soul" ["Odyssey of a Spinster", op.cit., p.12]. Others who subscribe to this view are Marjorie Barnard, J.F. Burrows, and all the critics listed in footnote 114. White is inclined to this viewpoint himself, as can be seen by his epigraph to Part Three: "When your life is most real, to me you are mad".

- 116 John Beston, "The Black Volcanic Hills of Meroë", *Ariel*, Vol 3, No 4 (1972), p.33n. Others of this view are Vincent Buckley and most of White's early critics of the 50s and early 60s.
- 117 Cf. Jung, "The Regressive Restoration of the Persona", in *Two Essays on Analytical Psychology*.
- 118 Cf. M.-L. von Franz, *The Problem of the Puer Aeternus*, part IV, p.2.
- 119 I can hardly give "evidence" of this excess and lack of control here. The reader is advised to turn to the middle section of the novel itself, where he will find evidence enough of an unrestrained outpouring of symbolic imagery.
- 120 To my mind, White's works function more as psycho-mythological fictions than as novels in the strict sense. This will be explored in the final chapter.
- 121 The fact that there are teeth images everywhere we turn in Part Two (and I have by no means exhausted the actual number of references to this image in the present study) is not Theodora's fault alone - White is largely responsible, projecting his own negative archetype everywhere throughout his fictional world. (Theodora's madness can hardly be blamed for the fact that Wetherby's mother has "protruding teeth" and a devouring character!)
- 122 Vincent Buckley, "The Novels of Patrick White", *Literature of Australia*, (first edition), p.416.
- 123 In Greek mythology *madness* and *lunacy* were attributed to the Goddesses of the Moon and the Underworld, Hecate and Persephone. Their dark energy was felt to be able to overturn the psyche and to plunge the victim into insanity. White's novel is certainly an affirmation of this. Cf. C. Kerényi, *Goddesses of Sun and Moon*.
- 124 Here I refer to a kind of "shared" or two-way solipsism. Theodora's relation to her world is solipsistic, and so too is White's relation to his fictional creation as a whole. At both levels, authorial and fictional, there is a distinct lack of differentiation and "otherness". There is a "oneness" (or rather sameness) which unites everything - world, characters, author - within the same psychic continuum.

Chapter Three, part 1

- 1 James Hillman, "The Great Mother, her Son, her Hero, and the Puer", in *Fathers and Mothers* (ed. Patricia Berry), p.88-89. Hillman's essay is by far the most brilliant and insightful study of the Great Mother-Son connection that has appeared to date.
- 2 In modern times the depth-psychologist believes that the most important question in all mystical enquiry is to find the "Who" in the experience: who is the "god" (or archetypal figure) in the mystical experience; "who among the variety of figures of which we are each composed ... is in this happening?" [Hillman, "Peaks and Vales", in *Puer Papers*, p.64]. This question is crucial because unless we can *name* the archetype that has seized us then we are completely at its mercy: it works upon us blindly, secretly weaving our "fate", and we are unable to know or dialogue with it.

- 3 Perhaps it is our own fruitless monotheistic consciousness which would have us stamp every creature from the "beyond" as an aspect of the one "God".
- 4 Patrick White, in an interview with T.Herring and G.Wilkes, published in *Southerly* Vol 33, No 2, June 1973, p.137. Elsewhere in the interview White is asked what the difference is between *The Aunt's Story* and the later novels, and he replies, "[In] *The Aunt's Story* ... I had not yet begun to accept (except perhaps unconsciously) that I believe in a God" [ibid.].
- 5 All references are to the Penguin (Harmondsworth, 1961; 1977) edition.
- 6 For instance, at the time of the first great storm, where the passion of Nature arouses a strong erotic feeling in Stan, Amy is frightened and dwarfed by the episode:
 ... the grey wool of torn clouds that the wind dragged across the sky raced quicker than her blood and began to rouse the terror in her ... But the man laughed. He felt a kind of pleasure in the mounting storm. He held his face up flat to the racing clouds. His teeth were smiling in a taut, uncertain humour at the sky
 Presently the man saw his wife running, her limbs fighting the wind and the stuff of her own dress. Seeing her tortured into these shapes he did not know, and the drained, strange face, quite suddenly he felt that this was not the girl he had married in the church at Yuruga, and loved and quarrelled with, but he forced himself to stumble on towards her. [pp.46-47]
 The whole episode is underscored with an erotic tone: the storm is said to be "swelling" and "mounting", Stan is drenched and intoxicated ("Rain filled his mouth"), and the storm uproots trees and knocks over buildings in orgiastic frenzy. Poor Amy is reduced by all of this: she looks ridiculous beside the splendour of the aroused Earth Mother, which Stan Parker interprets as "God" [p.47].
- 7 In his incapacity to form a satisfying relationship, he has much in common with Elyot Standish, who abandoned his girlfriend - Hildegard - when she no longer mirrored his fantasy-image of the Golden Goddess. We have also seen that Theodora could not find a partner or mate: White's characters are wedded to eternity, and in a sense are not capable of human relationship.
- 8 Cf: "[Stan Parker] had discovered an affection for his wife, which is less terrible than love" [p.339]. And again, "Habit comforted them, like warm drinks and slippers, and even went disguised as love" [p.333].
- 9 For an excellent discussion of the *mater/matter* relation in symbolism and mythology cf. M-L. von Franz, "Matter and the Feminine", in *A Psychological Interpretation of "The Golden Ass"*, Zurich (1970).
- 10 Surely the link between Amy's old cow (Julia) and Julia Goodman is not accidental. Or perhaps White merely dislikes the name, and so gives it to unpleasant maternal figures, whether animal or human.
- 11 Cf.: "Stillier even than the dusk was this peaceful relationship between Amy Parker and the yellow cow. Their soft, increasing bodies were in full accord. I shall have a little girl, said Amy Parker, and she smiled for this luxury into the acquiescent belly of the cow" [p.56].
- 12 Cf. "Hathor", in E.O. James, *The Ancient Gods*, pp.82-84.

- 13 Archetypally, consciousness relates to the phenomenology of the spirit and to the Father-world. But in White's fiction, the Father is absent.
- 14 That is to say, Stan - and White - experience an overwhelming revulsion for the Great Mother's materialism precisely because they are so bound up in it - and suffocated by it. The paradox is that although White is constantly drawn to the material world -and describes it with almost photographic accuracy - he suffers a tremendous resistance to it. His ambivalent response to *matter* derives from his relationship to *mater*: he is attracted and repelled by her world.
- 15 We find this same pattern at the beginning of the book:
 Ah, she had said, he will be a teacher, or a preacher, he will teach the words of the poets and God. With her respect for these, she suspected, in all twilight and good faith, that they might be interpreted. But to the son ... there seemed no question of interpretation. Anyway, not yet.
 He was no interpreter. He shifted beside his fire at the suggestion that he might have been. He was nothing much. He was a man. [p.12]
- The first part seems to suggest that interpretation of the mysteries may well be a desirable thing. The second begins on a different note: "He was no interpreter ... He was a man". Here the idea of interpretation is felt to be an abstraction - which detracts from his natural condition and which he "rightly" rejects.
- 16 White makes it clear that the whole episode of the flood is more symbolic than real:
 The house was no longer a house; it had been reduced to a pointed roof on which rain fell ... It fell always. It fell in their sleep. It washed through the dreams of sleepers, lifted their fears and resentments, and set them floating on the grey waters of sleep. [p.70].
- Like the hotel fire in the previous story, or the bushfire in the present work, the flood functions both at a "real" and at a "symbolic" level. However, we must emphasize that it is *predominantly* symbolic, so that if it is read only at a literal level most of its importance is lost.
- 17 Cf.: "... for Mother, you were sure, things existed in hard shapes. Mother had not dissolved at dusk under the apple trees" [AS, p.56].
- 18 It is ironic that the men are supposed to be "rescuers", yet it is they who need to be rescued from the fatal attraction of uroboric incest. We find the same pattern at the time of the bushfires:
 The fact was, the fighters had become not only exhausted but fascinated by the fire. ... Some were by now so apathetic and hollow they could have entered, to add their bones. There were few who did not succumb to the spell of the fire. They were swayed by it, instead of it by them. [pp.173-174].
- 19 M.-L. von Franz, *The Problem of the Puer Aeternus*, part 6, p.9.
- 20 Cf.: "So Stan Parker ... went down towards the river, ... to get sucked under perhaps, [or], in any event, to be released by some process of flowing water" [p.72].
- 21 Sallie Nichols, "The Hanged Man", in *Psychological Perspectives*, Vol.10, No.2, p.191.

- 22 Vincent Buckley, in "Patrick White and his Epic" [*Australian Literary Criticism*, ed. G. Johnston, p.195], never determines whether Stan is "a clod or an enigma". I think Buckley is right to see Stan in these terms, but I would reject the either/or category of his formulation. Stan is both enigma *and* clod, which is the essential characteristic of every *puer aeternus*: he is puzzlingly "mystical", yet at the same time excruciatingly simple and vegetable-like. His "mystical" character comes from the sense that he is not yet born into the world, but is still linked to the pleroma in a direct and definite way. The mysticism is not mature or "religious" in any real sense, but is simply arrived at by default, as it were, by virtue of his undeveloped ego-consciousness and outstanding mother-complex. Thus the cloddishness goes hand in hand with the enigmatic quality.
- 23 The boy even shares the same psychology as Stan Parker - like him, he is a *puer aeternus*, a youth afloat upon the sea of the unconscious, and is fascinated by images of dissolution and disintegration [cf. p.95f]. The boy eventually escapes - and so he must - but the archetypal image of the Great Mother collecting her lost son is what is registered in the mind of the reader.
- 24 I do not believe that White was aware of the anima symbolism of the bath episode. I believe it is an unconscious process of the work itself, and something which is far from the conscious mind of the author.
- 25 Cf.: "He put the bath in a shed, where it remained quietly. Parkers were always uneasy about that bath" [p.93].
- 26 The "anima" is initially contained in the mother archetype and its development as an autonomous archetype takes place only against the strongest resistance from the mother. Cf. Jung, "The Soul-Image", Def.49, *Psychological Types*, and "The Syzygy: Anima and Animus", *Aion*. See also Erich Neumann's discussion of the Great Mother/anima relation in "The Two Characters of the Feminine", *The Great Mother*.
- 27 Cf. The picture of St. George slaying the dragon to free the "maid in distress".
- 28 It is Neumann's thesis, elaborated in his work *The Child*, that the primal relationship between mother and child is in large part responsible for the future relation between individual and society. In infancy the "other" or "thou" is the mother, and the relationship that develops there will condition how one relates to the "other" in later life.
- 29 Cf. Erich Neumann: "A negative primal relationship characterized by withdrawal of love and the accompanying anxiety gives rise to aggressions and is the worst possible foundation for sound social behaviour" [*The Child*, p.42].
- 30 Ray's subsequent death and tragic end will be discussed later [see note 40].
- 31 In the words of Mrs O'Dowd, Madeleine is a "stuck-up thing, ... ridun up the road as if you was the dust upon it" [p.185].
- 32 Cf.: "... if there is to be a genuine eruption [Madeleine said], with clouds of smoke and sheets of flame, let it erupt unexpectedly. That can be exhilarating" [p.424].

- 33 White's alleged homosexuality suggests a personal inability to form a love-bond with a woman. Cf.: Erich Neumann, "... we almost always find, in cases of male homosexuality, a matriarchal psychology where the Great Mother is unconsciously in the ascendant" [*Origins*, p.141n].
- 34 The analogy with the Voss-Laura relationship is self-evident.
- 35 The fact that this union takes place at the head of the stairs is interesting. Elyot's mother, Mrs Standish, was often imagined as a glowing beauty upon the staircase at Ebury Street: "... she stood there in the gold dress, that time had tarnished, but that left its mark still upon the stairs, ebbing molten as she mounted" [*LD*, p.130]. The fact that Mrs Standish is "gold" and "molten" links this image more strongly with the figure of the fire-woman at Glastonbury. Furthermore, Theodora consummated her union with her mother in the fiery abyss of the burning hotel. In White's psyche there is a strong link between mother, fire, stairs, and images of melting and dissolution. The desire for the mother is so strong that it can only be represented by an all-consuming fire. Also, it is interesting to see how "boyish" and "infantile" is Stan's sexual feeling for Madeleine - he wants to sink his face in her flesh, to part her breasts and put his face between. This, surely, is a boy's fascination for his mother: to return to her flesh and be enveloped by her body. "Sexuality" in White is indissolubly linked with incestuous fantasies.
- 36 In terms of the image of the flood, the "winning" of Madeleine would be similar to the "winning" of the bath - a humanly relatable quantum of psychic energy. But just as the bath becomes ineffectual as an anima-symbol (and opposed by the mother-woman), so is Madeleine reduced by the Mother Goddess and her primordial fire.
- 37 Cf.: "Is this Madeleine? Amy Parker asked without regret. Her novelette was finished" [p.181].
- 38 That is to say, the subsequent negative reaction to Madeleine is proportional to the original erotic attraction.
- 39 The "negative" side of Madeleine is reinforced at the end of the story, where she reappears as the suburban housewife Mrs Fisher, close companion of Mrs Forsdyke (née Thelma Parker). In this way the human woman is given a negative colouring, and the Great Mother, the anonymous, impersonal force, is the sole carrier of the ecstatic character.
- 40 We will recall that after Elyot's sojourn at Ard's Bay Mrs Macarthy was held responsible for the "devouring" of the rounded pebbles, and for the barren, wilderness-like aftermath of his childhood experience. White does not hesitate to blame the nearest mother-woman for hideous crimes which are actually "caused" (if we may put it that way) by the negative mother-image which dwells in the unconscious. Perhaps the most terrible "crime" committed by the mother figure in this book is that of Amy Parker against her son Ray. White makes it clear that Amy's brutal rejection of her son is what ultimately destroys him. Towards the end of his life Ray returns to his mother for nourishment and support, but she rejects him, and his son, with a fierceness that surprises even herself [p.422f]. Ray "reads" this rejection archetypally (partly because he is completely fixated upon the personal mother as a psychic image) and he never recovers from it. In fact, the day after this event he is mortally wounded [for "tipping off the police" p.436] in a gunfight in a Sydney bar. Here the outer "facts" of his death are merely circumstantial: the psychological force of the prose makes us see it as the deathly work of

the Rejecting Mother. As Ray is about to die we are told that "[people] were moistening his lips when he could not lower his face to suck the brown waters of the dam, he could not make the stones skip, or tell even in those simple words with which it had been customary for him to speak" [p.436]. Here we must recall that after he is turned away by his mother (with whom he had been unable to speak, or convey his need) Ray had gone down to the "brown waters of the [Parker's] dam" - but sitting by the dam he was made to feel "dry" and "breathless": "There is nothing here, he said, pulling at a blade of grass with his brown teeth" [p.422]. The water of the dam, then, has spontaneously arisen as an image of the mother and her life-giving nourishment: but this source is withheld ["he could not lower his face to suck ..."], and as he dies his lips are "dry". White has Amy admit that she is "to blame" [p.409] for Ray's tragic fate, but once again we have to point out that this is true *only* if we see Amy as a psychic or mythological figure: the Terrible Goddess who withdraws her love.

- 41 The romantic connection between them is emphasized by Mrs O'Dowd's words to Amy Parker: "Only I am sayun, my dear, glad I am it was not O'Dowd come dawdlun through the fire with a lady round his neck" [p.185].
- 42 Cf.: "He touched her dreamy thighs, and remembered standing on the white banks of a large but almost dry river, catching eels, when a little boy" [p.303]. Here the *puer* motif is sounded again, but more importantly the connection between Amy's body and the Earth Mother's landscape is highlighted in this boyhood remembrance of eels, river, and natural world.
- 43 After orgasm, Leo feels that the house is "stuffy" [p.304] and that he is a prisoner of Amy's passion. This reflects the archetypal ambivalence of the son's entry into the mother: prior to the incestuous return the "house" seems inviting and seductive, but when contact is made the son feels stifled and looks for a way out.
- 44 We have encountered this mechanism before. In *The Living and the Dead* the overwhelming erotic attraction of Elyot for Mrs Standish was unconsciously transferred onto the mother herself - *she* was made to appear intoxicated by a frenzied sexual desire. In the same way that Catherine Standish was caught up in a "satisfying coma of the flesh" [p.242], we find Amy Parker plagued by "a strange dictatorship of the body" [p.313].
- 45 I cannot understand how R.F. Brissenden can say that White's "presentation of Amy Parker ... is one of love and sympathy" [*Patrick White*, p.27]. I can only imagine that he is reading a different novel.
- 46 A.P. Riemer discusses Stan's final experiences in Jungian "mandalic" terms, and asserts that he achieves "perfection, wholeness, and unity" at the end of his life ["Visions of the Mandala in *The Tree of Man*", in *Ten Essays on Patrick White*, p.118].
- 47 We could say that the brick boxes substitute for the images of "teeth" which were so prevalent in the previous novel. It does not matter what the negative symbol is, for the idea of uroboric disintegration is such an abstract one that it can be represented in many ways. But it will have to be hard, aggressive, suggestive of the devouring womb and connected with the maternal principle.
- 48 It goes without saying that White is unconscious of the symbolism of the brick homes (which is one reason why it "works" so successfully). I have no doubt that the image of encroaching suburbia has autobiographical significance for White's own life, since at the time of writing he was

- at Castle Hill and worried by the "spread of suburban villas ... pressing hard on the boundaries of his six acres" [cf. "Life at Castle Hill", in *Forty-two Faces* by John Hetherington, p.141].]
- 49 I disagree with Leonie Kramer, who asserts that Stan Parker has finally "spat out God" ["*The Tree of Man: An Essay in Scepticism*", in W.S.Ramson (ed.) *The Australian Experience*, p.278]. Stan has become so intoxicated by the presence of his deity that he sees it (or Her) reflected in every aspect of existence, in every leaf, or ant, or crack in the concrete path.
- 50 White's book is not the "poem", as Professor Kramer has suggested (op.cit.). The novel is simply a transcription of natural life - it celebrates, and does not break, the spell of the Great Mother.
- 51 Cf.: "I wanted to suggest in this book every possible aspect of life" [Patrick White, "The Prodigal Son", p.39]. White's failure to do this stems in part from his failure to appreciate how the mother-myth penetrates every corner of his fictional world, and how it converts "reality" into an image of its own making.
- 52 Cf.: "'I don't like chopping wood,' said Bub. 'I'd rather my sister did. Then I am free'" [p.195].
- 53 Cf. Neumann: "Many forms of nostalgia and longing signify no more than a return to uroboric incest and self-dissolution, from the *unio mystica* of the saint [Theodora] to the drunkard's craving for unconsciousness [O'Dowd] ..." [*Origins*, p.17].
- 54 Mrs O'Dowd's false teeth are constantly falling out of her mouth, and snapping at those who are standing near her [cf. p.286].
- 55 C.G. Jung, *Symbols of Transformation*, p.258.
- 56 Cf. Patrick White, in the *Southerly* interview (op.cit.) p.136.

Chapter Three, part 2

- 1 All references are to the Penguin (Harmondsworth: 1977) edition of the novel.
- 2 In Freud: it is the castration complex versus the incest urge. But I can agree with Freud only if we give his statements a "mythic" dimension: i.e. it is not *literal* castration that is feared, but psychological castration - ineffectuality or dismemberment - at the hands of the maternal unconscious. Nor is it (in our case) literal incest that is desired, but a psychological return to the mother-image.
- 3 Because of the essentially psychological nature of the Sydney-Inland duality, we must not view the "huddlers" as an historically accurate portrayal of Australian society in the 1840s. White is first and foremost a symbolist writer expressing psychological realities, and is dealing with historical or social issues only insofar as these provide a background and a setting for the psychological drama. We must resist the obvious temptation to read *Voss* as an historical novel. This point will be followed up at the end of the chapter.
- 4 Another way to put this is to say that White is at his best when dealing with the conflicts within a single individual (as in *The Aunt's Story*).

When he tries to become a social writer he merely splits up the individual psyche, creating "splinter societies" which war upon each other in an unproductive way.

- 5 Peter Beatson argues that the movement of the work is toward heightened unity and the "mystical marriage" of the opposites ["The Three Stages: Mysticism in Patrick White's *Voss*", *Southerly*, Vol.30, No.2, 1970]. Patricia Morley supports this view in her work *The Mystery of Unity*.
- 6 Because Voss is identified with the mother-world, he feels that the Australian continent is an extension of himself, that it is his "by right of vision". Critics have stressed the "poetic", "dramatic", or even "nationalistic" aspect of Voss's claim to ownership of the continent, but I must emphasize the psycho-mythological aspect, which for me is the most compelling one.
- 7 A term borrowed from Erich Neumann in his study of "The Group and the Great Individual", [*Origins*, p.425].
- 8 This might be compared with the effect that White has upon many of his readers. The unwary reader, and even some "critics", are intoxicated by the author's vision and are soon credulously supporting his world-view.
- 9 One cannot help associating Voss's "recruiting" nature with Hitler and the Nazi movement. In a sense the ruling archetype of Nazism is the *puer aeternus* (cf. Gunther Grass, *The Tin Drum*). What Hitler did was to bring to the surface the latent *puer*-impulse in the youth of Germany, to appeal to their daemonic nature in order to enact the bloodiest death-ritual in human history. Voss, in his own way, carries on the spirit of Nazism and the "death-romanticism" of the Germanic races in the Australian context.
- 10 Palfreyman describes his sister in terms which suggest the spirit of the earth or "Nature" in personified form: "[she is always] in a great hurry to rush outside, into the garden, or the woods. My sister is particularly fond of woodland and hedgerow flowers: violets, primroses, anemones, and such-like. She will venture out in the roughest weather, in an old grey cloak, to see her flowers, and will often return with an armful of the common cow-parsley that she had been unable to resist, or a string of scarlet bryony to wear round her neck" [p.262]. This same nature-spirit is of a very passionate nature, and is prone to outbursts of rage and violent emotion. On one such occasion, overtaken by an affect, she actually threw Palfreyman out of an upper-story window. Later, she seemed to devour him with kisses and apologies and affection, until he "became more terrified of her love than of my own condition" [p.263]. Then we are told she wanted to make Palfreyman "completely hers", to nurse and care for him for the rest of his life.
- 11 There is an obvious autobiographical element here (as in much of Palfreyman's characterization): part of the reason why White chose to live in Australia was to escape from his mother's negative clutches and from the impossible love-bond between them: "[My mother and I] were too much alike. That is why we couldn't spend more than a couple of hours in each other's company without fighting, and why I chose to live in another hemisphere" [P. White, in a letter to D.J. Tacey, 12 January 1981].
- 12 Cf: "It was ... this same sister from whom he had run, at least, from her passionate, consuming nature, with the result that he was never

finished wondering how he might atone for his degrading attitude ..." [p.287].

- 13 Because, unlike Voss, Palfreyman recognizes his subordination to the maternal unconscious and to the female "deity" he is classified by White as a "Christian", as one possessed of "Christlike humility" [p.151]. But subservience is not humility - Palfreyman's "humility" is merely a crippling psychological guilt, a sense of complete inadequacy before the greater power of the Mother Goddess. White has no real understanding of Christianity, and wrongly associates it with psychological castration or weakness. Palfreyman is a complete anticipation of Mordecai Himmelfarb, a character who is similarly burdened by a maternal fixation and a sense of guilt for having betrayed the mother-image, and whose subsequent attempt to return to the mother, to surrender to her world, is also regarded as a "religious" conversion and as spiritual commitment. White's "religious" figures are highly suspect and always appear as castrated *pueri*.
- 14 James McAuley was the first Australian critic to mis-identify Laura Trevelyan as "the Jungian anima" ["The Gothic Splendours: Patrick White's *Voss*", *Southerly*, 1965, reprinted in *Ten Essays on Patrick White* (ed.) Wilkes, p.44]. Of course he was on the right track - Laura is definitely a "Jungian" character, but not the anima. Since McAuley, Patricia Morley, Peter Beatson, Barry Argyle, Judith Wright, and a number of others have treated Laura as an anima-figure. This is a good illustration of the psychological maxim that "a little Jung is worse than none at all". It is hazardously easy to take a slight knowledge of Jung, and then to mis-apply his ideas to different kinds of literary and archetypal contexts.
- 15 Cf. Erich Neumann, "The Two Characters of the Feminine", in *The Great Mother*; Emma Jung, *Animus and Anima*; James Hillman, *Anima*; and C.G. Jung "Psychological Aspects of the Mother Archetype", in *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious, Collected Works*, Vol 9, part 1.
- 16 Cf. Esther Harding: "When the animus is not dealt with and is not brought to consciousness he functions as the Ghostly Lover who lures the woman away from known and knowable reality to limitless regions" ["The Ghostly Lover", *The Way of All Women*, p.66]. We have already met the "ghostly lover" in the psychology of Theodora Goodman: there he functioned, as Moraitis or Holstius, as an uroboric guide who led the female protagonist into psychological and spiritual disintegration. This is not to say that Theodora and Laura are especially damned - unchecked the archetypal forces always work in a destructive way. It is only when consciousness intervenes that the inner figures begin to adopt a positive stance. But this never happens in White's fiction: the archetypes remain undifferentiated and always work to the detriment of the individual concerned.
- 17 Cf. Apuleius, *The Golden Ass*; Erich Neumann, *Amor and Psyche*; and Robert Johnson, *She*.
- 18 Cf: "'He does not intend to make a fortune out of this country, like other men. He is not all money talk'" [p.28].
- 19 In *The Aunt's Story* the "Ghostly Lover" first appeared as the Syrian, and later, of course, as the Greek 'cellist.
- 20 Her "spiritual" pronouncements never quite hit the mark, her assessment of Voss's progress is exaggerated and distorted, and her religious revelations ["'Dear Christ, now at last I understand your suffering'" p.386] are not grounded in actual experience and therefore read as lifeless platitudes.

- 21 This shows that the Voss-Laura relationship has mythic or symbolic dimension but has no real personal basis. The "marriage" which takes place is a union of archetypes, not a marriage of human persons. It must be noted that I do not find any evidence of so-called "telepathy" or ESP in *Voss*. Voss's contact with Laura is an inward, archetypal experience, and if Laura engages in similar psychic experiences in Sydney the connecting link is synchronicity, not telepathy. One of the advantages of the psychological reading of the work is that one does not have to be bothered by the question of "occult phenomena" which reviewers and readers have found so distressing, and which has been foremost in many critical studies of *Voss*. When we internalize Laura as an archetype there is no longer any need to talk about occultism and magic.
- 22 The constellation of the negative image is further evident in the presence of a "Teeth Mother" in Turner's company:
 '... it is a lovely way to die' [drooled the man].
 The lady, morbidly attached to a situation over which she had no control, was sucking such teeth as remained to her.
 'It is a scandal,' she said, of that which she could not leave be [p.118].
 Here again we find the familiar conjunction of the dissolution-striving *puer* and the Teeth Mother: the most frequent, unconsciously recurring image in White's fiction.
- 23 In world mythology the "west" has long been associated with the devouring maw, because it is in the west that the sun, and thence the solar hero, is consumed and taken back into the earth. Thus the movement westward is itself symbolic of the dissolution process. Cf. Jung, "The Origin of the Hero", in *Symbols of Transformation*.
- 24 As, for instance, in the jubilant, triumphant image of Nature as Theodora travelled through the corn-country of mid-west America, or in the grand conception of "mandalic" Nature as Stan prepared to enter death.
- 25 Cf. the Godbold children singing and chanting outside Himmelfarb's house prior to his death at the hands of the Terrible Mother (Mrs Flack).
- 26 Another way to put this is to say that the death-fantasy by which they are all possessed leads (not surprisingly) into actual death. They cling to their dream of Thanatos, but reject the reality of death when it eventually confronts them.
- 27 Cf. C. Kerényi, *Goddesses of Sun and Moon*, and M. Esther Harding, *Woman's Mysteries*.
- 28 Because the Mother Goddess or "Laura" is the superior force, this is no reason to see Laura Trevelyan, the young woman in Sydney, as the "centre of value" and "major character" of the novel [Veronica Brady, "In My End is My Beginning: Laura as Heroine of *Voss*", *Southerly*, Vol.35, No.1, 1975, p.16]. Dr Brady reads Laura Trevelyan at a personalistic level, thus mistaking Laura's true role and losing sight altogether of the all-important female *image* in Voss's psyche.
- 29 William Walsh touches on this point: "... the blacks are not simply murderers but priests of some other and incomprehensible god" [*Patrick White: Voss*, p.33]. The point is well taken, but for us the "god" the blacks serve is not "incomprehensible" - it is the Earth Mother in her chthonic, devouring aspect.

- 30 We found this same pattern at work in the previous novel: Stan Parker was strongly impassioned by the beckoning passages of Glastonbury, but once inside the mansion he found himself surrounded by an imprisoning wall of fire. Also, Leo was drawn lustfully to the opening corridors of Amy's house, but once intercourse had been achieved he felt the house to be stuffy and claustrophobic. However it is encountered, as female womb, house, or circular landscape, the matrix is felt to be devouring once it has been penetrated.
- 31 There are two versions of the death of Attis: in the Phrygian myth he hangs himself on a tree, in the Syrian version he castrates himself beneath the pine. Strangely, in the deaths of Mr Gage (the artist of the previous novel) and Le Mesurier, White unconsciously reproduces both versions - thus giving his work, in my view, the quality of genuine myth. In pagan mythology, self-castration (Attis) and ritual self-mutilation (Le Mesurier) are symbolic equivalents; cf. Neumann, "The Mythological Stages in the Evolution of Consciousness", *Origins*, p.121f.
- 32 Cf. J.G. Frazer, "The Myth and Ritual of Attis", *Adonis, Attis, Osiris, The Golden Bough*, Part IV, Vol.1.
- 33 Le Mesurier's prayer is addressed to "God", but it is clearly the Earth Goddess that is being invoked:
'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 true love of all men, and in you, O God, at last.' [p.297]
- 34 The connection between the Medusa and petrification is strangely suggested in the following sentence: "Mrs Bonner was petrified, both by the words that she did not understand, and by the medusa-head that uttered them" [p.386].
- 35 The idea that Voss is now at one with the mother-world, that he is wedded to the object of desire for all eternity, is at the back of Mr Sinclair's remark: "[I am] of the opinion that [Voss has] discovered a paradise somewhere in the middle of the Continent, and cannot bear to return" [p.400].
- 36 Cf. Jung, "*Regressive restoration of the persona*", in "The Relations between the Ego and the Unconscious", *Two Essays*, pp. 163-169.
- 37 As H.P. Heseltine notes, "[The final chapters form] an epilogue to the main narrative, an epilogue which, some readers have felt, breaks so drastically with what precedes it as to constitute a real formal failure" ["Voss: Issues and Problems", in the Longmans edition of the novel, p.408]. This formal failure has its basis in the psychological fact that at the end we find a restoration of the rigid persona-world, to the detriment of passion, vision, and symbolic force.
- 38 R.F. Brissenden sees Stan Parker as a "representative of common humanity" [*Patrick White*, p.25], and G.A. Wilkes emphasizes the "ordinariness of Stan and Amy, and the commonplaceness of their lives" ["Patrick White's *The Tree of Man*", in *Ten Essays*, p.28]. According to H.P. Heseltine, "*The Tree of Man* is White's tribute to those ordinary lives which, elsewhere, he has felt so strongly compelled to take to task" ["Introduction", *Voss*, Longmans edition, p.380]. D.R.Burns, choosing to read Stan Parker as the prototype of the Aussie Male, argues that he is "as unequivocally and undecoratively Australian as a galvanized iron roof" [*The Directions of Australian Fiction 1920-1974*, p.158].

- 39 For the English poet-critic Ted Hughes, *The Tree of Man* is "a true epic, the life story of the Australian anonymous hero" [in the *Listener*, quoted by John Barnes, "A Note on Patrick White's Novels", *The Literary Criterion*, Vol. VI, No.3, p.93].
- 40 Cf. "Stan and Amy Parker are no Theodora Goodmans trembling on the edge of madness - they are simple, ordinary people, without too much imagination" [R.F. Brissenden, "Patrick White", *Meanjin*, Vol.18, no.4, 1959, p.419]. See also G.A. Wilkes, who argues that *The Tree of Man* was written as a reaction against *The Aunt's Story*, and that it "puts an end to the theme of 'alienation' developing through White's earlier books" [ibid., p.27].
- 41 R.F. Brissenden, ibid., p.412.
- 42 In the Introduction to the Longmans edition of *Voss*, a text designed for use in secondary schools, the reader is informed that the German leader is a "hero [who] marches confidently into the future", and that he "leads his composite band into the interior not for the sake of material rewards but to help create a national legend" [*Voss*, The Heritage of Literature Series, pp. 389-390]. The reader is further instructed that "*Voss* is a novel based on Australian history and concerned to provide an interpretation of Australian experience" [ibid., p.388].
- 43 James McAuley, "The Gothic Splendours", *Ten Essays* (ed.) Wilkes, p.40.
- 44 "'It would be better that I should go barefoot, and alone. I know. But it is useless to try to convey to others the extent of that knowledge'" [p.69].
- 45 Two important dissenters from the (un)critical celebration of White's "Australianness" are A.D. Hope and John Barnes:
 What he is writing about has nothing essentially to do with Australia, or with pioneering, or with the pattern of country life. [Hope, in his 1956 review of *The Tree of Man*, reprinted in *Native Companions: Essays and Comments on Australian Literature 1936-1966*, p.76].
 ... it is misleading to stress the apparent Australian-ness of [White's] subject matter. *The Tree of Man* has the shape, familiar to readers of Australian fiction, of a family pioneering saga, and *Voss* has, as its central situation, the nineteenth century explorer going into the desert heart of Australia ... [B]ut neither [work] is solidly grounded in Australian experience. [John Barnes, "A Note on Patrick White's Novels", op.cit., p.94].
- 46 Here I can only echo the insights of John Barnes: "*The Tree of Man* ... suffers from a vagueness of time and locality which at once suggests universality and defeats it. The physical world in which Stan and Amy Parker live is less strongly imagined than their inner experience, and that experience, which is White's central concern, is almost unrelated to their Australian identity" ["A Note ...", ibid, my italics].
- 47 It is, of course, conceivable to have a literature which is both archetypal and regional - Hemingway, Faulkner, and Melville are good examples of a synthesis of the two. But White's work is more strictly archetypal and mythic - he is not "Australian" in the sense that Faulkner is "American" - but is somehow accidentally Australian.
- 48 G.A. Wilkes complains about "mythic content" in *The Tree of Man*, and says that it weakens the novel's realistic frame ("Patrick White's *The Tree of Man*", op.cit., p.25f). Brissenden is worried by the "symbolic bushfire" and claims that it distracts us from the family saga ["Patrick White", *Meanjin*, op.cit., p.413].

- 49 Here I appear to be contradicting myself - my first task was to show the inner nature of White's vision, but now I go on to suggest that this vision is not necessarily subjective. This is a complex problem that relates to the dynamics and structure of the unconscious - when one distorts reality by projecting inner contents onto it, this is a personal issue (in the sense that the contents are from "my" psyche, and do not belong to the world) but the contents themselves are at once archetypal and collective. Thus both aspects are true: White does distort reality by imposing an inward, psychic pattern, *and* this pattern is objectively true in a psychological or mythic sense. Or in other terms, White's vision has little to do with Australia - the external objective field - but does relate to *the inner objective field* of psycho-mythology. (In psychosis, for instance, the eruption of the unconscious is "my" problem, but the contents which disturb me arise from "the" collective psyche and have an archetypal and mythological character).
- 50 White has Laura "discover" the religious frame of the novel when she announces: "'How important it is to understand the three stages. Of God into man. Man. And man returning into God'" [p.386].
- 51 Unfortunately, G.A. Wilkes, like so many critics of *Voss* (with the important exception of James McAuley), mistakes the superimposed Christian layer for the work's true organizing principle. The Christian schema, he says, is "the myth of which the novel avails itself" ["A Reading of Patrick White's *Voss*," *Ten Essays*, p.141].

Chapter Four

- 1 *Riders in the Chariot* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Modern Classics, 1974), p.424. All future references are to this edition.
- 2 Colin Roderick, "*Riders in the Chariot: An Exposition*", *Southerly*, XXII, ii, (1962), p.62.
- 3 For psychological references to the idea of the "unborn soul" see Erich Neumann, "The Uroboros", *Origins*, p.12f, and also Jung "Commentary on Kundalini Yoga", *Spring 1975*, p.21d. For a psychoanalytic treatment of the subject cf. H.G. Baynes, "The Provisional Life", *Analytical Psychology and the English Mind*.
- 4 Robert Bly expresses this yearning, and the concomitant fear of being devoured, in his poem "Tao de Ching Running":
 If only we could not be eaten by the steep teeth,
 If only we could leap like the rough marble into the next world
 (from *Sleepers Joining Hands*.)
 It would be an interesting literary study to assess to what extent the image of uroboric incest has dominated the literature of the twentieth-century. Lawrence, of course, is full of this uroboric-romantic image of merging ecstatically into the uncreate source or womb, cf. "The Ship of Death".
- 5 This obviously begs the question: what then is genuine religious vision? I cannot answer this here but will attempt a statement along these lines in the Appendix.
- 6 Naturally the author does not present his character in a morbid or pathological light, because he sees the condition of the "unborn soul" as the ultimate or ideal state.

- 7 'A housekeeper!' she said, ... and this was what Miss Hare dreaded most: an individual called Mrs Jolley, whose hips would assert themselves in navy blue, whose breathing would be heard, whose letters would lie upon the furniture It was frightening, frightening. [p.17-18].
- 8 Cf. Erich Neumann: "... when the time has come for an individual to sever his containment within the maternal world, the mother will appear a "witch" quite independently of her 'real' behaviour" [*The Archetypal World of Henry Moore*, 1959, p.22].
- 9 If for a moment we assume Mrs Jolley is an actual human character we could say that she is indicative of a certain kind of fragmented or dissociated consciousness which identifies with the "Good" ['I attended the C. of E. ever since I was a kiddy' p.58], yet which is inwardly possessed by evil and the shadow-side of the collective psyche. At one level she professes her faith in the Lord and trots off each Sunday to church (where she first meets Ada Flack), but she finds herself compelled to do evil, to be obsessed by sexuality and to engage in malicious gossip about the possible sexual entanglements of others. Her inward situation is mirrored admirably in the episode of the killing of the snake at Xanadu. As a "Christian lady" she destroys what appears to be evil in the external world, only to cause this evil to reappear at the inner level. After killing the snake ['ridding the world of something bad', p.83], she herself begins to hiss and work evil at Xanadu. The fascinating thing is that Mrs Jolley continues to think of herself as a Christian despite her possession by evil. This much we can accept in White's characterization of the housekeeper from Melbourne (Moonee Ponds?), but as she appears to Miss Hare we can only think of Mrs Jolley as a witch in a fantasy-play.
- 10 Goethe, *Faust Part 1*, trans. Wayne, p.75.
- 11 Susan Moore ["The Quest for Wholeness in *Riders in the Chariot*", *Southerly*, vol 35, i, 1975] analyses Mrs Jolley as a purely external figure and so misses the entire meaning of this figure's role in the novel.
- 12 Days after the lettering had been consumed, Miss Hare was haunted by the pink cake. She must, she *would* understand it, though there were pockets of thought which her mind refused to enter, like those evil thickets in which might be found little agonizing tufts of fur, broken swallow's eggs or a goat's rational skull. [p.61]
There is a tentative, one might say a theoretical desire to understand Mrs Jolley and her evil pranks - but if Miss Hare is not capable of accepting evil in external nature, then she is even less capable of seeing evil within herself, and of realizing her intrinsic likeness to Mrs Jolley.
- 13 At one point Mrs Jolley exclaims: "'You do not know me, ... any more than you don't know nothing at all'" [p.54]. This is truer than Miss Hare realizes - she knows nothing of the witch-power that holds her fast from within. Cf. also the quotation used as an epigraph to this part-chapter - but Miss Hare is not in a position to benefit from the sound wisdom of Ada Flack.
- 14 In a sense the image does not "belong" to any of the characters, because it is transpersonal and archetypal. It precedes characterization.
- 15 Is not Xanadu an (unintentional) symbol of White's own religious edifice? It too is a European extravagance which is imposed upon a matriarchal field, and which is always defeated and made ineffectual by the "ground" of the text. Like Norbert Hare, White celebrates the edifice, but does not realize how shaky and inappropriate it is.

- 16 Cf. "The black branches of the elm sawed. The early leaves pierced the more passive colours of human refinement like a knife" [p.42].
- 17 It is only when Norbert Hare is drunk or otherwise intoxicated that he is able to accept his "unborn" child. One evening, intoxicated by brandy and overcome by the glaring light of sunset, Norbert speaks to Mary about the Chariot ['Who are the riders in the Chariot, eh, Mary? Who is ever going to know?' p.23] which betrays his own underlying "mystical" or *puer* side, and which also allows Mary her first contact with the chariot symbol. Norbert has an inward uroboric nature, but this is revealed only during moments of drunkenness and abandon.
- 18 In *Voss* there was a similar relation between Bonner and his dissolution-striving niece: "It was his niece, Laura Trevelyan, who had caused Mr Bonner's world of substance to quake" [V, p.373].
- 19 Then he appeared more afraid than before, as if she were looking truly monstrous from that height and angle, as she held the pole towards him.
'Some-one!' he was crying. 'Mary! Don't! Have some pity!' [p.57]
- 20 As we shall see, Arthur Brown, "the getter of pain", feels himself responsible for the death of his ego-bound brother Waldo. This important psychological fact occupies the entire fourth section of *The Solid Mandala*.
- 21 Voss and Le Mesurier, for instance, delighted in their disintegrative effect upon Turner, Judd, and Angas. Voss felt no conscience about his psychologically disturbing impact upon Bonner and the Sydney huddlers.
- 22 Obviously we cannot say the same thing about the mother figures in *Riders in the Chariot*—they delight, as ever before, in ruining the lives of the other characters. Thus the deep unconscious still manifests an hostility toward consciousness, but the *puer* and *puella* figures (who might be said to represent a middle, quasi-human position between ego and unconscious) display melancholy-sadness and accept responsibility for the defeat of the ego.
- 23 And again: "... the tent of the tree contracted round them The lovely branches sent down sheets of iron, which imprisoned their bodies" [p.156].
- 24 Miss Hare persists in her ignorance about the "goodness" of Mother Nature: "'I know this tree is good; it cannot be guilty of more than a little bit of wormy fruit. There,' she said, indicating the gentle movement of the grass, 'how can we look out from under this tree, and not know that all is good?'" And again, beneath this tree of paradise, we find the unacknowledged evil aspect assuming form in the "apparition" of Mrs Jolley:
Indeed, looking out from under the tree, it seemed as though light was at work on matter as never before. A plain-song of bees fell in solid drops of gold. All souls might have stood forth to praise if, at that very moment, such a clattering had not broken out, and shoved them back.
'What is that?' Himmelfarb asked.
A pillar of black and white had risen in the depths of the abandoned orchard, but moving and swaying. Silence creaked, and the weed towers were rendered into nothing.
'Hal-loo? Oo-hoo! Coo-ee!' called the voice of conscience...
'That,' [said Miss Hare] 'is one of the evil ones!' [p.156]
- 25 It is difficult to assess exactly how much Himmelfarb tells the madwoman of Xanadu about his life, or whether much of his story is "intuited" by his trusting companion. In part, the idea of the long-winded verbal exchange

runs counter to White's particular theme, which relates to the necessity for silence and restraint between nature-mystics. Dubbo and Miss Hare, for instance, merely share one or two portentously inflated comments, or elusively "knowing" gestures.

- 26 Cf. Jung: "For the infant, the mother is an archetypal experience; she is known by the more or less unconscious child not as a definite, individual feminine personality, but as *the* mother, an archetype loaded with significant possibilities" ["Mind and Earth", *Civilization in Transition*].
- 27 Frances Wickes, *The Inner World of Childhood*; Erich Neumann, *The Child*; Michael Fordham, *Children as Individuals*.
- 28 The mother's attempt here to fit Himmelfarb into the role of her son-priest is emphasized by the father's comment when he interrupts the ceremony and exclaims, "'Well, Mordecai, quite the little *zaddik!*'" [p.97].
- 29 Cf. Anna Belford-Ulanov: "The animus of the Great Mother-type is what Jungians call the *puer aeternus*, the "eternal" ... The un-lived animus of the mother may be projected onto her actual son, to be realized later on in his life. Unconsciously, the Mother-type will pressure her son to realize in his life the creative animus capacities which she failed to develop in her own life" ["The Mother", *The Feminine in Christian Theology and Jungian Psychology*, p.202]. See also Jung, *The Development of Personality*, p.191f.
- 30 Incidentally, "Rhea" is the name of a Mother Goddess in ancient Greece, a daughter of Gaea (the Earth) and sister of Demeter (the corn goddess).
- 31 At the marriage ceremony the "disgusting dyer of his youth" encounters the bridegroom: "'I did not doubt you would see what was indicated,' slobbered the awful man into the bridegroom's ear. 'And know you will justify our expectations'" [p.128].
- 32 One senses, intuitively, that the author was rather too anxious to bring his protagonist's guilt out of the hazy, psychological arena and into the realm of concrete fact. Hence the events at the time of his "betrayal" of Reha seem contrived, just as the prose at this point [p.150f] is forced and directed. To my mind the author is best at symbolist fiction, and when he tries to convert symbolic reality into realism he invariably fails.
- 33 Himmelfarb's psychological sacrifice involves his abandonment of his intellectual career and his taking on an ascetic, self-denying life-style. But when he cries, "The intellect has failed us" [p.198] this is less a statement about the inadequacies of human reason than it is a desperate admission of his own failure to maintain a rational consciousness in the face of his outstanding mother-complex. White has a tendency to make sweeping statements about the sterility of intellectual life (here, as in *The Living and the Dead*, and "The Prodigal Son"), but these should be seen against their psychological and subjective background, coming from an author who is predisposed by a mother-complex to refute the masculine intellect. It is, in Mordecai's case, simply a form of self-castration.
- 34 Cf. James Hillman: "In the special case of the Mother-*puer* confluence, the Great Mother seems to win out, not only by depotentiating spirit, but by exaggerating it. Mother, as giver and nourisher, as natural life itself, supplies the *puer* with an overdose of energetic supplies, and by reinforcing certain of the *puer*'s basic traits she claims him as her dependent son ... When the vertical direction towards transcendence is contaminated with the mother-complex, the [masculine spirit] is no longer authentic" ["The Great

Mother, Her Son, Her Hero, and the Puer", *Fathers and Mothers*, pp.84-87].

- 35 Once again, the reader is directed to the Appendix, "Uroboros is not Mandala", where the difference between spirituality and uroboric mysticism will be outlined in a brief but pointed discussion.
- 36 At best, Himmelfarb's "Jewishness" is a fictional or structural device, which enables him to say with Miss Hare, 'I, too, am different'. But at a religious level it is unconvincing and unrealized - partly because White (in spite of his considerable reading in the area) does not understand Judaism and patriarchal religion, and partly because Himmelfarb's "God" (the Mother Goddess) has nothing to do with the God of the Jews.
- 37 The reference to Mrs Godbold's face glowing with light reminds us of Malke Himmelfarb during her ritual adoration of her son [p.97]. This supports the idea that Mrs Godbold is actually celebrating an extension of herself, and that she is secretly identified with her son-animus.
- 38 It is present, too, even when it is overlaid by the author's Christian framework, as we shall see.
- 39 We could put it this way: when archetypes fragment they become stereotypes, because the "fragments" become static, inflexible, and are no longer held in check by their respective counterparts.
- 40 We will recall that this was a specific feature of the protecting, maternal tree at Xanadu, which appeared to be swallowing and devouring the mystics caught in its embrace.
- 41 This reminds us of Stan Parker afloat upon the unruly "sea" of the earth-mother, or Leo upon the writhing body of Amy Parker. Sexuality is always linked with the image of the *puer* being overwhelmed by the Mother's passion.
- 42 Soon after their marriage Ruth Godbold is imaged as the All-Mother, a forboding companion for poor Tom: "Strangled by the arms of a weaned child, she was seldom it seemed without a second baby greedy at her breast, and a third impatient in her body. She would scrub, wash, bake, mend, and drag her husband from floor to bed when, of an evening, he had fallen down" [p.66].
- 43 As Erich Neumann has shown, the habit of the earth-goddess to mourn her dead is a case of crocodile tears - it is a mere sensation of voluptuous fulfilment [*Origins*, p.88f].
- 44 As we saw in *Voss*, the Mother Goddess was presented as divine, celestial, and Christian, but she emerged, against the author's wishes (and Voss's expectations) as a devouring, blood-stained, Gorgon-like figure.
- 45 This in itself is an expression of her paradoxical nature: in the same moment as she reduces her husband, she lifts up and exalts the visionary Dubbo.
- 46 Not only is Dubbo's father absent - he is completely unknown - presumably one of his mother's anonymous and innumerable lovers.
- 47 Cf: "Their life together was full of undercurrents, which sometimes threatened to drag them down. So that the presence of the aboriginal boy did at first relieve, and even promise rescue. If the sister was only partially aware, the brother became fully conscious that his hopes were fastening on Alf Dubbo, and that through him he might attain, if not personal

salvation, at least a mental cosiness"[p.319].

- 48 As we discover, this conflict between religious and pagan aspects is also at work in the rector himself - his facile Christianity proves incapable of transforming his animal passion, so that he eventually succumbs to the sexual instinct and is forced to engage in homosexual activity with Dubbo and the choir boys of the church. It is this which forces Dubbo to leave the rectory - especially when Mrs Pask discovers them at sexual play in the Reverend's bedroom. Symbolically, this is a further expression of the ineffectual father-image in White, and its inability to contain or transform the energies of the mother-world.
- 49 It is significant that Dubbo's childhood memory should be an explicitly sexual-incestuous one, whereas Himmelfarb's was a spiritual interaction between himself and the mother-figure. In mythological terms, the White Goddess possesses a sophisticated, "theological" animus, which Himmelfarb is forced to live out, but the Black Madonna has a more earthy and sensual spirit which is never divorced from the realm of passion. Dubbo's life, and his art, is an eminently passionate, erotic affair.
- 50 The maternal nature of the tree is emphasized by the comment, "He touched it with vermilion, and it bled afresh". In White blood is always connected with matriarchal and pagan mysteries, especially in Arthur Brown's "blood-poem".
- 51 Hereafter I will use the term *pueri* to include Miss Hare with Dubbo and Himmelfarb, for in its original Latin usage the word denotes "children" in the broadest sense, and is not limited to the masculine gender.
- 52 Jung, "Symbols of the Mother and of Rebirth", *Symbols of Transformation*, p.258.
- 53 It is interesting that Dubbo experiences his incestuous-sexual affair with the elderly widow as an inevitable part of his fate: "The woman appeared to be beckoning ... 'You!' she called ... 'Come on over, and 'ave a yarn.' Again he realized that fate was in action. The locked mechanism of his will was allowing Mrs Spice to lead him through the hole of her humpy into a darkness in which she lived" [pp.334-36]. Later he refers to this period of his life as "the reign of Mrs Spice".
- 54 As with Tom Godbold and Mick O'Dowd, Dubbo vents his rage upon the negative mother-figure by strangling and almost killing Hannah. But this external, physical violence can in no way extricate him from the internal symbolic force.
- 55 Here I must take issue with J.F. Burrows, who asserts that "Dubbo ... draws constantly on the Bible, his only substantial store of imaginative riches" ["Archetypes and Stereotypes: *Riders in the Chariot*", *Ten Essays on Patrick White*, p.55]. Dubbo's imaginative source is his own pagan background, not his borrowed Christianity.
- 56 Cf. Neumann: "The son-lover ... experiences the destructive side of the Great Mother as something masculine. It is her murderous satellites ... who carry out the sacrifice of the son. In mythology this side manifests itself as a dark homicidal male force, a savage animal, in particular the bear, but later it manifests itself as her masculine warrior consort" [*Origins*, p.179].
- 57 Cf. John M. Robertson, *Pagan Christs* (1911), and also Edward Carpenter, *Pagan and Christian Creeds* (1920).
- 58 Cf. J.G. Frazer, "The Myth and Ritual of Attis", *Adonis, Attis, Osiris*, Part IV, vol I, *The Golden Bough*, p.267.

- 59 The main difference is that Attis-Adonis is worldly, instinctual, and of the earth, whereas Christ is transcendent Spirit, an extra-mundane factor. The Christ-figure, in symbolic terms, is from the Father and "heaven", whereas the other dying and resurrecting god is from the Mother and nature. Also, Christ's passion is lineal and absolute - it is concerned with the incarnation, in historical time, of the divine Logos. Attis-Adonis, who is purely "mythical" and was never a human figure, has a cyclical pattern of rebirth and dies each winter to be reborn in the spring. Realizing the apparent similarities of the two gods, the Church Fathers (cf. Robertson, *Pagan Christs*) were adamant about preserving the uniqueness and historicity of Christ over against the cyclical and mythological character of the pagan god. St. Paul was careful to delineate between them: "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit that is of God" [1 Cor. 2:12]. For an excellent account of the differences between Attis-Adonis and Christ see John Sandford, *The Kingdom Within*, p.163f; and Hugo Rahner, "Earth Spirit and Divine Spirit in Patristic Theology", in *Spirit and Nature*, Papers from the Eranos Yearbooks, (ed) Joseph Campbell, Vol 1.
- 60 Critics have found the incident bothersome because it seems unlikely as a real event, and "could not happen in Australia" (R.F. Brissenden, *Patrick White*). But this is hardly an appropriate criticism - the book is not social realism and must not be judged according to realistic conventions. We *can* say that its pointedly mythic quality makes it less convincing as a fictional event, but not that it fails because it is mythic.
- 61 J.G. Frazer, "The Myth and Ritual of Attis", op.cit., p.266.
- 62 Frazer, "The Day of Blood in the Attis Ritual", p.268f; and also "The Ritual of Adonis", p.226 in the same volume.
- 63 I do not believe that White deliberately modelled his story on the death-festival of Attis - anyway he was attempting to model the episode on the Christian passion, so that the parallels with Attis are quite unintentional. At this level the fiction is genuinely archetypal, so that it is not surprising to find it in imaginative rapport with the dramas of ancient myth.
- 64 Cf: "... someone that we know of must *consort* - to put it blunt. Eh? Blue! Blue! ... Enjoy, boy, enjoy, then! Bust your skin open, if that is what you want! It is only a game to let the blood run when there is plenty of it. And so red" [p.397].
- 65 From Robert Bly's translation of a section of the Book of Job, in his essay, "I Came Out of the Mother Naked", *Sleepers Joining Hands*, p.31.
- 66 Cf. Marie Louise von Franz: "Somehow the Great Mother is in league with her son's death, is a kind of party to the occasion, though is never directly involved in the murder" [*The Problem of the Puer Aeternus*, part 1, p.19].
- 67 Which, it will be remembered, were united in the one paradoxical figure in relation to Tom Godbold.
- 68 Mrs Godbold's overpowering and destructive nature is further evinced in her handling of Harry Rosetree. She undermines his ideas about the uniqueness of Judaism in an instant, and insists on seeing all men as "children" of the one maternal source [p.445]. This disturbs the Jew greatly and is a contributing factor to his ensuing suicide. But at a symbolic level this is a further expression of the lethal power of the Mother Goddess, and her ability to reduce all men to *pueri* and to undermine the masculine principle.

- 69 See Appendix, "Uroboros is not Mandala".
- 70 Cf. Hugo Rahner, "Earth Spirit and Divine Spirit in Patristic Theology", *op.cit.*
- 71 "Very quietly Himmelfarb left the factory in which it had not been accorded to him to expiate the sins of the world" [p.418].
- 72 Cf. Theodora Goodman: "Morning was bigger than the afternoon, and round, and veined like the skin inside an unhatched egg, in which she curled safe still ..." [AS, p.22].
- 73 Cf. M.King-Boyes, *Patterns of Aboriginal Culture: Then and Now*; A.P. Elkin, *The Australian Aborigines*.
- 74 "His vanity was flattered by his version of this Second Servant of their Lord. The risk of spoiling [!] did not prevent him touching and touching, as he wrapped the bristled creature closer in the almost too skilful paint" [p.455].
- 75 It is interesting to note that the idea of the Chariot comes to the major characters second-hand. Miss Hare is told about it by her father, Himmelfarb discovers it through the *Judaica*, Mrs Godbold finds it through her hymn, and Dubbo through a reprint of Odilon Redon's painting of Apollo. At no point does it arise from the actual experiences or dreams of the characters - except once in Miss Hare's delirium, and then it is treated with such vagueness that one can hardly speak of an "experience" of the Chariot.
- 76 Here again, one is reminded of the crucial image of *The Aunt's Story*: the frail trochilus in the mouth of the dragon.
- 77 This term is borrowed from John Colmer, who used it in his essay, "Duality in Patrick White", *Patrick White: A Critical Symposium*, *op.cit.*
- 78 That is to say, the motif of crucifixion is not in itself synonymous with redemption, or *only as it appears in the Christian passion*. In non-Christian contexts, such as the one here, it simply points to death.
- 79 For a further expression of this matriarchal blood-ritual in modern fiction see John Steinbeck, *To a God Unknown*.
- 80 It will be noted that the sale of Dubbo's paintings caused "ribaldry" and that the destruction of Xanadu was carried out in an atmosphere of drunken, even frenzied delight. The uroboros enjoys devouring its own spirit, just as Mrs Flack seemed ecstatic over the defeat of Himmelfarb and the blood-sacrifice.
- 81 There is a fascinating significance to the fact that March-April and Easter in Australia coincide not with spring and the regeneration of nature, as in the northern hemisphere, but with the autumnal and winter decline. Thus our celebration of Easter and the crucifixion, by a curious reversal of the seasons, more readily evokes the pagan model of the crucified god as an image of failure and defeat.
- 82 Colin Roderick, "Riders in the Chariot: An Exposition", *op.cit.*; Susan Moore, "The Quest for Wholeness in *Riders in the Chariot*", *op.cit.*; F.W. Dillistone, *Patrick White's Riders in the Chariot*; and Peter Beatson, "Chariot and Mandala", *The Eye in the Mandala*.

- 83 J.F. Burrows, "Archetypes and Stereotypes", op.cit; and John Colmer, *Patrick White's Riders in the Chariot*.
- 84 Susan Moore argues that "the more one knows about medieval religious literature - particularly Jewish Mystical literature - the more sense one can make of the experiences of White's four living creatures, and the more one can appreciate his allusions" ["The Quest for Wholeness", op.cit., p.53]. I would say the opposite is true: the less one knows about Jewish mysticism the better, for then the reader can remain open to the narrative structures and will not be preoccupied with hunting for illusory parallels.
- 85 When read at the allegorical level, the novel appears as a fragmentary work which, as John Colmer aptly puts it, "is more reminiscent of an unfinished jigsaw puzzle than the mystic unity of a sacred mosaic" [*Patrick White's Riders in the Chariot*, p.53].
- 86 Cf: "From behind, her great beam, under the stretchy cardigan, might have appeared something of a joke, except to the few who happened to perceive that she also wore the crown" [p.491].
- 87 Burrows finds the characterization of Mrs Godbold inadequate because she is not presented in an ironic light ["Archetypes and Stereotypes", op.cit., p.69f]. The point is, White is not a novelist in the ordinary sense, and we must not expect him to present an ironic or "modern" vision of life. Myth cannot be judged according to the standards of social realism.
- 88 "'I mean,' he mumbled, 'a man must make use of what he has. There is no point in putting on a pair of boots to walk to town, if you can do it better in your barefeet'" [p.285].

Chapter Five

- 1 John Updike, *The Centaur*.
- 2 Cf. Erich Neumann on the plurality of the circle-image; *Origins and History of Consciousness*, p.36f.
- 3 Cf. Jung, "The 'eternal child' in man is an indescribable experience, an incongruity, a handicap, and a divine prerogative; an imponderable that determines the ultimate worth or worthlessness of a personality", in "The Psychology of the Child Archetype", *Essays on a Science of Mythology*, p.98.
- 4 Cf. Jolande Jacobi, "The Helpful Shadow", *The Psychology of C.G. Jung*, plate 3.
- 5 "Funny old Arthur was no more funny than your own flesh suffering an unjust and unnecessary torment" [p.76]; "He was crying for Arthur, for Arthur or himself" [p.68]; "There was no escaping Arthur ... he became the sound of your own breathing" [p.76].
- 6 Arthur's internal counterpart is not revealed until comparatively late in the story, when he makes a desperate bid for consciousness. Cf. In the Library scene: "He walked across the hall, steady enough, and out the main entrance, his shadow following him in the sun, as he carried away inside him - his brother" [p.285].
- 7 Jung, "Conscious, Unconscious, and Individuation", *The Archetypes and*

the Collective Unconscious.

- 8 All references are to the Penguin (1977) edition of the novel.
- 9 Cf. James Hillman, "Psychological Faith", *Revising Psychology*, p.50f.
- 10 Cf. Marie Louise von Franz, "The first approach of the unconscious", in "The Process of Individuation", *Man and His Symbols*, p.165f.
- 11 Hölderlin, from his poem "Patmos", quoted as the epigraph to Erich Neumann, *Depth Psychology and a New Ethic*.
- 12 Cirlot says: "The knot, as with the net, loop, and plait, is generally expressive of an unchanging psychic situation, however unaware of his predicament the individual may be: for example, that of the unliberated man who is 'tied down' by the Uranian god" [*Dictionary of Symbols*, p.172]. P.W. Martin defines the psychic complex as "a twisting-together of unconscious contents" [*Experiment in Depth*, p.162].
- 13 Patricia Morley and Peter Beatson, among others, are generally too apt to put all the blame at Waldo's door, not realizing the absolute necessity of the ego to move away from the unconscious at an early stage.
- 14 Cf. Neumann, *Origins*, p.96f.
- 15 After this incident Dad turns away from Arthur (who had originally been his favourite son) because he is a constant reminder of his own psychic affliction ["... at that moment he felt Dad turn against him. It was some question of afflictions. Except in theory, the afflicted cannot love one another. Well, you couldn't blame Dad. With his aching leg" p.230]. George Brown is a direct descendant of George Goodman, and shares his ineffectuality and psychological impotence. The father-image in White will be more fully explored in the final chapter.
- 16 In her book *The Problem of the Puer Aeternus*, Von Franz discusses the psychological causes of the tragic situation of the mother-bound man. She says that it often appears that the complex is too strong for the ego to cope with, but adds that the ego itself is often at fault, and that its inherent weakness adds "strength" to the mother. She defines this as the "defective ego" [part II, p.6], and says that its inherent resistance to change or challenge stops any possibility of development.
- 17 Mary Hare was imaged as resting in "a dreamtime womb of transparent skin". Also, the palpitating fetuses upon Dubbo's tree were wrapped in whorls of wind.
- 18 In reference to the aesthetic consequences of dissociation, Jacobi says: "The raw material of imagery lacks the formative power of the conscious mind, and consciousness dries up because the nourishing source of the image no longer reaches it" [*Complex, Archetype, Symbol*, p.96]. This is hardly the place for me to investigate White's aesthetic dilemma. I will attend to this problem in the final chapter, where the conflict between conscious and unconscious in his art will be discussed.
- 19 Again it should be emphasized that I am using "castration" in a symbolic context - as dismemberment of the male ego (Neumann) and not as a literal devouring of the male penis (Freud). Cf. for instance: "The woman ... attempted repeatedly to fasten on him her ambitious sea-anemone of a mouth, and he was as determined to avoid being swallowed down" [*Riders*, p.343]. Also: "The woman ... fastened her greasy lips on his mouth, and as though

she had been a vacuum cleaner, practically sucked him down" [SM, p. 184].

- 20 By the time of *The Twyborn Affair* White is able to disclose his homosexual dimension with apparent ease. By 1979 his artistic reputation is assured, and the revealing of his sexual preference is unlikely to affect his public stature. Also, between 1966 [*The Solid Mandala*] and 1979 the world at large has drastically altered its attitude toward homosexuality; it comes less as a shock, and more as a matter of interest, to the reading audience of today.
- 21 Cf. C. Kerényi, *The Gods of the Greeks*.
- 22 As Jung points out: "When Theseus descended into the underworld [he] wished to rest a little, but found that [he] had *grown fast* to the rocks and could not rise. In other words, [he] remained stuck in the mother and was lost to the upper world" [*Symbols of Transformation*, p.293n].
- 23 See Chapter III part I, footnote 35.
- 24 Erich Neumann, *Origins*, p.93.
- 25 Cf. Robert Graves, "Athene's nature and deeds", *The Greek Myths*, Vol.I. In the following passage Graves refers to Tiresias' blindness and subsequent gift of prophecy: "When Tiresias, one day, accidentally surprised her in a bath, she laid her hands over his eyes and blinded him, but gave him inward sight by way of compensation" [p.98]. Unfortunately, Arthur seems to have the 'inward sight' of Tiresias, and Waldo merely his blindness.
- 26 Hillman: "In classical mythology this special entanglement of spirit and maternal world is personified in the clinging embrace of mother and son.... [T]he attempts to untie this knot are truly in the ancient sense agonising and tragic" ["Great Mother, her Son, her Hero, and the Puer", p.77-78]. The mother-complex was also referred to (allusively) as a "knot" in *The Aunt's Story*: during the fantasy-murder sequence Theodora throws the knife back on the kitchen sink and exclaims, "But this ... does not cut the knot" [AS, p.123]. The tie to the mother-image is psychic, and can only be cut at the internal level, through an increase in consciousness.
- 27 Cf. For instance, the back cover of the Penguin edition: "Arthur was the fool who didn't bother to look. He understood". There is a natural tendency in the literary world to exaggerate the wisdom of the fool or idiot-figure (as an over-compensation for our intense intellectuality?). A.P. Riemer even asserts that it is Arthur's profound knowledge that ultimately shields him from the realization of his vision ["Visions of the Mandala in *The Tree of Man*", *Ten Essays*, p.115].
- 28 It must be pointed out that Arthur's retardation is more symbolic than physiological. He is a shadow-figure - i.e. he personifies the unconscious in its infantile aspect - but he has the capacity to grow, to be transformed, like any archetypal figure.
- 29 I will not explore the dance sequence [pp.265-267] in this survey, because it adds nothing new to our understanding of the mandalic vision. It is simply a poetic-dramatic restatement of the emergent theme.
- 30 Neumann, "The Birth of the Hero", *Origins*, p.131f.
- 31 In other words, the unconscious is ingenious in its ways of showing the ego-figure what it must do. But it cannot do the work for it. The unconscious needs the ego-personality, of its own volition, to co-operate with it.

- 32 At the point of Waldo's death, Arthur shows Waldo the mirror-studded dress of his transvestite episode, so that "he might see his reflexion in it" [p.212].
- 33 I do not wish to imply (here or elsewhere) that White is "presenting" this theme of individuation in his story. It is simply present, in the fabric of the narrative tale, and it is likely that White shares Waldo's ignorance of the problem. It is an autonomous content of the fiction; it is not White's idea, but Arthur's.
34. The Mother most often instructs the *puer* "not to bother", to relax and rest, thus subverting his heroic quest. Cf: "Ecstasy (the art of not-doing) is one of the Goddess' ways of seducing the *puer* from its *senex* connection" [Hillman, "Great Mother and Puer", p.86].
- 35 Waldo transfers his collected papers from his desk to the David Jones dress box immediately after the transvestite scene. The papers, we are told, were "easily contained" [p.191] in the cardboard receptacle. This adds to the many representations of the mother-complex in the novel (the knot at the centre of the mandala, the image of Waldo as the Goddess Memory, etc). But the fact that he keeps his papers in the dress box is perhaps the most explicit (yet, I take it, unconscious) manifestation of his mother-bound nature.
- 36 The image of "Terminus Road" (i.e. a *dead end*) is itself suggestive of the fatalism, sterility, and hopelessness of Waldo's life. It gives the sense that he was destined never to escape from the deathly matrix.
- 37 That is, Anne Brown (née Quantrell); his mother.
- 38 The last line of the tale reads: "'In me didst thou exist --and, in my death, see by this image, which is thine own, how utterly thou hast murdered thyself'" [Edgar Allen Poe, *Forty-Two Tales*, p.160].
- 39 Waldo's subjugation by chthonic instinctual forces is indicated through his bodily dismemberment by the savage dogs. Runty and Scruff, locked in the house after Arthur's exit, mutilate his corpse and are seen (by Mrs Poulter) devouring his testicles and phallus [p.302]. Symbolically, when the instincts are "locked up" they turn on the ego-personality and devour it with raving passions.
- 40 Mrs Godbold, we will recall, undergoes a similar process in the previous story (not madness, but a loss of masculine spirit, or animus). This betrays Arthur's "maternal character"; his solidarity with the mother realm.
- 41 That is to say, suburbia is made into a nightmare by his own internal state. It is demonized (as so often occurs in White) through a process of mythic apperception.
- 42 Dulcie had also tended to undermine Waldo, but again Arthur would not allow it:
- 'Waldo is only your brother, you know. At least he's no more than that to me. Arthur's brother.'
- 'Oh no,' said Arthur, 'he's more than that.'
- She hung her head.
- 'It's necessary to escape from Waldo.'
- 'Necessary for you. Not for me.' [p.225]
- 43 Kiernan argues that Mrs Poulter's transformation is "stated ... rather

- than fictionally 'argued' and discovered" ["The Novels of Patrick White", *The Literature of Australia*, p.476]. One can see his point if we view Mrs Poulter at the human level, as a "real" character. But her apotheosis is fully appreciated and acceptable only if we see her as an anonymous *magna mater* celebrating the collapse of individuation in the fictional psyche. Only at this level can we see that her transformation emerges naturally and even inevitably from what has gone before.
- 44 I feel certain that White himself is unaware of the altered imaginal context. It is the creative imagination, the tale, which is the master-mind behind the symbolization process, and the author, I would suggest, is merely following the indicated course.
- 45 Thelma Herring and A.P. Riemer see in this image the fulfilment of the mandalic vision [Herring, "Self and Shadow: The Quest for Totality in *The Solid Mandala*", *Southerly*, Vol 26, No 3, 1966, p.189; Riemer, *op.cit.* p.114f]. Riemer asserts that Mrs Poulter becomes at the end "the custodian of this symbol of perfection" "she is the anima", (he says), "capable of mandalic experience" [p.115].
- 46 Walsh puts it nicely: "To go from *Riders in the Chariot* to *The Solid Mandala*, is to move from a novel which is spacious and inclusive to one in which the field of action is confined, in which the language is more abstinent, the metaphorical habit less florid, the manner altogether trimmer and sharper, and the elements of the 'arrangement, distribution and composition' are more finely balanced" [*Patrick White's Fiction*, p.85].
- 47 I cannot agree with Manfred Mackenzie who argues that the novel is "more theological than any of White's earlier books" ["The Consciousness of 'Twin Consciousness': Patrick White's *The Solid Mandala*", in *Novel*, Vol 2, No 3, Spring 1969, p.251].
- 48 The term "mandala", quite obviously, is borrowed from Jung, but the *symbol* itself, the glass marble, is not derivative or consciously constructed. It functions in much the same way as Elyot's periwinkle stones, only now the circle-image has a new name. I therefore strongly dispute A.P. Riemer's claim that *The Solid Mandala* is Jungian theory in fictional dress ["Visions of the Mandala", *op.cit.*, p.116]. The story seems "Jungian" because it is a spontaneous manifestation of deep psychological processes, not because it is "based" on a reading of the Swiss Psychologist.
- 49 This criticism was especially noted in the early reviews of the novel, but still continues in part in recent studies - as in Kiernan: "No other novel brings out in such an extreme and disorienting way White's literariness ..." [*Patrick White*, p.100].
- 50 Jung even defines the mandala in one place as "the archetype of order", cf. "Concerning Mandala Symbolism", *Collected Works*, Vol 9, 1. In this regard, it may not be irrelevant to note that Arthur, the apparent dill and irrational brother, has a natural predilection for mathematics and arithmetical formulas. Here "order" must be seen as a category of the unconscious, not as a consciously arrived at skill.
- 51 White ends the novel with the chapter title, "Mrs Poulter and the Zeitgeist" - which, I take it, is meant to refer to the death of the old order (Mrs Poulter's Christianity, or rather Churchianity, which shatters as she witnesses the dogs mutilating Waldo's corpse) and the birth of the new "psychological" era, based on inwardness and personal connection to mythic reality.

Chapter Six

- 1 M.L. von Franz, *The Problem of the Puer Aeternus*, iii, p.5.
- 2 Here I am using the word "womb" as both literal human womb *and* as symbolic or archetypal matrix.
- 3 All references to *The Vivisector* are to the Penguin (Harmondsworth, 1977) edition.
- 4 All references to *The Eye of the Storm* are to the Penguin (Harmondsworth, 1977) edition.
- 5 In this chapter it may seem as if my argument is directed against "sexuality" and the fulfilment of instinctual desires, but this is by no means the case. It is only because the *violation of the incest-taboo* expresses itself concretely and sexually that we have cause to denigrate sexuality in White's work. The fact is, sexuality here is synonymous with incest - since it is caught up in an infantile stage as a result of the mother-complex. Thus when sexuality finally appears it is as a completely infantile and undifferentiated erotic force. My argument is not against sexuality itself, but the perverted expressions of the incest-urge to which White gives expression (and sanction) in the later novels.
- 6 According to Esther Harding, this is a constantly recurring problem - not only for the feminine *image* within a man's psyche (as here), but for woman herself: "The uprush of feminine instinct in woman may be like a flooding from the unconscious which threatens to swamp all the specifically human values which she formerly seemed to possess" [*Woman's Mysteries*, p.118].
- 7 Cf. The next chapter, "Novels as Products of the Unconscious".
- 8 Hence, I might add, White's understandable reluctance to discuss matters pertaining to these fictions. Cf. His comments about *The Eye of the Storm* at the end of the *Southerly* interview [Vol.33, No.2, June 1973, p.143].

Chapter Six, part 1

- 1 *The Vivisector*, p.100.
- 2 This obviously parallels White's own relation to his art. To a large degree, *The Vivisector* encapsulates White's individual experience of the creative act.
- 3 "'You're what I've been trying to tell them about. You're what Pa and me knows we aren't,' Mumma mumbled" [p.22].
- 4 This has much the same effect as Malke's relation to her son Himmelfarb. The Mother is always behind the scenes, manipulating the *puer* like a puppet or plaything.
- 5 Cf. "'The city is full of vice, and human nature is weak. But we can't merely accept, Hurtle. We must help others help themselves'" [p.34].

- 6 In view of what was said earlier, White's fictional goddess is here depicted in grave fear of her own imminent transformation, of the eruption of chthonic femininity.
- 7 At the end of the story Rhoda becomes known about the neighbourhood as "the cat woman" [p.439]. The cat, of course, is one of the well-known animal forms of Hecate-Artemis, and has a long association with the moon and other chthonic-matriarchal symbols. Cf. Neumann, "Lady of the Beasts", in *The Great Mother*, p.140f.
- 8 The idea of Rhoda upon the board echoes the image of the little dog on the operating table: both are being subject to civilization's ideals and destructive techniques.
- 9 Later we learn that Maman is accustomed to whipping Rhoda with a riding crop whenever she refuses to lie upon the board. Cf. "'You torture me!' Rhoda screamed" [p.128].
- 10 The reader will note that this parallels with Alf Dubbo's forced departure from the rectory in his early life. But from Duffield's (and Dubbo's?) side the sexual attack is not altogether unpleasant: he only wishes he could have "smothered" in her love, and later in his bedroom he masturbates while remembering voluptuous dreams "of being received" [p.167]. The incident merely gives expression to his psychologically incestuous existence.
- 11 Cf. Voss's dream of Laura as the blood-spotted goddess.
- 12 Even the painting of the estuary reminds us of Rhoda, the chthonic goddess, with "the faintest sliver of pink shining in the fork ..." [p.131].
- 13 It will be remembered that the repression of sexuality was seen to be a direct result of the incestuous mother-bond; cf. Chapter One, and Glossary, "incest wound".
- 14 Note that this same perverted instinctual force destroyed Mrs Standish at the end of *The Living and the Dead*.
- 15 Even Ellen Roxburgh's initial fall from grace - her sexual encounter with Garnet enacted upon a bed of leaf-mould on a forest floor - is reminiscent of Duffield's boyhood encounter with Boo Hollingrake. And of course both incidents can be linked back to Elyot Standish's sexual episode with Hildegard (once again, enacted on a bed of leaf-mould in a garden setting). The motif is so constant that one suspects the working-out of a personal experience on the part of the author, perhaps along the lines of Elyot's sexual experience. But it is nevertheless remarkable that the incident has preserved an essential sameness across the 35 years of his career.
- 16 Cf. "'I'm giving you Hurtle, Hero, for dinner.' ... Duffield had an image of himself trussed on a gold plate, threatened by a knife and fork in Hero's small, rather blunt hands" [p.313]. Other figures who exploit Duffield for their personal gain are Mrs Halliday, Mrs Trotter, and Mrs Horsfall [p.273f], all of whom are rich, worldly figures in search of their lower, instinctual natures.
- 17 Cf. Esther Harding, "The Moon Mother", *Woman's Mysteries*, p.98f.
- 18 During his first sexual encounter with Mrs Davenport, Olivia rejects his advances: "she seemed determined to demonstrate that rape is not

- inevitable" [p.304]. In every sexual involvement Duffield displays a kind of gladiatorial eroticism with sado-masochistic elements.
- 19 The idea that *The Vivisector* is a work advocating a "free natural way of living" [Docker, p.44] as against the sexually repressive ways of Australian society is a humanistic misreading of an essentially pathological novel [cf. John Docker "Patrick White and Romanticism: *The Vivisector*, in *Southerly*, 33 (1973), and Robert S. Baker, "Romantic Onanism in *The Vivisector*", *Texas Studies in Language and Literature*, Vol. 21, No.2 (1979)]. Critics appear to overlook the obvious fact that Duffield's life of sexual licence is a nightmare which hardly reflects a "natural" way of living. ("Natural" sexual life - as anthropological evidence suggests - is anything but indulgent, distorted, and licentious, as it is here.) Also, critics ignore the fact that Australian society is today remarkably permissive as regards sexuality and eroticism, so that the "eros versus society" argument is completely inappropriate and academic.
- 20 White continues to refer to his fictional deity in the masculine gender, despite *every* indication to the contrary.
- 21 Cf. especially the epigraph from Rimbaud:
 He becomes beyond all others the great Invalid, the great Criminal, the great Accursed One - and the Supreme Knower.
 For he reaches the unknown.
 And the passage from Ben Nicholson:
 As I see it, painting and religious experience are the same thing, and what we are all searching for is the understanding and realization of infinity.
- 22 Duffield's fate as a victim of Hecate parallels with Waldo Brown's tragic end - his bodily dismemberment by the caged-up dogs in Terminus Road. When we note the connection between Hecate and dogs [see Figure 10] it is possible to see how Duffield's assimilation to animal instinctuality was grimly foreshadowed in Waldo's death.
- 23 As such, I do not believe that this is in any way a representative story, a portrait of the Artist, as critics tirelessly inform us [cf. Terry Smith, "A portrait of the artist in Patrick White's *The Vivisector*", *Meanjin*, Vol. 31, No.2, June 1972]. *The Vivisector* as a documentation of artistic experience is appropriate only for the Hurtle Duffields of this world - the infantile, alienated, *puer*-artists who attempt to transform pathological mental states into aesthetic terms. Thelma Herring is the only critic to have tackled this crucial point. She speaks of "a conception of the artist's role that is questionable in itself" and suggests - quite rightly - that White's idea of the artist is limited to "the self-dramatization of Byron in his role of the outcast, the overheated fantasies of the Gothic novelists, and all the decadent forms of romantic agony discussed by Mario Praz" ["Patrick White's *The Vivisector*", *Southerly*, Vol. 31, No.1, p.4].
- 24 As John Beston points out, "After Nance's death ... the novel does not reveal anything substantially new about Duffield's character. The remaining 400 pages are corroboratory, making patterns clearer rather than deepening insights There would appear to be something obsessional about the writing of such a novel" ["Patrick White's *The Vivisector*: The Artist in Relation to His Art", *Australian Literary Studies*, Vol. 5, No.2, October 1971, p.174].
- 25 Thelma Herring, *ibid.*, p.6.

- 26 When Duffield encounters his hunchbacked sister, she is described as "Maman with a vengeance, translated into terms of Rhoda" [p.506].
- 27 Arthur Brown was carried away by a wave of sentiment after Waldo's death, and this appears to have set the scene for the present story. For an excellent discussion of feeling in relation to the mother-bond cf. James Hillman, "Feeling and the Mother-Complex", in *Jung's Typology*.

Chapter Six, part 2

- 1 Patrick White, *The Eye of the Storm*, p.389.
- 2 In this regard it is interesting to note comments by Anais Nin: "Form and style are born of the theme, inspired by the theme" [*The Novel of the Future*, p.79], and Marcel Proust: "Style is a matter of vision, not technique" [quoted by Nin, *ibid*].
- 3 That is, the "life" we find her living in the novel - the last few weeks of her existence. Cf. "Whether asleep or awake ... Mrs Hunter slipped back into the dream she had left. She found it easy enough to resume these waking dreams of which her life was constituted ..." [p.22].
- 4 This idea of a "fictional field" was first put forward in relation to *The Tree of Man* [cf. page 136 of the present study] but to some extent it had been a general feature of White's fiction. Always the minor characters can be seen as split-off fragments of the central figure - but this is so much more the case in this novel, where all characters revolve symbolically *and* literally around the protagonist.
- 5 Her life is seen by her daughter Dorothy as "a continuous triumph" [p.249].
- 6 This is not to be seen as a flaw in her characterization: she is clearly extra-human, and is therefore not subject to human laws. She is, as it were, a middle term between goddess and woman, a flesh-and-blood character whose life springs from an archetypal source.
- 7 The relation here between various attributes or aspects of the Mother and the central figure is suggestive of ancient figurines and drawings where the Great Goddess is represented with four, eight, or sixteen arms, signifying her many characteristics. Cf. Graeco-Roman images of Hecate with several faces and arms; Neumann, *The Great Mother*, p.169f.
- 8 Cf. Jung, "Relations between Ego and Unconscious", in *Two Essays*.
- 9 Cf: "Arnold Wyburd hardly allowed himself to hear what could only be a slow, soft fart from the direction of his client's bed; he could not remember ever having heard a woman break wind before" [p.30].
- 10 The as yet childless nurse often dreams of little babies about her strongly maternal body: "... the little children climbing on her lap kneading her breasts dabbling their lashes in her throat crimping her skin into smiles ..." [p.110]. Mrs Hunter calls her "the breeder" [p.430] and suggests she will have many offspring.
- 11 Sister Manhood carries an orange plastic handbag, and wears brightly coloured lipstick, make-up, and plastic ear-rings. She also wears

- mini-skirts, "bargain shoes" [p.321], and coloured cardigans.
- 12 "She could take any amount of treatment from little Manhood: an animal presence is something the mind craves the further the body shrivels into skin and bone" [p.82].
 - 13 J.G. Frazer writes of "sacred prostitutes" who devoted themselves to sexuality at the sanctuaries of Aphrodite [*Adonis, Attis, Osiris*, op.cit., p.36f].
 - 14 Mrs Hunter is implicitly compared with Aphrodite on one occasion: "The figure on the bed ... continued treading the waters of recent sleep, till rising above the wave she was clothed in her former beauty" [p.354]. This evokes the image of the Goddess arising from the waters in Botticelli's "Venus". Cf. "The Birth of Aphrodite", in C. Kerényi *The Gods of the Greeks*, p.69f.
 - 15 It is significant that Mrs Hunter's mystical experience of the eternal centre or "eye" of existence occurred fifteen years [cf. p.70] before the present time-setting of the story. Before this novel no White character (except perhaps Mrs Godbold) has been able to survive the impact with eternity, the experience of the uroboros. This indicates that only the Mother herself is able to benefit from the return to the uncreate source. For the Mother it is not (as it is for the *pueri*) a nihilistic act of disintegration, but a transformative experience upon which she is able to construct a life of contemplation and religious reverie. See last section of the Appendix, "Uroboros is not Mandala".
 - 16 In this regard de Santis carries on the Greek ideal of spirituality which was evident in Hero Pavloussi before her fall into animal-like instinctuality. Hero also originated from Smyrna.
 - 17 Walter Otto sharply differentiates Artemis as a goddess of Nature from the classical earth-mother Demeter: "... this divine femininity is *nature* - not the great mother who gives birth to all life, sustains it, and in the end receives it back into her bosom, but nature of a quite different sort, which we might call virginal, free nature ... with its guiltless purity and its incanniness" ["Artemis", *The Homeric Gods*; p.80].
 - 18 Her connection with the moon is obviously dissimilar from the connections between Hecate and the moon in *The Vivisector*. The moon is a multi-dimensional symbol, and can represent different aspects of the Mother Goddess. Cf. Esther Harding, "The Moon Mother", and "The Changing Moon", in *Woman's Mysteries*, pp.84f, 216f.
 - 19 "'Love'", she tells de Santis, "'is not a matter of lovers'" [p.164].
 - 20 Cf. Esther Harding, "The Virgin Goddess", *Woman's Mysteries*, p.125f.
 - 21 Cf. Paul Friedrich, "Virginity", *The Meaning of Aphrodite*, p.86.
 - 22 Cf. Harding: "She remains virgin, even while being goddess of love. She is essentially one-in-herself" [*Woman's Mysteries*, p.125]. Mrs Hunter's "virginal" nature is strangely suggested in her inability to breast-feed her children. Basil's failure as a baby to draw milk from his mother's breasts is a recurring theme in the story [cf. pp. 118, 408].
 - 23 In practical terms, the only secure thing in Manhood's life is her job, or rather, Mrs Hunter herself.

- 24 Cf: "Sister de Santis filled the glass. When she had raised her patient's shoulders, the neck worked; the lips reached out, and sipped uglily at water. The lips suggested some lower form of life, a sea creature perhaps ..." [p.22].
- 25 One is reminded here of the "release" of Rhoda's cats from their wire prison in the previous story. Instinctuality is still in a state of relative rebelliousness, still claiming its due after a long imprisonment in the fictional unconscious.
- 26 This sequence appears to anticipate in a less dramatic form Ellen Roxburgh's struggle with instinct, and her subsequent nakedness and animality.
- 27 Basil's journey with Dorothy to this former homestead of the Hunter family is reminiscent of Duffield's walk down Parramatta Road with his own newly-recovered sister. In each case the journey is a kind of grotesque marriage-ritual, accompanied with a flood of sentiment, nostalgia, and "memories" of childhood. The *puer* is transported back to the maternal womb, and Basil celebrates this by munching hot pies and tomato sauce ["symbols of his boyhood" p.452], by frequent masturbation and auto-erotic behaviour, and by curling up in the grass "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].
- 28 "Around him the fortified soil, the pampered plants, the whifts of manure ... all were encouraging the vegetable existence: to loll, to expand, fleshwise only, and rot, and be carted away, and shovelled back into the accommodating earth" [p.264].
- 29 "At least the actor would go away, and need not know. It was the rightful father who would remain and know" [p.311].
- 30 Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, Part IV, Vol.I, p.36f.
- 31 Cf: "... my children are human we hope Mrs Hunter if the blessed sapphire works" [p.555].
- 32 A name frequently applied to Mrs Hunter because of her preference for the lilac-coloured wig [cf. p.123].
- 33 The harmony here between fictional and mythological patterns is a further example of the genuinely "mythic" quality of White's work. The parallel is not consciously or deliberately arrived at, but is spontaneously produced by the author's imagination.
- 34 The incident of the hat is recounted with great delicacy and humour:
 'I decided to take your advice,' she explained to Manhood,
 'and buy myself something gay. How do you like it?'

 'It'll take a bit of getting used to. It isn't part of your
 - your image, Sister.' Flora Manhood was sweating with her own
 daring. [p.319].
- 35 The Goddess Demeter is connected with dance and her annual celebration was enacted through ecstatic dancing. Cf. "Demeter" (by Kerényi) in Jung and Kerényi, *Essays on a Science of Mythology*, p.113f.
- 36 Her extreme dependence upon others for her own survival is indicated by the fact that after Mrs Hunter's death, when the household breaks

down and the nurses turn toward their new lives, she commits suicide by cutting her wrists and drowning in the bath [p.588].

- 37 Here we have to view Mrs Hunter both as a real character engaged in individuation, and as the ideal archetypal figure who organizes and arranges her own integration. See note 6.
- 38 At times Mrs Hunter's superior strength is experienced almost in physical terms: "Wyburd scuttled down the passage towards Elizabeth Hunter's door, where he was brought up sharply against woman's strength" [p.270]. Whenever the male personality enters the field or "orbit" of the Goddess it is subordinated to Her power.
- 39 As Adler's psychology has shown, the obsessive use of power for material and social gain is an abortive or unconscious expression of the desire to have power over one's own nature. Cf. Alfred Adler, *The Neurotic Constitution*.
- 40 Cf: "If there was no running away from herself, she must at least escape from the Cheeseman house, with its implications and downright accusations" [p.287].
- 41 To some extent Mrs Hunter represents a recreation of the "Abyssinian Queen" motif as it was presented in *The Aunt's Story*. See Chapter 2, p.84 of this study.
- 42 This echoes Mary's struggle with instinct on the night of Col Pardoe's visit.
- 43 Cf. The epigraph (from M-L. von Franz) to this Chapter. Sister Manhood remarks at one point: "Mrs Betty Hunter was more powerful than any man could remember" [p.103]. This statement has a peculiar relevance to White's entire work: none of the male characters attain anything like a semblance of the power and psychic integration embodied in Elizabeth Hunter.
- 44 This idea may seem fanciful and "mystical" from the social-realist position, but because at the mythic level the nurses are "extensions" of the Goddess it is wholly plausible that they should benefit from Mrs Hunter's triumph. Note however that it is only de Santis and Manhood who experience the boon, since they are the ones who have worked toward wholeness throughout the story. As in mythological tales, only the deserving and spiritually developing devotees are lifted up by the boon.
- 45 As A.P. Riemer observes, "there are, merely, possibilities of significance connected with Mrs Hunter's death, no absolute statements" ["The Eye of the Needle: Patrick White's Recent Novels", *Southerly*, Vol. 34, No.3, 1974, p.262].
- 46 Of course one could claim that the increased detachment is simply a matter of artistic maturity and reticence, as Beatson argues in "The Skiapod and the Eye: Patrick White's *The Eye of the Storm*", [*Southerly*, Vol.34, No.3, 1974, p.219]. But in the light of my own argument the change can be seen to have a more fundamental and archetypal basis.

Chapter Six, part 3

- 1 *A Fringe of Leaves*, p.17. All references are to the Penguin (Harmondsworth, 1977) edition.

- 2 Biographical reconstructions of Elizabeth Fraser's life can be found in Michael Alexander's *Mrs Fraser on the Fatal Shore* (London: Michael Joseph, 1971), Henry Stuart Russell's *Genesis of Queensland* (Sydney: Turner and Henderson, 1888), and Robert Gibbings' *John Graham, Convict 1824* (London: Dent, 1937). More recently, there has been a further book Kenneth Cook's *Eliza Fraser* (Melbourne: Sun Books, 1976) and a film, *Eliza Fraser* (Hexagon Productions, 1976).
- 3 The average reader in Australia is more prepared to accept literature which is based on factual or historical material, as can be seen in the widespread preference for *Voss* and *A Fringe of Leaves*, White's so-called historical novels. This is an outcome of Australia's extraverted temperament, and of the popular belief that "truth" is always (and only) discovered in the factual.
- 4 Aborigines in White, regardless of their actual anthropological context, are always conceived as inhabitants of a chthonic mother-world. Cf. *Voss*.
- 5 The term "Nekyia" is from Homer and means "descent to the Underworld". Cf. Jung: "The Nekyia is no aimless and purely destructive fall into the abyss, but a meaningful *katabasis eis antron*, a descent into ... psychic reality" ("Picasso", in *The Spirit in Man, Art, and Literature*, p.139).
- 6 Cf. "The Rape of Persephone", in C. Kerényi, *The Gods of the Greeks*. It was the Goddess Hecate who made certain that Persephone would spend several months of each year in the darkness of the Underworld.
- 7 In relation to *The Eye of the Storm* there is a curious reversal of the use of dark and light symbolism. In the previous novel darkness was associated with spirituality and Mary de Santis, and light was connected with Flora Manhood, instinct, and natural life. Here instinct is the dark underworld and spirituality the "light".
- 8 Cf: "[Garnet] had defected ... to sensuality and worse, and had been packed off as quickly and quietly as possible" [p.132].
- 9 The moral father and immoral son manifests in an even more extreme form in the figures of Judge and Eddie Twyborn.
- 10 It is interesting to note that the term "spread-eagle" was used countless times in *The Vivisector* to describe the languid postures of Nance Lightfoot [cf. pp.189, 191, 196]. The use of the term here points to the breakthrough of the Nance-like aspect of her own character.
- 11 As in the deaths and/or psychic disintegrations of Waldo Brown, Arthur, Duffield, Basil Hunter - all of whom were overcome by the Hecatean forces of the unconscious.
- 12 Cf: "His mind glided marvellously when not threatened by the shoals of human intercourse or the bedevilled depths of his own nature. Moods and any tendency to animal spirits had been discouraged by his mother, who feared too much of either might aggravate his delicate health" [p.131].
- 13 The "long, black spear [which] led a malignant life of its own" [p.214] seems an appropriate image of his own completely autonomous and "malignant" instinctual side.

- 14 The notion that an apparently "civilized" Western figure can descend to prehuman levels is fully explored by David Malouf in his recent novel *An Imaginary Life* (1980). Here Ovid, in exile from Rome, proves himself to be more psychologically primitive than the tribespeople with whom he lives. Cf. Peter Bishop's as yet unpublished article, "Malouf and the Language of Exile".
- 15 The only comparison is the dual-exploitation of Basil Hunter by the Sisters of Moreton Drive; for "higher" purposes in the case of Manhood, and for "lower", instinctual reasons for de Santis. But here it is the one complex woman co-ordinating the masculine figure to both instinctual and cultural needs.
- 16 Cf: "As he held her by the thighs, he could have been furiously ramming a wheelbarrow against the darkness" [RC, p.343]. This passage describes Dubbo's encounter with a whore. Sexuality in White always has this mechanical, violent, and loveless aspect.
- 17 Of course we must again view Ellen's situation in the wider fictional context, in relation to the "vengeance" of Hecate in White's world.
- 18 Ellen's reversal of feeling toward her rescuer is directly analogous to that experienced by Eliza Fraser upon her return to civilization. The Russell biography (*Genesis of Queensland*) suggests that it is the fear of gossip which causes Eliza to deny her rescuer. Cf. Jill Ward, "Patrick White's *A Fringe of Leaves*: History and Fiction", *Australian Literary Studies*, Vol.8, No 4, (October 1978), p.416f.
19. We saw that even in the later stages of her journey, before she had made contact with any "human beings", the tendency toward rigid morality and repression of instinct was evident.
- 20 The main difference is that whereas this "lower" world was characterized as the numinous-mystical realm in *Voss*, here it is the instinctual and chthonic level of being.
- 21 Cf: "If she could but remember her lessons, together with some of the more helpful tags of common prayer" [p.318].
- 22 Compare this situation with that of Laura Trevelyan: "The vows were rigorous that she imposed upon herself, to the exclusion of ... all introspection, however great her longing for those delights of hell. The gaunt man, her husband, would not tempt her in" [*Voss*, p.404].
- 23 Here I am referring to the critical statements of Veronica Brady, John McLaren, Patricia Beer, Elizabeth Perkins, John Colmer, J.S. Ryan, Jill Ward, William Walsh, and others (see Bibliography for complete references). Dr Brady asserts that "Ellen triumphs not in the desert, but in the prosaic domestic surroundings after her return" [*A Fringe of Leaves: Civilization by the Skin of Our Teeth*], *Southerly*, Vol 37, (1977), p.139]. And Professor Colmer argues that "For the first time in White's fiction there is a wholly authentic and deeply moving resolution of the dualities that lie at the heart of our existence, as solitaries and social animals" ["Duality in Patrick White", *A Critical Symposium*, op.cit., p.75]. I must add that when the novel first appeared I was myself among the chorus of voices proclaiming Ellen's achievement of wholeness [cf. D.J.Tacey, "A Search for a New Ethic: White's *A Fringe of Leaves*", *South Pacific Images*, (ed.) C.Tiffin, pp.186-95]. But a further consideration of the text forced me to adopt the less optimistic view presented here.

- 24 The author himself rejects the positive interpretation of the ending: "When Ellen puts on her corset and silk gown at the end she is resuming her guise as Mrs Roxburgh. Her decision to marry the English merchant *is* a regression, though not necessarily one which damns her" [Patrick White, in a letter to D.J. Tacey, August 6, 1978].

Chapter Six, part 4

- 1 *The Twyborn Affair*, p.79. All references are to the Penguin (Harmondsworth, 1980) edition.
- 2 With the important exceptions of Mrs Hunter and Flora Manhood.
- 3 "As she stood by the wall watching the scene through the open window, the tears were streaming down her cheeks, for joy, for the music she was hearing, and out of frustration from the life she had led and, it seemed, would always lead" [p.18].
- 4 Cf. Robert Graves, "Apollo's Nature and Deeds", in *The Greek Myths*, p.78f. In some (allegorical) interpretations of the myth, Apollo is the morning sun, and Daphne the dew which the early light "pursues" and of necessity chases away.
- 5 In *The Vivisector* Cutbush the Grocer masturbated in the park while under the influence of the Hecatean or "destructive" moon. In this work Monsieur Pelletier, the owner of the kiosk at St. Mayeul, "thrashes wildly" [p.76] at himself while watching Eddie swim naked in the ocean. The difference between almost identical scenes reflects the symbolic shift here: what was felt to emanate from an archetypal (or Luna) source now emanates from the *puer* himself. He shines with the Hecatean radiance which drives the male shopkeeper to sexual frenzy.
- 6 Cf. Chapter 5, note 20. Since that note was written, White's *Flaws in the Glass* has appeared, to confirm what was suspected all along.
- 7 Cf. Eddie's "love-making" with (or assault upon?) the manager at 'Bogong': "He plunged deeper into this passive yet quaking carcass offered up as a sacrifice ... He twisted [hair] by merciless handfuls as he dragged his body back and forth, lacerated by his own vengeance" [p.296].
- 8 Cf: "How long will they leave me like this, he wondered, in peace and understanding. But his wife had to come presently ..." [TM, p.476],
- 9 Of course it is really the Mother Goddess whom they serve, but everything is given a personalistic stamp in White's later phase.
- 10 The fact that Mrs Golson "generates phlegm" [p.46] in her mouth as she watches Eddie fall to the ground links this scene with White's ongoing presentation of the salivating (and daemionically "hungry") mother figure. While watching the Jew walk away from Godbolds' shack, Mrs Flack brought quantities of saliva to her mouth, "causing her to swallow quickly down" [RC, p.214]. The matrix is always longing to consume the *puer* for its next meal.
- 11 Erich Neumann, *Origins of Consciousness*, p.61.

- 12 Cf. The tom cat in *The Vivisector* who "eased himself backwards and sprayed the sofa without his mistress appearing to notice" [p.455]. This highlights the connection between Eadie's chthonic self and the figure of Rhoda Courtney, the "shadow goddess".
- 13 See Conclusion, "The collapse of symbolization".
- 14 In the *Odyssey* Circe changed men into swine after she had "used" them as lovers. Cf. "The Sorceress - Circe", Kerényi, *Goddesses of Sun and Moon*, p.8f.
- 15 Her name obviously reminds us of Mrs Lusty in White's *The Ham Funeral*, the prototype of the devouringly passionate woman in his writing.
- 16 This is why the sex act is constantly linked with images of rotting leaves, compost, excrement, and smells of decay.
- 17 His connection with the motif of the devoured *puer* is suggested by the fact that after his departure Marcia Lushington gives birth to his son, but the boy dies at a very early age (and is buried beside the other children in her private graveyard). Eddie's association with this motif is further emphasized when Marcia and Eadie exchange snapshots of their respective sons. The entire sequence is far too literal and suggests that White has lost his subtlety and symbolic approach. (Cf. This explicit sequence with, say, the marvellously delicate presentation of the unborn child motif in Arthur's cow-play, or in Dubbo's painting of the Tree of Unborn Souls.)
- 18 In the orgiastic festivals of the Great Mother, some of the men (*kelabim*) were ritualistically killed at the height of the orgy, and were placed upon the ancient shrines of Hecate-Aphrodite. Cf. Neumann, *Origins*, p.51.
- 19 The fact that they plan to return to Australia underscores the theme of Eadie's longing for a further "descent" into her Hecatean nature.
- 20 Cf: "Yes, it was the most seductive proposition: the two sitting in the steamy garden, surrounded by ragged grass, the bubbling and plopping of bulbuls, a drizzling of taps" [p.425].
- 21 Cf: "But as from all such golden dreams, the awakening would surely devastate" [p.425].
- 22 Critics and reviewers have responded to the work merely at the aesthetic level. The review titles suggest the general optimism with which the book was received: "Literary master in full cry", "White has not yet begun to write", and others in a similar vein (cf. Bibliography for complete references). My emphasis has been upon the archetypal structures and "visionary" nature of the novel, where there are marked signs of deterioration, confusion, and decline.

Conclusion

- 1 *The Vivisector*, pp.570-571.
- 2 Cf. The statements of these and other writers in Brewster Ghiselin (ed.), *The Creative Process* (1952).

- 3 Cf. Mario Jacoby, "The Muse as a Symbol of Literary Creativity", in Joseph Strelka (ed.), *Anagogic Qualities of Literature, Yearbook of Comparative Criticism* (1971).
- 4 Although of course rationalists still argue that Jungian terminology is "mystical" and "gnostic".
- 5 White, from an interview with Craig McGregor in *In the Making*, (1969), p.219.
- 6 White, from an unpublished radio interview with Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, November 1973. (By courtesy of Professor Robert Wilson, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada.)
- 7 "Writing [is for me] an exhausting and perhaps finally destructive process" ["A Conversation with Patrick White", *Southerly*, op.cit., p.139].
- 8 Cf. For instance, "The Nobel winner who hates writing", in *The Age* (Melbourne), October 20 1973, p.2. Cf. Also, "An Interview with Patrick White", in Ingmar Björkstén, *Patrick White*, pp.4-17.
- 9 Cf: "I feel my life has been controlled by fate" [White, in the C.B.C. radio interview, op.cit.).
- 10 White, from the McGregor interview, p.219.
- 11 Cf: "Unconsciously you are largely writing about yourself. I could never write anything factual; I only have confidence in myself when I am another character. All the characters in my books are myself" [White, the McGregor interview, p.221].
- 12 Cf. The C.B.C. radio interview, op.cit.
- 13 White, "I don't believe any of my novels has a plot; they are just characters rubbing up against one another", *ibid.*
- 14 Manfred Mackenzie, H.P. Heseltine, and John Colmer.
- 15 White himself rejects the guru role, and insists that he is not personally identical with the wisdom revealed in his books. Cf: "I am no intellectual or prophet: I simply put down what comes into my head If I am given occasional insights which may help others, that is fortunate, if also fortuitous" [White, in a letter to D.J. Tacey, August 6, 1978].
- 16 Cf. Again, White's statement above, note 11.
- 17 Here I borrow terms from Leslie Fiedler, "Archetype and Signature: A Study of the Relationship between Biography and Poetry", *Sewanee Review*, Vol I, No 10, (1952).
- 18 Especially as this is represented in the figure of Arthur Brown.
- 19 Which provides, in effect, an interesting model for the synthesis of Freudian and Jungian theories of art.
- 20 White, from the McGregor interview, p.219.
- 21 Cf: "I write the first two versions in longhand. The third I type

out with two fingers: it is for refining of meaning, additions and subtractions" [White, in the McGregor interview, p.219].

- 22 White, the *Southerly* interview, p.139.
- 23 White, the McGregor interview, p.219.
- 24 Graham Hough provides an interesting view: "It is a mistake to think that the formal elaboration of a work of literary art suppresses or smothers the unconscious; on the contrary, it is one of the very means by which the unconscious contents are enabled to appear" ["Poetry and the Anima", *Spring 1973*, p.90].
- 25 White's vision is in every respect compensatory to the cultural canon. The society in which he works is patriarchal, rational and secular, but the work focuses upon a matriarchal deity, nature, darkness, the sublunar realm - everything which has been rejected and denied by modern Western consciousness.
- 26 Neumann, *Origins and History of Consciousness*, p.263.
- 27 Cf. Neumann, "The Primordial Goddess", *The Great Mother*, and E.O. James, "The Mother-Goddess and the Young God", *The Ancient Gods*.
- 28 Cf. Hillman: "'Mother-complex' is another way of stating that spirit cannot present itself, has no effect or reality, except in regard to matter" ["The Great Mother, Her Son, Her Hero, and the Puer", op.cit., p.80].
- 29 Cf. Hillman, "Senex and Puer: An Aspect of the Historical and Psychological Present", in *Puer Papers*, pp.3-53.
- 30 Cf. Hugo Rahner, "Earth Spirit and Divine Spirit in Patristic Theology", and also Edward Carpenter, *Pagan and Christian Creeds*, and John Robertson, *Pagan Christs*.
- 31 This confusion of pathological with religious states is an ever-increasing social problem, especially as more and more youth in Western society proclaim their interest in "religious" experience. James Hillman writes: "The *puer* [or modern 'hippy'] drops out from the demands put upon the heroic ego. He makes few demands even on himself, wanting little and needing less and less. As tensions equalize he believes himself in rare balance, becoming cooler and less personal ... The term 'regression' is refused as a misnomer. Regression means return to more childish or historically earlier behaviour patterns, but in this instance one seems so obviously to be making spiritual advancement towards ever-widening values and general symbols, progressing through the perennial philosophy into truths of all religions - even if requiring sometimes vegetarian support or hallucinogenic reinforcement. One can hardly be 'regressing' while quoting Hesse, Nietzsche, Gurdjieff, Eckehart, and Socrates!" ["The Great Mother ... and the Puer", op.cit., p.89].
- 32 The opposite, of course is true of Eastern culture: which has highly sophisticated techniques for inner experience, and very little grasp of external reality (at least, compared with the West).
- 33 Bachofen, *Das Mutterrecht* (1948); *Myth, Religion and Mother Right*.
- 34 Briffault, *The Mothers* (1927), Volumes 1, 2 and 3.

- 35 Cf. Jung: "The therapeutic importance of myths is this: they explain to the bewildered human being what is going on in his unconscious and why he is held fast" ["The Dual Mother", *Symbols of Transformation* (1912), p.308].
- 36 Cf: "In my books I have lifted bits from various religions in trying to come to a better understanding" [White, the McGregor interview, p.218].
- 37 After *The Solid Mandala* (1966) White was forced to abandon his elevated religious view: "I wouldn't say I am a Christian; I can't aspire so high". And he adds, in an entirely new (pagan) tone: "I am a very low form of human being; in my next incarnation I shall probably turn up as a dog or a stone" [the McGregor interview (1969), p.218].
- 38 All supervised by Athene, the Goddess of Heroic Life, who had herself sprung forth from the masculine principle, from the head of Zeus.
- 39 Here I include "society" as one of the fictional figures (cf. infra "The social context"). At such points White conveniently forgets that his characters "well up from the unconscious ... are not based on real people", and treats Mrs Flack, Mrs Jolley and their kind as *if* they were real people. The fantasy connection is not acknowledged; or the shadow-myth is treated in a social realist frame and not connected to the central mythic quest.
- 40 Cf: "'All this Christ stuff ... doesn't seem to work. But we have each other,' Arthur said" [SM, p.200].
- 41 *The Solid Mandala*, p.212.
- 42 Freud would say that the "real" complex has simply been avoided or at best "sublimated" through this mystery. But the archetypal view would reverse this and argue: the libido itself longs to move to higher levels, to activate archetypal worlds, and that the "personal fixation" is a mere perversion of the symbolic drama.
- 43 Cf. Jung: "History has numerous examples of how easily the mystery can turn into a sexual orgy, just because it grew out of the opposite of the orgy" [*Symbols of Transformation*, p.377]. Cf. Also, Erich Neumann *Origins*, pp.19-20.
- 44 Cf. Especially, Chapter Two [infra p.29f], where the problem of converting personal fixation to symbolic ritual was closely examined.
- 45 Cf. Miss Hare and Himmelfarb blissfully "contained" by the flowering tree at Xanadu, and the unborn souls dangling upon Dubbo's Tree of Life and Death.
- 46 Even Elizabeth Hunter's story is literalistic - she has to have a contingent of real persons around her to support her in her quest for integration.
- 47 Cf. Katherine England, Neil Jillet, Hope Hewitt, and G.A. Wilkes. (See Bibliography for references.)
- 48 A classic example of this is Veronica Brady's article, "Patrick White and Simone Weil", in *Patrick White: A Critical Symposium*, edited by

- R. Shepherd and K. Singh. A more recent case is J.S. Ryan's essay, "The Faith of his Fathers - Another Source for Patrick White's Mysticism", in *Notes and Furphies*, No.5, 1980.
- 49 Cf. R.F. Brissenden's studies of *The Tree of Man* and *Voss* in "Patrick White", *Meanjin*, Vol. 18 No.4, 1959.
- 50 Leonie Kramer, "The Tree of Man: An Essay in Scepticism" (in W.S. Ransom ed., *The Australian Experience*), and "Patrick White's Götterdämmerung", *Quadrant*, Vol.17 No.3, 1973.
- 51 White, the McGregor interview, p.219.
- 52 Cf. Robert Graves, "Return of the Goddess", *The White Goddess*.
- 53 The women's liberation movement is obviously associated with this cultural transformation. The logo of the feminists - the Venus sign with the clenched fist inside it - is an apt expression of the force and anger with which the feminine-maternal archetype is reasserting itself.
- 54 James Hillman, "The Great Mother ... and the Puer", op.cit., p.83.
- 55 Cf. Erich Neumann, "Art and Time", in *Art and the Creative Unconscious*.
- 56 Cf. The epigraph to Chapter Two of the present study.
- 57 We sometimes find perverse (because concrete) expressions of the "dragon-slaying" urge in the novels. O'Dowd threatens his wife with an axe, Jack Frost cuts the throats of his wife and three daughters, and Alf Dubbo attempts to strangle the prostitute Hannah. These are, we could say, misplaced attempts at slaying the Mother. The need to fight the unconscious is acted out in literal forms of violence.

Appendix on Uroboros and Mandala

This note is put forward to help clarify the argument in the early stages of the thesis. It is written as an aid to understanding the psychological processes that take place in the novels from *The Living and the Dead* to *Riders in the Chariot*, and it is hoped that the reader will consult this appendix concurrently with reading the early chapters. After Chapter 5 notions of "uroboros" and "mandala" are no longer relevant to the discussion, since the circle-image disappears altogether in the later fiction. (The reason for this cannot be examined here, but will be explored in the body of the thesis, and in the Conclusion, cf. especially, "The collapse of symbolization".)

. . .

In myth, religion, and imaginative literature the circle-image appears in two distinct symbolic contexts. The first is the circle as *uroboros*, which is the primal symbol for the origin of life, the "circle-as-beginning". The second is the *mandala*, the symbol of totality and wholeness, known as the "circle-as-end". Uroboros and mandala are the terms used in archetypal psychology to differentiate these specific forms. As philosophical constructs, the terms have much in common with concepts such as Alpha and Omega (Hermetic philosophy), First Paradise and New Jerusalem (Blake and the Revelation of St John) - all of which are intuitive, time-based concepts which seek to differentiate origin from goal, beginning from end.

1. Uroboros and individuation

In modern depth-psychology the uroboros is used as a synonym for the deep unconscious in its original, primary, undifferentiated state. The uroboros is simply the inner world of Nature, the source or matrix from which ego-consciousness is born like a child from the maternal womb. Hence the uroboros (see Figure 1) is intimately associated with the archetypal

Great Mother - it is Her central symbol, representing in particular Her self-begetting and self-devouring character. In the process of individuation, the ego-personality is "ejected" out of the primal situation (in myth: the Fall from the First Paradise) and is motivated to develop as a separate entity away from the matrix of the unconscious. This process takes place spontaneously in late childhood and early adolescence, when the individual begins to view himself as a separate entity. There is a sudden sense of alienation and great loss. This state may often continue up until early adulthood, when the individual (broadly speaking) is faced with a choice of paths. Either he can fortify the ego which is developing outside the source-situation, and achieve stability and satisfaction through identification with social tradition; or he can reject that developmental pattern and turn back to the maternal source. This turning back leads invariably to a "mystical" orientation, an anti-social outlook, and a personality oriented around ecstasy and vision. In itself, this "return to the source" can be an extremely enriching and creative process. There is usually an increase in imagination and creative ability, and a deep connection with the Mother and natural mysteries. But the main problem is: can the renegade ego extricate itself again from the matrix, or will it finally succumb to it in death and dissolution?

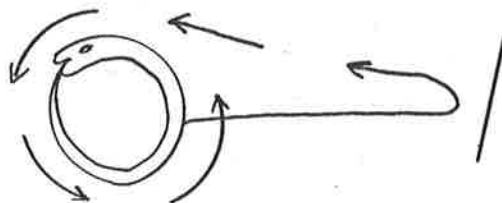
In Western myths the hero (read: ego) commonly must return to the source to achieve renewal and rebirth, but there are always dangers lurking in the lower realm - somewhere there is a dragon to be slain. The "dragon" is the devouring aspect of the source-situation - or, intrapsychically, the hero's own regressive longing, his desire to dissolve in unconsciousness and return forever to the matrix. But there are also positive, life-affirming forces lying dormant in the uroboros. In patriarchal myths, the positive element is the 'anima', the maid in distress who is held captive by the mother-dragon, and who, if freed, would lead the hero out of the underworld and guide him to his selfhood. (In general terms, the anima is the spirit trapped in

matter, and hence - as in the Gnostic Sophia, the Kabbalistic Shekinah, or Judaeo-Christian Wisdom - has an essential, though often disguised, affinity with God the Father as the personification of masculine spirit.) But this positive force is never won without a fight: the hero must challenge the dragon and prove himself worthy of the prize. If he does this, the power of the unconscious is broken and he is led away on another course, with the anima (*axis mundi*) as his "bridge" to the higher self.¹ This higher self is often represented as the mandala, the symbol of ultimate, conscious unity with God. And this mandala, like the uroboros, is a circular form, because, as White himself suggests in *Voss*, "perfection is always circular" [V, p.198].

. . .

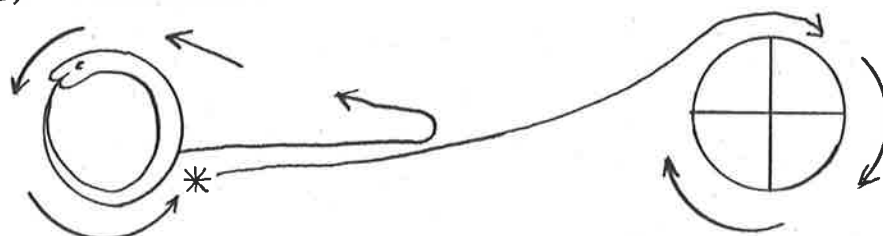
It may be useful at this point to represent the psychic process that takes place in White's novels in diagrammatic form, and to contrast this with the process of individuation. The diagrams are obviously very simple and generalised, but they do help to clarify the essential difference.

a) White's paradigm



Here we find a partial movement away from the source-situation (as in the lives of Theodora, Elyot, and Himmelfarb); but then the ego-personality is called back home, as it were, or we could say that the attraction for the Mother is stronger than the urge toward life.

b) Individuation



In individuation, there is an incestuous return to the source, but there is also a return of the ego to the path of consciousness, which may ultimately

lead to unity with the Self, the archetype of wholeness.² The sign * marks the crucial turning point: the ego stops orbiting the uroboros and sets out on a new trajectory. This is the point of the "dragon-fight", where the ego resists the inertia and primal strength of the uroboros and releases the positive (anima) potential bound up in the unconscious. He has found the "treasure hard to attain" (sometimes the *elixir vitae*) and so begins the movement toward consciousness and selfhood. In White's pattern there is no challenging of the primal power, the ego remains bound to the source. His world is therefore non- or rather, pre-heroic; there is no dragon-fight, only continual submission to the uroboros.

There is another possible way to contrast the uroboric and mandalic processes:



In the first pattern life takes place within the Great Round of Nature - there is no real development, only movement within the eternal circle. In the second a life-creating Spirit has transformed the circle into a spiral; now there is movement, progression, a beginning and an end. In the uroboric pattern the ego-personality constantly returns to the source and finally dissolves in incestuous union with the Mother. In the individuation model it attains transcendence through the anima and finds fulfilment in the life of the Spirit.

In White the situation is complicated by the fact that mergence with the uroboros is felt to be synonymous with transcendence and redemption. This means that the nihilistic "marriage" with the Mother is confused with the fulfilment of spiritual destiny and the reunion of man with God. In this way defeat is misinterpreted as triumph, uroboric castration is regarded as humility and surrender, and self-dissolution is misrepresented as self-realization.

The next task is to examine the differences and similarities between uroboros and mandala mysticism, and to ascertain why these kinds of mysticism are so often confused.

2. Two kinds of mysticism

a) The question of unity

The experience of an ego relating to the Self is sometimes confused with the earliest phase of ego containment in the unconscious. The language describing the two states is similar: it stresses unity, wholeness, and the subordination of the ego to an encompassing psychic entity.

- Anna Belford-Ulanov³

In uroboros mysticism there is much emphasis placed on the idea of unity, but this is a different kind of "unity" to that celebrated in mandala mysticism. The "early" unity is the primal oneness of Nature and the unconscious - all things are united because spirit and consciousness have not yet come into being. Neumann defines this unity as "oceanic", since everything is undifferentiated, watery, and chaotic. This is the oneness in which there is no individuality or becoming. The mandala, however, represents an individuated or differentiated totality. Here life has been allowed to take shape, creation has begun, the One has become the Many, and now the pairs of opposites are re-aligned in a higher unity. In Tibetan tradition, the mandala is an extremely intricate design: the 'magic circle' contains complex patterns of imagery, often with beasts, gods, daemons, and other representatives of psychic phenomena. But the important thing is that all the contents are clearly delineated and preserve their essential character and integrity. They are united, but not confused. The uroboros, on the other hand, shows either a chaotic profusion of contents (as in ancient Nordic representations),⁴ or else it is quite empty, like the Chinese *wu chi* (literally: "empty circle").⁵ The emptiness points to the original formlessness of the world before the advent of Creation.

In individual psychological experience, the unity of the mandala is wrought by effort and work. In order to integrate the opposites at the higher level one first has to differentiate them from their original oneness. Consciousness must be brought to bear upon the psyche, and careful consideration (*religio*) made of every archetypal content. The unity of the mandala is an *opus contra naturam*, achieved only through the agency of spirit and with an attentive and mature ego-consciousness. By contrast, the primal unity is "found" simply by sinking into the unconscious and returning to the source. This unity does not require effort and intellect, but merely ecstasy and abandon. It can be contacted relatively easily, either through the lowering of the threshold of consciousness, mental disorder, or loss of ego. The circle-as-beginning is constellated merely by an act of regression, and does not suggest that the human personality has achieved any degree of spiritual realization.

b) Containment and isolation

But between this alpha and omega, this First Paradise of Eden within the maternal womb and the Second Paradise of New Jerusalem within the womb of God, there lies a wilderness in which complete separation must be made from the first as *sine qua non* of entry into the second. And this wilderness is life, conscious and active life ... in which one must face the loneliness of personal existence.

- John Layard⁶

The uroboros mystic longs to be contained, enfolded, embraced. His desire is to be nurtured by the Goddess, to be protected from the world, to escape from reality into a dream of bliss. There is a kind of resistance to being born (in Freud: the separation anxiety), since birth implies struggle, loneliness, isolation, and the courage to be. Loneliness, described by Neumann as the *principium individuationis*, is accepted by the mandala mystic as a part of his destiny - which, through acceptance, transforms into a state of aloneness, a sense of sacred nakedness before

the divine. He must find enough strength to stand alone, to resist the attraction of the Mother and maternal world, to allow himself to be thrust out of the orbit of the First Paradise and to embark upon the long and arduous path to selfhood.

The mandala mystic has support in this undertaking: the anima provides the Ariadne thread through the labyrinth of life, but the anima is a hard task-master. Unlike the Mother, who lulls her subject into a cocoon of bliss and inactivity, the anima (sometimes herself dressed as a warrior) demands heroic efforts from her beloved. The mystic cannot lean on Her and expect to be taken up into the bosom of God. He must perform most of the tasks himself, and the anima comes to his side only in times of crisis and uncertainty. Whether as Athene, Beatrice, or Sophia, the anima provides support on few occasions, and this only if the mystic has proved himself worthy of Her concern. The Mother Goddess, on the other hand, is constantly lavishing her subject with every kindness, protecting him from the blows of life. But Her attentive kindness comes at the cost of individuality and development. Proximity to Her world yields pleasure and comfort, but life itself is betrayed by this relentless clinging to the maternal womb.

c) Nihilism and world-affirmation

Since for the uroboros mystic Reality resides in the primal beginning, in the uncreate source, the world, consciousness, and the form-creating spirit are rejected on the basis of their departure from the original perfection. Uroboros mysticism seeks systematically to destroy the world of form, and to bathe once more in the pleromatic realm. The goal of this mysticism is to achieve "anonymity", to enter "that desirable state ... which resembles, one would imagine, nothing more than air or water" [*The Aunt's Story*, p.128].

For the mandala mystic, on the contrary, the world and consciousness

are manifestations of the divine, part of the creative principle that resides in the godhead. The mandala mystic (cf. Blake, Meister Eckhart) sees God as being intimately involved in creation, history, and the evolution of man. He sees in human development and the broadening of consciousness God's own self-evolution, His own longing to achieve greater and greater manifestations through His creation. The spiralic course of individuation is viewed as being divinely inspired, as part of God's search for Himself through man. Thus for the mandala mystic God is in a state of becoming, and not merely a static condition which is discovered in the Other realm. Mandala mysticism is incarnational and affirmative, whereas early mysticism is world-hostile and retrogressive.

d) Eternity and time

Closely related to the above problem is the relationship between eternity and time. The uroboros mystic sees time as an obstacle to eternity, a dark veil which must be sundered if we are to experience the divine radiance. But in mandala mysticism time itself becomes the vessel of Revelation. As consciousness increases, time and the world of form loses its inert, impenetrable face, and becomes transparent and alive. The Other reality is revealed *in* and *through* this world, not beyond it. Thus the early mystic dissolves the temporal field in order to get to the eternal,⁷ but the mandala mystic heightens awareness so that the divine essence within time and matter becomes manifest.

e) The false monism of uroboros mysticism

We have seen that, in spite of all his espousals of "unity" and "oneness" the uroboros mystic is actually caught up in a world of dualities. The pairs of opposites: conscious and unconscious, world and void, human and divine, are actually split apart and turned against one another. There is "unity" only when he has demolished the ego and the human structure, but until this mystic ecstasy has been achieved he is subject to a world

torn asunder into dualities. The only true monism - that which can be experienced in life and which affirms the created world - is the conscious re-integration of the opposites represented in mandala mysticism.

f) Negative projections

... a daemonic Eden, this paradise
of snakes.

- Joseph Conrad⁸

What ultimately differentiates the uroboros mystic from his spiritual counterpart is the presence of negative psychic projections. Because his mysticism leads finally to disintegration and death, and because this negative aspect is not realized or felt consciously, the devouring forces which assail him from within are continually projected upon the exterior world. He lives in a "real" world made daemonic through a process of mythological apperception. Society, materialism, women, appear to him to be evil and devouring, because the maternal-feminine archetype is undermining and destroying him. Consciously he experiences the maternal uroboros as bliss and ecstasy, but the destructive effect of the matrix - its castrating, enfeebling, and overpowering character - is experienced only in projection upon "real" people and things.

The mandala mystic, on the other hand, is not plagued by any such projections. He is not subject to hostile psychic forces and hence is able to conduct life free from obsessive and negative transferences. His higher consciousness makes him compassionate toward the world, for he is able to find redeeming elements in every person and every situation. The mandalic viewpoint is fully encapsulated in the Hassidic tradition, which defines the goal of mystical endeavour as "the redemption of divine sparks in all times and places".⁹

Notes

1 Cf. John Layard: "The union with the anima leads in turn to the soul's brideship with God, to whom the anima herself acts as a bridge" [*The Virgin Archetype*, p.260].

- 2 The Self is used in this discussion as synonymous with the mandala. They stand to one another as archetype to archetypal image, or as idea to representation. Cf. Jung, "The Structure and Dynamics of the Self", *Aion*.
- 3 Anna Belford-Ulanov, *The Feminine in Jungian Psychology and Christian Theology*, p.72.
- 4 Cf. The uroboros of Sigurd and Fafnir, reproduced in Joseph Campbell, *The Mythic Image*, p.344.
- 5 Cf. Neumann, "The Uroboros", *Origins*, p.12.
- 6 Layard, *The Virgin Archetype*, pp. 259-260.
- 7 Cf. Especially, Theodora Goodman in *The Aunt's Story*.
- 8 Conrad, quoted as the epigraph in Claire Rosenfield's study, *Paradise of Snakes*.
- 9 Hassidic saying, quoted in Neumann, "Mystical Man", *Spring 1961*, p.41.

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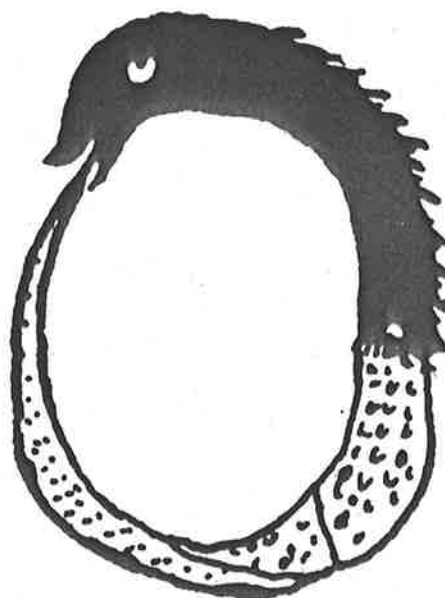


Fig.1 The tail-biting uroboros
(eleventh century, *Codex Marcianus*)

The image of the circle is not identical with the mandala. When the circle-image appears in White's work (as rose, rounded stone, bay, shell, etc) it invariably represents the archetype of the Great Round, symbolized in alchemy by the figure of the uroboros. The tail-biting uroboros represents the all-containing (self-fecundating, self-devouring) nature of the Great Mother and the primordial unconscious prior to the advent of human consciousness. The uroboros is the "natural" unity of unconscious life, whereas the mandala is a "spiritual" unity representing the pinnacle of human consciousness.

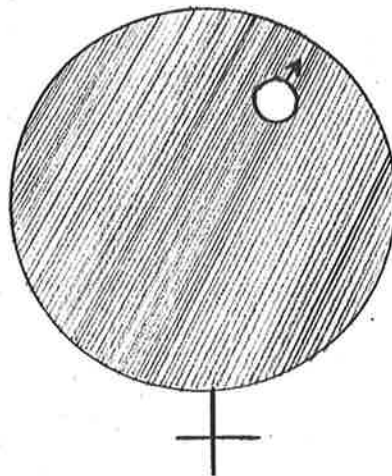


Fig.2 A schematic view of the archetypal situation in *The Aunt's Story*

Within the dark maternal structure we find a "light", life-creating aspect. This is the positive side of the uroboric situation, which in this novel is given a "masculine" character, though in reality it is simply the life-creating side of the Mother Goddess. Up until her twelfth birthday Theodora does not recognize the dark maternal world which surrounds and encircles her masculine spirit. But on that day the power of the uroboros begins to assert itself over and against the claims of the aspiring spirit.



Fig.3 A dragon devouring the birds of the air
(Medieval bestiary)

This picture captures the spirit of the central mythic image in the "Meroë" section of *The Aunt's Story*: the winged trochilus caught in the jaws of the Meroë-dragon. This is an image of the victory of chthonic nature over the spirit of the air, the divine *pneuma* which seeks to rise above elemental existence and the maternal ground of the unconscious. The image suggests that the regressive nature of the unconscious is far too strong and easily thwarts the flight of the spirit.



Fig.4 Paradise as Vessel

(From an Italian manuscript, XV century)

This picture embodies the crucial relation between the uroboric, paradise-seeking spirit and the gaping jaws of the uroboric dragon. In longing for "Eden", for the blissful state of child-like unconsciousness, the uroboric mystic does not see that he is at the same time moving back into the devouring maw of the "mother", or into the disintegrative field of the source-situation. To be "blissfully unconscious" also implies an aggressive archetypal field which "swallows" the conscious personality. This is the paradoxical situation that White's protagonists face whenever they are motivated by the regressive (though seemingly "mystical") idea of returning to the source or matrix of life.



Fig.5 A Teeth Mother
(Balinese mask)

The Teeth Mother is a mythological image of the devouring-castrating aspect of the maternal unconscious. In White's fictional world the image of *teeth* is often linked symbolically with this mythological figure. The Teeth Mother appears whenever the ego-personality is too close to the unconscious or is too preoccupied with the idea of uroboric non-existence.



Fig.6a The uroboric world of the nautilus
(modern pencil drawing; one fifth
of actual size)

In the central section of *The Aunt's Story* the nautilus shell is the dominant symbol of the maternal uroboros, and the secret, all-containing world of the deep unconscious. One can see here how the spiralic form of the nautilus suggests something of the "tail-biting snake" represented in Fig.1.

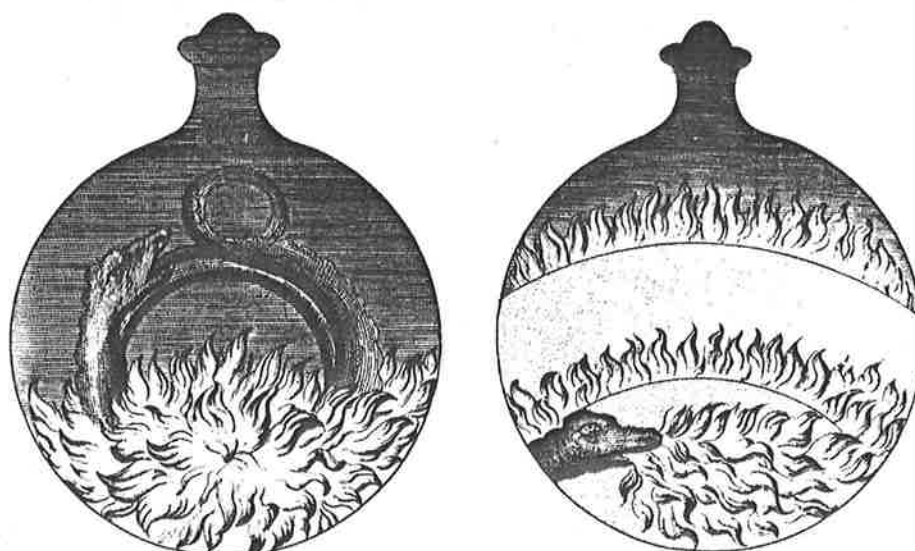


Fig.6b The uroboric dragon devours and recreates
itself in fire.

(from 'Elementa chemicæ', 1718)

At the end of Part Two of *The Aunt's Story* the dragon-mother figures of Lieselotte and Mrs Rapallo destroy themselves in the hotel fire. They can afford to disappear in this manner because they are about to be reincarnated in Theodora herself, who now becomes the new carrier of the daemonic mother-image. In alchemy, the maternal-dragon both destroys and recreates itself in fire, as it does in *The Aunt's Story*.



Fig.7a In the belly of the dragon
(ninth-century drawing)

Having made his symbolic return to the mother in *The Aunt's Story*, White finds himself, in the next book, caught up inside the mother-world. This is expressed in several ways: Stan Parker is a "prisoner" of Nature and caught up in the Great Round and its cycle of the seasons, and he is trapped in the maternal unconscious, unable to communicate with others or come to consciousness of himself. He is a mere embryo who is simultaneously nurtured and imprisoned by the matrix. Mythologically, the novel is an expression of the failed heroic consciousness, the mystical traveller who returns to the mother for the sake of rebirth, but who gets stuck there and is unable to break free.



Fig.7b The mother-woman as imprisoning house
(modern cartoon by James Thurber)

In White's fiction there is often a link between mother and house: both are felt to be strongly containing and devouring forces. Symbolically, the house is the maternal womb, or matrix, which stifles and devours the masculine ego that returns to it. Cf. The words of the Man who was Given his Dinner, "Put[your life] in a house and it stops, it stands still" (*AS* p.44). This is the side of the "return" which White's mystical characters do not see, and so it is projected upon the human mother-woman, as though she were stifling and containing them.



Fig. 8 Goddess bestowing boons upon
Attis-Adonis

(Akkadian, third millennium)

In ancient Western mythology the "spirit" of maternal nature was worshipped and venerated in the form of a male youth, usually said to represent the actual son of the Great Earth Goddess, Cybele or Aphrodite. Here we see a matriarchal priest offering a blessing to the boy-god, in the likeness of Himmelfarb's childhood consecration. Acceptance of the blessing entails that one live - and die - in the manner of the *puer aeternus*, who is put to death at the end of the uroboric cycle by the Mother's destructive aspect. Note the highly stylized tree behind the Great Goddess: her constant symbol in myth and the crucial image which stands at the beginning and at the end of Himmelfarb's career in the novel.

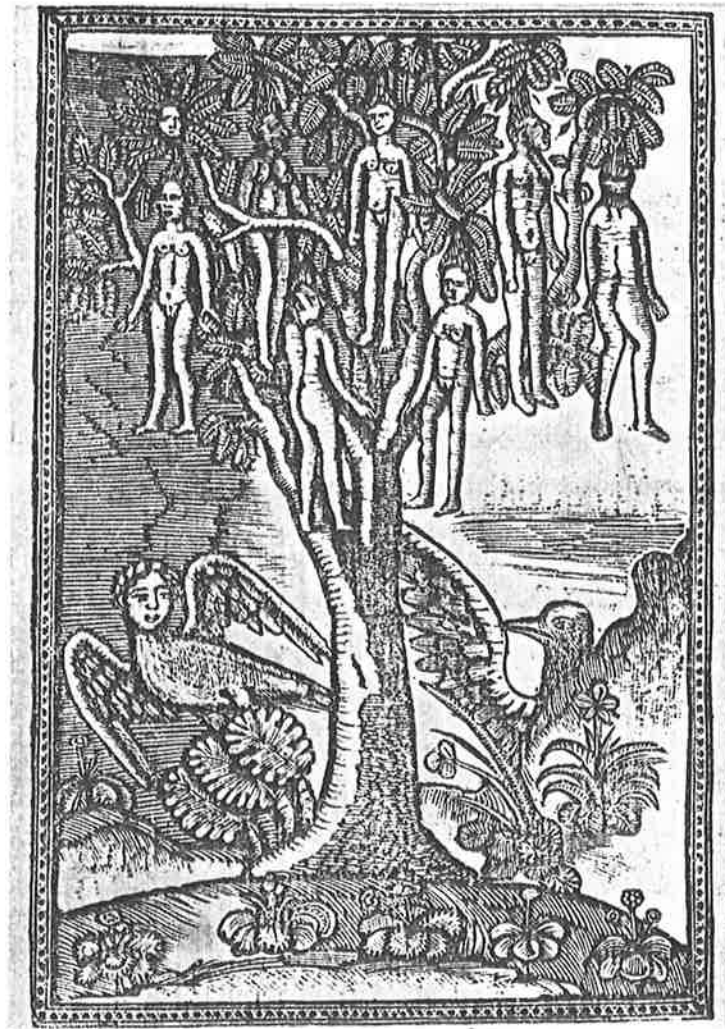


Fig. 9 The wak-wak tree with its human fruit
(Turkish, eighteenth century)

White's mystics are assimilated to the realm of the maternal unconscious - or, in symbolic terms, they are caught up on the maternal tree and bound to the cyclical pattern of natural life. In this drawing, from an ancient Turkish manuscript, we capture something of the meaning and symbolic context of Dubbo's painting of the Tree of Unborn Souls. The intimate relation between human fruit and maternal source expresses the ecstasy and the despair of the uroboric situation: the unborn soul exists in a state of permanent psychological incest, but it can never enter life as an independent being or become fully human. And when the seasonal cycle draws to a close, the *pueri* are returned to the darkness of the maternal source.

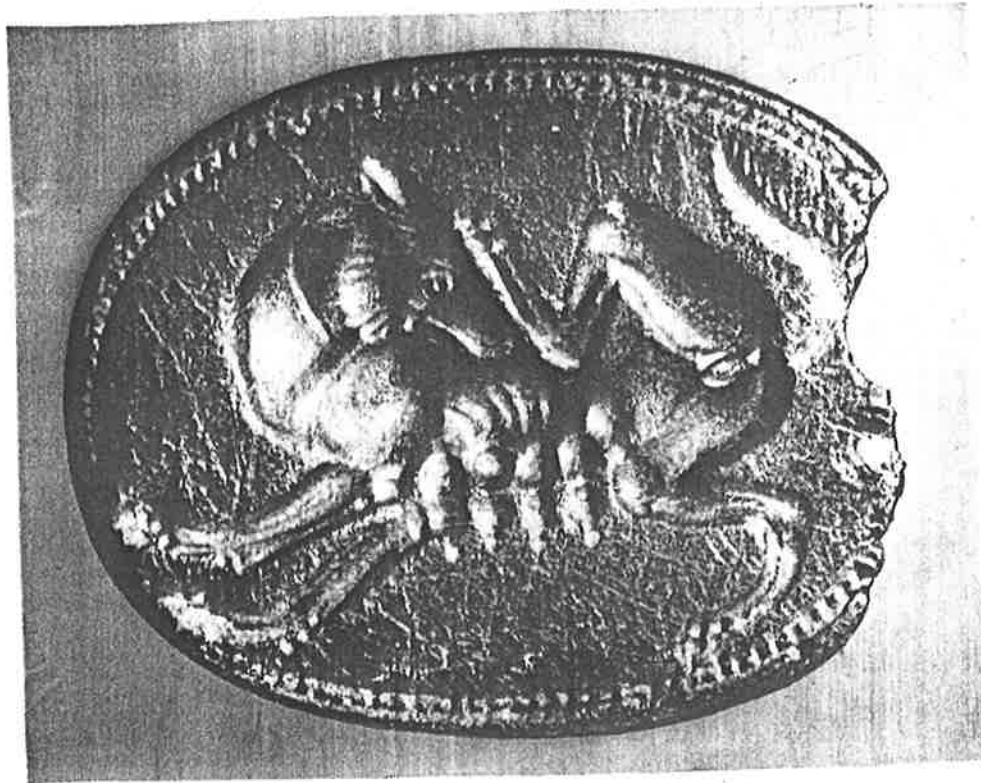


Fig.10 The Goddess Hecate as whelping bitch
(Scaraboid seal, archaic Ionian style)

In *The Vivisector* the idea of prevention of cruelty to animals, especially dogs, is a particular obsession of Mrs Alfreda Courtney, an overly refined woman who has herself maltreated her "animal" or instinctual side. The Goddess Hecate, ruler of instinctual life and lunar energies, was theriomorphically represented as a cat, dog (as here), or wolf. Mrs Courtney's obsession reflects a fundamental tension within White's mythic deity: the Hecate-animal-primitive aspect of the Mother, which has long been maligned and repressed, must now be "redeemed" and protected from further harm. In this picture the exposed genitals and exaggerated teats emphasize Hecate's sexuality and fertility. Nance Lightfoot, a central figure in the novel, is often imaged on all fours like an animal, with her breasts dangling and genitals on display. Hecate herself was known as the "exhibitionist goddess".

Glossary

Archetype. The archetype is viewed as an inherent, pre-existent formative principle which is capable of releasing uniquely human patterns of imagery, thought, feeling, and behaviour. It is a content of the collective unconscious and is invariably located in religions, mythologies, folk tales, symbolic literature, and personal dreams. It is not used in the sense of any kind of recurring motif (Northrop Frye), but of a highly particularized psychic image. In the present study it is confined mainly to the mother, the dominant image, structural foundation and creative impulse in White's art.

Assimilation. The absorption or joining up of one psychic content to another, usually the assimilation of the weaker element to the greater archetypal field. Here it relates to the fusion of the ego (or the son) with the mother-image.

Castration. The term is used in a symbolic sense to refer to the dismemberment or devouring of the ego by the Mother. It is used whenever I am emphasizing the ineffectuality, weakness, and exhaustion which the ego is made to suffer in the incestuous state.

Complex. An emotionally charged unconscious entity composed of a number of associated ideas grouped around an archetypal image. It can interfere with the intentions of the will, disrupt the conscious performance, and control an individual's life in an almost imperceptible way. It is, of course, all the more powerful for being unrecognized by the conscious mind.

Coniunctio. A term from alchemy referring to the union of opposites in the psyche. In particular it refers to the internal marriage of the contrasexual figures.

Consciousness. Consciousness is the relatedness of psychic contents to the ego and the function which maintains the relation of inner contents with the ego. It is not identical with intellect or reason, but constitutes a kind of "emotional knowing". To be conscious of an archetype is to be capable of responding to it at a prerational level, yet at the same time maintaining the integrity of the ego.

Ego. By ego I do not simply mean the rational mind or intellect, but the conscious self and the centre of one's field of awareness.

Enantiodromia. Greek, "running counter to". Jung uses the term for the emergence of the unconscious opposite in the course of time.

Incest. The word is used in a symbolic sense to denote an internal and psychological process. It refers to the urge of the ego-personality to get back to the mother-image, the source and origin of life. It is sometimes used (viz. Chapter Six) to denote symbolic and literal patterns of regression to the mother. The term "incest urge" simply refers to the libido's natural tendency toward infantile situations, psychic inertia, and dissolution into the matrix. It is therefore closely related to Freud's death-instinct and the ego's longing for self-extinction.

Incest taboo. Not something imposed by society upon man (Freud), but an internal regulation of instinctive libido. The taboo is a product of spirit or logos, which strives to direct libido away from the matrix

and toward individuation. It inhibits the "natural" movement toward inertia and dissolution and promotes consciousness and ego-stability.

Incest wound. Used as an alternative to "mother-complex" whenever I am wishing to emphasize the damaging and wounding effects that such a complex has upon the life of eros and the love/sex relationship. It creates an ideal image of heavenly love which is sharply separated from bodily and instinctual processes.

Individuation. The process of forming the individual nature; the development of the individual as a differentiated being from the unconscious and its archetypes. It leads ultimately to an integration of the ego-personality with the inner world. In Chapter Six (after the collapse of ego-consciousness in White's fiction) the meaning of the term changes - it comes simply to mean the development of the archetype itself, its search for wholeness and self-completion.

Liminality. Borrowed from the anthropological studies of Paul Friedrich. Derived from Latin, limen, "threshold". The quality of being "betwixt and between" the margins of recognized boundaries.

Matrix. Latin, "womb" or "source". It is used to denote the maternal nature of the unconscious as the origin and source of conscious life.

Mother Goddess. An archetypal figure of the deep unconscious, represented in the mythology, art and religion of all races. The Mother personifies Nature, instinctuality, and the unconscious. She is the oldest deity known to man, and precedes the Father-God by several millenia.

Mythologem. From C. Kerényi. Denotes a living, evolving body of myth governed by a specific archetype.

Participation mystique. From Levy-Bruhl. Derived from anthropological work on the primitive mind and describes the state of mystical at-oneness between man and the external world. Adopted by Jung to refer to states of unconscious identification with any thing, person, or objective reality.

Pleroma. Greek, "fullness" or "plenitude". It relates to the sense of harmoniousness and perfection which is had in the primal situation of unconsciousness, before the birth of the human ego. Hence the "pleromatic" feeling associated with the uroboros.

Projection. Signifies the transference of a subjective process upon an object. It is a process of dissimilation wherein a subjective content is estranged from the subject and, in a sense, becomes incorporated in the object.

Puer aeternus. Latin, "eternal youth". In Ovid the name is applied to the child-god in the Eleusinian mysteries. In psychology the term refers to an archetypal situation wherein the libido is held in a "childhood" stage of development. The puer constellates the Mother as his psychological counterpart.

Unconscious. A psychological boundary-concept, which covers all those psychic contents or processes which are not conscious, i.e. not related to the ego in a perceptible way.

Uroboros. Greek, "tail-biting snake". The symbol of the origin of life, the circle-as-beginning. Represented in almost all mythologies, and especially found in alchemical science, where it is identified with the primordial dragon. In psychology, it denotes the deep unconscious in its archaic and undifferentiated aspect. See the Appendix at the conclusion of the Notes.

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