SOME ASPECTS OF IMAGERY IN
THE NOVELS OF PATRICK WHITE

Michael Thomas Cotter

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FOR HELEN.
This thesis is my own composition.
All sources have been acknowledged.

MICHAEL COTTER.
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The presuppositions for a symbolic literature in our time are two, an imagination hungry for images, and a vague idea that our lives are somehow determined by indefinable principles which operate outside the domain of cause and effect but which have a hidden meaning that manifests itself in external phenomena.... The basic tendency in symbolic literature is its orientation towards the intuited, intangible, indeterminate.

URSULA BRUMM.

The art of literature ... is to adjust the language so that it embodies what it indicates.

A. N. WHITEHEAD.
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EDITIONS CITED

The following is a list of the editions of Patrick White's works to which references have been made in the body of this thesis. All page references, given in parenthesis within the text of the thesis, are to these editions.

The Living and the Dead (1941), London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1962.
The Tree of Man, London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1956.
Throughout his novels, Patrick White addresses himself to questions fundamental to human existence and understanding. His stance is prophetic and the mode of his narrative is appropriately poetic. In the formulation and presentation of his images, White unifies the subjects of his fiction and the language in which they are rendered.

The potential of discursive prose inherent, or at least traditional in the novel, is revalued in White's creative effort. Essentially his novels are explorations of character, from which he extrapolates the implications arising from his vision of humanity as inhabiting a world rich in covert significances that may only occasionally be glimpsed. White's major characters do not substantially develop in the sense of becoming essentially different in the course of the novel in which they are presented. Instead their growth is a process of increasing awareness and understanding of what they are, the world in which they have their being and their place within that world.

White's novels are, as he has said, attempts 'to come close to the core of reality, the structure of reality'. The exposition and development of the themes growing from the attempt - the essential solitariness of the self and its paradoxically resultant union with all human life; the necessity of thorough engagement with every aspect of experience; the possibility of illuminated understanding; and the relation of humanity to divinity - are realized in the dynamic function of his presentative language and especially of his imagery.

The imagery in White's novels is seen in this thesis to function according to the two basic principles of recurrence and centrality. The recurrence of images both informs the novels with their poetic texture and clarifies the development of situation and character within them. In the episodic structure of the novels, images establish coherence and continuity by conditioning the
episodes and by linking them at a connotative level. Thus in relation to episodes in the novels, imagery may be seen to function in terms of both the principle of recurrence and that of centrality. The scale of reference of a central image extends from single episodes to the entire novel. In the first three chapters of the thesis, I discuss the proposition that White's implementation of these two principles produces a stylistic embodiment of theme which results in immediacy of exposition.

Yet the novels are more than the sum of a number of interlocking aesthetic structures and in the final chapter of the thesis, I argue that the thematic essence of White's works is figured in the motifs which have, in the course of his creative effort, established themselves as predominant. In White's presentation of the image of the human body, of the image of the material world, and of the imagery of revelation and understanding, the growth of his characters is both recorded and enacted.

Such a critical approach obviously demands a sustained close reference to the primary texts and I have tried to support my argument throughout the thesis with detailed analysis. As a major novelist of the twentieth century, White has expressed a vision of humanity in the world which repays the most careful and precise attention. I do not claim to have exhaustively covered every aspect of his style, or even of his imagery, but I hope that my study will contribute to an understanding of his works.
As its title indicates, this thesis is not predominantly concerned with the themes of Patrick White's novels, nor with the novels' structure. Neither is it a comprehensive study of the function of imagery in the novels. It explores the thematic and structural functions of the imagery in White's novels. It is not a linguistic study, nor is it a specialised aesthetic study. I do not intend in this thesis to define the term 'image' in a detailed linguistic way or to attempt to produce a treatise on aesthetics. The analysis is to be of specific problems and matters of interest associated with the novels of Patrick White and it will be conducted with reference to White's imagery. Obviously, however, such a discussion will need to be based upon some definition of the term 'image'. Briefly, I use the term to designate any verbal aesthetic structure which incorporates both description of physical phenomena or ideas and sensations associated with them, and a connotative level within the presentation of that description. A fuller definition is offered in my Introduction, in addition to definitions of several other terms referring to figurative language, to which I have recourse in the body of this thesis. It should be said here that these definitions are of a more general kind than would be appropriate in a discussion of specialist aesthetic or linguistic interest.
I am not suggesting here that there is no place for a semiotic or any other kind of linguistic analysis of White's novels. Nor am I presuming to undervalue the specialised study of aesthetics. Clearly such analyses are instructive to literary criticism, in that the application of various forms of competence to a given area of concern is usually of general value; and the need is obvious for such studies of White's work by those who are equipped to make them. Nevertheless, my concern in this thesis is with the meanings that suggest themselves in the novels of Patrick White and the way in which they do so. It is not with the language of those novels as an object of scientific study. Though the need of some theoretical structure in such a study as this one is plain, I have at all times tried to ensure that its theoretical structure serves the subjective response to the novels expressed in this thesis: and not the reverse. Inevitably, any study of a work or a body of literature which emphasizes a particular characteristic or technique will seem to produce a distortion of the text. It should be understood, then, that I have no interest in claiming to have discovered the key to all of White's mythology: or, for that matter, of his methodology. The divisions asserted in the structure of the overall argument and discussion are probably somewhat arbitrary and are made for the more convenient examination of the parts and their contribution to the whole. It is with the whole, in the sense of that word which sees White's ten novels as such, that this thesis is concerned.
In each chapter, only the first reference to each of the primary texts is footnoted with publication details. Subsequent references to and quotations from the text refer to the editions so cited and pagination of quotations is given, within the text of the thesis, in parenthesis immediately following the quotation. Where more than one quotation is made in a sentence, a single reference to pagination indicates that all quotations in that sentence occur on the same page of the primary text. Otherwise, pagination is given for each quotation in the sentence. A list of editions of primary texts used for the thesis is provided on p. viii.

INTRODUCTION
The novels of Patrick White are expressions of a poetic impulse which is nowhere so clearly seen as in the function of his imagery. The principal concern in this thesis is with the part played by imagery in determining the manner in which that impulse is expressed. As a novelist, White's business is with the matter of narrative structure, characterization and the development of theme from both of these. As a poetic novelist, committed to 'an attempt to come close to the core of reality, the structure of reality, as opposed to the merely superficial',\(^1\) he is obliged not only to record his vision in language, but also to approximate it.

That White thinks of his novels in this way is of as much relevance to their underlying metaphysic as it is to his style, for this statement expresses the assumption that there is an ultimate reality. The themes of the novels rest squarely on that assumption and from it flow the fundamental notions that, although the core and structure of reality may be obscure to human beings, it is imperative that they perceive and understand their place in it. Moreover, the novels propose a further notion that human beings profoundly desire to do so: although, to be sure, many of White's characters, in their attachment to 'the merely superficial', deny or repress that need within themselves. Those who do not, however, become protagonists in the struggle for understanding to which White

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directs his novels.

White renders that struggle with a preference for oblique rather than direct expression, for the implied rather than the overt statement. He strives to enact meaning, rather than to state it, relying on the imagery of his prose to do so. His methodology therefore indirectly testifies to a faith in the aesthetic possibilities of language, and especially in its metaphoric capacity which is essential to the presentation of images. He has also directly expressed the assumption that these possibilities are open to exploitation, in remarks which he has made outside his works. In his comments on the technical fashioning of *The Tree of Man*, he plainly speaks of writing as a process in which the writer comes to grips with his medium at a quite basic level. Working on that novel, White says, he discovered that writing, which had previously meant to him 'the practice of an art by a polished mind in civilized surroundings', became 'a struggle to create completely fresh forms out of the rocks and sticks of words'.

Apparently he feels that the aesthetic odds are stacked against his success in the struggle, if some of the comments he has made in interviews are any indication. He has said, for instance, that:

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

White feels, then, that there is a disparity between the subject and the medium of his art; that, as an aesthetic medium, words

2. 'The Prodigal Son', 39.
are 'frustrating'; that writing is a process of 'reeling out an endless deadly grey'.

There is an evident conflict between what White says about his writing here and what he does in his novels, where obviously he strives, as he said he did in Voss, to demonstrate that 'the Australian novel is not necessarily the dreary dun-coloured offspring of journalistic realism'. White's familiarity with Australian fiction may have been slight when he wrote this comment. In any event, Marcus Clarke's For the Term of His Natural Life, Henry Handel Richardson's The Fortunes of Richard Mahony, Christina Stead's Seven Poor Men of Sydney and Xavier Herbert's Capricornia would at least indicate that 'the Australian novel' was less in need of rescue than White imagined it to be. These novels represent a variety of modes and there is much to be found in them which would scarcely fit in with White's strictures about realism. Be that as it may, evidently White feels that the language of realism is inappropriate for his own novels. 'The realistic novel is remote from art', he has observed, and his novels have been developed according to that belief. Voss, for instance, White describes as an attempt to 'convey through the theme and characters ... what Delacroix and Blake might have seen, what Mahler and Liszt might have heard'.

In proposing to himself aims of this kind, White sets himself a definite problem: his novels are to deal with subjects which lie well outside the ordinary, yet he must render these extraordinary

2. 'The Prodigal Son', 39.
4. 'The Prodigal Son', 39.
subjects in terms of an inevitably 'ordinary' medium. He shows his awareness of this problem when he attempts, as he did in writing *The Tree of Man* (and certainly not only in that novel), to 'discover the extraordinary behind the ordinary'. His faith in and preference for the powers of intuition - the direct and non-verbal understanding - are relevant here, for non-intellectual processes, he says, are of primary importance to his art:

> I just muddle away at it. One gets flashes here and there, which help. I am not a philosopher or an intellectual. Practically anything I have done of any worth I feel I have done through intuition, not my mind ...

If this statement seems to suggest that White is pretending to preach the gospel of preconscious utterance, another one should redress the balance to a position nearer to the reality of White's aesthetic. Speaking of reason, as distinct from intuition, as a factor in his creative effort, he says:

> I don't reject it but I think intuition is more important, creatively, in the beginning. Perhaps not for everybody. But everything I write has to be dredged up from the unconscious - which is what makes it such an exhausting and perhaps finally, destructive, process.... 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 of a process of reason. The last version is your last chance - and you hope it won't be suicide.

White thus views the task of writing a novel as a process of bringing rational order to material which has originated in a non-rational source, in intuitive springs such as those with which Coleridge

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1. 'The Prodigal Son', 39.
3. 'A Conversation with Patrick White', 139.
was concerned in 'Kubla Khan'. The prominent status of intuition in White's work is indicated both in his strong endorsement of characters who value their intuitive capacities and in his creation of figurative structures which embody the themes of his novels, for these furnish the novels with a grammar of the intuition.

In this respect, White's methodology resembles Lawrence's attempt to reach the unconscious levels of his reader's perception. White is, in fact, claiming the supremacy of the intuitive over the rational in much the same way as Lawrence insists, in his essay on Whitman, that art should transmit its meaning to the 'blood' before it is received by the intellect:

The essential function of art is moral. Not aesthetic, not pastime and recreation. But moral. The essential function of art is moral. But a passionate, implicit morality, not didactic. A morality which changes the blood, rather than the mind. Changes the blood first. The mind follows later, in the wake.1

The fact that White has persisted for more than thirty years with the 'struggle to create completely fresh forms out of the rocks and sticks of words', so as to reach his reader at that intuitive level, is positive confirmation of his underlying confidence in the aesthetic possibilities of language. Clearly, to strain so consistently against the limitations imposed by conscious perception is to regard language affirmatively, and the conflict may well be more apparent than real.

White's metaphor, 'the rocks and sticks of words', implies a belief in the transcendent power of aesthetic language, for it

associates his medium with the physical forms of the natural world, which everywhere in his work he presents as transcendent over its own physicality. Moreover, in envisaging his own creative function as analogous to both the artisan's and the artificer's, he shows himself to be convinced of the dynamic possibilities of his medium; of its capacity to mediate pliably between experience and the presentation of experience. White is optimistic, then, despite his demurrals.

White's novels have been approached from many critical directions, but in this thesis I adopt the view proposed by H.P. Heseltine, that 'Whoever would come to grips with the themes of White's fiction can do so only through the words in which they are embodied'. To this seminal generalization I would add the view that White's work is a highly wrought, intricately developed presentation of non-conscious, as well as conscious, experience. That view gives rise to much of the discussion which follows in this thesis, as does the premise that the linking of this level of experience with the more familiar conscious level is a major preoccupation in the novels: a pressure that manifests itself in the creative fashioning of language which is most evident in his imagery.

White creates imaginative forms which reveal an intrinsic relation between what is obvious in the material world and what is less obvious: the essential transcendence which he finds present in that world. In doing so, he is producing novels which seem to many alien in conception and design; not least because,

1. 'Patrick White's Style', Quadrant, 7, 3(1963), 61-74; 62.
as the Hindu philosopher Ananda K. Coomaraswamy has observed, the modern tendency has been away from symbolic thought, 'the art of thinking in images'. Yet the symbolic dimension of White's novels continues to be of relevance today, for, as Mircea Eliade has pointed out, 'symbolic thought opens the door on to immediate reality for us, but without weakening or invalidating it; seen in this light the universe is no longer sealed off, nothing is isolated inside its own existence: everything is linked by a system of correspondences and assimilations'. There is, moreover, as Susanne Langer has pointed out, 'an unexplored possibility of genuine semantic beyond the limits of discursive language'.

The imagery of White's novels represents his exploration of that possibility.

Poetic Prose

In that 'poetry' is a term that refers to language which conveys an unusually intense vision of aspects of the world not otherwise readily apparent, White's novels are poetic. In that White's prose is characteristically metaphoric, it is poetic, since, as Northrop Frye has observed, 'The basis of poetic expression is the metaphor'.

2. See A Dictionary of Symbols, xiv.
In making these judgements, I am aware that there is a critical position which denies that prose, the traditional language of the novel, can be poetic. As David Lodge shows, even such writers as Wordsworth and Coleridge who tried to uphold the view that prose was not necessarily the poor relation of poetry found themselves floundering in inconsistency.¹ In Shelley's essay, 'A Defence of Poetry', the rejection of any idea that a story (written in prose) might be the aesthetic equal of a poem is outright and final:

A poem is the very image of life expressed in its external truth. There is this difference between a story and a poem, that a story is a catalogue of detached facts, which have no other connexion than time, place, circumstance, cause and effect; the other is the creation of actions according to the changeable forms of human nature, as existing in the mind of the Creator, which is itself the image of all other minds.²

More recently, Paul Valéry considers prose and poetry in a similar light, likening prose to walking and poetry to dancing, declaring that:

Thus understood, poetry is radically different from all prose: in particular, it is clearly opposed to the description and narration of events that tend to give the illusion of reality, that is to the novel and the tale when their aim is to give the force of truth to stories, portraits, scenes, and other representations of real life.³

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2. See Language of Fiction, 9. Shelley's view may be at least partly conditioned by the circumstances in which it was expressed. Certainly the essay's passionate tone is consistent with the fact that it is a rebuttal of Peacock's 'The Four Ages of Poetry'. See Peacock's Four Ages of Poetry: Shelley's Defence of Poetry: Browning's Essay on Shelley, ed. H.F.B. Brett-Smith, Oxford: Blackwell, 2nd ed. 1923, 1-19, 21-59.
3. See Language of Fiction, 11.
T.E. Hulme seeks to uphold a similar discrimination by the force of metaphor:

In prose as in algebra concrete things are embodied in signs or counters which are moved about according to rules, without being visualised at all in the process. There are in prose certain type situations and arrangements of words, which move as automatically into certain other arrangements as do functions in algebra. One only changes the $X$'s and the $Y$'s back into physical things at the end of the process. Poetry, in one aspect at any rate, may be considered as an effort to avoid this characteristic of prose. It is not a counter language, but a visual concrete one. It is a compromise for a language of intuition which would hand over sensations bodily. It always endeavours to arrest you, and to make you continuously see a physical thing, to prevent you gliding through an abstract process. It chooses fresh epithets and fresh metaphors, not so much because they are new, and we are tired of the old, but because the old cease to convey a physical thing and become abstract counters. A poet says a ship 'coursed the seas' to get a physical image, instead of the counter word 'sailed'. Visual meanings can only be transferred by the new bowl of metaphor; prose is an old pot that lets them leak out. Images in verse are not mere decoration, but the very essence of an intuitive language. Verse is a pedestrian taking you over the ground, prose -- a train which delivers you at a destination.¹

Why Valéry and Hulme should make this distinction with such arbitrariness is not altogether clear. What is plain, however, is that they and the other writers mentioned in this survey, including those who attempt to create new distinctions to replace the antithesis poetry : prose, are comparing verse and prose; and that they do not conceive of poetry as existing beyond verse.

Another manifestation of this type of closed argument occurs in an essay by Malcolm Bradbury who, though arguing that prose may well have advantages as well as disadvantages by comparison with poetry, advances the claim that the convention of prose in the novel 'significantly determines' the 'matter' with which novelists might concern themselves. So, though Bradbury in his essay goes farther than many others to argue for poetic prose, he remains basically unwilling to go beyond the comparison of the novel and the poem. Hence prose, in Bradbury's view, is an inherent limitation of the novel's possibilities:

Prose, as compared with poetry, has an accentuated referential dimension: it is our normal instrument of discursive communication, is associated with our ways of verifying factuality, and is thereby subject to a complex of social uses not imposed on verse. In compositional terms, an extended piece of prose will inevitably use forms of discursiveness and persuasion not normally available to poetry, will have a different tonal and structural engagement with the reader, and so will emerge as a different species of persuasion, usually involving extremely varied use of language (ranging from reportage to extreme poetic effects) and large-scale rhetorical strategies.... As for the fictive nature of novels, this can indeed be seen as a feature common to all forms of invented discourse, but it can also be distinguished as that matter for invention appropriate to this scale and this mode of discourse, so that a writer will choose to develop it through prose fiction and no other form: and that matter is typically characters and events, presented to us by verbal means and shown in extended interaction. Thus the novel is a complex structure by virtue of its scale, prose-character, and matter, being more extended than most poems, dealing with a wider range of life, appealing to the reader through a broader variety of approaches, having a different relationship to working language, and above all stating its character, intentions and conventions with less immediate clarity and a greater degree of gradual worked persuasion. It will tend, then, to be more discursive than poetry, and its stronger

referential dimension will be shown not only by attentiveness to people as they talk and think and act, and places as they look and institutions as they work, but also to large processes of human interaction as they take place over a long chronological span, or spatially over a large area of ground or a large sector of society.

There is obviously much here that is incontestable: but at the same time the good sense which Bradbury talks about the novel, including his concession that prose may consist of language varying in kind 'from reportage to extreme poetic effects', is characterized by the prevailing assumption that only in a poem will true poetry be found. This notion is implicit throughout the passage just quoted: it is, for instance, evident when Bradbury speaks of the 'poetic effects' of prose as though these were borrowed robes worn by the poor relation.

Though I accept Bradbury's distinctions in so far as they apply to a poem and a novel, then, I do not agree with his assumption that poetry is the exclusive preserve of a poem. Indeed, one of the basic premises of this thesis is that, as W.H. Auden has said, 'The difference between verse and prose is self-evident, but it is a sheer waste of time to look for a definition of the difference between poetry and prose'. It is a waste of time to look for such a difference, that is, because there is more than a little arbitrariness in the compartmentalization of language as an aesthetic medium. Indeed, as Lawrence Lerner has said, 'Perhaps we should question the very idea of classifying language into two kinds, rather than describing it as a continuum, between - say - the poles of mathematics and dream'.

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1. 'Towards a Poetics of Fiction', 49.
2. See Language of Fiction, 8.
3. See Language of Fiction, 11.
and, conversely, some prose is poetic in nature, as Coleridge points out.¹ Truistic though this point may be, it is nevertheless an important underlying principle in the work of many post-Romantic novelists and of signal importance in that it informs the experimental aspect of their aesthetic.

The manifestation of Coleridge’s notion in White’s novels can be sharply defined by a comparison of his work with that of some other contemporary novelists. Among the many experimental writers of the present time, Janet Frame and Doris Lessing are two whose work will serve this purpose. In all of her novels, Janet Frame has presented and developed her themes in much the same way as White has, by the disposition and elaboration of images throughout the prose.² In each of her novels, however, verse has been introduced into the prose narrative on a much larger scale than in any of White’s works to the present. There are thirteen such inclusions of verse, for instance, in Owls Do Cry,³ a novel of about 160 pages. Frame’s use of verse in her novels seems to rise spontaneously from the prose, the graceful melancholy of her verse deriving its tone fundamentally from its context.

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Verse and prose are integrated in the dramatization of Daphne's schizophrenia, the loss of her childhood being compensated by withdrawal into fantasy and memory, to the point where remembered experience becomes the only reality. Throughout the novel, Frame evokes Daphne's inner world extraordinarily clearly in her verse passages, juxtaposing different orders of reality in unmediated accusation. The transition from prose narrative and dialogue at the end of Chapter 13, into the verse which begins Chapter 14 is a clear instance of this technique. The pipe inserted into Daphne's mouth in preparation for electric shock therapy, being ironically aligned with the pipe of Blake's 'Introduction' to his *Songs of Innocence* (l.9), metaphorically evinces the underlying point that the therapy is a curtailment of the spirit:

The women wave their feelers. They suddenly go stiff, their knees set like concrete, their breasts of stone; and press icicles upon Daphne's ears, and her body down, down in the hollow; though one of them says kindly,  
- Put this in your mouth.  
It is not an aniseed ball or acid drop or blackball, but a little black pipe or whistle.  
- Bite it.  
Should it not be played? Drop thy pipe, thy happy pipe.  
The doctor, waiting, exults. He presses the switch. One moment then, and nothing.-- (48).

Chapter 14 begins with Daphne's gradual return from oblivion, which is signalled by an elegaic presentation, in verse, of the lost child's world. In Daphne's case, Blakean Innocence and Experience are subsumed within a troubled present, cast in terms of the formative past. The transition into the past is made through the verse in generalised terms before a particularised past is

1. cf. the reference to this line on pp. 9 and 52 of *Owls Do Cry*. 
dramatized in the subsequent prose narrative:

...Oh the wind is lodged forever in the telegraph wire for crying there on a grey day on the loneliest of roads of dust and gravel and forest of cocksfoot at the side and gorse or broom hedge with the dead pods refusing to drop and the cross the crucifix of the leaning poles linked by the everlasting wire of crying of the wind lodged forever in the telegraph wire for crying there. The green baize and oil sickening smell of the gramophone horn, a smell swallowed and vomited from memory upon a folded sheet of summer, burned and boiled in a pumice copper with a pine cone gum log, old apple wood. Francie, come in you naughty bird the rain is pouring down, What would your mother say if you stay there and drown? You are a very naughty bird, you do not think of me, I'm sure I do not care, said the sparrow on the tree. Francie, come in you naughty bird, the rain is pouring down, the fire is pouring down. Now be careful kiddies, for wherever you walk you may meet an angel; for angels walk upon the earth among people, and the day Christ comes He too will walk unknown upon the earth. And blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth. Blessed are they that mourn for they shall be comforted, blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. And childhood is nothing, it is only the wind in the telegraph wire for crying there, the toothache in the cavity of night, the too big body curled up in the cot too small, the grandmother breaking her back in the hot Virginny sun, grandmother what big eyes you have; and the boy in the fox's belly, unstitch, unstitch, boy girl or day locked in the suffocating belly of memory.

Now that Francie is dead, I, Daphne, am the eldest sister, the eldest in the family, not counting Toby who takes fits and lies sometimes in hospital with his lips lolling together like rubber and covered with saliva and his face twisted and his eyes bulged. He does not know us when we go there at visiting time, and the nurse leads us along a corridor to a room like a cage, with bars, where Toby lies on a high bed white and clean as a china plate; as high as the bed where the princess lay, under twenty mattresses; the real princess. Toby, when you get better we will go to the rubbish dump and find things. A diamond. A lump of gold. A moa bone. Toby we must find things that other people have thrown away as no use, all day and night they are standing on the edge of the cliff and throwing,
and sometimes in the night they cannot see what they throw; in the night or sleep or dream; till they wake too old and late. (48-50).

Daphne's poems are a characterization technique, in that within them Frame comments indirectly on the significance of events in the narrative. Similarly, Doris Lessing's *Briefing for a Descent into Hell* is remarkable for the inclusion of verse in the narrative. Like Frame's, Lessing's central character has also withdrawn from the world into what Lessing calls 'inner space' (9). Most of *Briefing for a Descent into Hell* is taken up with an exploration of Charles Watkins' subconscious urgings which Lessing presents in narrative that ranges widely in style. She repeatedly presents the same basic situation, the growth of humanity away from and back towards conformity with universal laws of harmony, in a variety of events seen from multiple perspectives. The verse sequences form only one of the many stylistic modes, but it is significant that they disappear from the narrative as Watkins begins to recover his 'sanity'. While mentally 'ill', Watkins is obsessed with a vision of humanity's evolution which is paralleled with his own life from childhood to middle age. The prevailing confusion evoked in the narrative up to the point at which the final verse sequence occurs becomes resolved in the coda-like decorum of the poem which, in turn, prepares for the ensuing central episode of the novel: 'The Conference' (116-25), where Lessing's thematic interest in providential influence on human development is exemplified. The poem, then, serves as a transition in the

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narrative from chaos to order and, accordingly, Lessing unites in the poem a structural gracefulness and a dignified rhetorical order. Having completed the inner voyage through the scherzo of human evolution, Watkins feels that he can view himself and mankind from a compassionate distance:

in a cool sweet loving air that rings with harmony, IS, yes, and here am I, voyager, Odysseus bound for home at last, the seeker in home waters, spiteful Neptune outwitted and Jupiter's daughter my friend and guide.

All men make caves of shadow for their eyes
With hats and hands, sockets, lashes, brows,
So tender pupils dare look at the light.

In Northlands too where light lies shadowless
A man will lift his hand to guard his eyes;
It's a thing that I've seen done in strong moonlight.

At any blaze too fierce, that warden hand
Goes to its post, keeping a dark;
Like cats', men's eyes grow large and soft with night.

New eyes they are, and still not used to see,
Taking in facets, individual,
With no skill yet to use them round and right.

Think: beasts on all fours we were, low,
With horizontal gaze kept safely from
That pulsing, flaming, all eye-searing bright.

Yet had to come that inevitable day
A small brave beast raised up his paw to branch,
Pulled himself high - and staggered on his height.

Our human babes have shown us how it was.
They clamber up; we, vigilant,
Let them learn the folly of their fright.

At that first venture, light stooped in salute,
Like to like, a shimmer in the mind,
And the beast thought it 'angel' - as indeed we might.

One paw, earth-freed, held fast the slippery branch;
The other, freed, waited, while the eyes
Lifted at last to birds and clouds in flight.
And so he balanced there, a beast upright.  
And the angel, saving what he'd hardly won,  
Jerked up that idle hand to guard his sight,  
In that most common gesture that is done.  
Man may not look directly at his sun. (104-5).

In *Voss*, White presents selections from the poetic essays of Frank Le Mesurier (313-17) which, like Daphne's poems in *Owls Do Cry* and the inwardly-spoken poems of Charles Watkins in *Briefing for a Descent into Hell*, deeply penetrate the novel's thematic material in the exploration of the sensibility of a central character. The elaborate symbolic richness of the anguished *Childhood* (313-15) splendidly evokes Frank's transition from distracted cynicism to acceptance of the solitary uncertainty which informs the vision of the human condition that is projected in the novel. In *Conclusion*, Le Mesurier's final sequence of prose poems, the action, conflict and thematic development of *Voss* are formalised in concentrated allegory:

I

Man is King. They hung a robe upon him.  
of blue sky. His crown was molten. He rode  
across his kingdom of dust, which paid homage  
to him for a season, with jasmine, and lilies,  
and visions of water. They had painted his  
mysteries upon the rock, but, afraid of his  
presence, they had run away. So he accepted  
it. He continued to eat distance, and to raise  
up the sun in the morning, and the moon was his  
slave by night. Fevers turned him from Man  
into God.

II

I am looking at the map of my hand, on which  
the rivers rise to the North-east. I am looking  
at my heart, which is the centre. My blood will  
water the earth and make it green. Winds will  
carry legends of smoke; birds that have picked  
the eyes for visions will drop their secrets in  
the crevices of rock; and trees will spring up,  
to celebrate the godhead with their blue leaves.

III
Humility is my brigalow, that must I remember: here I shall find a thin shade in which to sit. As I grow weaker, so I shall become strong. As I shrivel, I shall recall with amazement the visions of love, of trampling horses, of drowning candles, of hungry emeralds. Only goodness is fed. Until the sun delivered me from my body, the wind fretted my wretched ribs, my skull was split open by the green lightning. Now that I am nothing, I am, and love is the simplest of all tongues.

IV
Then I am not God, but Man. I am God with a spear in his side. So they take me when the fires are lit, and the smell of smoke and ash rises above the smell of dust. The spears of failure are eating my liver, as the ant-men wait to perform their little rites. O God, my God, if suffering is measured on the soul, then I am damned for ever. Towards evening they tear off a leg, my sweet, disgusting flesh of marzipan. They knead my heart with skinny hands. O God, my God, let them make from it a vessel that endures. Flesh is for hacking, after it has stood the test of time. The poor, frayed flesh. They chase this kangaroo, and when they have cut off his pride, and gnawed his charred bones, they honour him in ochre on a wall. Where is his spirit? They say: It has gone out, it has gone away, it is everywhere. 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. (315-17).

The point is that these poems are written in prose. They function in the narrative of Voss in a similar way to those I have quoted from Owls Do Cry and Briefing for a Descent into Hell: but they are prose. It is evident that White conceives of prose
as a viable and dynamic poetic form. The statements he has made of his literary objectives have been nothing if not daring in their implications. In these statements his boldness is directly associated with a confidence in the aesthetic possibilities of the language of fiction: 'The realistic novel is remote from art. A novel should heighten life, should give an illuminating experience; it shouldn't set out what you know already'. This remark compares interestingly with Saul Bellow's response to the proposition that the novel must deal with social chaos and consequently the novelist cannot make use of 'certain forms appropriate to poetry or to music':

I think the novelist can avail himself of similar privileges. It's just that he can't act with the same purity or economy of means as the poet. He has to traverse a very muddy and noisy territory before he can arrive at a pure conclusion. He's more exposed to the details of life.

1. Interestingly enough, the prose of any of White's novels is, by comparison with his verse, far richer and more intense poetry. See Thirteen Poems, Fisher Library, University of Sydney, RB 1630.19, and The Ploughman and Other Poems, Sydney: Beacon, 1935. White does, of course, also incorporate verse into his novels, ranging from the burlesque, 'Hi Digger' intoned by Alf Dubbo in Khalil's brothel. (Riders in the Chariot, London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1961, 314-16) to the gnomic doggerel of Arthur Brown, in his 'blood myth' (The Solid Mandala, London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1966, 212). Nevertheless, the point made here stands.


Throughout his career as a novelist, White has consistently implemented the requirements of both his and Bellow's views, by writing prose which aspires to the revelatory condition of music and painting: he deliberately directs his writing towards that which cannot be fully rendered in words, as a painter or a composer does. Less than a painter and unlike a composer, however, the novelist is bound to proceed towards the unutterable through the circumstantial and recognizable and White's awareness of Bellow's 'muddy noisy territory' is patent. The relationship in White's work between form and content strongly suggests his acknowledgement of the necessity of traversing that territory. To read White's prose is to be constantly aware that he has enriched the significance of the superficial level of the narrative with a subtextual dramatization. It is evident that White's creative effort is directed towards the creation of an aesthetic object which exemplifies the integrated universe which he is concerned to reveal. For this reason, White suggests meaning implicitly rather than overtly and directly: and, because he does so, the importance of the function of imagery in White's prose can hardly be underestimated.

White's works are striking instances of what Virginia Woolf in 1927 foresaw as the novel 'which we shall scarcely know how to christen'. It was to be a novel, she wrote, that would transcend divisions of form, because it would be written in such

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a way that the poetic capacities of the novelist could be utilized:

It will be written in prose, but in prose that has many of the characteristics of poetry. It will have something of the exaltation of poetry, but much of the ordinariness of prose. It will be dramatic, and yet not a play. It will be read, not acted.¹

The looseness of Woolf's critical vocabulary here suggests that her thought, like that of those others whom I have quoted on this subject, is more rigid than it might appear to be at first sight. The idea conveyed by her term 'poetry' might more accurately be designated by 'verse' and her phrase 'the ordinariness of prose' accounts only for prose at the level of reportage. Nevertheless, one should not be distracted by this rigidity from the insight that Woolf shows in this essay. Indeed, for the purposes of the present discussion, her remarks are entirely useful and illuminating in that they describe the general terms of White's prose very well. White's imagery brings a submerged intensity to his narratives, 'the exaltation of poetry' to his language. In that the images in his prose function dynamically to enact meaning, however oblique the angle from which that meaning is to be observed by the reader, they are 'dramatic'.

Other writers have described White's novels in such a way as to suggest that they too would agree that these novels belong to Woolf's category. McAuley has designated works which would so belong as 'competing currents' against the 'mainstream of "bourgeois" naturalism' in the development of the novel.² He distinguishes the work of such writers as Melville, Dostoyevsky, Loti, Joyce and Lawrence from conventional novels, coining the term

¹. Granite and Rainbow, 18.
'meta-novel' to describe them. His brief summary of the characteristics of meta-novels is eminently applicable to White's novels:

Such works as I have mentioned use more or less of the naturalistic techniques of the novel, depending on their purpose. They are to be distinguished from the 'novel proper' - which may, as modern criticism so well knows, carry potentialities for schematic or symbolic or mythopoeic sub-intention within the firm framework of its primary novelistic virtues - by the fact that an impulse from outer space has seized upon the form and is distorting its normal growth.¹

Veronica Brady proposes a view of White's novels which clarifies what that 'schematic or symbolic or mythopoeic sub-intention' in his work might be:

White is writing a kind of wisdom literature, seeking to demonstrate the rule of powers beyond human comprehension and to lead the individual to worshipful submission to them. Where the traditional novel, the 'novel which raises no questions' as Butor has called it, seeks to endorse the power of social convention, White, following Simone Weil, tends to suspect all human artifice and to distrust all intentions that are socially conditioned, 'civilization' being all too often, in his view, a conspiracy to conceal the way things really are.²

A synthesis of these two views lies behind my arguments in this thesis: that White's technique is a palpable formulation of what he has to say; that the preoccupation with aesthetic

¹ 'The Gothic Splendours: Patrick White's Voss', 34-5. In this article, McAuley applies the term 'meta-novel' only to Voss and Riders in the Chariot. Its applicability to all of White's novels, especially to The Aunt's Story and The Eye of the Storm, however, is made clear enough in what he goes on to say about Voss. It is a novel, he argues, in which the 'customary procedures of novel writing' are 'subdued to an aim transcending naturalistic fiction, and where necessary the conventional code is broken arbitrarily and without discussion'. 'The Gothic Splendours', 35.

design which announces itself in the novels is completely in accord with White's prophetic stance; that White has long been writing the novel that 'we shall scarcely know how to christen'; and that a characteristic attribute of his attempt to do so is the pronounced significance of imagery in his novels.

*Images and Other Presentational Forms*

It is appropriate now to offer a workable definition of the term 'image': a task that becomes seemingly less possible with each new critical pronouncement on the nature and function of imagery. The concept of the image in literature may always be elusive, but at present it is at least possible to identify two characteristics of the image which most writers and readers would accept. The first of these is its evocation of responses in the reader which are akin to his or her sensuous responses to the material world. As many writers point out, such evocation may approximate not only visual responses, but the responses of all the senses. If this were the sole characteristic of an image, any apt description in literature might be considered to be one. Images have also a metaphoric capacity, however, derived from the context in which they occur. They have the power of disclosure by connotation, of meaning something beyond or other than the objects or sensations which they evoke; and this is the second characteristic inherent in my use of the term. An 'image', then, is an aesthetic structure in which objects or phenomena are presented metaphorically.
As a number of writers have argued, however, the denotative element of an image may also be non-physical. Ezra Pound's definition of an image, as 'that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time', suggests that notion. I.A. Richards' remarks on the subject postulate a similar rationale, with an emphasis on the reader's response to the image:

The sensory qualities of images, their vivacity, clearness, fullness of detail and so on, do not bear any constant relation to their effects. Images differing in these respects may have closely similar consequences. Too much importance has always been attached to the sensory qualities of images. What gives an image efficacy is less its vividness as an image than its character as a mental event peculiarly connected with sensation. It is, in a way which no one yet knows how to explain, a relict of sensation and our intellectual and emotional response to it depends far more upon its being, through this fact, a representative of a sensation, than upon its sensory resemblance to one. An image may lose almost all its sensory nature to the point of becoming scarcely an image at all, a mere skeleton, and yet represent a sensation quite as adequately as if it were flaring with hallucinatory vividity.

Moreover, as Northrop Frye has pointed out, the natural world is by no means intrinsically physical and this notion has significant implications for the denotative scope of images:

We are accustomed to associate the term 'nature' primarily with the external physical world, and hence we tend to think of an image as primarily a replica of a natural object. But of course both words are far more inclusive: nature takes in the conceptual or intelligible order as well as the spatial one, and what is usually called an 'idea' may be a poetic image also.

3. Anatomy of Criticism, 84.
Thus an image may also be the presentation of an event, a feeling, an idea, or an experience: but, whatever is presented as the vehicle of the image, it is 'peculiarly connected with sensation'; it is a discrete aesthetic structure; and it has a connotative function. According to the terms of this definition, images are the staple of presentative discourse, for they enlarge the area of meaning suggested by the presentation of the subject; they mediate between the material and the fictive worlds.

The same may be said of the symbol, a term by which I mean an image which brings to a text - to a poem, play or prose fiction - a pre-established or traditional connotation or significance. Thus unlike an image, which largely derives its metaphoric function from context, a symbol tends to bring meaning to its context from beyond the text. This is not to say that, within patterns of recurring images in a text, a recurring image will not enrich the contexts in which it appears subsequent to its introduction to the text; for indeed recurring images function in precisely that way. The general difference between an image and a symbol, as I use the terms in this thesis, is that the connotative element of the image is usually developed in terms of the text in which it occurs, while the symbol brings to the text a generally agreed-upon connotation by which its context takes on a further meaning.

When the agreed-upon connotation of a symbol is so thoroughly traditional within the culture which produces the work, when the feelings or ideas evoked by the symbol are culturally all-pervasive, I refer to that symbol as an archetype. The term derives, of course, from the work of C.G. Jung, whose hypothesis
concerning poetry's psychological significance is discussed and applied by Maud Bodkin. The description of Jung's hypothesis as to archetypes given by Bodkin is relevant here:

The special emotional significance possessed by certain poems - a significance going beyond any definite meaning conveyed - he attributes to the stirring in the reader's mind, within or beneath his conscious response, of unconscious forces which he terms 'primordial images', or archetypes. These archetypes he describes as 'psychic residua of numberless experiences of the same type', experiences which have happened not to the individual but to his ancestors, and of which the results are inherited in the structure of the brain, a priori determinants of individual experience.

Matters concerning 'the structure of the brain' are best left to the psychologist and, as I.A. Richards saw, to the neurologist. Nevertheless, it is self-evidently true that, as Bodkin goes on to show in Archetypal Patterns in Poetry, certain symbols are of enduring status within and amongst human cultures. When presented in literature, then, the archetype functions to bring a broadly-defined pre-accepted significance to the text in which it occurs.

On a lesser scale, images or other figurative devices, situations or ideas which recur frequently in literature, I refer to as 'motifs'. Another application of the term, more pertinent to the discussion in this thesis, can be made to the dominant images within the work of a particular writer. The motifs which


2. '... what matters is not the sensory resemblance of an image to the sensation which is its prototype, but some other relation, at present hidden from us in the jungles of neurology', Principles of Literary Criticism, 120.
a writer establishes during the course of his or her work provide
a concise indication of the nature of the world projected within
that work as a whole.

The final item in this survey of the technical usage adopted
throughout this thesis is the term 'leitmotif', by which I mean
an image which recurs frequently within particular works. The
functions of this type of imagery are many, perhaps limitless,
but in general the establishment of a series of leitmotifs within
a work of literature provides that work with a figurative structure.
In the case of a novel, the development of leitmotifs will engender
a coherence and a continuity which will inevitably relate to
characterization and narrative structure.

An image may therefore be an extremely complex aesthetic
structure, as C. Day Lewis recognized when he wrote that 'a whole
poem is, or may be, a total image'. That the same can be said
of a novel is clear, in view of the existence of Anna Kavan's
Ice, which arguably becomes an extended image of the antagonistic
polarities within the single psyche, revealed in terms of a
heroin-induced fantasy. Similarly, George Lamming's highly
figurative novel, Natives of My Person, can be viewed as a
complex image of the colonial and neo-colonial matrix.

Be that as it may, the sustained presence of imagery in
the work of any novelist adds a dimension to his or her prose
which raises it to the level of poetic language: which, as
Winifred Nowottny has shown, has as its 'great and amazing
peculiarity' the power 'to bridge the gap between what has meaning

but no particularity (that is, ordinary language) and what has particularity but no meaning (that is, the reality language is about)'\textsuperscript{1} Bridging the gap in White's novels is the systematic precision of his imagery, for his imagery is a mythopoeic response to the need to discover an aesthetic form which will more thoroughly reveal in his novels his deepest responses to the world.\textsuperscript{2} As such, the imagery of White's novels exemplifies W.K. Wimsatt's dictum, that the language of literature creates figures which 'present the things which language is otherwise occupied in designating'.\textsuperscript{3} Malcolm Bradbury's reference to poetic language - as 'a language of concrete instances transformed by the interplay of verbal resonances into something universal\textsuperscript{4}' - would, despite Bradbury's strictures, also readily apply to White's imagery.

Ursula Brumm has pointed out that 'meaning and image are not comparable in rational terms; the connection between them is metasensory'.\textsuperscript{5} It is necessary to bear in mind, therefore, that the analysis of the functions of imagery in a novel is really a description of the results of what White refers to as the 'oxywelding' stage of writing, the stage subsequent to the first,

\textsuperscript{1} The Language Poets Use, London: Athlone Press, 1965, 143. See also Language of Fiction, 63.
\textsuperscript{2} cf. Heseltine: 'White's style ... is in fact a direct function of his deepest response to life'. 'Patrick White's Style', 61.
\textsuperscript{3} The Verbal Icon, [Lexington]: University of Kentucky Press, 1954, 217. See also Language of Fiction, 63.
\textsuperscript{4} 'Towards a Poetics of Fiction', 46.
intuitively-inspired draft. An analysis of the content of a writer's imagery would be a different matter, for it would lead as it does in Spurgeon's work to an investigation of the quality of the writer's sensibility, or to other similar activities.\(^1\)

While investigations of this kind are intrinsically valuable and often interesting, I will not in this thesis be placing my principal emphasis on White either as a person or as a writer. My interest is in the texts which the person and the writer have produced, although obviously that interest must to some extent incorporate judgements about the position adopted by the author.

Such an emphasis does not preclude the possibility of viewing imagery as a form of language which conveys meaning at an intuitive level, however, for it does not necessarily bring with it the task of examining the intuition of the novelist himself. That the connection between meaning and image is metasensory is no reason to suppose that the meanings suggested by images cannot be perceived, 'plurisignative'\(^2\) though images may be. Indeed, in that intuition is a non-rational capacity to apprehend something immediately it has been perceived by the senses, the study of imagery as a language of the intuition is made entirely appropriate by virtue of the sensuously-orientated nature of images.

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2. The term is used by P. Wheelwright in his *Metaphor and Reality* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1962, 102) who considers the plurisignative and therefore unifying function of metaphor. I am indebted to Dr S.P. Walker of the Department of English, the University of New England, for bringing to my attention the work in which the term occurs.
In the form of his novels, White attempts to approximate his sense of the reality which he inhabits. Accordingly, in this thesis I propose to discuss those aspects of his imagery in which the approximation is attempted. In the course of my analysis, then, I shall be considering the structural function of patterns of recurrent imagery in the novels. I shall then discuss images which appear to me to be aesthetically central to those patterns and, of course, to other aspects of the novels in which they occur. Finally, the need to examine what is to be found at the core of White's reality naturally suggests itself as a logical extension of this analysis, for there the most profound thematic levels of the novels reside.

An Outline of the Functions of Imagery in Patrick White's Novels

Images, writes Susanne Langer, are 'our readiest instruments for abstracting concepts from the tumbling stream of actual impressions. They make our primitive abstractions for us, they are our spontaneous embodiments of general ideas'.\(^1\) While Langer's statement refers primarily to the images created within language in general, she does illustrate it by reference to the image of the rose and that of fire in a way which stresses the connotative levels that these images have developed. In that sense, Langer's conception of images is analogous to the nature of the image in aesthetic language. In the novels of Patrick White images

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certainly function as 'instruments for abstracting concepts from
the tumbling stream of actual impressions': they are, then,
the staple of his prose. They not only reveal with clarity
and immediacy the given moment, the selected object or the
precise feeling, but they also provide a metaphoric structure
in the coherence of such revelations.

The recurrence of images is probably the most frequently
employed poetic technique in prose fiction. It is one of those
practices by which authors furnish their work with what
E.M. Forster would refer to as 'rhythm', a concept neatly defined
by E.K. Brown as 'the combination of the repeated and the variable
with the repeated as the ruling factor'. Certainly in White's
novels, recurrent images provide figurative structures which
function significantly: which contribute, in fact, to the
establishment of the 'structure of reality' in his novels. The
close association between patterns of recurrent imagery and the
development of the various characters in White's novels is thus
congruent with the primacy of characterization in the novels.
Recurrent imagery is often an index to the characters' various
spiritual qualities or emotional states at given moments in the
novels, as a number of writers have shown. Along with
developments in the patterns of images, the characters are seen

2. Rhythm in the Novel, [Toronto]: University of Toronto Press,
   1950, 17-18.
3. See, for example, Heseltine, 'Patrick White's Style';
   S. Gzell, 'Themes and Imagery in Voss and Riders in the Chariot',
   Australian Literary Studies, 1 (1964), 180-95; and A.J. Lawson,
   'Patrick White. An Analysis of the Structural Use of Imagery in
   the Earlier Novels -- Together with a Comprehensive
in relation to each other, to setting, as well as to events in the plot.

The analysis in Chapter I of this thesis is concerned with the interaction of images, situations and characters in the novels, especially with the establishment of leitmotifs and their function. The development of leitmotifs in the recurrence of certain images provides White's novels with a continuity and coherence. Within the figurative structure of the novels, White gradually unfolds their fulness so that the reader participates in the discoveries made by the protagonists. That technique is observable in all of White's novels, but it is perhaps at its most impressive in *The Aunt's Story*, which is centred on the theme of self-discovery, the notion of the self's share in humanity at large. It is an important notion in White's fiction, developing from the realization in *Happy Valley*\(^1\) by Oliver Halliday, 'my life ... is also the life of all these people' (326), to Ellen Roxburgh's outcry in *A Fringe of Leaves*:\(^2\) 'It does concern me - why the good and the bad are in the same boat - and the difference between killing and murder. Until we know, we shan't have justice - only God's mutton for Sunday dinner - those of us who are lucky enough' (342). It is in a gradual opening of the self and the world that White's characters reach such understandings as these and the process by which they do so is rendered with considerable immediacy in the evolution of interrelated leitmotifs in the prose.

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The argument in Chapter II of this thesis is that the creation of patterns of recurrent imagery is not the only means whereby White establishes coherence within his novels. They may be organized 'in the manner of a lyric poem', as Dorothy Green described *Voss* in her admirable essay on that novel:¹ but, as novels, they also exemplify the meaning of Wellek and Warren's description of the novel as 'a structure of structures',² in that their episodic and figurative structures are closely intertwined. Images often function as central points of orientation within the total framework of the novel. Within episodes such central images determine the metaphoric character of the episode and between episodes a continuity and coherence is established by the interaction of a number of such images. Their scale of reference may be limited to the episodes in which they occur, then, and at that level the episode may embody a minor thematic configuration. At its extreme, however, this technique may result in the creation of episodes which are themselves large images. Obviously, images of this kind are of primary thematic significance, which is nowhere so clearly seen as in *The Solid Mandala*, in the episode of Arthur's mandalic dance wherein the novel's themes are distilled in symbolic microcosm.

Related to that process, but functioning on a scale which comprehends the entire novel, single images or a coalescence of

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images may form the poetic centre of the novel, and it is this matter with which Chapter III of this thesis is concerned.

More than either of the two structural principles introduced above, this notion must be approached with caution to avoid the fallacy of imposing a schematic rigidity on the aesthetic structure of the novels. Yet there are a number of ways in which the poetic centrality of a novel reveals itself, whether in terms of such a recurring image as that of the tree in *The Tree of Man*, or in those of a single central image. Moreover, the presence of a central image may itself vitiate the aesthetic authenticity of the novel, for as W.Y. Tindall has pointed out:

> The trouble with the symbol as communicator is that, although definite in being the semblance of an articulated object, it is indefinite in what it presents. In the first place the symbol is an analogy for something undefined and in the second our apprehension of the analogy is commonly incomplete. Moreover, the terms of the analogy are confused. Since one is embodied in the other, our search for a meaning apart from the embodiment must return to it and we are left with a form, at once definite and indefinite, and significant perhaps only by seeming so.¹

In his presentation of the central image of the Chariot in *Riders in the Chariot*, White's problem is that the archetypal chariot is ultimately aloof from the fiction, and a confusion of the kind of which Tindall writes is the result. Nevertheless in the specificity evoked within the range of images associated with the Chariot, White clarifies the centrality in this novel of the notion of the world as embodying transcendence which may be perceived through the senses. The most successful instance

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of the central image appears in *The Eye of the Storm*, which embodies a vast, elaborate image of the major character, and it is with a discussion of this novel that I conclude my discussion of the structural function of White's imagery.

In Chapter IV of this thesis, I examine the implications of White's intention to 'get close to the core of reality', discussing the three predominant motifs of his novels as a whole: the image of the human body, the image of the material world and the imagery associated with human understanding of the condition of being in the world. In the image of the human body, White focuses on the tension between the physical and the spiritual dimensions of experience, but the relationship between the two is as complicated as it is richly presented. White's rendition of the material world inhabited by his characters is directly associated with his theme of self-awareness and the concept of immanent transcendence which has attained major proportions in his fiction. White assumes the two tasks of rendering that concept and dramatizing his characters' perception and understanding of it. His attention is therefore directed towards his characters' deepest being and towards the metaphysical significance with which he invests the material world. Symptomatic of that concern, his prose takes on the distorting function usually associated with surrealistic presentation. There are many ways by which his characters reach fulfilment, but whatever the path taken its ultimate goal is what Sylvia Gzell refers to as 'the sense of completion through belonging to some larger sphere than the self'.

In the imagery of music, White presents the intuitive

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1. 'Themes and Imagery in *Voss* and *Riders in the Chariot*', 186.
relation between the self and the larger sphere; in that of painting, he figures the objectification of that relation; and in that of the dance he dramatizes the enactment of it.

The subjects with which White deals and the level at which he presents them, require a poetic mode of presentation. As a novelist concerned with the task of coming close to 'the core of reality, the structure of reality', he attempts to approximate in his works, a conviction that revelation resides in the object itself and not in something external to it. In that sense, White's works can be seen as most convincing attempts to chart paths from the superficial to the real.
I

PATTERNS OF IMAGES
Patrick White's statement that in his novels he attempts to reveal the structure of reality has a particularly evident importance for the study of the structure of the novels themselves. Their aesthetic integrity derives from a consistently significant relationship between imagery and the incidents presented; imagery and characterization; and imagery and thematic development. Far from being decorative aggregation, White's images constitute 'the very linchpin of what he has to say', as H.P. Heseltine has pointed out.¹

White offers a pertinent insight into the relationship between imagery and the other elements of his fiction in the observation that he makes in *Riders in the Chariot*,² that 'images and incidents do not depend on probability for life' (333). The 'probability' of which White speaks here is defined, as its context in the novel indicates, according to the superficial views of the world against which so much of his writing is directed. Like Norbert Hare's extravagant home, Xanadu, to which the words in this quotation refer, however, White's novels are founded on the desire to give shape to a profound significance which their creator senses in the world.

**The Interaction of Images, Situations and Characters**

In White's novels images and incidents interact within the terms of the experience of his characters, a process to which White refers as 'the juxtaposition of images and situations and the emotional

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¹. 'Patrick White's Style', *Quadrant*, 7, 3 (1963), 61-74; 74.  
exchanges of human beings', in terms of which he establishes a higher order of probability in the poetic form of his novels. White's fiction abounds with examples of this aspect of his aesthetic methodology, especially in respect of the practical need he faces of revealing the more profound significance that he sees at the heart of all human experience.

In *The Tree of Man,* for instance, the lives of several strangers intersect briefly with those of Stan and Amy Parker, all of them in some way reminding the Parkers of a mystery in their daily experience of the world which is not altogether explained. All of these strangers leave behind them a token of their presence, the piece of crimson glass left by the lost boy being one of these tokens. The image of the coloured glass is presented as one of the many means in the novel of viewing afresh the world of substances: in this case, literally. When Amy looks through the glass in the boy's company the room is 'drenched with crimson, and the coals of the fire were a disintegrating gold' (94). After the boy's silent departure, Amy is frustrated that she cannot explain to Stan her feeling that 'a moment comes when you yourself must produce some tangible evidence of the mystery of life' (97). Mystery and poetry are, then, brought together in terms of the association between the image of the piece of glass and the moment in the kitchen shared by Amy and the boy. At the end of the novel, after Stan's death, the image recurs as Parkers' grandson wanders through the bush planning a 'poem of life' (499) as he peers 'through the glass at the crimson mystery of the

world' (498). The image of the piece of glass therefore plays a significant, if small, part as a catalyst in the process by which the characters' experiences are evaluated in *The Tree of Man*.

On a larger scale, the image in *The Eye of the Storm*\(^1\) of Odilon Redon's engraving, *Sciapode*,\(^2\) also acts as a poetic catalyst, the various allusions to the engraving creating an image of certain aspects of the character of Elizabeth Hunter, the novel's central figure. Neither wholly material nor wholly spiritual in nature, the skiapod bears intimations of her own being for Elizabeth Hunter. In it she sees 'not her own actual face, but the spiritual semblance which will sometimes float out of the looking-glass of the unconscious' (200). The ambiguity of the skiapod also suggests the sense of mystery about what is at the core of her own experience:

Unlike most of the other monsters in the book, this half-fish half-woman appeared neither allied to, nor threatened by, death: too illusive in weaving through deep waters, her expression a practically effaced mystery; or was it one of dishonesty, of cunning? (200).

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2. White's use of his sources here is of incidental interest because it sheds some light on the relationship between his own work and the other arts to which he constantly refers, both within and outside his fiction. In the case of the Redon engraving, it is fairly clear that what is described in *The Eye of the Storm* is a combination of several of Redon's works. The 19 x 14 cm etching entitled *Sciapode* (1892: see *Odilon Redon*, dd. C. Keay, London: Academy Editions, 1977, 78) is very similar to that described by Elizabeth Hunter to Pehl. There is, however, a greater correspondence between her own reflection on the skiapod when she first discovers it, and two other Redon works. In *Monstre fantastique*, a 48 x 34 cm charcoal (c. 1880-8. See Keay, p.2), the artist creates a figure whose face, in being encircled and partly obscured by its curling, eel-like body, and by the shadow of one part of its body, indeed remains 'a practically effaced mystery'. Similarly, but more markedly, the 64 x 49 cm oil-on-canvas work, *Oannes* (c. 1910. See Keay, 17), shows several such figures suspended in a submarine-like setting which seems to prevent a clarity of their own vision as well as a certainty of interpretation in the viewer of the work.
The strangeness of Redon's mythical creature precisely fixes the enigmatic character of Elizabeth Hunter. Moreover, the self-awareness of this character, which is of fundamental importance to the thematic development of the novel, is made very clear in her description of the Redon engraving. The picture, she says, shows:

a kind of shadowy fish, but with a woman's face. The face was not shadowy. Or some of it at least was painfully distinct. I saw it years ago in a drawing, and it stayed with me. You couldn't say the expression looked deceitful, or if it was, you had to forgive, because it was in search of something it would probably never find. (404).

This evaluation of the meaning of the figure of the skiapod is obviously also self-evaluation and thus the interaction between the image and Elizabeth Hunter's response to it becomes a penetrating means of characterization.

Images often illuminate the terms in which the characters in White's novels develop. In The Aunt's Story¹ there are many instances of this technique, among them the opposition presented in the interaction between the image of the house at Meroë and that of the nautilus shell which Mrs Rapallo brings to the Hôtel du Midi. The house at Meroë is an image of the assurance of permanence which Theodora Goodman as a child finds in the palpable world:

It was flat as a biscuit or a child's construction of blocks, and it had a kind of flat biscuit colour that stared surprised out of the landscape down at the road. It was an honest house, because it had been put up at a time when the object of building was to make a house a roof with walls, and the predominant quality in those who made it was honesty of purpose. (14).

Experience teaches Theodora to be disillusioned in her faith in the certainties of her childhood, with the result that she moves increasingly deeply into a state of detachment from the world: aspiring, even, to a state of total dispossession which she conceives of as 'nothing more than air or water' (151).

The image of the nautilus shell objectifies the attractiveness of this state of being for Theodora, who envisages it as a condition of rare beauty, in which will be satisfied the nostalgic yearnings she feels for the transient peace of her childhood. When it is introduced into the narrative the nautilus is seen as the 'most marvellous' aspect of Mrs Rapallo's exuberant eccentric appearance, as it floats 'in its own opalescent light' (182). Mrs Rapallo's remarks on the nautilus then emphasize the suggestions of airy liberation, bordering on a sense of spiritual release, which emerge from White's presentation of this image:

It is quite elegant. It can't help but float. And that is an advantage. There is so much that is hateful. There is so much that is heavy. (183).

Katina Pavlou, with whom Theodora so strongly identifies her own youth, then becomes a fantasy surrogate for Theodora as she holds the nautilus, fascinated by its beauty:

The girl took in her hands the frail shell. She listened to the thick-throated pines fill the room, their clear, blue-green water, rising and falling. The music of the nautilus was in her face, Theodora saw, behind the thin membrane that just separates experience from intuition. (183).

1. Katina is one of the characters with whom Theodora shares what J.F. Burrows calls a 'fugue-life': the process by which, in fantasy, she faces 'her own problems in the subtly altered perspectives that these other lives afford'. "Jardin Exotique:" The Central Phase of "The Aunt's Story", *Southerly*, 26 (1966), 152-73; 156.
In Katina's rapture, Theodora perceives bitter-sweet echoes of her own youth, especially of her relationship with her father. She hears whispers of 'the perpetual odyssey on which George Goodman was embarked, on which the purple water swelled beneath the keel, rising and falling like the wind in pines on the blue shore of Ithaca' (71). Having come to perceive her own Ithaca as a reduction of self, Theodora is eventually as obsessed as Sokolnikov and Mrs Rapallo by the dispensation of lightness which the nautilus offers. With them, Theodora desires 'to hold the nautilus, to hold, if it is ever possible, to hold' (251).

The possibility of taking a permanent hold on the opalescent beauty of the nautilus shell is, however, as much an illusion as the permanence which Theodora has once imagined to exist in the 'peaceful mystery' of her possession of Meroë (19). Just as Meroë has crumbled, Theodora sees, so 'the nautilus is made to break' (254). When it does break and Theodora feels 'considerably reduced' (256) by the event, her sense of loss is an echo of the traumatic events of her father's death and the consequent loss of Meroë. The description of Theodora's reaction to these events makes this connection quite clear, especially her feeling that 'Meroë has crumbled' (95).

The image of the nautilus shell, then, by its association with Theodora's desire for translation into a state of pure being, the extinction of self, suggests the nature and origin of the malaise which she eventually overcomes through her experiences in the Hôtel du Midi. In the final stage of the novel, she accepts her unique selfhood and the many-sided reality of others. Theodora resolves
in that way the conflict between her childhood vision of the world's unchanging quality and the escapist desire to achieve complete detachment from everything beyond the boundaries of her private world. In White's presentation of the image of the house at Meroë and the nautilus shell, both sides of that conflict have been illuminated. More generally speaking, the function of these two images exemplifies the manner in which imagery delineates the psychological developments within White's characters and, by extension, the thematic level of the novels in which they have their being.

A more complex function of White's imagery is evident in Voss, in which imagery clarifies the novel's metaphysical parameters. There are many contrasts between the characters in this novel, but none more fundamental to the development of White's metaphysical concerns as that contained in the relationship between Voss and Laura. In the debate between humanity's earthbound condition and the human aspiration to divinity, however, the extreme positions are occupied by Judd and Voss. The visionary megalomaniac with pretensions to infinitude is in constant opposition to the scarred and solidly physical ex-convict who has considerable, though ultimately limited, powers of endurance. A complex of images is associated with each of these characters: with Judd, some of these images are of gnarled strength, of simple or even crude but functional objects, and of suffering; with Voss, the crown, the throne, fire,

rock and, occasionally though significantly, Christ's passion with
its eucharistic connotations. Among these images, a contrast
between two that have not been mentioned in this brief summary is
of present interest, in that it identifies the predominant terms
of the antagonism between Voss and Judd. On this antagonism are
founded a number of the questions posed by the novel on the issue
of humanity's position in relation to God.

The first of the two images is introduced in an early passage
of narrative which describes one of Voss's dreams. It is an
objectification of Voss's pretensions:

It was not possible really, that anyone could damage
the Idea, however much they scratched at it. Some
vomited words. Some coughed up their dry souls in
rebounding pea-pellets. To no earthly avail. Out
of that sand, through which his own feet, with
reverence for velvet, had begun to pay homage,
rose the Idea, its granite monolith untouched. (48).

Voss's 'Idea', a conviction that he will demonstrate his own
divinity, is the inspiration of his expedition. As such, it may or
may not be admirable: but White shows that, despite the heroic
proportions of Voss's 'Idea', it is assuredly ludicrous. He
immediately qualifies this passage, for instance, with the irony of
Voss's attempts, in sleep, 'to free his body from the sweat with which
it had been fastened' (48). The pretender to the Throne is bound in
mortality by the body which he so constantly seeks to deny, in ways
both great and small.

1. Still others are observed by H.P. Heseltine in 'Patrick White's
Style' and by S. Gzell in 'Themes and Imagery in Voss and
Riders in the Chariot', Australian Literary Studies, 1 (1964),
180-195.
That devaluation of the 'granite monolith' of Voss's 'Idea' is then accentuated in the paragraph which follows, complete with a series of contrasting images of the very mundane, but necessary, supplies and instruments with which the expedition is to be provided:

He decided on the pack-saddles of Mr O'Halloran. He negotiated with a Mr Pierce for an eight-inch sextant, prismatic compasses, barometers, thermometers, and sundry other instruments. Enough flour for two years was to be delivered direct to the vessel from Barden's mill. (49).

It is Judd who assumes the role of the expedition's quartermaster and under whose control fall these instruments of guidance and sources of physical sustenance. He is a figure of unrequited aspiration, with his telescope which will enable him to see just so far but which is too weak to permit him to study the stars (160). The limited success which Judd experiences in such attempts to extend his understanding as his experiments in astronomy, leads him to a sense both of frustration at his failure and of reverence for the instruments which remind him of it. Handling them, Judd experiences both senses:

Now as he worked, he experienced a sense of true pride, out of respect for what he was handling, for those objects, in iron, wood, or glass did greatly influence the course of earthly life. He could love a good axe or knife, and would oil and sharpen it with tender care. As for the instruments of navigation, the mysticism of figures from which they were inseparable made him yet more worshipful. Pointing to somewhere always just beyond his reach, the lovely quivering of rapt needles was more delicate than that of ferns.

All that was essential, most secret, was contained for Judd, like his own spring-water, in a nest of ferns. (194).

Clearly the change of context has brought about a change in the tenor of the image of the instruments here. They are now associated not with the limitations of the mundane on Voss's 'Idea' but with
the gulf which separates Judd from Voss. Judd's 'practical resourcefulness and physical strength' (160) fit him well for the expedition, but only to the extent that is declared at the point of his mutiny. Judd rebels for the understandable reason that:

his own fat paddocks, not the deserts of mysticism, nor the transfiguration of Christ, are the fate of common man, he was yearning for the big breasts of his wife, that would smell of fresh-baked bread even after she had taken off her shift. (367-68).

For his return, Judd avows that he no longer needs a compass (369). The two parties go their separate ways and, among the deserters, Judd is a mid-point between the yahoo-like Turner and the land-owner Angus, whose opinion that 'there is land enough along the coast for anyone to stake a reasonable claim' (370) places him among those who 'huddle' on the edges of a country 'of great subtlety' (13). They ride away from Voss's reduced party: Voss himself, the possessor of the country 'by right of vision' (32); Le Mesurier, the poet obsessed by the triumph of failure (289); Harry, the simpleton whose 'once empty face' is 'filled with... distances' (193); and Jackiewho becomes 'the shifting and troubled mind' of 'the great country through which he travelled constantly' (448) after murdering Voss. Judd's final movement, then, is away from the metaphysical terrors and splendours of Voss's 'Idea', back to the fastnesses of his own earthbound existence.

Nevertheless, Judd does bring back with him an understanding of Voss's apotheosis, which he expresses to Laura and Colonel Hebden. His confusion of Voss with Palfreyman (472-73), as well as demonstrating Judd's continued limitations, also paradoxically reveals his understanding:
'Voss? No. He was never God, though he liked to think that he was. Sometimes, when he forgot, he was a man.'

He hesitated, and fumbled.

'He was more than a man,' Judd continued, with the gratified air of one who had found that for which he had been looking. 'He was a Christian, such as I understand it.' (472).

As well as revealing his earthbound nature, Judd's remarks therefore express the understanding that has been reached earlier in the novel, by Laura, of 'the true meaning of Christ' (395) and of 'the three stages' of the Incarnation (411). Judd is, then, well qualified to say of Voss that 'he is there in the country, and always will be' (472); and thus retrospectively to bring a finally positive connotation to the image of Voss's 'Idea' as a 'granite monolith' set in both sand and velvet, for the 'Idea' itself is no longer 'untouched' (48). It has been explicated by Judd, the keeper of the instruments of navigation.

A consideration of the imagery associated with both of these characters, insofar as it illuminates their relationship, therefore clarifies their somewhat enigmatic metaphysical significance. Judd, the 'common man' of the novel, is critically important in the development of the thematic notion that, as Laura says, 'human truths are also divine' (395). Although that notion derives principally from the progress made by Voss and Laura, the allegorical significance of Voss's journey would be less richly intelligible without the supportive presence and, significantly, the eventual absence of Judd.

It is therefore clear enough, even from the few instances I have offered in this brief survey, that the function of imagery in White's novels needs to be taken carefully into account. Images, situations
and characters interact to provide the richly-wrought whole with both a precision and a coherence. Indeed the poetic fibre of exposition and development in the novels is constituted of a series of interacting cognate or disparate images, of a series of leitmotifs: as analysis of White's procedure in establishing the leitmotifs in his prose, will indicate.

The Establishment of Leitmotifs and their Function

The major themes of all of White's novels are developed in terms of imagery which is associated with both incident and characterization; especially in terms of a complex of images which constitute a pattern of meaning. Even in the first of the novels to be published, Happy Valley, where White's technique is still in its experimental stage, imagery functions actively alongside the passages of interior monologue and the patterning procedures which White institutes in characterization. The action of the novel is directed, although not altogether successfully towards a demonstration of the theme

2. Comparisons and contrasts are obviously invited between Hilda Halliday and Vic Moriarty; between Oliver Halliday and Clem Hagan; between Sidney Furlow, Hilda Halliday and Alys Browne; between Amy Quong and Alys Browne and so on. The characters are thus ranged in the context of the thematic concern with the nature of suffering.
3. In this respect, I agree with the comments of a number of other writers on Happy Valley, in that I would say that White succeeds more fully in demonstrating the inevitability of suffering than in revealing its function as 'the one indispensable condition of our being'. See, for instance, Marjorie Barnard's remark that in Happy Valley the 'story itself is lucid; but it is in its handling that the writer appears at war with himself' ('The Four Novels of Patrick White', Meanjin, 15, 1956, 156-70; 158). R.F. Brissenden expresses a like reservation about the novel: 'It is obviously the novelist's intention that the reader should feel that Halliday, if not the other characters in the novel, have learned something from the suffering they have gone through. But the total impression of the novel is that the anguish of living which some people have to endure is futile and meaningless'. ('Patrick White', Meanjin, 18, 1959, 410-25; 416).
expressed in the novel's epigraph:

It is impossible to do away with the law of suffering, which is the one indispensable condition of our being. Progress is to be measured by the amount of suffering undergone ... the purer the suffering, the greater is the progress. (6).

The purity of the suffering undergone by the characters in this novel is gauged by its intensity, which ranges in degree from the ennui of Sidney Furlow to the traumatic collapse of the relationship between Oliver Halliday and Alys Browne: and ultimately to the fatal climax of the Moriarty plot. Intensity and thus purity of suffering is increased according to the degree to which it seems to the sufferer to be meaningless. The more intense the suffering undergone, the less meaning can be derived from it in Happy Valley. Just as Australia is seen by the ethnocentric Roger Kemble as 'the land of plagues' (146), so Oliver Halliday sees Happy Valley as 'unreal, removing itself into a world of allegory, of which the dominating motif was pain' (77).

The allegorical level of the novel is initiated in its early stages in two images. One of them, 'the township of Happy Valley with its slow festering sore of painfully little intrigue' (18), is a stylistic anticipation of the bleak fortunes of the characters. Later, the tenor of this image is amplified as a correspondence between the novel's setting and the lives of its characters, which is articulated by Oliver Halliday as he prepares to minister to the asthmatic Ernest Moriarty: 'here was Moriarty, or Happy Valley, or the embodiment of pain, or Happy Valley instilling pain into the passive object that was Moriarty lying in his bed' (122). It is not
simply that White's characters are made to suffer, but that in the
world of this novel it is idle to expect an alternative, for Happy
Valley is presented as an objective correlative of suffering:

In summer when the slopes were a scurfy yellow and
the body of the earth was very hot, lying there
stretched out, the town, with its cottages of red
and brown weatherboard, reminded you of an ugly
scab somewhere on the body of the earth. (28).

Moreover, the condition of Happy Valley is also seen in this novel
as the condition of the world, a notion which is also given to
Oliver Halliday to express: 'it is anywhere, not Happy Valley, it
is anywhere' (324).

The other image that foreshadows the terms under which the
characters of this novel are made to experience life is the image
of the hawk, 'listless against the moving cloud, magnetized no doubt
by some intention still to be revealed' (9). The image evokes a
sense of uncertainty when first presented: it has, the narrator
says, 'none but a vaguely geographical significance' (9). When the
image next appears, Oliver Halliday considers the hawk as an 'agent'
of suffering 'absorbed ... into the whole of the frozen landscape,
into the mountains that emanated in their silence a dull, frozen
pain while remaining exempt from it' (18). The hawk's remoteness
exemplifies for Oliver his conception of 'a kind of universal cleavage
between these, the agents, and their objects' (18). Not only is
suffering seen as inevitable in this novel, but also as inflicted
by the unfeeling agents, whether human or not, of some unknowable
principle of pain. The sufferer's pain is increased by his or her
inability to come to grips with this principle through its agents.
Oliver Halliday and Clem Hagan observe the hawk from their different locations. Each considers that he would shoot the hawk were he armed. That neither of them has a rifle encourages the impression that the hawk is to be seen as unreachable: an impression confirmed by Oliver's idea that, even if he did shoot it, the hawk would experience 'no pain before annihilation' (18). As an agent of pain it is 'absolved' from pain (18): the agents of pain may be destroyed, but not affected by retaliation. This conception lies within the many instances of suffering to be presented in Happy Valley: Rodney Halliday's persecution by his classmates, the racism suffered by Margaret Quong, the unjust and violent punishment she receives from Ernest Moriarty, the collapse of the affair between Oliver Halliday and Alys Browne, Hilda Halliday's anxiety and ill-health and the frustrations which eventually become the calamity of Vic and Ernest Moriarty. The link between the image and these later developments is tenuous, but it does foreshadow the importance of the relationship between images and events in White's later novels.

As the images of the hawk and the town in Happy Valley, constituting a leitmotif of detachment and suffering, indicate the terms within which the significance of the novel's action is to be evaluated, so the antithetical states of being proposed in The Living and the Dead are clarified in terms of the novel's imagery. The novel encompasses White's first major study of the need to engage fully with experience despite the possible risks such a course involves. The few characters in the novel to recognize this need

are seen as the living; while the others, who avoid committing
themselves to positive engagement with experience, are counted among
the novel's dead. Their state of spiritual death is somewhat akin
to the limbo existence of Eliot's 'hollow men'.

Where White is concerned in *Happy Valley* to reveal the
inevitability of suffering and its constructive function, in *The
Living and the Dead* he accepts these notions as established. Thus
the characters group themselves together according to the degree to
which they either shrink from or accept the suffering consequent
upon any engagement in experience. The quality of sensibility of
the various characters is made clear when the images presented in
the novel are considered as integral to the interaction of character
and situation. The point can be illustrated with reference to two
of the images which constitute the novel's leitmotif of suffering
and mortality.

The first of these images, the body of the drunk who has been
knocked down by a bus, has about it both a nonsensical and a
pathetic quality. The drunk meanders into the path of the bus
'not so much man as the clown upon his tightrope, a flapping of
empty sleeve and hollow leg' (14). Immediately after the accident
the drunk's misfortune is concentrated in 'the thin trickle of blood
from the corner of a mouth' (14-15). Elyot Standish, having made
an unspoken contact with the drunk, just before the accident, in a
'second of connexion on the kerb that broke too easily', considers
that he has 'failed, in one of those moments of arrested initiative',
to rescue him (15). Unable to 'seize on the significance of this
incident' (15), Elyot attempts to 'retrieve himself from an avenue of too obtrusive images' (15). Here, then, commitment to experience is seen to be both difficult and emotionally risky. To seize on the significance that is graphically imaged in the drunk's body, of which the 'lips ... blew in and out', flecked by blood that bears 'a glitter of whitish froth' (15), is an admission of the human vulnerability from which Elyot is generally insulated by his scholarly habits.

Elyot, suspended precariously between his inert solitude and the sense he has of the 'nervous but convinced contribution towards the business of living' (20), which is made in the lives of others, is presented in contrast with Joe Barnett. As Eden Standish realizes, Joe believes in the living 'as opposed to the dead' (255) and is able to act in accordance with that belief. Elyot and Joe are not contrasted in terms of that belief, which they share. Rather they differ according to their ability to act on it: Joe can do so, where Elyot cannot. A measure of their difference is offered in the reaction of each of them to experiences which are fundamentally similar in significance: and those experiences are illuminated in the images on which they are focused. Elyot's initial evasion and subsequent contemplation of the body of the drunk, revealing both his timidity and his sensitivity, is echoed in contrast with Joe's reaction to the carcass of the terrier bitch.

The image of the dead dog is presented rather more graphically than that of the body of the drunk, but the two have much in common. The image of the dead dog horribly exemplifies the suffering inherent in mortality: 'The guts hung out through the belly fur. The nose was wrinkled in a last shudder of pain' (256). Like the trickle of
blood from the mouth of the drunk, the dog's 'festoon of helpless guts' has been 'torn out like the last existing privacy' (257).

Where Elyot's first impulse is to reject his memory of the face of the drunk, 'its lips blowing outward on unshaped words, trying to resist the shapelessness' (20) of experience in urgent silent communication, however, Joe is compelled to action by his outrage at the significance of what he sees:

The dog disgusted him, but he had to look, as if it had a bearing on himself, the sickness in his own stomach. He made himself look. But he spat on the ground. His mother went to chapel. She expected death. To lie on the ground with your guts hanging out. Man was born to this, no other dignity, announced the map of Spain, or the voice of his mother retailing a laying out. But there was a dignity he was jealous of, his own body, his privacy of thought. This was what made him tremble when he read of the killings in Spain or saw the body of the dead dog. (257).

Joe's decision to fight in the Spanish Civil War, because it is an abandonment of the 'certainty' (270) of his own life and especially of his relationship with Eden, is one of the novel's illustrations of 'the ultimate separateness of soul' (136). Because it is an acceptance of responsibility (255), however, it is seen in the novel's terms as a positive commitment to living, of the kind which Elyot also comes to understand in association with the events in Spain, when he sees that he must:

recognize the pulse beyond the membrane, the sick heartbeat, or the gangrenous growth ... even at the risk of sacrificing awareness, and the other moments, the drunken, disorderly passions of existence, that created but at the same time consumed. (286-87).

Elyot's development is a progress away from the world of such characters as those grouped around Adelaide Blenkinsop, who speaks
'with the mouth of death' to seduce him into a state in which he is 'smothered in a plush complacency' (286). He moves in the difficult but more authentic direction of Joe Barnett's positive conviction, feeling that he must 'recognize the sickness and accept the ecstasy' (287). The images of the body of the drunk and the dead dog are thus intimately involved in the process by which the thematic connection between Elyot and Joe is established. They therefore also uphold the validity of Elyot's reflection about himself: that, although alone, he is 'yet not alone, uniting as he did the themes of so many other lives' (20; 333).

The contrary states of spiritual life and death are of crucial significance, too, in The Solid Mandala, where they are also figured in White's imagery. White's creative maturity is evident in this novel, in that his vision of the differences between the two states is more accessible to the reader, because it is more fully developed than it is in The Living and the Dead. In the early novel, White presents an incomplete comparison of the two states, for the images related to spiritual death predominate and the values and experiences endorsed by the author are not fully clarified. The opposed states of spiritual life and death are clearly enough embodied in the experience of Joe and Elyot, but most of White's attention is directed towards Elyot's life. An imbalance thus results, which is only partially corrected by the presence of Eden in the novel.

By comparison, the values invested in the characters of Waldo and Arthur are ranged against each other as explicitly as they are in Joe and Elyot, or in Eden and Mrs Standish, or in the unfortunate Connie Tiarks and the cynical Muriel Raphael: yet the opposition between Waldo and Arthur is informed by an equality of strength which is lacking in the two sides of the same opposition in *The Living and the Dead*. For all that, it would be a mistake to see Arthur and Waldo merely as mutually alienated extremes, for, as Manfred Mackenzie has shown, where there is a significant interaction between the two, in which each of them to some extent shares characteristics of the other. The relationship between Waldo and Arthur is discussed later in this thesis. The relevant issue at present is the function of images in establishing leitmotifs within the novels, giving aesthetic life to their themes and thus illuminating them.

In *The Solid Mandala* the most significant image in this respect is that of the mandala itself, especially in its association with Arthur's striving to discover 'a pattern of order' to superimpose on the psychic chaos in which the characters find themselves (238). Arthur, as 'the keeper of mandalas', who must guess 'their final secret through touch and light' (240), needs to understand the concept of 'totality' which he has discovered in the definition of the mandala in Mr Musto's encyclopedia (238). Only by gaining such understanding can he establish a meaning in his life and the lives of others.

Arthur's search for the meaning of totality leads him to perceive a metaphysical union of all things: to establish, in fact, that

2. See chapter 2 of this thesis.
'the world is another mandala' (245). The Solid Mandala has both the simplicity and the profundity of a parable and, within it, White's means of poetically suggesting his major metaphysical concern is simple enough, but most effective. The definition of the mandala having been invoked, he merely presents repeatedly a mandalic image in association with certain episodes and characters: and this series of presentations constitutes the whole. Arthur's visit to Leonard Saporta, for instance, is preceded by a passage of explication: narrative:

In Arthur's life there were the convinced, the unalterable ones, such as Mr Allwright and Leonard Saporta, as opposed to those other fluctuating figures, of Dulcie, Waldo, his parents, even Mrs Poulter, all of whom flickered as frightfully as himself. Whereas Mr Allwright and Leonard Saporta must have kept the solid shape they were moulded in originally. Arthur was grateful for knowing they would never divide, like the others, in front of his eyes, into the two faces, one of which he might not have recognized if it hadn't been his own. (249).

During the visit, Arthur's discovery of the mandalic pattern in one of Saporta's rugs relates to the harmonious totality of the novel's positives, Saporta's 'gentleness and honesty' (250). Especially important is his religious faith, which is associated with the Star of David, the other mandala to be presented in the episode.

The Star of David is specifically associated with the 'enclosed' (251) family life of the Saporta's which is later shown to be the centre of the mandala of their existence, when Arthur visits their home and peers into the house from the outside. The fence, the lawn, the 'outer wall of shrubs' and the 'cement shell' of their house are the outer regions of the Saporta family's mandala and they are
envisaged at its centre (309-10). Thus the image brings a structural continuity to the novel as well as illuminating the value invested in characters and circumstances within it.

A most significant mandalic image is that of Arthur's marbles, to which the title of the novel refers and which is intimately associated with Arthur's attempts to achieve community among the 'fluctuating figures' in his life. Waldo rejects the marble offered to him by Arthur and the marble is subsequently lost: a poetic reinforcement of Waldo's eventual damnation. Both Dulcie and Mrs Poulter accept the gift of the mandala when Arthur offers it, and both are conscious of his positive influence. The notion of the gift of the mandalic marbles is most fully developed in White's presentation of the relationship between Arthur and Mrs Poulter. From the time of her acceptance of Arthur's gift of the marble, immediately after his mandalic dance (267), Mrs Poulter keeps her 'steady unblinking marble, or boy's toy' (313) until their final reconciliation, for:

> in the course of years, and really it had all been a piece of nonsense, something pagan she dared say, she would never of let on to the minister, she had put it away, and forgot where, and not really regretted till now. When Arthur was bringing out his. (313).

Here, as elsewhere in the novel, Mrs Poulter is presented on two levels. She is the workaday figure seen in the company of Mrs Dun at the beginning of the novel, on her way towards 'muckin' around the big shops' (11). She is also the sensitive initiate who sees

1. For an extended discussion of Arthur's dance, see chapter 2 of this thesis.
that, though her marble and Arthur's 'might have paired' (313), could she find her own, the actual loss is insignificant. She and Arthur are 'reflected in each other's eyes' and also united 'at the centre of that glass eye' of Arthur's marble (313). It is in this knowledge that she can co-exist both as a dull suburbanite, encouraging her husband to a 'real nice loin chop' (317) and as a 'transparent and hopeful' figure (314), whose life is shaped into an 'actual' sphere (317). Despite its differences from the lives of the Saportas, then, Mrs Poulter's life attains the same mandalic or enclosed strength as theirs, reflecting the harmonious totality posited as the novel's desideratum.

Arthur, 'getter of pain' (295), 'the cause of everybody's shame' (308), as well as the positive 'instrument' in Dulcie's life (297) and Mrs Poulter's 'token of everlasting life' (313), himself embodies the principle of totality contained in his mandalas. His life is bounded within the novel by the 'red gold disc of the sun' and the 'cold circles' of icy water at the beginning (215), as well as by the orange ju-jubes associated with Mrs Poulter's love at the end (313, 315). This unity is declared explicitly in the narrative:

For Arthur the orange disc had not moved noticeably since he began his upward climb. It was the accompaniment which confused, by its increase in complexity: the groaning and tinkling, and splintering of invisible icebergs. (315).

The thematic significance of the leitmotif of the mandala in The Solid Mandala is established within the coherence of a number of cognate images. In The Vivisector the leitmotif of Hurtle Duffield's

solitude is devised in terms of a configuration of images whose vehicles are quite different from each other, although each obviously gives rise to a tenor that is similar to those of the others. In the first paragraph of *The Vivisector*, the image of the crook-neck white pullet which is persecuted by the rest of Duffield's fowls, because of its difference from them (7), dramatizes the very type of solitude in which Hurtle will spend his life because of his 'difference'. The first character sketch of the protagonist, devised in terms of imagery, therefore, emphasizes his solitude.

The images of aesthetic beauty in the descriptions of light and the luxurious material aspect of Sunningdale are variations which extend the sketch further, thus elucidating the significance of the image of the crude mural Hurtle draws in the stable at Cox Street (77). The drawing is in fact a poetic foreshadowing of Hurtle's own development, encompassing the world of Cox Street, that of Sunningdale and that of Hurtle himself. In his mural, the drawing of 'the Eye' presents Hurtle as both visionary and victim. The idea is suggested that his creativity is directed by forces, originating both within and beyond him, of which he is the instrument: 'Aiming its arrows the bow-shaped eye was at the same time the target, or bull's-eye' (77).

The metaphor which is introduced in the fourth epigraph to the novel, of the 'Accursed One - and the Supreme Knower' who 'reaches the unknown' in his solitude (6), is prominent here: and it gathers strength as the narrative progresses. The image of the 'bell-possum' which is presented in the yarn spun by Sid Cupples, develops this Rimbaudian concept by which Hurtle is 'struck cold: by a vision
of himself, the last possum on earth, tinkling feebly into a darkness lit by a single milky eye' (111). Only once more does White present the concept again so specifically: in the episode in which there is a fight outside Sunningdale between Hurtle and several 'larries' (127-28). Its influence pervades the entire novel, however, only occasionally rising to overtness, as it does in Hurtle's reflection on his relationship with Hero and the other women with whom he has been involved, that his 'repeated downfall was his longing to share truth with somebody specific who didn't want to receive it' (375). In that respect, the leitmotif of solitude conveys with a subtle strength one of the most important notions underlying the action and thematic development of the novel. Like the other instances that have been discussed up to this point, it clearly exemplifies the dynamic function of White's imagery in embodying, as well as projecting, patterns of meaning within his novels.

Leitmotifs Developed in Recurring Images

The varied recurrence of the same or very similar images provides White's novels with structural coherence and clarifies the principles by which continuity is developed in the narrative. White begins to explore the possibilities of recurrent imagery in Happy Valley, in the contrapuntal recurrence of the images of Vic Moriarty's 'voluptuous' cyclamen (33) and Ernest Moriarty's mahogany clock. In the presentation of these two images, there is little subtlety. The cyclamen's occasional 'tumescence', never becoming more than gratuitous, reduces Vic's frustrated sexual energies to bathos. This reduction is consistent with the self-pity which leads to her affair
with Hagan, however, and it does emphasize the petty sordidness of
the liaison, even if rather crudely. The clock ticks sharply and
relentlessly in their house, constantly irritating and sometimes
even accusing Vic; functioning as a token of order for Ernest until
his discovery of Vic's infidelity. When Ernest murders Vic, he
destroys both the cyclamen and the clock, feeling that 'these symbols
... had fulfilled their purpose in the life of Vic and Ernest
Moriarty' (272). They have done so only too emphatically,
unfortunately, developing hardly at all throughout the novel.

The active function of these two images is an early indication,
however, of the continuing importance of recurrent imagery in White's
novels. Sequences of this kind emphasize the nature of the
characters' experiences, of their responses to the world. Where
White develops them successfully they are well integrated with his
thematic concerns and thus they function in a genuinely constructive
way. In The Living and the Dead, the leitmotif of confined space
signifies the 'ultimate separateness of soul' (136) which each of
the characters either accepts or avoids. In Elyot's acceptance of
his own discrete solitude, however, the leitmotif takes on a positive
connotation, as Elyot envisages the house on Ebery Street as a
'receptacle' which contains 'the material possessions of those who
had lived in its rooms', but which is also united with another
receptacle, that containing 'the aspirations of those he had come in
contact with' (20; 333). The union of the two receptacles in the
manner of two Chinese boxes leads Elyot, in his solitude, 'to an
infinity of other boxes, to an infinity of purpose' (17-18; 357) and
the view of his own life as the union of 'the themes of so many other
lives' (20; 333).
Where the success of the leitmotif of enclosed space in *The Living and the Dead* is founded on this single variation of connotation, other patterns of recurrent imagery, such as the leitmotif of the rose in *The Tree of Man*, are devised in terms of a constant variation in the presentation of the image. When the rose is introduced into the novel, it is associated with Amy's youth and strength:

There was a rosebush now, growing against the veranda, a white rose, of which she had thought and spoken, and which he had brought to her from town. It was already a branching, irregular bush, with the big wads of shapely paper roses just smelling of tobacco. Cold perhaps. It belonged to the dank green light on that side of the house, where it stood in the long weed that is called cow-itch. Its branches would grow black and straggly later on. But the rosebush of Amy Parker was still green, sappy wood. The marble roses were solid in the moonlight. The white roses glared back at the heavy light of noon or fluttered papery down into the yellow-green of the cow-itch. (39).

Throughout the narrative, the image recurs in various contexts, associated with Amy's experience. Soon after the mention of her first pregnancy, which ends in a miscarriage, Amy notices on the rosebush an 'early bud' which is 'white and sickly' (53). Later the image is associated with the sexual fulfilment of Stan and Amy, blending the sensuous and the sacred:

In the cool of the released world, amongst the dreaming furniture, at the heart of the staggy rosebush that pressed into the room and wrestled with them without thorns, the man and woman prayed into each other's mouths that they might hold this goodness for ever. (111).

It is then presented as indicative of Amy's strength and contentment in maternity:
If Amy Parker continued to sit, it was because the rose is rooted, and impervious. The big milky roses nodded on the window frame. She was firmly rooted in the past, as old roses are. This was her salvation in the face of words, as she sat, and stirred, and drowsed, but could not move beyond her fate.... She had grown up full and milky out of the past ... while nodding and stirring her mind twined again, twining through the moonlight night on which it had half-spoken, half-dreamed the rose. (120).

The emphasis here on Amy's static attachment to the material world is developed throughout her life. In late middle age she is seen to sit, 'in that lull of afternoons, on the front veranda, to watch from behind vines, and the canes of an old rose, that must go, it was too possessive and too old' (378), as Amy herself is becoming. Her earliest fascination with palpable things is recalled in the final presentation of the image of the rose, when Amy discovers the lost silver nutmeg grater 'where the rosebush was ... the old white rose' (496). Amy's discoveries are incorrigibly of the world of surfaces and this one is pointedly juxtaposed with Stan's understanding of the unity of the physical world, of the metaphysical significance of its order which has persistently evaded him. In the recurrent image of the rose in *The Tree of Man*, then, White establishes one of the leitmotifs which chart the growth of one of the two major characters of the novel.

The establishment of a leitmotif, as well as having a vital influence on parts or aspects of a novel, may also become a major structural principle, in terms of which the whole development of the novel is engendered. A clear instance of the practical application of this principle can be seen in *The Vivisector*, where White's attempt to present his material in approximation of the structure of his reality is strongly exemplified.
The structural development of *The Vivisector* is promoted in terms of the leitmotif of continuing rebirth, of constant becoming, which is established in the images of several of Hurtle's key works in relation to the events and other images that provide their context. The leitmotif of rebirth is introduced very early in the novel, with Hurtle's fascination in his grandfather's signet ring, on which a phoenix is embossed (9). Later, when he is being 'tested' to be taken to live at Sunningdale, Hurtle discovers that Harry Courtney also wears a phoenix-ring. They have this in common, Hurtle sees (61), but the difference between them is stressed by the insignificance of the bond. Only Hurtle will be continually reborn from the flames of his obsessions: Harry will conduct his life with a flat decency until he dies in the same way.

The first of Hurtle's rebirths occurs in his move from Cox Street to Sunningdale and it is duly recorded in the mural, which he completes on the night before making the move and in which he brings the two worlds together. The fertile warmth of the Cox Street world is presented as 'Mumma's hollow body, with the new baby sprouting in it like one of the Chinese beans the Chow had given them at Christmas' (77). The comparatively cool world of light at Sunningdale is presented as the drawing of the chandelier, appropriately enough, for as its name implies the Courtney's house figures in the novel as a temple of light and is presented accordingly in terms of images of light.

White stresses the inevitability of Hurtle's changing condition in the final paragraph of the chapter dealing with the Cox Street phase of his existence:
Well there was drawing. He made a dash or two at Mrs Birdie Courtney's chandelier that wasn't between hollowing out Mumma's body he would have liked to creep inside to sleep tighter in warm wet love and white drool of hens if she would have opened to him she wouldn't. (77).

Hurtle's changed condition is not just a movement from one state to a different state, but from one state to another in which the values and experiences of both worlds combine. Like the experience through which he passes, Hurtle's character is cumulative. The thwarted spirit which prevails in the Courtney household, therefore, reinforces rather than destroys the attachment to the physical world which Hurtle has formed during the Cox Street phase of his existence. Thus, on the first morning of his visit to Mumbelong, Hurtle wakes from his sleep to find that 'the darkness had turned into silver paddocks. The silver light was trickling down out of the trees, down the hillside; the rocks themselves were for a second liquid' (106). That the image of the composite mural done in the shed at Cox Street suggests that a bridge is established between the two worlds, rather than that one world has superseded the other, is here confirmed in the narrative, especially in the image of light.

The rural aspect of the Courtney life figures also in Hurtle's second rebirth: his postwar return to Australia, after which he feels, for the first time, no doubt of his ability to 'translate the world into terms of his own' (194) in his painting. In the period immediately preceding Hurtle's enlistment, by which he feels that he has 'broken the caul' (173) which joins him to the Courtney world, he receives the letter written at Sevenoaks in which Harry writes of its 'distant hills heaped like ... uncut sapphires ... the dew shining like ... diamonds ... in the luxuriant grass' and in which Harry
expresses doubt that any painting 'could possibly equal this actual picture' (163). The challenge is repeated by implication in one of Harry's letters to Hurtle at the Front, in which he claims that 'Life on the land continually offers a sense of creation, power ... omnipotence' (178). Hurtle's adolescent disenchantment with the Courtney life and with his art, both signified in his destruction of the painting 'in which the golden flesh of two bodies was interlocked on a compost of leaves under a glittering rain of blood' (162-63), is intensified by the first of these letters. His wartime world-weariness and disillusionment in his creativity are exacerbated by the second.

As he does in moving from Cox Street to Sunningdale, however, Hurtle retains something of his former self when he makes the change from Sunningdale to his solitary bankruptcy in postwar Sydney. Despite his discouraged state, he continues to believe at this stage in the paintings 'he was still only capable of painting in his head' (187). In entering into his relationship with Nance, however, Hurtle finds his creativity taking a more positive form. That he is indeed reborn as a youthful though much more certain source of creative effort is made clear in the image of 'Nance Spreadeagle' which, 'vegetable in form and essence' (207), is his belated response to Harry's challenge:

For it was in fact the same journey as they jolted through the early light the same gullies in spite of the dazzlement of rock and dew the hills offering the same outline he tended to lose sight of since climbing down since hearing the future crunch away out of reach with those he had depended on. (208).

The celebration of the physical world which characterises this painting and those which follow it evokes the dominant aspect of the phase of
existence into which Hurtle is reborn in his relationship with Nance. In 'Electric City', 'Marriage of Light', 'Animal Rock Forms', as well as in 'Nance Spreadeagle', the investigation of creation is as energetic as the young painter and as lyrical as his sensibility.

Yet there is also a sourness in Hurtle's attitude at this time which is captured in White's presentation of the image of Hurtle's self-portrait. It is a phase of his existence which is complicated by his realization that he 'had never been altogether dishonest: nor yet entirely honest; because that isn't possible ... God or whatever couldn't have been entirely honest in creating the world' (245). Hence in the self-portrait he sees himself by turns as 'coarse, thickset, moral scavenger' and as 'lyrical onanist' (246). The two versions of the self-portrait each capture an aspect of this phase of his work and his life, though he thinks of the second as 'more austere, essential, more honest' (250) than the first which he comes to see as 'over-painted, self-indulgent ... nauseating, rejected naturalistic trash' (250). His final verdict on the painting, prompted by Nance's sorrowful cynicism, is that it is 'devilish: furtive, ingrown, all that he had persuaded himself it wasn't, and worse than anything else - bad, not morally, but aesthetically' (258). His gesture of smearing the portrait with faeces before joining Nance in their final miserable sexual encounter, which is partly a mutual comforting and partly a passage of sensuous combat, dramatizes the sense that both have of themselves as having 'reached the depths' (260) where surprisingly, however, 'bursts of exquisite purity, of rubbed leaves, of sprinkled dew, made them writhe' (260). The episode is followed by the death of Nance in which this phase of Hurtle's experience culminates.
The rebirth into his more mature phase in Flint Street follows a period of some years of gestatory meditation and work, before his conversation with Cutbush at the Gash. The painting which results from this conversation, 'Lantana Lovers Under Moonfire', is an image not only of the duality of physical existence which has been presented in the previous phase, but also of humanity as a pale expression of the Divine Vivisector. The strange despair which dominates Hurtle's life during this period is figured in his 'Pythoness at Tripod' series. It also emerges from the paintings that project his relationship with Hero. In the 'Infinity of Cats' series, one painting shows 'the condemned animals ... still noticeably furred, but their writhing despair and the action of the water made some of them look skinned, or human' (370). In another, Hurtle images a state of ultimate despair:

In all but one of these versions, the victims' fate was ordained by implication and a presence of light. But in one painting he couldn't resist introducing the Satrap Himself: he was almost completely covered with black hair, the face livid, except for the eyelids, which were black too.... the doomed god became as tragic as the cats he had condemned. (373-74).

The echoes here of descriptions of Hero's husband, Cosmas, link the painting's general theme with the more specifically defined subject of Hurtle's untitled painting of himself and Hero. In that

painting, 'the man's phallus glowed and spilled; while the woman, her eyes closed, her mouth screaming silent words, fluctuated between her peacock-coloured desires and the longed-for death-blow' (377).

Not until some time after their visit to Perialos, and after the conversation with Mothersole, does the end of this phase become clearly understood by Hurtle himself. Reflecting on the conversation, Hurtle considers that 'he no longer needed his Mothersole. His teeth grated as he regurgitated the nonsense he had talked while in the throes of rebirth' (421). He remembers 'another occasion when he had risen from the dead, by seminal dew and the threats of moonlight, in conversation, repulsive, painful, but necessary, with the grocer Cutbush: and now was born again by grace of Mothersole's warm middle-class womb' (421). As Hurtle tears up and throws Mothersole's card from the ferry on which they have held their interchange, the sexual imagery quite specifically renders the renascent aspects of Hurtle's experience in this episode:

He took out the printer's card. When he had torn it, he scattered the pieces on the water as Mothersole himself would have wished, if his ethos had allowed. Gulls fell rapaciously, swerved deceived, curving away. He continued watching the seed he had sown in the white furrow; some of it began at once to germinate, to reach such proportions his mind was already grappling with their sometimes exquisite, sometimes bitter fruit: particularly the apricot-coloured child-faces with their dark, crippled Doppel-gänger. (421).

The major image in which his new understanding is conveyed is the painting of Hero's apotheosis, which demonstrates his conviction that he has not been completely deluded in thinking of her as a pure soul. Obviously, as Thelma Herring has observed,
the pure soul can exist only in Art:¹ as it does in this painting. Nevertheless, in its composition, Hurtle has ignored neither the purity of desire underlying Hero's sentimentalism in making the pilgrimage to Perialos, nor the destructiveness of her disillusion which he presents in the image of the glowing cancer within her. It is this realisation which renews his belief in his ability to create a spiritual child in the art of his late maturity.

The quality of his experience during that phase is no less complicated by the gap between the life he lives and the hopes he has than the previous phases have been. In the paintings inspired by his relationship with Kathy, Hurtle's probing of the notions he has begun to form of human suffering, culpability, frailty, negative physicality and of the relationships between artist and Art, between human beings and God, there is a sense of anticipation as well as of review. Though in 'Girl at Piano', 'The Lopsided Blind' and 'Spiral' Hurtle does succeed in imaging a spiritual child in its various aspects, it is the spiritual childhood of Hurtle himself that is most interesting during this period. Hurtle's suffering after Kathy's departure does, after all, lead him to question his often repeated affirmation of belief in Art and he tries to face the possibility of a failing in his powers. He even thinks of himself as an ancient child, formed by his life's experience and energised by many of his past relationships, as White shows in the image of one of the 'secret' works executed at this time:

¹. 'Patrick White's The Vivisector', Southerly, 31 (1971), 3-16; 13-14.
There was one drawing in which all the women he had ever loved were joined by umbilical cords to the navel of the same enormous child. One cord, which had withered apart, shuddered like lightning where the break occurred; yet it was the broken cord which seemed to be charging the great tumorous, sprawling child with infernal or miraculous life. (540).

Hurtle contemplates the drawing as an image of the passivity which is characteristic of this stage of his becoming:

Was he the child who still had to expect birth? And what of death? Sometimes he stood shivering as he waited on the river bank, until his little psychopomp appeared, dressed in the silver tunic, hair streaming with light and music. She would never approach closer than to show him she wasbeckoning; after which, he was content to follow. (540).

In the stroke which he suffers soon after this passage, Hurtle undergoes his penultimate rebirth. It is an event which accentuates the passivity seen in this passage and therefore, like the events which bring about Hurtle's other rebirths, it is a bridge between an earlier and a later phase of his development. As Hurtle lies 'parcelled on the pavement' (580) the regenerative connotation of his conversation with Mothersole is subtly recalled in the image of Bernice Cutbush as the gull-starling which 'flapped and screeched still not touching not prepared to be deceived by any pseudosewage' (570). Following the stroke, Hurtle's body crippled and his scepticism as to the restorative powers of the mind very much in evidence, his hopes of capturing in his painting 'the last and first secret the indigo' (571) are very much the outcome of his sense of his own weakness. On one occasion, as Don Lethbridge washes his feet, Hurtle sees that:
A corner of the body left didn't mean anything more than a tickle. The body wouldn't renaissance. Nor the mind. The spirit an only hope. It flickered a little above the warm soapyulent water.

It didn't flicker it stabbed him to watch his servitor's curved backbone the hanging light of unconscious flossy hair. To recognize the vulnerable indestructibility of a fellow spirit. (577).

It is Hurtle's own 'vulnerable indestructibility' that is the driving force behind the final phase of his creative and personal development. In his final painting, death is imaged as an ultimate rebirth in culmination of his entire creative life:

All his life he had been reaching towards this vertiginous blue without truly visualizing, till lying on the pavement he was dazzled not so much by a colour as a longstanding secret relationship. (641).

The movement of the artist towards an understanding of God also culminates in this final stage of the novel. Spiritually, Hurtle is now most alive, as he acknowledges 'with all the strength of his live hand the otherwise unnameable I-N-D-I-G-O' (641). His physical collapse, 'the tobbling scrawl deadwood splitting splintering the prickled stars plunge a presumptuous body crashing. Dumped' does not contradict, but rather it dramatises his illumination: 'Light follows dark not usually bound by the iron feather which stroked' (642).

The image of the painting, a mere reiteration of the colour indigo, with its previously-established connotations of divinity, is thus simultaneously the simplest and most significant of all the images of the paintings in the novel, just as this rebirth is the simplest and most significant of all the rebirths. Painting and rebirth here complete Hurtle's movement throughout the novel towards a conscious acknowledgement that his art is greater than
himself and that Art is an ideal process beyond the limits of any of his works. The God-like nature of creativity never seduces him into a state of *hybris* such as that in which Voss makes his extraordinary journey, but nowhere in the text is Hurtle's understanding of his relation to God and to Art more specifically rendered than in his acknowledgement of 'the otherwise unnameable I-N-D-I-G-O' (641).

Appropriately, in a novel in which White's vision is presented so dualistically, the acknowledgement does not contradict Hurtle's daring in attempting to express the nature of Divinity in this painting.

'Only reach higher. Could. And will' (641) is a statement of the painter's intention to exceed both his physical and aesthetic limitations. The statement is held in tension with his recognition of those limitations, not ultimately contradicted by the collapse which follows it. 'Dumped' Hurtle's 'presumptuous body' may be, but he achieves an understanding of himself in relation to God in his vision of the 'end-less obvi indi-ggoddd' (642), with which the novel concludes on a genuine note of regeneration. The tone of the novel's conclusion issues directly from the recurrence within it of the leitmotif of rebirth, which thus exemplifies the comprehensiveness of White's mature vision and the technical subtlety of which he has become capable in presenting it.
The Fundamental Importance of the Leitmotif
in 'The Aunt's Story'

It is The Aunt's Story, a novel that belongs to the earliest stage of White's career, to which extended reference must be made for an analysis of the most outstanding example of the importance of the leitmotif in the novels. In The Aunt's Story, the establishment and development of a number of leitmotifs very clearly serves as a characterization technique, for the development of Theodora's sensibility and understanding are dramatized in the terms which are determined by developments in patterns of recurrent imagery that constitute the leitmotif. Moreover, because the novel's themes are mainly derived from Theodora's experience, the structure of thematic development is embodied also in patterns of recurrent imagery.

White has described The Aunt's Story as 'a work which celebrates the human spirit'. Obviously this celebration is enacted particularly in the character of Theodora, whose spirit both resists pressure from the world beyond herself to deny its uniqueness and survives the impulse to annihilation that springs from within. There is very little, if anything, in the novel which does not bear directly on the development of Theodora's sensibility. The perception of the world of the novel is hers; the novel's moral alignments are made according to her vision and to the factors that shape it. Theodora is the novel's subject and at the same time she is the lens through which that subject

1. 'A Conversation with Patrick White', 137.
is seen. She is apart from the world around her. By turns she is isolated from it, alienated from it and both isolated and alienated from it, before coming to terms with it. Hers is not a dispassionate view, then, but Theodora's position as an Outsider at least allows her to judge the world on its own terms, which can be more fully perceived from the outside, as well as on her terms.

It is clear enough that Theodora's condition is more or less that of the Outsider, but to recognize her as such is of little value without some appreciation of what, in her particular case, that condition entails. Her vision is extraordinary and White suggests that, for that reason alone, what she sees is worth revealing. He dramatizes the uncommon sensibility, which is capable of fresh and penetrating observation of the world, implying that such observation inevitably leads to a fuller and clearer understanding of the human condition: and, indeed, of the 'structure of reality'.

1. Theodora is like the Outsider figure identified by Colin Wilson in his book *The Outsider* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1970), in that she is aware of the negative aspects of society; but unlike that figure in that she is not accurately aware of her own essential self. Like Wilson's Outsider, she ceases to be an outsider upon resolution of the conflict between herself and society; but as that resolution is enacted only in Theodora's mind, and not seen as a resolution by society, as it is represented by the Johnsons, Theodora differs from Wilson's standard figure.

2. cf. the view proposed by R.F. Brissenden in his book, *Patrick White*, that some of White's 'most distinctive and successful achievements as a novelist have resulted from his attempt to convey the uniqueness of personality' (London: Longmans, Green, 1966, 15-16). H.P. Heseltine expresses a comparable view: 'In creating such characters [as Theodora Goodman, Mary Hare and Laura Trevelyan], White has moved from direct delight in rendering this kind of feminine sensibility for its own sake to an inspection of its possibilities and values. In doing so, he has arrived at one of his central themes - the infinite possibilities of the single personality.' ('Patrick White's Style', 63).
In The Aunt's Story, White presents in three phases the evolution of Theodora's understanding of the 'structure of reality'. The novel falls readily into the classic pattern of the Bildungsroman, being concerned almost exclusively with the development of its central character, as she passes from youth through spiritual crisis into maturity and understanding. Seen in the terms of William Blake, this development is a progress from a state of innocence through experience to higher or organized innocence. In Hegelian terms it is a process of thesis-antithesis-synthesis. In the terms established by White in his selection of the epigraphs to the three parts of the novel, it is an odyssey,1 pursued in the 'solitary land of individual experience' (1), during which the traveller experiences the 'great fragmentation of maturity' (155), and completes the journey by reconstituting her original vision of reality. She does so, however, at the risk implicit in the novel's final epigraph: 'When your life is most real, to me you are mad' (303). It is hardly necessary to add to this list of structural formulae. It is worth pointing out, however, that each formula in its different way expresses the basic condition of Theodora Goodman in each of the three major phases of her life. Her first condition, of security limited by immaturity, is short-lived. It is soon replaced by a period of conflict and dividedness, which is destructive at first and then constructive. Issuing naturally from that middle period is the

condition of resolution and reintegration, in which Theodora's original values and perceptions are re-established, but in a more mature form. In her final condition, as John and Rose Marie Beston have pointed out, Theodora has regained 'the lost reality of childhood' (301).¹

Theodora's early security is almost entirely the product of her ignorance of the possibility of conflict.² White's first presentation of her childhood evokes her untroubled perception of the world in the image of the rose:

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 her arms as she stretched. She stretched with her feet to touch the depths of the bed, which she did not yet fill. She felt very close to the roses the other side of the wall. (15).

At this early age, Theodora hardly distinguishes between herself and her environment, let alone between herself and other people. With emotional growth, however, the ability to distinguish develops, though not yet the need to do so. The developing leitmotif of the rose also subtly traces this growth and development through several of Theodora's characteristic moods.

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2. Theodora's early sense of herself in the world has a prelapsarian quality, therefore. The comparison between the Eden of Genesis and the Meroë of Theodora's limited perception might almost be seen to be literally accurate, especially in view of the reference in Genesis 2, 13 to the second of Eden's rivers, Gihon: 'the same is it that compasses the whole land of Ethiopia'. Theodora's conversation with her father about the Nile in ancient Ethiopia and the creek on Meroë (18-19), the property named after the ancient Ethiopian capital, encourages the impression that Eden and Theodora's Meroë are not metaphorically distant from each other.
In the mornings, she drifts 'in the roselight that the garden shed'; in the deeper mood of her afternoons she is aware that 'the serious full white roses hung heavy and the lemon-coloured roses made their cool pools in a shade of moss' (15); and then, in the evenings, her sense of the mystery contained by physical things is aroused 'when red roses congealed in great scented clots, deepening in the undergrowth' (16). Her solitary nature and her strong sense of place are both also introduced in the rose image, when Theodora 'felt on her cheek the smooth flesh of roses', which is 'smoother than faces. And more compelling' to her inner self, of which she finds an objectification in the roses which 'drowsed and drifted under her skin' (16). The leitmotif of the rose, then, makes clear the limited, contained nature of the environment in which Theodora's sense of things begins to develop. The first phase of her life is 'an epoch of roselight'; a morning of experience, 'round, and veined like the skin inside an unhatched egg, in which she curled safe still' (16). Because it is a contained world, it is also limited. Theodora soon outgrows it and by the time that she becomes aware of conflict within and around her she has already completed the first phase of her life.

The possibility of conflict is always present in the novel, from the first chapter in which it is clear that Theodora must contend with the contradiction between her aspirations and the demands which others have of her. Contradiction and conflict have declared the terms of her experience, in fact, from the time of her childhood. Opposed to the connotations of tranquility borne by the leitmotif of the rose, for instance, there is an essential
anxiety at Meroë which White suggests in his first presentation of the image of the pines growing beside George Goodman's room, filling it with a 'dark murmuring of boughs' and with green and shifting light (17). This vaguely troubled air is deepened as 'sometimes the pines, when the wind blew, flung themselves at the windows in throaty spasms' (17). The image bears more positive connotations, too, for Theodora considers that her father is 'not unlike a tree, thick and greyish-black, that you sat beside, and which was there and not' (17).

At this stage, however, anxiety prevails and it is in this room that Theodora is distressed by the implicit prophecy of the end of her childhood world when her father tells her about the original Meroë, 'a dead place, in the black country of Ethiopia' (18). The intensity of Theodora's rejection of 'the second Meroë' (18) is a measure of her sensitivity and is conveyed in the variations on the image of the 'first' Meroë as White describes that rejection. Theodora cannot 'set down on the black grass of the country that was called Ethiopia their own yellow stone', and she goes outside 'to escape from this dead place with the suffocating, cinder breath' (18). The brownness of the roses of which her father speaks, in contrast with those seen earlier, the establishment of the counterpoint of yellow and black and the deathly cinders recalling the volcanic hills of the Australian Meroë all evoke the intensity of Theodora's first knowledge of the finite quality of her present world.
From that point on, Theodora is aware that there are two sides to experience and she enters the second phase of her life, which begins as a period of great and only occasionally alleviated anxiety. She is convinced of the threat of the Ethiopian Meroë and consequently obsessed with the need to preserve her own as a source of comfort. Even at this early stage, however, White makes it clear that the co-existence of the opposed states integral to the two Meroës must sooner or later be accepted, for Theodora's Meroë derives its name from the 'black volcanic hills', which relate the two (21). The name 'Meroë' smoulders, with the strength of the original and its hills conspire 'to darken, or to split deeper open their black rock, or to frown with a fiercer, Ethiopian intensity' (14). Theodora is unable to accommodate the co-existence of the two worlds, however, and fixes strongly on the yellow grass and the 'golden stone' of 'Our Place' (19).

The leitmotifs of yellow and black are of substantial significance in White's evocation of the conflict within Theodora. Yellow and black are Meroë's dominant colours and White, in his first description of her, has made them also Theodora's:

Black had yellowed her skin. She was dry, and leathery, and yellow. A woman of fifty, or not yet, whose eyes burned still, under the black hair. (4).1

Her identification with Meroë is explicitly stated in the description of her response to the property as she rides around it with her father:

1. cf. Marjorie Barnard's observation of Theodora, that 'Meroë's black and yellow were her colours'. ('Theodora Again', Southerly, 20, 1959, 51-5; 52). Brissenden also refers to the significance of the two colours, noting that the 'counterpoint of black and yellow' is 'one of the most subtle and beautiful features of the novel' (Patrick White, 18).
She listened to the clinking of the stirrups, and the horses blowing out their nostrils, and the heavy, slow, lazy streams of sound that fell from the coarse hair of their swishing tails. Theodora looked at the land that was theirs. There was peace of mind enough on Meroë. You could feel it, whatever it was, and you were not certain, but in your bones. It was in the clothes-line on which the sheets drooped, in the big pink and yellow cows cooling their heels in creek mud, in magpie's speckled egg, and the disappearing snake. It was even in the fences, grey with age and yellow with lichen, that tumbled down and lay around Meroë. The fences were the last word in peace of mind. (19-20).

For Theodora, Meroë is clearly as much state of mind as it is place, but in identifying with it she does not always enjoy the peace of mind of which White speaks here.

White suggests both Theodora's anxiety and the comfort she derives from her identification with Meroë as he develops the leitmotifs in which that identification is established. The metaphoric value of the colour yellow, for instance, has an ambiguity which functions in that way. When Theodora overhears Mr Parrott's scornful reference to Meroë as 'Rack-and'-Ruin Hollow' (20) and to her father's lack of a 'sense of responsibility to his own land' (20) she suffers as she did in her discovery of the 'second Meroë'. Both are experiences of a threat to what she knows and loves as 'something to touch' (19). The first engulfs the 'peaceful mystery' of 'Possession' (19) in 'an expanding terror' (19) and the second turns Theodora 'thin and yellow with shame' (21). In the first, the 'golden stone' (19) of the house is a source of comfort. In the second, Theodora's very identification with Meroë, suggested by the yellowness of her complexion, is a source of intense distress. By bringing together the two values in his emblematic use of yellow in these two episodes, White introduces the notion which is finally
articulated when Theodora recalls how, in her meeting with the Man who was Given his Dinner, she has been 'infused with a warmth of love' that is 'most thinly separated from expectation of sorrow' (332). Death co-exists with life, love with sorrow, and, as Holstiuss tells her, the 'separating membrane is negligible' (332).

In her early life, however, Theodora is by temperament unable to see those connections, as White suggests in the imagery. There is the yellow of Meroë's peaceful world and, apart from it in Theodora's mind, there is also 'the long, thin, yellow face of Theodora Goodman, who they said was sallow' (23). There is 'the black country of Ethiopia' (18), immanent in the black hills surrounding Meroë (19); and there are the 'many bitter days at Meroë when the roselight hardened and blackened' (23). At best the leitmotif of the colour black is associated, at this early stage, with the sullen satisfaction that Theodora feels in withdrawing from her mother and sister into melancholic contemplation of 'the long, black, bitter sweep of the hills' (24). Even the closeness of these two connotations of black is insufficient to relate them in Theodora's mind.

In providing these leitmotifs with dual connotations, White makes the dialectical nature of the world of The Aunt's Story very clear, despite Theodora's ignorance of it in relation to herself. Theodora is generally aware of the dialectic from the time of her discovery of the 'small, pale grub curled in the
The leitmotif of the rose as well as suggesting the importance in the novel of linked contraries, is an early hint of 'the distances that separate' (154) Theodora from others. In that respect there is a significant association between this function of the leitmotif and the presentation of Theodora's estrangement from others which evolves within its development. That more than the single connotation of innocent security emerges from the image of the rose is clear enough from its introduction in the first chapter when Theodora remembers Meroë as 'an old house in which nothing remarkable had taken place, but where music had been played, and roses fell from their stems, and the human body disguised its actual mission of love and hate' (13). The 'epoch of roselight' is thus anticipated by a contradiction which is further developed, both in the revelation that the rose garden is an 'artificial' token of Mrs Goodman's need to exercise her will (15) and in the description of Fanny as 'pretty and as pink as roses' (16). The difference which later develops between Fanny and Theodora is here introduced in terms of the rose leitmotif, the superficiality of Fanny contrasting with Theodora's intensity, which is confirmed also in association with the rose, when a little later 'her hands touched, her hands became the shape of rose, she knew it in its utmost intimacy' (28).
Theodora's differences from others result in conflict which strengthens her inherent solitude and reinforces her affinity with the inanimate world. She characteristically withdraws from interaction with people during this initial phase of the second major stage of her life, emulating the passivity of objects. Following the traumatic discovery of Pearl Brawne and Tom Wilcox behind the cow bails, for instance, Theodora is both terrified by 'a great spreading shadow which grew and grew' within her (36) and fascinated by her new awareness of human sexuality (37). Fanny's response is to laugh the matter off, but Theodora responds to it with characteristic intensity. Significantly, however, she evolves her response in a solitude that is nourished by the passivity of inanimate nature:

Light yawned out of the hills, and from the yellow thickets of the gorse. Theodora stood and let the water lip her legs. She could just hear. Now light and water lay smoothly together. She took off her clothes. She would lie in the water. And soon her thin brown body was the shallow, browner water. She would not think. She would drift. As still as a stick. And as thin. But on the water circles widen and cut. If Pearl Brawne took off her clothes, Theodora said, and lay in the water, the hills would move, she is fine as a big white rose, and I am a stick, It is good to be a stick, said Theodora, it is better to be a big white rose. (37).

Here Theodora's attempt to emulate the passivity of a stick is a limited approximation of her earlier drifting in the roselight, but she succeeds only in reminding herself of the differences between herself and others. In the image of the stick, White introduces the leitmotif of wood, which develops significantly
throughout the novel. It is noticeable here, however, that the image suggests Theodora's sharp sense of the distance between her earlier, innocent self and her present self. It is Pearl, and not herself, with whom she associates the rose. In that association, White develops further the multiple connotations of the leitmotif of the rose, by indicating its positive associations for Theodora and simultaneously stressing her sense of the gap that now exists between herself and those early associations.

Despite her awareness of the gap, however, Theodora grows no closer to most other people, feeling that the landscape is 'more communicative than people talking' (30). In any case, other people are repelled by her ugliness and her sharp intensity and she has of necessity to learn 'to accept both the contempt and the distances', although she is consoled by 'the moments of insight, whether with Father, or the Man who was Given his Dinner, or even with the Syrian' (53). It is significant that those few with whom she does communicate at this early stage are also estranged figures who, like her father, respect silence (30). That respect ensures for Theodora such 'peace of mind' as she derives in her father's company from Meroë's natural aspect (19-20). The silence of the Syrian produces a different experience: although

1. cf. the observation made by William Walsh in his book *Patrick White's Fiction*: 'Things have a peculiar, sometimes overwhelming presence for Theodora who feels simultaneously how intimate she is with them and how powerfully charged they are with energy towards her'. (Sydney: George Allen and Unwin, 1977, 24).
it is the silence of a language barrier, it lends an exhilarating intensity to Theodora's perception of the natural world:

In the white-lit winter evening her legs grew longer with the strides she took. Her hair flew. She had increased. She walked outside a distinct world, on which the grass quivered with a clear moisture, and the earth rang. In this state, in which rocks might at any moment open, or words convey meaning, she stood and watched the Syrian go. His silence slipped past. The hills settled into shapelessness. (26).

Her communion with the Man who was Given his Dinner, with whom she establishes 'something warm and close' (41), is also associated with Theodora's affinity with the natural world. Having heard his story of the blizzard at Kiandra, she sees that 'Sun fell through the shaggy tree, and things were good to touch' (44).

The story told by the Man who was Given his Dinner introduces a variation to the leitmotif of fire which has up to this point been established as a series of images of intensity, anger, resentment and fear. Where the Man tells of the security and warmth of fire, then, the image assumes the same ambiguity that is seen in the other important leitmotifs in this part of the novel. He is aware of the 'rivers of fire' which consume (46), but also of fire's gentleness as the state contrary to that associated with the 'secret moments of reflected fire' of which Lou is made aware by the Indian ball (10); or to that with the angry resentment of Theodora's vision of the extinct volcano which

1. Here my position differs from that taken by J.B. and R.M. Beston in 'The Black Volcanic Hills of Meroë: Fire Imagery in Patrick White's The Aunt's Story', which allows only for the negative connotations of this leitmotif and thus, in my view, takes insufficient account of the dialectical condition of the world of this novel.
'had once run with fire, its black cone streaming' (24); or to that with the fearful mystery of the bolt of lightning which strikes so close to Theodora and is seen, amongst other things, in association with her mother's moods (40).

The bolt of lightning, cryptically labelled by Gertie Stepper as 'an act of God', is for Theodora 'one of those things that happened, and which it was still not possible to explain' (40). She has, as her father tells Mrs Parrott, 'great understanding' (28), but she is acutely aware of the extent of her ignorance of the world and especially of what White calls elsewhere 'the cat's cradle of human intercourse'. As a child she expresses her intention to 'know everything', to 'wrap it up and put it in a box' labelled: 'This is the property of Theodora Goodman' (39).

The 'moments of insight' (53) that she experiences in the company of the Syrian and the Man who was Given his Dinner are, as Miss Spofforth says, 'moments of passing affection, through which the opaque world' becomes for Theodora 'transparent' (68). They can contain neither complete nor permanent satisfaction.

Not even her father can help her to reach ultimate understanding, for he is himself a figure of uncertainty, despite his sensitivity:

He was serious. He sighed a lot, and looked at you, as if he were about to let you into a secret, only not now, the next time. Instead, and perhaps as compensation for the secret that had been postponed, he took you by the hand, about to lead you somewhere, only in the end you could feel, inside the hand, that you were guiding Father. (17).

Thus, only in solitude can Theodora attempt to achieve a full understanding of the world, of herself and of herself in the world. Her private moments of communion with the natural world are, then, inspired as much by her need to reach such understanding, as by her conflicts with others. Yet the two are not unrelated: Fanny's superficiality and materialism prevents her from sharing Theodora's deepest needs; Mrs Goodman sees 'clearly, but not far' (70) and will always do so, for she likes 'to arrange things, the ornaments in cabinets, or the little tables in the drawing-room, then to sit and watch what she had done' (23). Frank Parrott is in his youth as limited a figure as Theodora conceives him to be in middle age, when he reminds her of 'a stuffed ram, once functional within his limits, now fixed and glassy for the rest of time' (8).

These characters exist on the superficial level of experience, bound up in circumstance. They are kin to the spiritually dead who are everywhere seen in White's previous novel: and Theodora refuses to join them in that state. Instead she seeks to identify and develop her essential self, a condition which White evokes in the leitmotif of sparseness. Theodora sees that circumstance contains essence, it is not itself essential, and only rarely does she find it possible in human relationships to penetrate the surface of experience, to perceive its essence. Thus she mourns the end of her friendship with Violet Adams even as she contemplates the freedom which offers itself to her at Meroë (64); and significantly images of sparseness
proliferate at that point in the narrative. On the side of 'the black cone of Ethiopia that had once flowed fire' are the remains of the wooden house, a 'narrow lantern that was somebody's folly' which is set among the scattered tins, bones and stones (64). The place is one of those landscapes 'in which you can see the bones of the earth', where 'You could touch your own bones, which is to come a little closer to truth' (64). Theodora's intention is above all, as Miss Spofforth understands, to 'see clearly, beyond the bone' (67-8).

By the end of the third chapter of The Aunt's Story, then, White has established the quality of Theodora's sensibility and outlined the terms of her experience, both of conflict and sympathy, within the leitmotifs which develop from the recurrence of the images of roses, pines, the colours black and yellow, wood, fire and sparseness. The evolution of the novel from this point is directed along lines which are illuminated by the dynamic function of imagery. The second half of 'Meroë', in general, contains little change in the connotative value of the leitmotifs that are engendered in the first three chapters. Rather, White consolidates what he has already introduced within these patterns of recurrent imagery: the uniqueness of Theodora's sensibility and the conflicts which are central to the novel as a whole.

Thus the leitmotif of the rose is again associated with the relationship between Theodora and Fanny, which is not without its moments of sympathy: 'Fanny is a rose, felt Theodora, but I am a lesser rose on the same stem. And it soothed, it soothed, the
flesh of the rose that lay along your cheek' (69). In general, however, Fanny and Theodora inhabit different worlds and nowhere is Theodora more aware of the fact than in their conversation together after Fanny has accepted Frank Parrott's proposal of marriage. In this context, the image of the rose evokes Theodora's wry appraisal of her sister as 'very lovely, soft, and thoughtful', reminiscent of 'the flesh of early roses', even though 'under the skin you could read arithmetic' (92).

The leitmotif retains its ambiguity and original seriousness, despite the sardonic tone that accompanies White's presentation of it here. Similarly, in the episode in which Theodora meets Moraitis, the leitmotif of the rose clarifies their mutual affinity by echoing the pleasure and security of Theodora's early life, as Moraitis stands 'in the reflected roselight' (123). Like the roses smouldering on the dinner table, which are also seen as a prop to Huntly's well-planned assurance, there is 'little correspondence between Moraitis and what was going on now round Huntly Clarkson's table' (123). The leitmotif promotes structural unity within the narrative, therefore, as well as illuminating the characters' experience.

The consolidating function of the imagery in this part of the novel is also readily apparent in the comparatively static connotative value of most of the other leitmotifs. The image of fire continues to suggest the passion of Theodora's poem of 'a river of fire' and a 'burning house' (55) and of her dance with Frank Parrott in which she is 'close to his fire' (83).
Huntly Clarkson's essential incompatibility with Theodora is indicated in his remark that none of the volcanoes he has seen have impressed him much (119). The image also retains its connotations of warmth and security in Theodora's partly dismissive, partly tolerant perception that, because Frank fears their shared intensity, he must 'light his little fire' of banal conversation (84).

The associations of the leitmotif of sparseness remain constant, too. Theodora and Moraitis see themselves as 'compatriots in the country of the bones' (126) and Theodora, seeing his performance of the concerts as analogous to her own experience of conflict, perceives him as a figure of triumphant humility. She perceives him as emerging from adversity in such a state of clarity that 'the sky had passed between his bones' (130).

In this part of the novel, consolidation is the chief function of the leitmotif of the pine also, as it continues to be associated with George Goodman's anxiety. He still sits beside them, 'at least in body' (69), regretting his unfulfilled odyssey (71). His condition is permanently regretful as he sits 'against the windowful of pines' (94), an 'old man complaining in a Greek play' in a voice which finally is 'as pale as the grey light that ... sucked and whispered at the pines' (95). Later, Theodora's nostalgic alignment of Moraitis with the roselight of Meroë becomes more specifically focused in her view of the 'cellist as a more immediate embodiment of the Ithaca which both she and her father seek: 'She swam through the sea of roses towards that
other Ithaca. On that side there were the pines, and on this side Moraitis' (123).

The rare kinship between Theodora and Moraitis is also indicated in terms of the leitmotif of the colour black, which functions to identify those characters in the novel who are capable of the same intensity as Theodora. Moraitis' darkness of complexion (122), like that of Mr Lestrange the former owner of the ruined shack on the slopes of the black volcanic hill at Meroc (75), functions in an emblematic way that is perhaps more at home in painting than in writing. In this novel, the image of darkness has about it more than a little of the Lawrentian concept of spiritual depth, intensity or fertility, however, and the associations established by White between characters and situations are, in terms of this leitmotif, also primarily verbal. Thus the music of Moraitis is described as bordering on the 'dark and tragic' (129), the intensity of Theodora's dancing threatens Frank as a 'darkness that was pressing down' (84), and the emotional depth of these two exchanges is conveyed in essentially non-visual terms.

The leitmotif of the colour black does nevertheless function in visual terms as well, especially in its association with that of the colour yellow in this part of the novel. In the late summer of George Goodman's death both these and the leitmotif of sparseness evoke Theodora's painful anticipation of that event. The anxiety of Theodora, herself 'thin and yellow', is clearly indicated in White's presentation of the landscape:

The hills were burnt yellow. Thin yellow scurf lay on the black skin of the hills, which had worn into black pockmarks where the eruptions had taken place. And now the trees were more than ever like white bones. (93).
The gold chrysanthemums with which Theodora fills the house (94) bring about a merely ephemeral transformation which George Goodman's death and the collapse of Theodora's Meroë brings to a sharp end. In terms of common sense George Goodman's death is inevitable, of course, but the function of White's imagery here, linking the death of her father with Theodora's earlier painful experiences, evinces its poetic inevitability. The event is thus presented as a culmination of a series of profoundly disturbing experiences which result in the almost complete destruction of the essential self which she would discover by withdrawing into herself.

Theodora's withdrawal, initially suggested in the image of the stick, the passivity of which she covets, continues to be traced in the development of the leitmotif of wood, especially where that development touches on her relationship with Huntly Clarkson. Mrs Goodman, observing that her daughter is 'a stick with men' (115), expects nothing to come of the relationship: and, understandably, Theodora shrinks from 'the glare of mahogany and lustre' (117) which characterises Huntly's world, taking on the 'attitudes ... of carved wood' (137), in cutting herself off from that world.

In hating Theodora for doing so, Mrs Goodman conceives of her as a 'great wooden idol' which 'she would have hewn down' (141). It is Julia Goodman's wish to live a 'simpler, neater, more consoling' life; to 'take the hearts of those who do not quite love us and lock them in a little box, something appropriate in mother-o'-pearl' (104). Obviously, to preserve her integrity, Theodora must refuse to become another item in Huntly's collection of
'unusual objects' (118) as much as she must resist her mother's attempts to reduce her to a cipher (105). Yet, in her withdrawal, Theodora also endangers her essential self by aspiring to annihilation in 'that desirable state ... which resembles ... nothing more than air or water' (151).

The paradox of Theodora's condition at the end of 'Meroë' is that in isolation she has felt closest to truth: yet she is unable to discover her essential self, let alone the 'everything' which in her childhood she declared her need to understand, because she is isolated. She cannot accurately judge the terms of her own humanity without accepting that of others, including their differences from her. She seems intuitively to realize the problem she faces when, in the last paragraph of 'Meroë', she considers 'the distances that separate, even in love' and regrets the estrangement which she has found to be necessary:

If I could put out my hand, she said, but I cannot. And already the moment, the moments, the disappearing afternoon had increased the distances that separate. There is no lifeline to other lives. I shall go, said Theodora, I have already gone. (154).

She has in fact become her own gaoler, fixated on her uniqueness in a way that denies her common humanity. It is also true, however, that she has little or no freedom as 'the victim of family approval' (11) and she knows that she must alter the condition of her life to resolve the paradox of her individuality. In 'Meroë' the boundaries of the individual psyche are everywhere insisted on and the characters are for the most part sealed off from each other. At the end of 'Meroë', then, White has brought the conflict within Theodora and the pressures exerted on her by others to a point of crisis that is almost wholly negative.
In the next section of the novel, 'Jardin Exotique', Theodora's crisis is viewed more positively: the barriers of personality are dissolved as White suspends distinctions between reality and illusion and Theodora's powers of empathy become vigorously active. 'Jardin Exotique' is by no means the world of confusion which that suspension may seem to engender, however, for as J.F. Burrows has observed, 'far from being a verbal chaos, Part Two stands in its own right and as a natural issue from Part One: for Theodora's European experience consists very largely in facing problems of her earlier life'. Yet the events and situations of 'Jardin Exotique' would be almost unintelligible without the significance invested in them by the leitmotifs which clarify their relationship with the action of 'Méroë'. In 'Jardin Exotique', then, the function of recurrent imagery is crucial to the continuity and unity of the narrative structure of the novel, as well as being a most effective means of revealing the significance of Theodora's experiences.

Whether taking place in fantasy or in actuality, Theodora's interactions with her fellow guests at the Hôtel du Midi afford her a clearer view of her own life than she has had before. She accepts the opportunity to revalue her experiences with complete honesty of purpose, the protective shell of her outer self being divested in the hotel's jardin exotique where, 'because silence had been intensified, and extraneous objects considerably reduced, thoughts would fall more loudly, and the soul, left with little to hide behind, must forsake its queer opaque manner of life and come

out into the open' (163). The self must eventually be identified and understood. White renders both the process of identification and the terms of Theodora's understanding by instituting a twofold evolution of the novel's leitmotifs. The images which have been introduced in 'Meroë' are transformed in 'Jardin Exotique' in terms both of contextual variation and of the alterations that White makes in his basic descriptive presentation of them. The leitmotif of the rose, for instance, undergoes both kinds of transformation when Theodora takes up residence in the Hôtel du Midi. The walls of her room are papered with a pattern of maroon roses, the symbols of roses which shout 'through megaphones' (161). Although here Theodora nostalgically recalls 'the flesh of roses, the roselight snoozing in the veins', she must make the adjustments that become necessary in the 'age of symbols' (161).

Theodora first enters into the spirit of that age in her fantasy of Katina's earthquake on the 'black island' which recalls the volcanic hills of Meroë (166). She is 'a mirror, held to the girl's experience', as their lives fuse 'like two distant unrelated lives mingling for a moment in sleep' (166). Theodora's assimilation of Katina's experience is announced in White's introduction of the leitmotif of the colour black. In the image of the pines in which the wind no longer stirs (166) there is a clear indication that, in her empathy with Katina, Theodora suspends the anxiety which was earlier associated with the image. A freedom is instituted in the fantasy figure Theodora/Katina, whom Theodora envisages as 'both frail and throbbing with impulsion, waiting to burst skywards on release', like the dove which she has once held in her hands (166).
For the moment at least, Theodora is released from her resentment of such matters as Frank Parrott's forgetfulness of the picnic that was to have been held at Meroë in their youth. The Katina/Theodora figure's plan to prepare for the possibility of death by going to 'an island, in which there are many pines' (168) recalls the intimations of mortality discovered by Theodora in her father's revelation of Herodotus' account of the ancient Meroë. In Katina/Theodora's plan to 'make a long picnic in a little cart, to the Temple of Athena', where 'the water will be cold, amongst the stones' (168), White recalls Theodora's way of bringing together all disappointments and crises, whether forgotten picnics or the death of her father or the cessation of Meroë. He also pointedly indicates Theodora's attempt to seek wisdom (at the Temple of Athena) in communication with people, even if in fantasy, rather than with objects as she does when she drifts in the creek at Meroë wondering about Pearl's and her own sexuality. The water will no longer be the setting for an alternative to thinking, but cold, running over stones such as those on the hill at Meroë where she sits to contemplate truth.

The fact that Theodora and Katina survive the fantastic earthquake foreshadows Theodora's later survival of past agonies.

In an extension of both the reality and fantasy of Theodora's first meeting with Katina, White includes a picnic in Chapter 10, in which Katina Pavlou makes her sexual intentions quite clear to Wetherby. Again the image of the pines is prominent in this episode. Mrs Rapallo, who sometimes becomes the mother figure of Theodora's fantasy life, sniffs at the trunk 'of an offending
pine' (265), much as Mrs Goodman has been known to act towards her husband, the original pine of Theodora's fantasy life.

Though distressed by her awareness of the situation between Wetherby and Katina, Theodora at least provisionally accepts it, understanding that it is 'necessary that Katina Pavlou should discover fire' (271). She is 'oppressed by a heavy music, a secret darkness of the trees, in which the sun just failed to glisten, however, while the lovers converse 'where the sun fell between the trunks of serious pines': and the pines again suggest anxiety. Later, Katina speaks with Theodora about the tower, which is presented with distinctly sexual connotations. Theodora sees that it is

strong and solitary and white. But whether its thick walls enclosed, in addition to damp, the smell of nettles, and possibly a dead bird, some personal exaltation or despair, was as obscure as the alleged moment in which Napoleon split the historical darkness of that part of the coast. (285).

The tower also recalls Theodora's discovery of the sexual activity of Tom and Pearl in the damp behind the cow bails where nettles are also mentioned (35-6), as J.B. Beston has pointed out. In their conversation about the tower, Katina affirms that it is 'better finally to know' about what it contains, even if that is painful or disagreeable. Theodora then recognizes a new maturity in Katina, seeing that in her face 'the bones had come' (287).

Her own acceptance of Katina's affirmation indicates Theodora's increased acceptance of sexuality and thus it signifies the emotional growth which typifies her experience in 'Jardin Exotique'.

The representation of continuity in Theodora's experience and the positive developments consequent on her awareness of it are, therefore, well established in the imagery which White presents in both fantasy and actuality. There would be nothing positive about her series of revisitations of past experience, there would be no revisitations, without Theodora's capacity to empathize with the experience of others. There are those, however, who cannot be persuaded by any degree of empathy to open themselves to others, as Theodora realizes while listening to 'the history of Wetherby, unfolding as logically as a shadow from the root of a cactus' (193). As Wetherby's narrative of his life continues, Theodora is 'not aware that it was meant for her' (193) and recognizes how separate Wetherby's self is from others. Significantly, White reintroduces the leitmotif of wood to indicate that recognition, in Theodora's fantasy of herself as 'some haphazard cupboard' in Wetherby's 'comparatively secure, ugly room, in which he proposed to arrange his thoughts' (193).

This fantasy is as revealing of Theodora as the others are. Where, in 'Meroë', Theodora strives to adopt the passivity of a stick drifting on the creek, so that she 'would not think', in the face of Wetherby's isolation in 'Jardin Exotique' she strives to achieve the 'peculiar honesty [of] the thoughtless kind of furniture' and 'her shoulders grew angular from expectation. She composed her grain' (193). In her fantasy of herself as a cupboard in Wetherby's room, Theodora is also taking on the part which her mother has ascribed to her in the days of the Huntly Clarkson relationship: that of 'a stick with men'. White subtly
distinguishes between this earlier episode and Theodora's encounter with Wetherby, however. During the later episode, there is nothing in Theodora's disposition of 'the superior acceptance of mahogany' (157) with which she has begun her sojourn at the Hôtel du Midi. The 'intuition of furniture' (193) is the quite different quality which brings about Theodora's insight into the meaning of the isolation and sterility of Wetherby's life and, by implication, of periods of her own.

If from her fantasy life with Katina Theodora gains a deeper insight into her own youth, and from her understanding of Wetherby's isolation begins to perceive the sterility of the completely self-regarding life, it is from the fantasies that she shares with Sokolnikov that Theodora derives her most comprehensive understanding. In the very early moments of their relationship she senses of him that 'he would unlock his solitude ... he would not bear the loneliness. He would look out' (180) and she meets his loneliness by adopting in fantasy the role of his sister, Ludmilla: 'a sour, yellow, reasonable woman' (179). Theodora understands Ludmilla, who wears boots 'like a Cossack under her long skirts' (175), because her own experience has been similar. Thinking of Ludmilla, Theodora recalls the comfort of her hunting expeditions with her father, 'because her boots rang hollow on the cold, yellow grass, and in her armpit she felt the firmness of her little rifle' (175).

She can picture herself as Ludmilla, too, in the episode at Kiev in which Sokolnikov's proposal of marriage is rejected by Varvara, whom the General refers to as 'my inspiration, my bright blue cloud, my singing bird' (199). For Theodora the parallel
with Fanny is clear enough and her recognition of this similarity brings to mind 'the bright glistening of Fanny Goodman' (82) in the waltz, at the Parrott's ball: 'Varvara swam against the waltz, and they stood in the open doorways, applauding, as she dashed the water from her swan breast' (200).

The destruction of the pavilion at Kiev by the Bolsheviks does not exactly parallel the sale of Meroë to the vulgar MacKenzie, but White's presentation of these experiences stresses their similarities. Where Meroë has been seen as 'Rack-an'-Ruin Hollow', its fences 'grey with age and yellow with lichen', tumbling down and lying round in a state of continued disrepair, the pavilion at Kiev is 'rotten' (239) and falling gradually into worse disrepair. The destructiveness of the revolutionaries at Kiev (239) is an enlargement of the grossness of Mr MacKenzie, the rich brewer who buys Meroë after George Goodman's death, and of the vulgarity of the auction of Meroë's furniture before the ownership of the house is transferred (99). Like the fantasy of Katina's earthquake, the fantasy of the destruction of the pavilion at Kiev indicates a re-orienting of Theodora's experience away from inwardness. In the fantasies, her most personal experience is translated into the experience of others and, in sharing the lives of others, Theodora is establishing the 'lifeline to other lives' which her previous inwardness had taught her did not exist.

As Burrrows has demonstrated, an important aspect of

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1. ""Jardin Exotique": The Central Phase of "The Aunt's Story"".
Theodora's emotional growth is the diminution of her previous resentment of the loss of Meroë and of the behaviour of her parents and sister during her early life. With the destruction of the pavilion comes an admission that 'the rightness of certain acts is a melancholy fact' (239) and in the extension of the fantasy to the episode in which Ludmilla dies, Theodora is clearly moving towards the acceptance of which Holstius later speaks as the path to wisdom. 'Finally, almost everything' (240) is right, Theodora concedes, as a prelude to the fantasy of the escape of the Sokolnikovs from the Bolsheviks and she realizes that 'she could not convince herself that she was not about to attempt to cross the mysteriously open space which separates beginning from end' (242). With the passing of the old Russian social order Ludmilla dies, as Theodora has 'died' with the death of her father and the crumbling of Meroë. The recurrence of the image of the pines (244ff.) during the fantasy of Ludmilla's death indicates the resolution of one of the most significant of the internal conflicts by which Theodora is persecuted: that between her father and herself. As Burrows points out, in this episode Theodora recognizes the immaturity of her previous view of her father. 1 As Ludmilla, Theodora tells the Bolsheviks, 'My brother is among other things a buffoon' (247), but she accepts him as she has never accepted the weakness of her father.

In the clearing in the pine forest, Theodora sits at the fire drawing such comfort from it as she remembers from the story of the Man who was Given his Dinner and her father when they were

lost together in the snowfields 'down Kiandra way' (44). Like the lost prospectors and like Frank Parrott after she had made him feel at the Parrott's ball 'the darkness that was pressing down', Theodora in her fantasy of Ludmilla's death cannot 'scrape together a few sticks quickly enough, to make a little fire, to sit against' (84): and she longs for 'the good warmth of fire, to sit on the rough resin-smelling log with her knees somewhere near her chin' (247). The positive connotation of the image of fire here suggests the spirit of acceptance with which she views her father in the fantasy of Ludmilla's death.

When looked at together, the death of Ludmilla (249) and the death of George Goodman (95-6) after 'a trying summer' (93) indicate the extent of Theodora's progress towards the acceptance of the end of her life at Meroë. She feels that, with the impending death of her father, 'all the sadness of the world was in the house' (86) at Meroë; and that, her father's death having occurred, 'the grey light was as thin as water and Meroë had, in fact, dissolved' (95). Her father, she feels, has departed from her on an 'odyssey from which there was no return' (100).

When Ludmilla dies, George Goodman's death and Theodora's sense of her own spiritual death are set in a less desolate perspective. The images of pines, light and of the 'greatness and paleness' (249) of Ludmilla's dissolution therefore illuminate White's narrative here, exemplifying the way in which imagery functions as part of his depiction of Theodora's spiritual growth.

Theodora also gains a more adult perspective on the antagonism between her parents as she overhears the squabble between Lieselotte and Wetherby in the room next to her own in the Hôtel du Midi,
as she lies listening to 'the stirring of the wallpaper', on which 'the mouths of paper roses open and close' (293). Having realized that 'she must accept the tactile voices of the voluble wall', upon hearing earlier 'the paper mouths of roses wetting their lips' (234) and the fierceness of Wetherby and Lieselotte's love-hate (234-35), she has learnt that for her 'Love is undoubtedly an acrostic' (235). But it is such a mystery not necessarily because she herself is a 'hard, plain, egotistical young woman who will never interpret the meaning of love' (105), as her mother has said she is and as Theodora has felt herself to be. She has long known that 'Love and hate ... are alternate breaths falling from the same breast' (143) but not until her experiences in the Hôtel du Midi does she apply the theory to the remembered practical situations at Meroë. When Lieselotte throws the oil lamp at Wetherby in the exasperated climax of their anger, the long re-evaluation of the Meroë experience comes to an end as Theodora hears 'words finally shatter, or the envelope that protects human personality' (294).

The bolt of lightning, by which Theodora is almost blasted in her childhood, recurs in the burning of the Hôtel du Midi which results from Lieselotte's anger. The leitmotif of fire assumes a purgatorial implication here, however: an important variation from both of its previous connotations. It is at first the fire of Lieselotte's and Wetherby's anger but it is transformed into a 'fiercer ... triumphant' (298) culmination of the 'Jardin Exotique' phase of Theodora's experience. Appropriately, therefore,
the leitmotif of fire functions in collaboration with that of
the rose, when Theodora sees the roses on her wallpaper 'dying
on their stems' (295) and the air 'branching' with fire (294).
In this episode, White brings the two major connotations of the
leitmotif together in preparation for the revelations of Holstius
in Part Three, as Theodora runs to safety, 'breathing the joy
or hatred of fire' (296).

Indeed, in the image of the burning hotel, White presents
a reconstitution of the joy and hatred of Theodora's 'Meroë'
phase, which has been re-aligned during her 'Jardin Exotique'
phase. As the fire begins to consume the wall of Theodora's
room she witnesses, in 'the revival of roses, how they glowed,
glowing and blowing like great clusters of garnets on the live
hedge' (295). The constant references to the rings worn by
Mrs Goodman, which Theodora sees by turns as objectifications
of Mrs Goodman's cruelty, anger, and destructiveness, also take
on a new significance. Mrs Goodman's garnet and Theodora's roses
are now identified with each other and this identification is soon
confirmed in Theodora's rescue of her mother's garnet ring from
the fire. The ring, which earlier is said to have 'changed its
expression, like most inherited things' (234), Theodora now sees
as 'rather an ugly little ring, but part of the flesh' (296).
She puts it on, for 'in the presence of the secret, leaping
emotions of the fire she was glad to have her garnet' (296).
Her 'Jardin Exotique' experience having culminated in this episode,
Theodora is now 'indifferent to any pricking pressure, any
dictatorship of the jardin exotique' (302). Her enhanced
understanding of 'the lost reality of childhood' (301) results
in her acceptance of that half of her experience she has feared and tried to reject and she declares that she 'may even return to Abyssinia' (302). She will return to Meroë, that is, in all its aspects, for: 'After the metal hieroglyphs she felt an immeasurable longing to read the expression on the flat, yellow face of stone. If the biscuit houses still existed' (302).

Theodora's more orderly investigation of the reality of 'the biscuit houses' of childhood is conducted in Part Three of the novel, 'Holstius', in which she 'returns to Abyssinia'. White now introduces to the narrative a clarity appropriate to the state in which Theodora makes the final judgement of her experience. She has, she writes to Fanny, 'seen and done, and the time has come at last to return to Abyssinia' (307). In returning to 'Abyssinia', Theodora intends to come back to her own country: a state of liberty, such as that spoken of by Katina after the burning of the Hôtel du Midi (301), or by herself when as a young woman she tells her father 'at Meroë I shall be free' (63).

The spiritual developments and reconciliations of her 'Jardin Exotique' experience must be translated into the terms of the world beyond the Hôtel du Midi, however, if Theodora is to live out her re-established selfhood. At first Theodora's yellowness is amplified in an integrated world of 'doing and being', of 'whole acres of time' in which the yellow corn blares its music of being (305). She now understands the world in terms of its 'two coiled themes': 'the flowing corn song, and the deliberate accompaniment of houses, which did not impede, however structural', for both themes are 'part of the same integrity of purpose and of being' (310).
Yet to have some understanding of the world and to live in it are not the same thing and, fearful that she does not 'fit the houses', that she is a 'discord' or a 'black note' in the 'bland cornsong', Theodora retreats towards social anonymity (311).

In that condition, having finally understood that 'she might not be able to make the necessary answers' (328) even to the kindly Johnson family, she proceeds towards 'the final objective of the faint road' (329), the 'thin house with elongated windows, like a lantern', reminiscent of Lestrange's shack (329). It is in this 'blank house' (329), which 'in no way suggested that it might be carried away by the passions of fire' (329), that Theodora finally reaches Ithaca. This presentation of the house image confirms much that precedes it. Its bareness recalls the many images of sparseness that have been associated with truth and clarity of vision in the novel. It is built among trees which are 'the same stunted pine' (328-29) that has been associated with her father's Ithaca and it sits in a clearing where 'the grass is as yellow as Meroë's' (329).

Within the house, Theodora no longer fears 'the process of disintegration' (330) as she feared the crumbling of Meroë, for from her elevated solitude she sees in the coming of night that the 'shapes of disintegrating light protested less than the illusions of solidity with which men surround themselves' (330). That seen, she becomes hopeful: 'In the house above the disintegrating world light and silence ate into the hard, resisting barriers of reason, hinting at some ultimate moment of clear vision' (330).
The positive aspect of the leitmotif of fire, which White then presents, accords with Theodora's expectancy, as she makes 'the little, tender tongue of fire that would soon consume a great deal of doubt' (331). There is, too, the comfort of the sense of reality which she derives from such objects as the chair and table: 'the essential of chair and table' (331) which she arranges in the house. In the early moments of her dialogue with Holstius, Theodora touches the table 'for greater precision' (332) and, seen from outside the fantasy of this dialogue, she can be understood to be struggling intensely towards an insight into her own reality. 'I suspect myself', she confesses to Holstius, 'feeling with her fingers for the grain of the table' (333). At her most desperate point, she digs her nails into the table and huddles on the bare floorboards 'beyond hope of protection by convention or personality' (334), in terror that she will lose Holstius as she has lost her other spiritual kin.

She has created in the figure of Holstius a being resembling her father, the Man who was Given his Dinner and Moraïtis, 'both detached and close' (333). In his presence the palpable world of the house and the intangible meanings of objects are united, for 'what made these sensations of love and sorrow more poignant, actual, wonderful, was that she could have touched the body of Holstius' (333). As formerly, in her father's presence, Theodora now is 'impressed ... by a congruity, a continuity of man' (333). She knows, however, that such feelings have always in the past been transient:
At times ... when expectation exceeded fact. Death had taken George Goodman and put him under marble. Fact corrected expectation. Just as the mind used and disposed of the figments of Mrs. Rapallo, and Katina Pavlou, and Sokolnikov. And now Holstius. She watched the rough texture of his coat for the first indications of decay. (333).

Joy and sorrow, she then realizes, or Holstius tells her, must be accepted: for the 'irreconcilable halves' (334) of experience are complementary, as the evidence of her 'several lives' (334) has suggested. After this realization, the leitmotif of wood appears for the last time in the novel as Theodora, having scrubbed the floor of the shack, feels 'a certain affinity with the women in houses' and conceives of herself as 'simple and impervious as a scrubbed board' (336). In this state she at last understands that there is 'nothing that she did not know, only this had to be laid bare painfully' (341); that she is 'a world of love and compassion that she had only vaguely apprehended' (341). She also grasps the multiple nature of her own self, realizing that in the multiplicity of all individuals and of all experience is 'true permanence' (342). This is a very different condition from the annihilation to which she aspires as an escape from her mother's destructiveness. It is even different from the 'humility ... anonymity ... pureness of being' which she hopes to achieve in giving the Johnsons a false name (322).

Knowing that there is 'no end to the lives of Theodora Goodman' (342), or of the others she has known because she has entered their lives 'making them momentarily dependent for love or hate, owing her this portion of their fluctuating personalities' (342), Theodora is able to sweep back 'a dark shadow from her face
with her quite solid hand' (343). It is a gesture which resolves the conflicts introduced in Part One of the novel when the thought of the 'second Meroë' engenders in her 'an expanding terror' (19). The image of the shadow also recalls Theodora at the beginning of this final phase of her experience, when she was seen as a 'tall and black' figure 'making a shadow, at the bend in the road' (316).

The final resolution of the novel's imagery proceeds, too, from this gesture as Theodora realizes that she 'could accept the pathetic presumption of the white room' (342) in deference to the 'admirable ... though limited' (341) people who are soon to commit her to a psychiatric hospital. Acceptance is not the destruction which she had earlier feared. She is able to claim with assurance her existence and to come 'at once, quietly and decently into the room' (345) of the shack in which the Johnsons and Doctor Rafferty are waiting for her. She puts on the black hat, 'with its large, black, gauze rose, more a sop to convention than an attempt at beauty' (311) because it is suggested that she should do so. The leitmotifs of the rose, of black and of yellow are then presented together, suggesting Theodora's preservation as an individual spirit despite her apparent imprisonment. The novel ends, as it began, with this fundamental antithesis which is very clearly signified by the imagery of the ultimate paragraph, where the bright vitality of the rose is especially specific:

So Theodora Goodman took her hat and put it on her head, as it was suggested she should do. Her face was long and yellow under the great black hat. The hat sat straight, but the doubtful rose trembled and glittered, leading a life of its own. (346).
Obviously the significance of these images derives from their previous appearances in different contexts in the narrative. Clearly, too, the recurrence of these images is a willed exploitation of the aesthetic possibilities of prose discourse by the author. In the final section of the novel, the poetic level of the narrative issues directly from the distortions of Part Two which itself re-presents the material introduced in Part One. White therefore completes the sequences of the imagery in 'Holstius', as the composer of a movement in music might add a coda, to form a more definite conclusion to the development of the novel's themes and of the central character. In the progress of the language can be traced the progress of the most significant developments of the novel, those which concern the transformations occurring within Theodora Goodman. In those transformations are enacted White's celebration of the human spirit. In Theodora, the spirit is all that remains at the end of the novel: her outer self is a self-acknowledged charade, a pantomime of conformity. The spirit survives with 'a life of its own' despite the ravages, self-inflicted and otherwise, which threaten it with destruction.
II

IMAGES AND EPISODIC STRUCTURE
Although patterns of imagery clearly provide a structure of meaning in White's novels, especially in their interaction with the characterization, an analysis of these patterns cannot account fully for the design upon which the novels are founded. If White were constructing streams of connected images only, he would be writing long prose poems in the manner of Frank Le Mesurier, which clearly he is not. The distinction between a long prose poem and a novel which is written in prose of a sometimes poetic kind may not be altogether clear, and is likely to remain undefined. The matter becomes quite uncertain, for instance, in the context of the Imagist claim that the idea of a long poem is self-contradictory. Much confusion in this matter is dispelled, however, when it is realized that, no matter how poetic the language in which it is written, the novel is peculiarly episodic in nature. Episodes to the novel are as scenes to a play: they are discrete areas of action which dramatize an aspect of character or theme. Thus, in any novel certain episodes will be crucial in the development of any given phase of the narrative; and a series of such episodes will cohere to provide the basis of the plot. Critically important episodes such as these may be central to the phase of the narrative in which they occur, in that other episodes proceed in a direct causative way from them. Some of them are central to the whole novel, in that the whole of the narrative may be causally linked to them.
In Patrick White's novels such episodes frequently incorporate images which suggest developments in the novel's characters; or which define the terms in which its themes are dramatized. These images engender a poetic amplitude within the episodes in which they occur, therefore. The imagery within the central episodes of White's novels, in that it contributes incrementally to the poetic structure of the novels, naturally complements such functions of the patterns of imagery as were discussed in the previous chapter.

Images actively define the effect of an episode. In Happy Valley, for instance, one of the early episodes of the novel concerns the painful birth of a stillborn child to Mrs Chalker, a 'big ox-like woman with a face that was naturally red, but which had now gone putty-coloured' (10-11). Her helplessness in suffering is stressed:

Sometimes she tossed about and sometimes she just lay still. She was having a child, she told herself dumbly at first, until with the increase of pain she did not know what she was having, only that she was having, having, straining, it was tearing her apart ... (11).

The futility of the woman's pain is clear enough and her experience of it is more pathetic for its inevitability. Oliver Halliday's anxiety and weariness, as the doctor attending the birth (12); the Chinese woman assistant's fatalistic silence and the token of her suffering, the cast in her left eye (11); the caustic reservations about the doctor in the mind of the Gampish midwife

(11-12): all of these facets of presentation contribute to the sense of sourness that is evoked by the image of suffering which this early event becomes. The function of the episode is to introduce the concern with suffering foreshadowed in the novel's epigraph and its thematic relevance is clearly evident in the image of the birth. The novel's episodic and metaphorical structures unfold, finally culminating in Oliver Halliday's reflection:

This is the part of man, to withstand through his relationships the ebb and flow of the seasons, the sullen hostility of rock, the anaesthesia of snow, all those passions that sweep down through negligence or design to consume and desolate, for ... he can withstand, he is immune from all but the ultimate destruction of the inessential outer shell. (327).

Many of the episodes through which the novel's thematic direction is established are characterized by images which function as the images of pain or suffering do here, where an event is the vehicle of the image.

A situation may also be the vehicle of an image, as it is in the introductory paragraphs of the second novel, The Living and the Dead, in which White presents the crowded railway station as a 'world of trivial incident', in which light reveals 'very little to distinguish the individual feature in the flow of faces' and in which Elyot and Eden are aware of 'prevalent, and yet irrelevant sound' (11). Here the situation in which the incident is set becomes an image of the teeming

details of experience which embody 'l'ordre et le bonheur du monde moral', ¹ which Elyot strives to perceive. Here and in the image of childbirth in Happy Valley, White suggests concepts which are of the utmost importance to subsequent thematic development in the novels. In that both images are central to the introductory phase of exposition in these novels, their immediate relevance is local; though each is also significant in terms of the whole of the novel in which it occurs, because of the prefigurative function of the introductory phase in which it is located.

Such images do not occur only in the early phases of the novels: they are also dispersed throughout the narratives, serving a number of purposes which are associated with White's attempt to realize the 'structure of reality' in his novels. Many of the images functioning within episodes which are central to specific areas of the narrative help to establish the tone of those episodes. Others have the more specifically structural function of relating the episode in which they occur to other episodes. They may even help to ensure the structural unity of the entire plot, by providing its component episodes with coherence.

1. The phrase is quoted from the novel's epigraph, taken from the writings of Helvétius. For the following translation of the epigraph, I am indebted to Professor G.C. Jones of the Department of Romance Languages, the University of New England:
'I put you under the guardianship of pleasure and pain; the one and the other will see to your thoughts, your actions; will engender your passions, will excite your aversions, your friendships, your tenderesses, your furies; will light your desires, your fears, your hopes; will unveil truths, will plunge you into errors; and after having caused you give birth to countless absurd and different systems of morality and legislation, will uncover to you one day the simple principles, to the development of which are attached the order and the happiness of the moral world.'
The figurative aspect of a number of episodes in White's novels is so pronounced that they are, in fact, themselves complex images. The function of these episodic images, like that of the images which metaphorically enrich episodes in the novels, may be confined to a specific area of the text or may even be directly relevant to the whole of the text. In his creation of images of this kind, White has devised a technical form which shows forth his 'structure of reality' with both immediacy and clarity, as Joyce does with his epiphanies.

The Function of Images Within Episodes

Consistent with the generally poetic condition of White's prose, imagery contributes to the establishment of tone in many of the episodes within his narratives. In The Aunt's Story, the meeting between Pearl and Theodora after many years' separation is an episode in which Theodora's experience of middle age is enriched by the memory of her childhood to which Pearl has belonged. At the time of the meeting, Theodora's inherent solitude has been emphasized by the waning of her friendship with Huntly Clarkson and by her sense of guilt at having entertained the idea of murdering her mother. Lou's letters to her help to establish a warmth in Theodora; but her relationship with her niece is 'both close and distant' (146), not adequate to calming the restlessness which Theodora is experiencing.

White renders Theodora's emotional condition in terms of visual imagery in this episode, with the colour purple being predominant. At first, purple is associated with pain as Theodora walks beneath a dusk sky in which the 'violet welts and crimson wounds showed' (146). Yet there is a positive aspect of Theodora's sense of her own pain, for it leads her to feel that she almost has, at least in this respect, something in common with those around her. She sees that 'the hour was fusing even the fragments of unrelated lives, almost of Theodora Goodman' and feels able to understand, in a vague way, 'faces clotting at corners' which are 'not so very obscure in this light' and which have in common 'veins ... throbbing with the same purple' (146). In 'Jardin Exotique', the power of empathy which Theodora shows here ranges more widely over the emotions and her empathetic experiences are less transient than this one is. The episode has a prefigurative function, so its scale is inferior to that of the central phase of the novel.

With Pearl's appearance the tone shifts from the hopeful melancholy that is evoked by the prominence of the colour image, as the image takes its place in context of royal vulgarity. Purple is now the colour of the splendour of unified experience: time past and present are fused in the aura of the port which Pearl and Theodora drink together, as it flows 'in a powerful purple stream' (149). Even the zany image of the 'man with the mulberry nose' at the bar who has 'a talent for eating glass' (147-48) has the force of holiday rather than of alienation, since for Theodora
'object or motive' have 'achieved a lovely, a logical simplicity' (148). Nevertheless Pearl's resurrection is no miracle and, despite her joy, Theodora's experience is of such a different order from Pearl's, there eventually comes the time when Pearl has 'descended deeper than the port could reach' (149). Theodora must accept their separateness, the essential differences between them: despite its closeness, she sees, 'the purple world of Pearl ... eludes other hands' (148). It is as foreign to her as she is to it, for 'Life is full of alternatives, but no choice' (148).

Developments in Theodora's emotional state are vividly rendered in the shifting tones of the narrative account of the events here. White in this way prepares for the final stage of 'Meroë' during which Mrs Goodman's death leaves Theodora acutely conscious of her own separateness, of the 'distances that separate'. The episode is thus important in establishing those links between characterization and the development of theme, which were discussed in the previous chapter; and its capacity to establish such links is realized in terms of the predominant image of the episode. Theodora's relationships with others being a dominant concern of The Aunt's Story, this episode is obviously a significant one, not least in that the language of the narrative exemplifies the essence of Theodora's experience.

In the interaction between his characters, especially the major characters, White is concerned with that essential level of experience, and he renders such intercourse obliquely. Stan and Amy Parker's relationship, like that of Theodora with so many of the other characters, takes its form and derives its intensity
from a complex of diverse unspoken understandings. The appropriateness of imagery as a means of revealing what is and remains unspoken between characters is seen clearly enough in *The Tree of Man*, where White often presents moments in the life of the Parkers in which each is aware of the mystery of the other, but in which each responds differently to that awareness. At such times, it is said that:

> they would look at each other in the course of some silence, and she would wonder, she would wonder what she had been giving away. But he respected and accepted her mysteries, as she never could respect and accept his. (147).

Nevertheless, words are unnecessary at these intense points of silent mutual realization, when they are 'absorbed in the mystery of the moment' (149).

After White introduces these notions about the characters, he exemplifies them dramatically. Amy recollects the episode in which Stan meets her 'accidentally', and stops to join her in picking mulberries. During the 'moment at the mulberry tree', Amy is aware that she is 'stained' by the juice of the tree's fruit, 'mottled' by 'a continual opening and closing of the tree, an interplay of sky and leaves, of light and shade' (149). The 'envelope of the shining tree' is presented as the physical equivalent of the moment of mysterious intimacy shared by Stan and Amy, which she is impelled to try to express in physical terms when she kisses him with sudden vehemence. She succeeds only in 'destroying the soft ripeness of mulberries' (149-50),

however, and Stan goes away leaving Amy 'ashamed of her ripeness and her purple hands' (150).

The colour image functions emblematically here to suggest Amy's habitual concern with the surfaces of the physical world and the presence of the image in Amy's memory of 'the moment at the mulberry tree' differentiates her version from the subsequent presentation of Stan's memory of the same event, from which the image is absent (151). For Stan, there are mysteries below the surface which for the present he is willing merely to acknowledge rather than to try to objectify them, as Amy does. This essential difference between the two of them is elaborated throughout the novel before its development culminates in the episode of Stan's death, in which Amy is seen as 'holding his head and looking into it some minutes after there was anything left to see' (497). The presentation of 'the moment at the mulberry tree' from two fundamentally opposite points of view, then, exemplifies the balance of the antithetical positions adopted by Stan and Amy in relation to the mystery and poetry beneath the surface of experience with which the novel is concerned.

Such episodes as this, in which aspects of the novel's themes are crystallized, are bound together with other similarly-functioning episodes to form an integrated whole, images within them providing coherence. In The Aunt's Story, as I suggested in chapter 1, Theodora goes through a revaluation of her experience during her stay at the Hôtel du Midi: when she learns to appreciate the multifaceted nature of reality, as White makes clear in the imagery. As much of Theodora's experience in this part of the novel has the heightened quality of dream, indeed, imagery is of fundamental importance in linking the episodes which
together suggest her deepening appreciation of 'the great fragmentation of maturity' (155). Her deepening appreciation of the reality of Mrs Rapallo's life, for instance, while it is developed in one of the strands of revaluation in 'Jardin Exotique', is also in its final stage an indication of a new maturity in Theodora's perceptions.

At first, in the episode of Theodora's first meal at the Hôtel du Midi, Mrs Rapallo bursts into Theodora's life as a figure of such impressive magnificence that she can only be presumed to be the imposter that Sokolnikov says she is:

Though without hindering Mrs. Rapallo, whom time and history had failed to trip. She 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. Under her great hat, on which a bird had settled years before, spreading its meteoric tail in a landscape of pansies, mignonette, butterflies, and shells, her face shrieked with the inspired clowns, peered through the branches of mascara at objects she could not see, and sniffed through thin nostrils at many original smells. Though her composition was intended to be static, sometimes Mrs. Rapallo advanced, as now. Her stiff magenta picked contemptuously at the fluff on the salle à manger carpet. She felt with the ferrule of her parasol for the billets-doux that anonymous gentlemen had perhaps let fall. 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. (182).

Theodora's lively awareness here of the ambiguity of Mrs Rapallo, the embodiment of both splendour and absurdity which are rendered in the images of her clothing as well as in the inferences about her that Theodora draws from her manner, indicates that she sees Mrs Rapallo as a figure whom she cannot understand in any single, simple light.
As Burrows and the Bestons in their different ways suggest, 1 Mrs Rapallo is a mother surrogate for Theodora. In her interaction with Mrs Rapallo, then, White is presenting the process by which Theodora's view of her mother assumes a complexity indicative of her own growth to maturity in this part of the novel. Having conceived of Mrs Rapallo in her more socially formidable manifestation, Theodora also confronts her more squalid aspect during the later episode in which she goes to her room to steal the nautilus shell, finding that:

In the semi-darkness of Mrs. Rapallo's room, furred and clammy as monkey skin, with the same distinctive smell, she looked for some event. But in Mrs. Rapallo's room events were past. They hung from hooks, or littered the chairs with discarded whalebone. Nothing would ever disturb the dust, except a finger aimlessly writing a name. GLORIA LEONTINI, the finger had written, on the small undecorated space of oak on which the nautilus stood, PRINCIPESSA DELL'ISOLA GRANDE, garlanding the foot of the complotier. (253). The absurdity which was suggested in the image of Mrs Rapallo's clothing in the first of these passages has been converted into a rancid grotesquerie in the second. If Mrs Rapallo is seen in the first as a parody of Julia Goodman at her most socially potent, in the second White recalls Mrs Goodman's later isolation and helplessness: that of an 'old and soft' woman who drinks hot milk 'with little, soft, complaining noises', the milk skin hanging from her lip to give her 'the appearance of an old white goat' (142);

who is found dead 'without her teeth' wearing 'a final expression
that was gentle, and prim, and uncharacteristically silly' (151-52).
In Mrs Rapallo's room Theodora finds, in material form, the
pathos of a life in which events are all in the past.

In these two episodes, then, White prepares for Theodora's
final meeting with Mrs Rapallo in which, bearing witness to Mrs
Rapallo's unmasking, while floating with her on her 'tulip-
coloured stream' which, in its flow does not 'respect substance'
(253), she accepts Mrs Rapallo's advice to 'relax' (291). In
turn, an acceptance of the recalcitrant difficulties of
distinguishing illusion from reality reach a point of serene
resolution in 'Holstius', the development of the image patterns
in these episodes paralleling Theodora's growth to maturity in
which the novel's themes are dramatized.

It is the function of certain episodes in the novels to bring
together the antitheses on which the themes rest: and of the
imagery which appears within these episodes to clarify those
antitheses. A typical instance of this aspect of the novels' structural nature is to be found in Chapter 4 of Voss, \(^1\) which
centres on the episode concerning the Bonner's party to mark
the occasion of the expedition's departure. As Mrs Bonner's panacea
for the anxieties with which she is beset at the time - Rose's
pregnancy, Mr Bonner's impatience with Voss, Laura's 'heaviness'
of manner - the party is inevitably a trivial, if pretty, affair
by comparison with the more profound things that are imminent in
the novel:

\(^1\) London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1957.
It would revive all spirits, soothe all nerves, even the frayed German ones. For Mrs Bonner loved conviviality. She loved the way the mood would convey itself even to the candle-flames. She loved all pretty, coloured things; even the melancholy rinds of fruit, the slops of wine, the fragments of a party, recalled some past magic. (83).

Invitations having been sent to selected guests, who qualify for them by being 'comme il foh', the proceedings begin within predictable limitations of politeness, with the very setting becoming an image of these limitations:

Two big lamps had transformed the drawing-room into a perfect, luminous egg, which soon contained all the guests. These were waiting to be hatched by some communication with one another. Or would it not occur? The eyes appeared hopeful, if the lids were more experienced, themselves enclosed egg-shapes with uncommunicative veins. (86).

As in The Aunt's Story morning is for the child Theodora 'round, and veined like the skin inside an unhatched egg, in which she curled safe still' (16), a measure of her innocence, so here in the Bonner's drawing room, social innocence - albeit a different kind from Theodora's - prevails. That the naivete of the Bonner world is a form of innocence is manifest in the childishness of Mr and Mrs Bonner, whom Laura envisages as children, even, during her illness (355). The prettiness of their entertainment is figured in the description of the dessert:

Puddings had by this time been brought: brittlest baskets of caramel, great gobbets of meringue. When the big, thick, but somehow thoughtful woman who was waiting at table set down amongst them the jellied quinces, Voss saw that it was indeed a pretty dish, of garnet colour, with pale jade lozenges, and a somewhat clumsy star in that same stone, or angelica. (89).
At the party, Tom Radclyffe's expression of his love for Belle in the song Love's Witchcraft has about it a decorous pomposity. It is noted that the song causes 'some vibration amongst the objects in glass and china on the shelves and cabinets' (84): though Tom sings with genuine 'fervour' (91) and his song is tonally consistent with the whole affair:

Maiden look me in the face ...
Steadfast, serious, no grimace!
Maiden, mark me, now I task thee
Answer quickly, what I ask thee!
Steadfast look me in the face.
Little vixen, no grimace! (91).

Such stuff is of a piece with the tritely coy innocence with which Tom and Belle's relationship is viewed by the gathering. Voss has created a ripple on the party's social calm, too, by his reading of the German Romantic poem, but the mild disturbance which he causes is of a very different kind from that caused by Tom's song, which is at least resonant with the common mood. Voss's poem is, on the other hand, entirely inappropriate:

Am blassen Meeresstrande
Sass ich gedankenbekümmert und einsam.
Die Sonne neigte [sic.] sich tiefer, und warf
Glihrnte Streifen auf das Wasser,
Und die weissen, weiten Wellen,
Von der Flut gedrängt,
Schäumten und rauschten näher und näher ... (87). ¹

¹. My remarks on the poem are based on the following translation, for which I am indebted to Mrs A. Hoddinott of the Department of English, the University of New England:

By the pale edge of the sea
I sat oppressed and alone
The sun inclined lower in the sky, and threw
Glowing red rays on the water,
And the white, broad waves,
Oppressed by the flood,
Foamed and rushed nearer and nearer ...

My thanks also to Professor E.L. Marson of the Department of German, the University of New England, for the background information with which he supplied me on Heinrich Heine's poem Abenddämmerung ("Evening Dusk") from which White's quotation is taken. The hyperbolic identification of Heine's speaker
The rather melodramatic intensity of this poem is obviously inappropriate to the occasion. It 'will not bear translation' (87), Voss says, and certainly its melancholy power is tinged with fatuousness in this setting. Polite society may be the victim of the irony of White's narrative voice in this episode, but Voss's high Romantic self-reference is also ridiculed by situational irony: not that either attack is more than light mockery. Laura is also satirised when she is revealed as the prig that she suspects herself of being, in her blunt rejection of Tom's condescension. Giving him a literal account of the thoughts of 'little Laura' (88) about which he professes curiosity, Laura is - to say the least of it - lacking in the urbanity which might have both fobbed off the Lieutenant and protected her integrity. Instead, she relentlessly turns her remarks towards a culmination which shocks everyone, except Voss, of course:

Just now, it was the drumstick on Mr Palfreyman's plate. I was thinking of the bones of a dead man, uncovered by a fox, it was believed, that I once saw in Penrith churchyard as I walked there with Lucy Cox, and how I was not upset, as Lucy was. It is the thought of death that frightens me. Not its bones. (89).

Footnote 1 continued:

with the natural world in this part of the poem, I am told, directly contrasts with the subsequent sequence in which the speaker identifies, with greater satisfaction, with the people he has known in childhood. Hence the poem is an apt source of White's satirical presentation of Voss, whose relations with the people at the Bonners' gathering are remote and whose identification with the country which he later explores is in fact symptomatic of his general obsession with his own divinity.
So the imagery of the episode embodies the social/antisocial polarity which underlies much of the conflict in the novel. Laura's choice of the drumstick here, as the starting point of her observations on bones and death inevitably alienates her from the others because she has dared to articulate the unmentionable, mortality, in terms of polite comfortable society's very symbols. The link here between the food imagery and the image of physical decay is subtle testament of White's brilliance in presenting the comedy of manners and of situation. Arranged on one side of the metaphoric balance struck in Laura's remarks, the images of the food and the comfortable surroundings suggest the spiritual innocence which engenders the complacency, perhaps even the evasiveness, of the Bonner milieu. On the other side, there is the image of the bones of the Penrith corpse, with its accompanying hint of the (definitely not 'comme il foh') savagery in the natural world that is suggested by the fox's raid on the grave.

If the conflicts and motivations within the novel are to be gauged accurately, it is clearly necessary to take stock of the way images function, as they do here. Divergent moral and philosophical poles are most certainly present in this novel, as they must be in works which are directed towards fundamental questions about the human condition; but the completeness of White's command of situation, tone and manners ensures that these extremes are far from baldly presented. As a novelist rather than a philosopher, he presents his responses to the world in terms of convincing fiction in many episodes such as this one, where the themes of his work are most impressively realized.
Notwithstanding the irony to which the Bonner set is subjected here, White recognizes - even with affection - the warmth of the occasion, the genuine quality of fellowship beneath its frivolous veneer. Voss and Laura, though they too are revealed in a somewhat ridiculous stance, are also basically endorsed, as they are in the prelude to Voss's curious poetry reading: 'It was again in a dream, Laura sensed, but of a different kind, in the solid egg of lamplight, from which they had not yet been born' (87). Indeed it is given to Voss and Laura 'to be hatched by some communication with one another' from the limitations of the social egg, as it is not given to the others when all had hoped to be liberated.

Voss and Laura's liberation is recorded both literally and symbolically in their withdrawal from the party into the garden where they come finally to understand each other. The episode thus opens out into their crucial meeting, in which the most profound concerns of the novel begin to take a definite shape. The antitheses established in the episode of the party are thus requalified in a setting more serious than the triteness of the workaday social world. Nevertheless it is from the party episode that they take their beginnings in this part of the novel. Possibilities of transcendence in the ordinary levels of existence are therefore implicit in the episodic structure of the novel; the origins of that implication are quite clearly located in the imagery of this episode; and the dynamic interrelation of images, incidents, the characters' motivation and the tone shape its fictive reality.
An important inference to be drawn from this aspect of the structure of Chapter 4 of *Voss* is that, despite the allegations to the contrary which some critics make, White presents his protagonists as anything but morally assured. There is little point in denying their status in the novels, of course, but they retain it in spite of themselves as much as because of their inherently positive qualities. In their conversation in the garden, Laura and Voss begin the most meaningful phase of the relationship in which each eventually achieves the understanding of humanity's relation to God, which each seeks in his or her way. Their behaviour at the party is in fact of the kind which would lead them away from such achievement because of its intrinsic self-aggrandisement.

Each of the protagonists has the task of striking the balance between undue assertion of self over others, the alienation of self from community, and a constructive recognition of solitude, a positive realization of selfhood. Thus Oliver Halliday eventually accepts his familial responsibilities in *Happy Valley*, as Vic Moriarty does not. He learns that another person cannot be possessed in a way that contrasts with the ownership established by Sidney Furlow over Clem Hagan. In *The Living and the Dead*. Elyot Standish considers his solitude as by no means the alienation that it might appear to be. That there is 'no lifeline to other lives', Theodora finds, is simply untrue: even, or perhaps especially, for the metaphysical quester. To enact the necessities of one's solitude is not to withdraw into the hinterland of the self, Alf Dubbo finds in *Riders in the Chariot*.  

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1. London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1961, 383. See 347-48, 459-61, 469, 512-13 for references to Alf's withdrawal, to his regretful half-attempts to communicate from the fringes of social intercourse and to his final, solitary expression of fellowship with Himmelfarb, Miss Hare and Mrs Godbold.
Conversely, to conceive of one's solitude as an election which brings with it the responsibility of fruiting goodness, love and understanding on others is an equally self-defeating approach to individual fulfilment, as White shows in his presentation of Himmelfarb during his walks on the Lindenallee or in the Statdwald, after the disappearance of Reha. In a semi-episodic narrative sequence at the beginning of Chapter 7 of Riders in the Chariot, White presents him as having 'reached a state of practical disembodiment' which enables him to 'enter into the faces' that he passes (176). From the interrelation of images in the narrative, subsequent to White's designation of Himmelfarb's solitary wanderings as a 'search for a solution to the problem of atonement' (176), can be judged the extent to which this rather disturbing behaviour falls short of success. The practice of entering into the faces that he passes, it is said:

became a habit with the obsessed Jew, and he derived considerable comfort from it, particularly after it had occurred to him that, as all rivers must finally mingle with the shapeless sea, so he might receive into his own formlessness, the blind souls of men, which lunged and twisted in their efforts to arrive at some unspecified end. Once this insight had been given him, he could not resist smiling, regardless of blood and dogma, into the still unconscious faces, and would not recognize that he was not always acceptable to those he was trying to assist. For the unresponsive souls would rock, and shudder, and recoil from being drawn into the caverns of his eyes. And once somebody had screamed. And once somebody had gone so far as to threaten.

But their deliverer was not deterred. He was pervaded as never before by a lovingkindness. (176).

The grandness of Himmelfarb's motives, his intentions towards humanity, is here most precisely figured in the image - significantly, an image of Himmelfarb's conception - of the rivers and the formless
sea. That White by no means disparages the concept of undivided humanity, which Himmelfarb's image suggests, is made clear in terms of the fellowship of the four protagonists of the novel and in Himmelfarb's preoccupation with uniting the sparks of the Man Kadmon. Nevertheless union is not to be achieved by unilateral action and the image of Himmelfarb's eyes as potentially-engulfing caverns succinctly evokes the gulf between his philanthropic intentions and the external appearance which he presents to others. The passage is, then, a microcosmic elucidation of that tension between the concepts of union and annihilation which is dramatized in the relations between the four protagonists and the society of this novel: and here the tension takes its reference from the interrelation of the two images which dominate the episode.

Images thus function to delineate the terms of the novel's moral order and, having outlined that here at the social level, White then proceeds to consider the most profound implications of those terms in respect of the individual's experience, as the narrative's focus narrows onto Himmelfarb's failure to perceive the Chariot:

Only at dusk, when even human resentment has scuttled from the damp paths, the Jew would begin to suspect the extent of his own powers. Although that winter, of bewilderment and spiritual destruction, the concept of the Chariot drifted back, almost within his actual grasp. In fact, there were evenings when he thought he had succeeded in distinguishing its form on the black rooftops, barely clearing the skeletons of trees, occasions when he could feel its wind as it drenched him in departing light. Then, as he stood upon the rotting leaves and steadied himself against the stream of memory, he would drag his top-coat closer, by tighter, feverish handfuls, to protect his unworthy, shivering sides. (176).
The concepts of transcendence with which White deals in this novel are in themselves elusive: to realize them aesthetically is a task of stunning difficulty in which the success of the metaphor of the Chariot is crucial. Here Himmelfarb is obsessed with the perception of transcendence, but its relation to the issues of the individual's position in society is clarified in the narrative development which takes place between the two passages quoted. It is evident, that is, that the metaphor of the Chariot is closely associated with the idea of the community of humanity as much as it also suggests the more abstruse concept of immanent transcendence. That concept is realized here, in the context of Himmelfarb's metaphysical striving, in the images of physical phenomena and of the forms of life in the material world. The skeletons of trees, the winter wind and the departing light set against the dark outline of the houses here evoke the clarity which is so important to Himmelfarb's perception. The floor of rotting leaves on which he stands is metaphorically consistent with his failure of perception and with the bewilderment and spiritual destruction which are most pressingly experienced by Himmelfarb after his wife's disappearance, when he is strongly aware of his inadequacies. Clearly these issues are highly significant to the messianic aspect of Himmelfarb's quest. Equally clearly the episodic and narrative structure of the novel is continuously

1. See Chapter 3 of this thesis for a discussion of the function of the metaphor of the Chariot as the poetic centre of the novel.
shaped to enact and clarify them in a manner determined by the function of the imagery.

The necessity of poetic usage to the realization of such profundity is as clear in all of White's work as it is here. The most demanding of the problems that he sets himself are always approached in terms of this necessity, but nowhere so impressively as in Chapter 13 of *Voss*, in which are entered the most profound reaches of the novel's exploration of the state of humanity in relation to divinity. The action of the entire novel hinges on the paradox which is articulated in this climactic chapter by Laura:

> When man is truly humbled, when he has learnt that he is not God, then he is nearest to becoming so. In the end, he may ascend. (411).

Underlying this paradox is the statement of the conjoint nature of the myths of the Incarnation and the Resurrection which lead Laura to it, when finally she fully understands them as 'God into man. Man. And Man returning into God' (411).

In his expedition Voss has sought to contradict this notion, aspiring towards divinity by denying his humanity. As Le Mesurier sees, the levelling of Voss's pretensions is as inevitable as the collapse of his exhausted body: the needs, weaknesses and limitations of which Voss has despised, as alien to his aspirations. He is forced to accept the idea that striving for ascension is inescapably inhibited by physicality, however great the craving; and therefore to accept also the suffering
which is the corollary of this conflict between striving and restriction. 'Man is God decapitated. That is why you are bleeding' (387), Laura tells Voss in one of the spiritual exchanges which occur in this chapter: and it is the humble acceptance of his humanity that finally ensures his ascension. Voss's achievement of this ultimate condition is suggested and confirmed allegorically and it is wrongheaded to seek a dramatization of it at the literal level. Nevertheless, there is a need for an assimilation of the two levels to ensure that poetic developments within the prose be consistent with the immediately perceivable realities of the action.

White satisfies that demand in this part of the novel in his presentation of the image of the Comet which, to those who witness its progress, is a physical manifestation of transcendence, akin to the stars which lie beyond the power of Judd's perception. The Comet is introduced into the narrative when Mrs Bonner sees it against the background of the 'most palpable' sky 'of solid, dark, enamelled blue', as a 'curious phenomenon', a 'broad path of light' which 'she almost dared hope ... might lead her out of the state of mental confusion' (399). Mr Bonner's response to the Comet is predictably expressed in terms of the town gossip he has heard, the newspaper reports he has read. Yet, despite the dryness of his observation that the Comet is to be scientifically observed by a substitute astronomer, he does share his wife's timidly imaginative hopes, for 'his eyes showed that he too had hoped to escape along the path of celestial light' (399).
The responses of the Bonners are important in establishing the transcendent power of the Comet in mundane terms, in a novel in which 'the world of semblance' communicates with 'the world of dreams' (277). White does not compromise the metaphoric significance of the image, however, and it is clear that the flatness of the Bonners' responses to the Comet is a matter only of their inability to express the effect which the sight of it has on them:

the two old people stood rather humbly watching an historic event. In that blaze, they were dwindling to mere black points, and as the light poured, and increased, and invaded the room, even Laura Trevelyan, beneath the dry shells of her eyelids, was bathed at least temporarily in the cool flood of stars. (400).

Humility is the keynote of Harry Robarts' response to the Comet, too: having been told what it is, he is 'ashamed to ask for further explanation' and to risk thereby the further sarcasm of Frank. Rather, he is content to bathe 'in his reverent ignorance' (402). He declares his gladness to have seen it (406), to have felt himself 'hollow with it' (402) and rests content. Le Mesurier's response is uncharacteristically perfunctory, even considering his occasional contempt for Harry. His silence on the subject of the Comet, apart from the merest observation of its presence, contrasts with Harry's, therefore emphasizing the boy's remark that the Comet is 'a fine sight. And soft as dandelions' (406).

It is only in the reaction of the Aborigines to the Comet, in fact, that it is presented as a wholly transcendent phenomenon.
Their view of it as a manifestation of 'the Great Snake, the grandfather of all men, that had come down from the north in anger' to devour them is qualified only by Voss's amusement (403). For Jackie and the others, however, the Cornet is 'too much magic' and the ribaldry of the explorer is no qualification of its dangerous power as far as they are concerned (403). Even the wise among them are troubled by 'the coils of the golden snake' (403), for it is an aberration within their scheme of things:

All their lives haunted by spirits, these had been of a colourless, invisible, and comparatively amiable variety. Even the freakish spirits of darkness behaved within the bounds of a certain convention. Now this great fiery one came, and threatened the small souls of men, or coiled achingly in the bellies of the more responsible. (403).

It is necessary for White to present the Cornet from this variety of points of view, since its occurrence coincides with the novel's climax and its function is to integrate the events in the plot with the poetic structure of Voss. Obviously it is a natural phenomenon, but it suggests to those who see it a mysterious transcendence in the world, either terrible or inspirational. Voss articulates the harmony of the Cornet's material and non-material aspects when he refers to it as an 'unearthly phenomenon' which is 'too beautiful to ignore' (402): and it is with the dazzling aspirations of Voss that White builds a subtle connection with the Comet.

This association emerges from the interconnection of several images and episodes throughout the later stages of the text. White establishes these links of metaphoric interconnection deliberately, but by no means obviously. To account for his procedures is to risk distortion, but the attempt must nevertheless be made in view of the pains taken by the author in integrating his work.
In the first place, connections are established among concepts of divinity, the image of the Snake and the image of the Comet. Among the cave paintings discovered by the expedition, the figure of the Great Snake is prominent as an image of the Creator (292). The image recurs in the description of Frank Le Mesurier's delirium, after the expedition has taken shelter in the cave:

Towards morning, Le Mesurier was wrestling with the great snake, his King, the divine powers of which were not disguised by the earth-colours of its scales. Friction of days had worn its fangs to a yellow-grey, but it could arch itself like a rainbow out of the mud of tribulation. At one point during his struggles, the sick man, or visionary, kissed the slime of the beast's mouth, and at once spat out a shower of diamonds. (299-300).

Frank is here presented in spiritual as well as physical crisis. He has followed Voss on a journey, the metaphysical aspects of which he is more acutely aware than anybody except Laura and Voss himself. Having washed Frank's body after he has, in his illness, lost control of his bowels (288), Voss has apparently acted with a degree of humility which he has previously understood as contrary to his aspirations to divinity. Voss seems to confirm the beginnings of his abandonment of these aspirations, moreover, when he admits that he could be as much of a failure as Frank holds himself to be (290). Frank's delirious struggle with the 'great snake, his King' can therefore be seen as an effort to restore Voss to the status of divinity. That it is the beginning of the collapse of Frank's faith in Voss, of his faith in the dictum that 'Man is King'(315) is confirmed in Conclusion, the second series of prose poems which Voss reads in Franks' book (315-16). For all that, Voss, God and the Snake are identified in these events.
Secondly, the Aborigines' identification of the Comet with the great snake, their belief that the Comet is the manifestation of a terrible god, echoes the connections elaborated earlier in the narrative concerning Frank's crisis of belief. The Aborigines also perceive a connection between Voss and the Great Snake, based on the coincidence of his arrival with the first appearance of the Comet:

He who had appeared with the snake was perhaps also of supernatural origin, and must be respected, even loved. Safety is bought with love, for a little. So they even fetched their children to look at the white man, who lay with his eyes closed, and whose eyelids were a pale golden like the belly skin of the heavenly snake. (413).

They are, naturally enough, mistaken: their attitude towards Voss having been shaped by the uncertainty which this unconventional phenomenon provokes, to the point where they are at least provisionally willing to accept any protection which Voss may be able to offer them in view of his boast that he 'will not die' (389). In the meantime, however, Voss has accepted his mortality, confessed it to Harry and Frank (403-404); and the Aborigines have, with the passing of the snake, verified the fact of Voss's mortality in investigations of their own (415). As Voss has observed, the Comet is a transient thing (406): as Laura says, it cannot 'save' them, for 'nothing can be halted once it is started' (399).

The anger of the Aborigines at the fraud which they believe themselves to have suffered coincides with Voss's acknowledgement
that he has 'always been most abominably frightened, even at the height of his divine power, a frail god upon a rickety throne' (414). He is 'reduced to the bones of manhood', he admits to his mortal fear 'of the arms, or sticks, reaching down from the eternal tree, and tears of blood, and candle-wax. Of the great legend becoming truth' (415), and cries out to Christ for salvation. At this time, Voss is identified as flesh and blood by the Aborigine who cuts his forearm 'experimentally, cautiously, to see whether the blood would flow' (415). At the same time, too, the young woman who has been given to Jackie, himself Voss's protégé and bound to the explorer 'remorselessly, endlessly' by a 'terrible magic' (419), is 'exhausted by celestial visions' (415). Her dream of 'yellow stars falling, and of the suave, golden flesh, full of kindness for her, that she had touched with her own hands' (415), complements Laura's moment of clear understanding of 'the true meaning of Christ' when she sees 'that human truths are also divine' (395).

All of these notions are finally integrated in the disappearance of the Comet in that area of the night sky in which the Southern Cross is seen. Voss, anticipating death at the hands of the enraged Aborigines, sees that the Comet has gone from the sky, but that in its place are 'the nails of the Cross still eating into it' (416). Both the figure of the 'quick wanderer' (402) and the explorer with whose pretensions to divinity it resonates are now subsumed into the myth of the Crucifixion.
In Voss's death occurs a culmination of the novel's thematic trends. Before his death, Voss hears the slaughter of his horses and seems to feel 'the spear ... enter his own hide' (417). In this fevered state of empathy, his screams for 'all suffering' (417) emphasize Voss's acceptance of his own animal nature: but the opening sentences of the fourth poem of Frank Le Mesurier's Conclusion series - 'Then I am not God, but Man. I am God with a spear in his side' (316) - are also echoed in this passage.

The kinship between humanity and divinity, that is expressed in Laura's understanding of Man as God decapitated, becomes prominent once again in this echo of Le Mesurier's notion. It is, in fact, literally affirmed in Voss's own death by decapitation.

Voss, having become 'truly humbled' (414), has enacted Laura's threefold paradox of the nature of humanity's link with divinity. The successful achievement of that enactment has been, it now becomes clear, itself based upon another paradox: that, like the Comet, Voss's grandiose pretension to divinity must run 'the length of its appointed course' (414), so that he may be truly humbled. Unlike Palfreyman, who does die in seeming imitation of Christ, with a spear in his side (364-65), but whose humility has the mark of the professional practitioner, 1

1. If the dialectical relationship between arrogance and humility in Voss is considered, it becomes clear that no single character has a monopoly of either, and that each is possessed of both to some degree. Palfreyman's humility is a form of vanity which arouses Voss's justifiable contempt. Palfreyman's case brings to mind M.K. Gandhi's observation that 'Humility, once it has become a vow, ceases to be humility', to which attention has recently been called by V.S. Naipaul in his essay 'India: Renaissance or Continuity?', The New York Review of Books, 20th January, 1977, 7.
Voss is humbled from a position of extreme arrogance. In his 
*hybris* is the key to his humility: in his brilliant, Comet-like progress through the novel he is inevitably directed towards the Cross.

The image of the Comet in *Voss* is, then, a clear instance of the singular importance that an image may have in White's novels, especially when the image is central to such a crucial episode as this one from the climactic chapter of the novel. In drawing together several of the novel's fundamentally important images and episodes, the image functions to unify the novel's action, its patterns of character development and aspects of its predominant theme. Effective as this methodology is, the linking of episodes and images never becomes a mechanical programme in White's novels. As the foregoing analysis of the episodes and images from such very different novels as *Voss*, *Riders in the Chariot*, *The Tree of Man* and *The Aunt's Story* indicates, flexibility is a key term of his approach to structure.

**The Episode as Central Image: The Solid Mandala**

The images and episodes considered so far have all been central to a particular phase of the novels in which they occur. Their centrality is local, that is: although the relevance of many of these locally central episodes and images may indirectly extend to the whole novel when they are drawn together into an integrated whole. An episode may function, too, as a novel's central image. In the episode concerning Arthur's mandalic dance,
for instance, White creates an image which illuminates the whole of *The Solid Mandala*. Arthur's dance is the key to White's structural strategy in this novel. It consists of four corners, each predominantly concerned with the attitudes and actions of the two major characters and of two of the relatively minor but important characters; with a centre which unites those four corners. In the first corner of the dance, Arthur reveals himself 'as a prelude to all that he had to reveal' (265). His manner of dancing his own corner, 'Half clumsy, half electric' (265) is an apposite way of representing Arthur's role as a divine fool. His clumsiness is obvious to every character in the novel, but only some of them appreciate his capacity to engender in them an 'electric' understanding of some aspect of themselves or of the human condition.

Waldo, of course, practically always sees only the clumsy aspect of Arthur. Yet there are also moments in which even Waldo sees with clarity in Arthur's company: even if, Waldo being Waldo, these moments bring out his spite or defensiveness. He knows, for instance, that he must 'protect that part of him where nobody had ever been, the most secret, virgin heart of all the labyrinth' (191) - his private papers. It is not dishonesty that Waldo fears in his brother, but rather Arthur's 'buffalo mind which could not restrain itself from lumbering into other people's


2. See P.A. Morley, *The Mystery of Unity: Theme and Technique in the Novels of Patrick White*, St Lucia, Qld: Queensland University Press, 1972, Ch. 6.
thoughts' (191). When Arthur does enter his thoughts, Waldo is often shamed by the clear reality which Arthur's vision perceives.

Arthur exposes Waldo's lovelessness, for instance:

The light was the whitest mid-day light, of colder weather, and Arthur was standing him up. 'If,' said Arthur, 'I was not so simple, I might have been able to help you, Waldo, not to be how you are.'

Then Waldo was raving at the horror of it. 'You're mad!' That's what you are. You're mad!

'All right then,' Arthur said. 'I'm mad.'

And went away.

Although he was trembling, Waldo took down his box intending to work, to recover from the shocks he had had. After all, you can overcome anything by will. If the will, the kernel of you, didn't exist - it didn't bear thinking about. (208).

Mrs Poulter, too, is exposed without mercy by Arthur's simple honesty, or clumsiness, when she is discovered by him nursing the child-surrogate doll Waldo has given her. The formal 'Mr Brown' (288), with which she addresses him succeeds only momentarily in cutting him off from her, just as Waldo's dismissive 'Sir!', in the Public Library episode, can only apparently deny the twins' inextricability. Arthur realizes that fact as he leaves the library, in which his reading has led him to see himself as an 'hermaphroditic Adam' (281): '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.' (285).

The pain that Waldo experiences in his public denial of their relationship is possibly commensurate with that felt by Arthur himself, despite the obvious qualitative difference. Yet Arthur's pain results from his frequent failures, especially of his attempts to understand and to answer the question: 'Who and
where were the gods?" (217). Arthur dances, in his own corner, a re-enactment of the awakening in him of this question during his childhood visit to Wagner's opera: 'He danced the gods dying on a field of crimson velvet, against the discords of human voices' (265). It is a ritual summarising by Arthur of his response to the atheism into which he and Waldo have been introduced early by their father.

George Brown, who is incapacitated by his atheism, rather than liberated by it, passes his own limitation on to his children, who are therefore forced to bear its consequences. In Arthur's case, the falseness of religion to which his father constantly alludes, is patently in conflict with the evidence produced by his own senses. Hence, for Arthur, 'Even in the absence of gods, his life, or dance, was always prayerful' (265). In constantly striving to act out the love which he is capable of feeling, though not always of expressing, towards Dulcie, Waldo and Mrs Poulter, Arthur's life provides one of the four possible responses to the question raised by the novel of how man can survive the death of God.

Faced with their father's rationalist-atheist teaching, Waldo and Arthur, along with the age in which they live, must seek their own gods. Arthur, having discovered the mandala accidentally in the course of his chaotic reading, begins to conceive of divinity in terms of totality. The definition he finds is not fully clear to him. He is mystified, as many would admit to being, by the term 'totality'. During his life, the several possibilities that suggest themselves to him as explanations of the term include the concept of the hermaphrodite that he also
meets during the course of his reading: 'As the shadow continually follows the body of one who walks in the sun, so our hermaphroditic Adam, though he appears in the form of a male, nevertheless always carries about with him Eve, or his wife, hidden in his body' (281).

The practical application of this theory which Arthur makes to his own thinking and life is an instance of the way in which he is empowered to extend the superficial significance of his circumstances:

He warmed to that repeatedly after he had recovered from the shock. And if one wife, why not two? Or three? He could not have chosen between them. (281).

He conceives then of Dulcie as 'his fruitful darling, whose mourning even streamed with a white light' (281), recollecting his colloquy with her after the death of her father, whom she believes to have been reunited with God by Arthur's influence: 'are you, I wonder, the instrument we feel you are?' (279).

Arthur, though unable to penetrate the question's meaning, is certainly capable of perceiving the symbolic paradox in the escape of the trickle of milk through Dulcie's mourning (279).

Similarly, Mrs Poulter, whose barrenness is physical only, is pictured by Arthur in terms of fecundity, of growth and physical luxuriance: a second bride, associated with 'burnt flower-pots' and 'russet apples' (282). She also is well aware of some special significance in Arthur but is, unlike Dulcie, not able to contemplate with equanimity a relationship with him of greater depth or intensity than would be allowed by suburban
respectability. Hers, too, is a response to the death of God: she clings to the forms of a harmless enough, but bland, religion of respectability.

Arthur's 'veiled bride' (282), the third of the group he associates with his hermaphrodisism, is Waldo. Although the reference is by no means one of absolute clarity, there is a form of marriage between the two celebrated throughout their lives in the closeness they share, culminating sexually and spiritually in old age (208-209). The episode is underlaid with the pronouncement of Venus discovered by Arthur in the almost inevitable 'old book': 'I generate light, and darkness is not of my nature; there is therefore nothing better or more venerable than the conjunction of myself with my brother' (229).

The attempts by Arthur to establish a community of wholeness between himself, his brother, the Feinsteins and the Poulters (especially the women of these families) comprise his response to the Zeitgeist in which he finds himself. He attempts to enrich social or kin relations with the reverence and love that grow in him from 'what he knew from light or silences' (265). On the other side of this aspect of Arthur's intentions is the gift or curse he has for truthful observation. Arthur's truth helps Dulcie to cope with her alienation as the daughter of a sceptic-materialist whom she loves and whom she suspects of suffering after the demolition of his theories of the progress of man by the conductors of the First World War. In the genuine comfort Arthur brings Dulcie after Mrs Feinstein's death, and in the support his love for both herself and Leonard Saporta brings,
Arthur feels the satisfactions of a genuine success. Against this there is the pain and estrangement inalienable from his knowledge; and this, too, Arthur dances in his own corner:

He danced the sleep of people in a wooden house, groaning under the pressure of sleep, their secrets locked prudently up, safe, until their spoken thoughts, or farts, gave them away. (266).

His corner ends with a movement denoting the conscious and subconscious layers of identification that he experiences with those others as they sleep. In dancing 'the moon, anaesthetized by bottled cestrum' (266), Arthur recreates the release of the subconscious bond he shares with Waldo in particular. The recurrence of the image of the cestrum's scent in this context suggests that Arthur has developed as part of his own being the traces of his brother which he assimilates in their subconscious interchanges, such as that seen in 'Waldo':

Night thoughts, struggling from under the cestrum, floated on the surface bloated and gloating. The cestrum was at its scentiest at night, filling, and swelling, and throbbing, and spilling, while all the time rooted at a distance in its bed. Its branches creaked, though, enough for Arthur to breathe your dreams. (79).

Inescapably, then, Waldo is part of the very essence of the identity that Arthur dances in his own corner. Arthur's sense of himself, finally, is strongly related to the conception of time as cyclic, of progress being made inwardly rather than in linear fashion. The beginning of his conscious memory is marked by his affinity for the sun: a mandalic image of perfection which
is echoed in the image of the orange ju-jubes before Arthur is taken from the world to 'Peaches-and-Plums' (313). The last movement of his own corner is the dance of 'the orange sun above icebergs, which was in a sense his beginning and should perhaps be his end' (266).

The sense of completeness that characterizes Arthur's corner of the mandalic dance emphasizes his function in the novel as a uniting influence: 'the keeper of mandalas, who must guess their final secret through touch and light' (240). For Dulcie, Arthur is the source of a fulfilment she craves but is not given by her father's enlightened conduct of family affairs. Mr Feinstein is a sceptical Jew, driven by rationalism to escape the old 'superstitions'. Whether or not Feinstein's attempts to find truth beyond the articles of his faith are misguided or admirably venturesome can probably only be assessed in the light of their results. It is in Feinstein's enlightenment, as in George Brown's humane rationalism that their children are given possible corollaries to the coming of secularism. Dulcie, at least, feels that without the support of tradition and the acceptance of the mystery of human affinities, reflecting perhaps the affinity of the human for the divine, there is an emptiness at the centre of the human community, which she obviously feels the family to be.

Hence when Arthur dances in the second corner of his mandala the triadic union he shares with Dulcie and her husband, Leonard Saporta, he expresses his understanding of the Jewish family's
function as a paradigm both of human union and the union of humanity and divinity:

In the second corner he declared his love for Dulcie Feinstein, and for her husband, by whom, through their love for Dulcie, he was, equally, possessed, so they were all three united, and their children still to be conceived. Into their corner of his mandala he wove their Star, on which their three-cornered relationship was partly based. (266).

Converse to that union is the consciousness of solitariness, the denial of community from which Arthur intends to shield Dulcie when he plans to give her one of his solid mandalas. He continues in his intention even after discovering that Dulcie is engaged to Len Saporta, because he then sees the marble as symbolic of their community:

There was now no need, he saw, to offer the mandala, but he would, because he still wanted to, because they were all four, he and Dulcie, Mrs Feinstein and Leonard Saporta, so solidly united. (255).

Both Arthur and Mrs Feinstein act to promote the engagement because each knows that behind Mr Feinstein's rational liberalism there is an emptiness, a spiritual deprivation that threatens Dulcie with destruction. In choosing Dulcie as the recipient of the blue mandala, Arthur sees that the sphere of love and beauty it symbolises will remain a part of her and that 'Her beauty would not evaporate again' (255). This surety is also danced in the Feinstein/Saporta corner of Arthur's mandala, as the 'Flurries of hydrangea-headed music' (266) that recall the loosely-embroidered dress Dulcie wears when Arthur first meets her. That meeting is more than the usual 'official, socially ratified
meeting’, because 'Dulcie, he knew, had to turn round and face whatever it was in Arthur Brown' (243). Having done so, Dulcie is all the better equipped to avoid the worst of Waldo: so that when Arthur dances 'the twisted ropes of dark music Waldo had forced on Dulcie the afternoon of strangling' (266), he does so as an assertion of her strength. The fact is that, though demolished by Waldo, reduced to 'the bones of her, seated on the upright chair, in black' (266), Dulcie is 'restored to flesh by her lover's flesh' (266). Arthur conceives of her as a mysterious, almost enigmatic female presence in his life and is fascinated by the depth of affection and beauty he discovers in her 'inextinguishable, always more revealing eyes' (266), to the point where this fascination is danced as the final movement of the Feinstein/Saporta corner of his mandala.

As this final note of the second corner suggests, there is contained within the corner the possibility of its development as the natural complement of the third corner. In the understanding shown by Mrs Poulter as he dances the second corner, Arthur sees that 'Dulcie's secrets ... had been laid bare in the face of Mrs Poulter, who might have otherwise have become the statue of a woman, under her hair, beside the blackberry bushes' (266). The 'secrets' are 'laid bare' to Arthur in an intuitive rather than a logically-articulated sense, as he establishes the connection of one aspect of the female principle in his mind with the other.

Mrs Poulter's part as the manifestation of the female principle of Arthur's dance and of the symbolic structure of the novel
originates more in Arthur's sense of her as a mother-figure rather than as a sexual equal, although clearly both of these roles are taken on by Mrs Poulter in relation to Arthur. The fulness of life in the Saporta family finds its natural correspondent in the images of plenty, of organic abundance that characterize Mrs Poulter's corner, where Arthur dances the unique relation he shares with her:

In Mrs Poulter's corner he danced the rite of ripening pears, and little rootling suckling pigs. Skeins of golden honey were swinging and glittering from his drunken mouth. Until he reached the stilllest moment. (266).

To this point, Arthur's position as a child in the relationship is suggested obliquely in the images of the pears and the pig to which, child-like, he is attracted. The tenuous, though clear, connections between the saliva of his idiocy, the dribbling of a child and the natural nourishment of honey are held in a very delicate balance indeed, before being resolved in the figure of Arthur as child-surrogate:

He was the child she had never carried in the dark of her body, under the heart, from the beat of which he was already learning what he could expect. The walls of his circular fortress shuddered. (266).

Contrary to Mrs Poulter's physical barrenness, she is seen as a figure of spiritual fecundity, who is temporarily sterlised by the secular materialism, the sterilisation of experience inimical to the era of blandness in which it is her misfortune to live. Soon after the afternoon of Arthur's dance the social forces are set in train to prevent a repetition of such intimacy and Mrs Poulter enters the long season of perfunctoriness which
only ends at the time of her reunion with Arthur before his
committal to Peaches-and-Plums. In Mrs Poulter's life, then,
is encompassed the death of God. She continues faithful until
the last part of her life to a formal, though sanitised,
Christianity; her practice of religious forms having little or
nothing to do with her deepest being.

Structurally, her formal response to this passionless
suburban Christianity is related closely to Waldo's sterile non-
belief. When viewed as a symmetrical combination of
complementarities, Waldo's non-belief in existence beyond his
own being, provisionally including Arthur's, is the positive
active force; whereas the rigidity of the formalism imposed on
Mrs Poulter results in her passivity. Arthur's interpretation
of Waldo in the fourth corner is therefore something of an
attempted exorcism.

By comparison with the images of natural abundance belonging
to Mrs Poulter's corner, Arthur's dancing of Waldo's corner is
depicted, not unexpectedly, in images of severity and harsh
assertiveness. The effect is made all the more striking by
White's use of images of nature in conjunction with Waldo's
thwarted aspiration to creativity. Arthur's sense of Waldo's
bitter frustration is a measure of his sympathy and thus itself
becomes symmetrical with Waldo's rage:

He had begun to stamp, but brittle rigid, in
his withering. In the fourth corner, which was
his brother's, the reeds sawed at one another.
There was a shuffling of dry mud, a clattering of
dead flags, or papers. Of words and ideas skewered
to paper. The old, bent, over-used, aluminium
skewers. Thus pinned and persecuted, what should
have risen in pure flight, dropped to a dry
twitter, a clipped twitching. (266-67).
It is not altogether possible to describe precisely the barrenness of Waldo's existence without resorting to a comparative discussion. The denial of promise suggested in the above quotation, for instance, relies on the reversal of the usual connotations of the natural images of reeds, or soil. Suppleness of organic life arising from the fertility of well-watered banks is negatively contained within the connotative powers of sawing reeds and shuffling, dry mud. Waldo's writing, it seems, is quite literally little more than the physical act designated by that word. His hoarded collection of private papers is not the expression of a growing responsive sensibility, but the trophies of his imaginative impotence, fixed in the amber of withdrawal from actual experience. Hence Waldo's internal life is a substitute for participation in communal reality, rather than its complement. Like Arthur, Waldo is able to cope with solitude and, indeed, he revels in it for unlike Arthur he strives against, rather than for, union.

Consequently his relation to Arthur achieves a symmetry based upon the balance of repulsion and attraction. In the matter of religion, for instance, he responds to the doctrines of humanism taught to both of them by their father, by measuring all things by man himself. 'We expect nothing of life but what we can humanly make of it' (153), he tells Dulcie. This sentence might well have been Arthur's, except that Waldo 'humanly' makes of life an experience revolving around nothing more than a shoddy triumph of ego, while Arthur's purpose is so obviously to unite, in order to face the Götterdämmerung of his father's teaching. Dulcie's restoration to equanimity is achieved through
such union as Arthur makes possible for her to enjoy. It is in fact an avoidance of the bleaker effects of the passing of traditional religious values; and, as Dulcie herself tells Arthur, 'It's necessary to escape from Waldo' (255). Waldo embodies the sterility that is one possible aspect of secularism. In middle age, he realizes that 'his religion had become a cultivation of personal detachment, of complete transparency — he was not prepared to think emptiness — of mind' (177).

Arthur sees Waldo's withdrawal from matters of spiritual consequence as a form of fear. He associates that fear with their father's burning of The Brothers Karamazov which, he guesses, was prompted also perhaps by fear of 'the bits he understood' (199) and more definitely by those intolerable 'bits' he could not understand. Arthur relates the threat of the inexplicable to being 'afraid to worship some thing' (200). Waldo's rationalism is a shell into which he withdraws in order to escape the implications of Arthur's insistence on the need for belief and the acceptance of mystery. Yet the relationship that exists between them, in which their individual consciousnesses merge into one, 'the twin consciousness' (77), is inescapable: 'jostling ... hindering ... but with which, at unexpected moments, it is possible to communicate in ways both animal and delicate' (77). Arthur's reassurance on the question of worship and belief, is therefore no comfort to Waldo when it risks the public exposure of that relationship in the N.S.W. Public Library Reading Room:

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. (200).
The exposure of his own private self by his brother is something that Waldo resents bitterly in Arthur's openness. While depending on the relationship, he would reject those aspects of it that are associated with Arthur's defiance of secularist-rationalist social conventions, because such defiance reflects on him, Waldo. By implication he is convicted unavoidably, if unreasonably. Thus his withdrawal from Arthur is intensified by a condition of powerless resentment. Where Arthur dances the mandala, the symbol of humanity's cosmic projection, Waldo revels in secret communion with his own reflection in the mirror, distorted by his dishonesty as he plays the role of 'Memory'.

One interesting peripheral consideration of this scene is that Waldo is repeatedly shown as despising Dulcie, his father and Arthur whose brown eyes seem to him to be 'offering themselves for martyrdom, or like soft brown animals burrowing in, unconscious, but still burrowing' (126).

Yet Waldo is seen in the 'Memory' episode burrowing into his own core of blue mystery, in a sense 'offering' himself to himself. In bizarre celebration of his relationship with his mother, and the Quantrells before her, Waldo puts on his mother's dress, submerging his individual identity. Waldo's transvestism is couched in several complicated series of associations. The glass-beaded dress of his mother's that he is compelled to wear is a mechanical aid to his affirmation of a relationship with that side of his mother which belongs to the Quantrells. The power to control, abandoned by his mother in her marriage, he sees
as defining one side of her that he envies, but in which in reality he can only participate vicariously, over the four o'clock sherry. He pictures, while holding the dress, 'her two selves gathered on the half-landing at the elbow in the great staircase' (192). The second self, it emerges, is Waldo, who 'Merely by flashing his inherited eyes...could still impress his own reflection in the glass - or ice' (192). The death of his mother is an abandonment. Waldo must conspire with himself against the presumptions of inferior humanity:

Mother had died, hadn't she? while leaving him, he saw, standing halfway down the stairs, to receive the guests, the whole rout of brocaded ghosts and fleshly devils, with Crankshaw and O'Connell bringing up the rear. Encased in ice, trumpeting with bugles, he might almost have faced the Saportas, moustache answering moustache. (193).

As Arthur strives to see his own reflection at the centre of his flawed marble, Waldo's mandala, so Waldo seeks a union with himself in the mirror. The difference is, of course, that Arthur, by looking deeply into the mysterious centre of Waldo's mandala, is seeking a more positive union with his brother, or at least some understanding of that which already exists. Arthur thinking of himself as Tiresias, or as the hermaphroditic Adam, seeks a bisexual wholeness, an androgynaeity of affirmative bonding. Waldo's bisexuality is on the obverse of this particular symmetry. Far from the productive assimilative co-ordination of Arthur's bisexuality, Waldo's is a brittle, impotent asexuality, from which even his own identity is cancelled, as he worships the goddess Memory incarnate, as it were, in his
own reflection. The central aspect of such worship is the conflict
upon which the expression of it depends:

All great occasions streamed up the gothic stair to kiss the rings of Memory, which she held out stiff, and watched the sycophantic lips cut open, teeth knocking, on cabochons and carved ice. She could afford to breathe indulgently, magnificent down to the last hair in her moustache, and allowing for the spectacles. (193).

From Arthur's point of view, Waldo's transvestism is a re-enactment of 'some such translation in himself of his brother's personality' (291). The figure of Waldo's goddess is for Arthur more specifically a composite based on the group who watched the performance of Götterdämmerung in the days of his own childhood, 'all huddled in the darkened box, waiting to see, not only what might offer itself for killing, but how their own blood would run' (291). In the circumstances, then, Arthur laughs at the spectacle of 'himself in Waldo's blue dress' (291). Hence in Waldo's corner of the mandala-dance, Arthur strives to 'dance his brother out of him' (266), but cannot fully succeed because they are 'too close for it to work, closest and farthest when, with both his arms, he held them together, his fingers running with candle-wax' (266). Arthur cannot rid himself of Waldo any more than Waldo can rid himself of Arthur. He is unable to save Waldo because of the resentment Waldo harbours against the encroachment of this relationship; consequently in Waldo's corner Arthur's dance is misery:

He could not save. At most a little comfort gushed out guiltily, from out of their double image, their never quite united figure. In that corner of the dance his anguished feet had trampled the grass into a desert. (267).
Waldo's rejection of whatever salvation Arthur can offer him is a function of his worship of self. Arthur's efforts to establish a union with Waldo are unremitting, though unsuccessful and always bringing about pain with failure. There is the constant expression of willingness by Arthur to take on Waldo's guilt according to the Christian myth that they have both been taught to dismiss. Arthur, however, dismisses the escapism of modern Christianity, while living practically according to its central dictate of love. Accordingly, at the centre of his mandala-dance exists the movement that enacts the Crucifixion. As Alf Dubbo has represented in paint the essential core of *Riders in the Chariot*, so Arthur dances the affirmation of love around which the structure of *The Solid Mandala* revolves:

Till in the centre of their mandala he danced the passion of all their lives, the blood running out of the backs of his hands, water out of the hole in his ribs. His mouth was a silent hole, because no sound was needed to explain.

And then, when he had been spewed up, spat out, with the breeze stripping him down to the saturated skin, and the fit had almost withdrawn from him, he added the little quivering footnote on forgiveness. (267).

In the centre of Arthur's mandala, and of the novel, White offers his most positive response to the secularism besetting the age. Where humanism has become, like George Brown's, little more than empty assertiveness or rebellion against traditional forms of religious belief, it diminishes humanity's view of itself. Where it denies the value of emotion, of the sense of mystery, as Mr Feinstein's does, it limits the bonds within humanity to
mechanistic obligation. Where it establishes man as the measure of all things - in the sense of man as the solitary ego, as in the case of Waldo's humanism - it denies life or growth. In Arthur, however, the collapse of traditional religious forms does not take with it their object. Mrs Poulter, long after Arthur's dance, realizes his Christ-like propensities and through him finds a validation of the religion to which she has remained attached but has never been made to feel. Having seen 'their two faces becoming one, at the centre of that glass eye' (312), she is moved to confess her faith: 'This man would be my saint ... if we could still believe in saints. Nowadays ... we've only men to believe in. I believe in this man' (315).

Mrs Poulter's public affirmation of this belief is at the metaphysical centre of the novel; just as her perception of her face and Arthur's, united at the centre of the mandala, is at the symbolic centre. Around this centre, and progressing inwardly towards it, are the various symmetrical balances and tensions of characterization and imagery with which its four main characters are associated. Mrs Poulter is transformed by her belief in Arthur from the vaguely discontented suburbanite, intermittently intuiting the presence of mystery below the surface of common life, to the exalted figure who in the last sentence of the novel turns 'to do the expected things, before re-entering her actual sphere of life' (316). In this transformation exists the metaphysical point of the novel itself. To Arthur's question 'Who and where were the gods?', White may be answering, as
Professor Kramer believes, that man is the measure of all things.¹ It seems more likely, though, in the terms of the novel's structure, and the way in which White relates that to the imagery and characterization, that The Solid Mandala suggests that man is the medium through which all things may be measured. That is a very different thing from an assertion of the nihilism that may have informed a lesser work.

An analysis of the significance of the image of Arthur's dance, therefore, reveals the crucial function of the imagery in The Solid Mandala. The whole of that novel revolves around this episodic image, for upon it the poetic structure of the work depends. Episodes and the images which function within them may be locally relevant or their relevance may extend to the whole novel. The foregoing discussion, having been almost completely concerned with the function of images in certain episodes, has emphasized their significance to the structure of White's novels. White's procedure in general has been to structure his novels on an episodic principle, continuity and unity being established in the imagery, whether within or amongst episodes. There is also in White's novels a poetic centre which is more or less predominant according to the fictional needs of the novel; and the discussion in the next chapter concerns the different kinds of central imagery from which White's 'structure of reality' is developed.

III.

POETIC CENTRALITY IN THE NOVELS
In this chapter I shall discuss at greater length the concept of centrality in imagery, with special reference to *Riders in the Chariot* and *The Eye of the Storm*. To begin with, it should be stated that central imagery varies in kind from novel to novel: and that there is no such imagery in some of White's novels. In *Happy Valley* and *The Living and the Dead* there is none, unless it occurs in the leitmotif of suffering in the one, or that of alienation in the other, which I discussed in Chapter 2: but the images belonging to those leitmotifs are tenuously linked with other images. To see them as the central images of these novels would therefore be an exaggeration of their function in the novels.

**The Tendency to Centrality in the Function of Leitmotifs**

In *A Fringe of Leaves*, a similar caution is advisable. Although the girdle of convolvulus leaves that Ellen makes for herself, 'her first positive achievement' in her state of isolation on the island (245), is closely associated with the issues of personal identity which are so important in the novel, it is only sporadically connected to the events of the plot and to the development of characters and themes in the novel as a whole. Ellen's convolvulus girdle, a flimsy covering of her nakedness, is an image which accords with the general notion of her possession

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of an essential identity, within the outer layers of herself which have been created in her upbringing on the Gluyas farm in Cornwall and in her later education for the role of Mrs Roxburgh. Her sense of her own identity is a crucial motivation of the novel's action, as Ellen pursues what is deepest in herself. An image may be associated with one of the central issues of a novel, then, but not itself be central to the whole of the novel.

The Aunt's Story, another novel in which the protagonist explores the deepest levels of self, is notable for the functions of recurrent images within it. Yet there is also a tendency towards centrality in the imagery of this novel, in that a focal point is created, against which Theodora's inner progress may be evaluated, in the combined function of the leitmotifs of the garden and the house in the different contexts provided by the three sections of the novel. The threefold structure of Theodora's experience is clarified within the novel's poetic structure in the development of both of these leitmotifs. Her childhood innocence is presented in association with the rose garden and the house at Meroë. Her revaluation of herself and of the members of her family takes place in the Hôtel du Midi and its jardin exotique, which form a matrix of both illusion and reality. Her final understanding is gained in Kilvert's hut, an 'essential' structure in which she finally perceives the basic truth of her experience, as well as in the natural 'garden' of the nearby woods

in which a spring rises in 'brown circles of perpetual water, stirring with great gentleness the eternal complement of skeleton and spawn' (343).

Variation of context, as well as of the vehicles of these images enriches their development. Mrs Goodman's Sydney house is for Theodora a narrow prison (97) which heightens her regret for the loss of Meroë and accentuates the reader's understanding of both her need for 'some feeling of permanence' (161) and her apprehension of 'the closed room' (161) which she later occupies in the Hôtel du Midi. Fanny's vulgar materialism is declared in her house (307-308), having been foreshadowed in her childish fantasy (27) as the antithesis both of Theodora's preference for solitary contemplation at Lestrange's shack (64) and of her 'own' home in Kilvert's hut. The bitterness that Theodora feels at Mr Parrott's contemptuous dismissal of Meroë as 'Rack-an'-Ruin Hollow' (20) is ameliorated in the affectionate wisdom of Sokolnikov when they speak of the deterioration of the pavilion at Kiev (239). In the Johnsons' house, Theodora faces the final revaluation of her concepts of family and houses (326-28), which confirms her need to progress towards the extreme of Kilvert's hut. In the leitmotifs of the garden and the house in The Aunt's Story, then, White establishes a significant relationship between setting and characterization which is at the centre of the novel's poetic structure.

As I suggested in Chapter 1, there is a multiplicity of interdependent images in The Aunt's Story. That being so, the
images which constitute the leitmotifs of the garden and the house can hardly be called the novel's central images. The concept of a central image implies such an intimate connection between the image and every aspect of the novel that to describe these two images in this way would be to overstate their function. They are similar in that respect to the leitmotifs of the desert and the garden in *Voss*, discussed by Keith Garebian as the 'literal and metaphoric environments' of Voss and Laura which, 'derived from powerful archetypes, serve as symbolic polarities of experience' in the novel.¹ Garebian having discussed the most pertinent functions of these two leitmotifs in the development of the novel, there is no useful purpose to be served here by going beyond a general observation that they are configurations of the antitheses in *Voss*. The conflicting polarities of civilization and chaos; of domesticated smugness and metaphysical obsession; and, associated with both of these, of arrogance and humility, take their reference points from these two leitmotifs. They therefore range themselves at opposite ends of the spectrum of experience in *Voss*. Nevertheless, because each of these leitmotifs is associated in varying degrees with both elements of each of these antitheses; and because the chaos of the desert symbolically enters the ordered world of the Bonner house at the novel's climax in Chapter 13, they are at the poetic centre of *Voss*. The leitmotif of the desert is given the same prominence in this novel as the image of the storm in *The Eye of the Storm*. It is complementary

to the leitmotif of the garden as a setting for developments in character and theme.

In *Voss*, the vehicles of the images constituting these leitmotifs remain constant, the motivations of the characters determining the variety of form they take. The result is an evolution of a complexity in the tenor of the images which in turn informs, with a palpable clarity, the development of the novel's profound thematic concerns. Such also is the case in the metaphoric structure of *The Vivisector*, in which the images of Hurtle's paintings are collectively central to the novel. Themselves constituting a central leitmotif, these images are also associated with the development of the other leitmotifs in the novel, of solitude, human vulnerability and the relation of humanity to God.

*The Tree of Man*\(^1\) centres on the leitmotif of the tree, as powerful an archetype as either the garden or the desert. The title of the novel and the Housman poem from which it is derived specifically relate to human existence the archetype's connotations of flux and continuity. White's presentation of archetypes - the garden, the desert, the mandala, the Chariot and the tree - provides the novels with a cultural depth; a power to impress their themes on a profound psychic level. Yet such an impression would never be made if White did not integrate these images with the very aesthetic fibre of the novels.

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In *The Tree of Man* the centrality of the leitmotif of the tree is determined by its ubiquity in the novel's patterns of recurrent imagery. Because of the archetypal stature of the image of the tree, it is an appropriate metaphor by which to 'suggest ... every possible aspect of life, through the lives of an ordinary man and woman', as White said he wished to do in this novel. The image of the tree, the first to be presented in the novel, is associated with the Parkers' beginnings and announces the writer's concern with 'the simplicity of true grandeur' as Stan makes that 'particular part of the bush' his own (3). In the early chapters, the Parkers, the O'Dowds and the Quigleys are seen as inhabiting their own clearings in the bush, separated from each other by the trees and yet enjoying a bond in their common solitude. In Amy's first meeting with Mrs O'Dowd she sees that her life 'which had never been a wilderness, was becoming one perhaps, with so many hinting at it, except for the moment it was peopled by her friend, the husky woman in the cart' (40). Each of the families is aware of the others, all of them in their islands of settlement among the trees: when Mrs O'Dowd's visit has ended, Amy is aware that 'There were the trees again' (41).

The leitmotif of the tree is associated with the relationship between Stan and Amy. In the early stages, Stan is shown returning from market in a 'comfortable silence, in a blandishment of trees' (30), contentedly infused with love:

He loved the enormous smooth tree that he had left standing outside the house. He loved. He loved his wife, who was just then coming with the bucket from behind their shack, in the big hat with the spokes like a wheel, and under it her bony face. He loved, and strongly too, but it was still the strength and love of substances. (30).

Stan's tendency is to pass increasingly towards a love and understanding of a metaphysical significance within the substantial world. There are moments for him when 'the touch of hands, the lifting of a silence, the sudden shape of a tree or presence of a first star, hinted at eventual release' (46). Amy tends to distrust any such mysterious intimations as these, and in the 'moment at the mulberry tree' this essential difference between them is revealed, as I suggested in Chapter 2. She is an initiate of 'a mysticism of objects' (398), while Stan perceives himself as 'a prisoner in his human mind, as in the mystery of the natural world' (46).

Nevertheless after some years of marriage their closeness to each other is complete. They sense that it is 'not possible to divide their common trunk' (97) and Amy is shown in contemplation of this intimacy, as she looks at the trees with Stan from their house:

She had begun to see the shapes of the trees, the white columns, and the humbler, shaggy ones, stirring and inclining towards them in the morning light. The sky was moving in an extravagance of recovered blue, so that the man and woman arrested at their window, seemed also to move for a moment, to sway on the stems of their bodies, as their souls stirred and recognized familiar countries. For that moment they were limitless. (97).
This pictorial image of the Parkers exemplifies many such moments in which they are presented throughout the novel. Always there are 'the house, and the trees that had grown round it, and the sheds it had accumulated, and the paths they had worn with their feet, all suggesting reality and permanence' (134). The leitmotif of the tree is constantly present, whether in the form of the dusty oleanders on afternoons 'full of the clear light of autumn' (306), or in the encircling shrubs and trees of the mandalic garden in which Stan achieves illumination:

Out there at the back, the grass, you could hardly call it a lawn, had formed a circle in the shrubs and trees which the old woman had not so much planted as stuck in during her lifetime. There was little of design in the garden originally, though one had formed out of the wilderness. It was perfectly obvious that the man was seated at the heart of it, and from this heart the trees radiated, with grave moments of life... All was circumference to the centre, and beyond that the world of other circles (493).

The illumination which Stan experiences just before death is appropriately associated with the tree, for at various stages in the novel White has presented the question of mortality in terms of this image. It is prominent in the description of the storm in Chapter 7, for instance:

The great trees had broken off. Two or three fell. In a grey explosion. Of gunpowder, it seemed. The trees were snapped and splintered. The yellow cow leaped just clear of the branches, tossing her horns. Man and woman were flung against each other with the ease and simplicity of tossed wood. (44).

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In the face of the danger of natural forces, Parkers are soberly conscious of their vulnerability. Yet their survival attests to a certain qualified durability:

the hulks of the shattered trees were slowly being hewn and dragged into neat heaps by the ant-man. The ant-woman watched him in the pauses from her own endeavours. She saw him stagger, but advance, over the uneven ground. There was no real doubt that he would eventually accomplish what he had set out to do; only the path was tortuous, and his once apparently boundless strength seen to be comparatively limited. (46).

By presenting Stan here as dwarfed by the greatness of his task and the hugeness of the blasted trees, White manages to show him both as diminutive and impressively enduring.

The durability of the Parkers is well to the fore, too, in those crises in their lives which are brought about by such catastrophes in nature as the floods. The leitmotif of the tree occurs in the episode in which the flood is described, again in association with human vulnerability:

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. All omissions were accepted by the blunt boat. And soon the old man, whose expression had not expected much, dying upside down in a tree, was obliterated by motion and rain. (72).

Parkers' life is revealed in such quickly passing moments as this one, inhabited as they are by minute visions of significance, which combine mosaically to form the whole. In the episode in which Stan rescues Madeleine from the burning house he perceives time 'becalmed in the passages' and is transfixed by the moment of fire (179). The dreaming bewilderment to which he is swept
by his glimpse of the meaning of eternity is evoked by the clarity
of the image of a burning tree:

Flinging open a door, he was in a long room of
quivering mirrors and impassive chairs.... If
time had clotted in the stuffy cupboards of the
passages, here it flowed again. Outside the
window of the room a cedar stood, of which the
bark was visible to its last knot and crack, as
fire rolled the darkness up, and red clouds of
smoke drifted in the branches, hanging and
drifting, and entered the room. So the man, like
the tree, was set adrift, and his botched
reflections tried to remember their mission. (180).

It is also the burning tree which brings Stan back to present
necessity, however, from his dream of Madeleine 'sitting somewhere
in one of the rooms of the house, in silk and diamonds' (180), a
melodramatic heroine in need of rescue:

Outside, the fire had gained a fresh foothold.
Something crashed, a bough, even a whole tree, and
whole sheets of shattering light shot into the room,
where the man, who had, in fact, only been dreaming
there an instant, was again all energy and
intention (180).

At less spectacular moments, when contemplation brings with
it no peril, Stan's sense of the mystery and the poetry of his
ordinary existence is constantly presented in association with the
leitmotif of the tree. Driving to parts of the bush which are
'too sour ... or too pure, to suggest prospects of gain or
possibilities of destruction' (224), Stan ponders on 'sandy soil,
in which struggled bushes of stiff, dark needles, and greater trees,
of which the bark came away in leaves of blank paper' (224), until
he is 'no longer surprised at the mystery of stillness, of which
he was a part' (225). Elevating as such experiences are for Stan,
his soul venturing 'out beyond the safe limits on reckless, blind expeditions of discovery, and doubt, and adoration', they remain stubbornly inexpressible: though Stan longs to 'express himself by some formal act of recognition, give a shape to his knowledge, or express the great simplicities in simple, luminous words for people to see' (225).

Instead, Stan consistently finds himself unable to do so, even when failure brings about such serious consequences as his estrangement from his son, whose unhappiness is largely due 'to the fact that he had not discovered the herd' (226). On one of the occasions in which Stan is shown trying to reach Ray, their awkwardness is related to the whole pattern of human experience embodied in the novel in the leitmotif of the tree, which here functions emblematically: 'beneath that tree, under which they had pulled up, a gnarled, difficult native with harsh, staring leaves, the man and the boy were resenting each other for their separateness' (226).

Where the chaos of human relations is inexpressibly difficult to confront successfully, Stan is received into the natural world, in which he can perceive an order. Private though the intelligence remains, it is Stan's measure of the positive aspects of his existence. Returning from Sydney and the newly-made discovery of Ray's petty criminality, Stan is bound to recognize that he knows 'the contours of the landscape more intimately' than he does 'the faces of men, particularly his children' (284); but on getting down from the bus so as to be able to walk across the paddocks, a 'more solitary approach' (284), he finds affirmation:
slowing through the yellow grass and black trees, looking about as if he were a stranger there, looking at the scrolls of fallen bark, which is a perpetual mystery. Then the ignorance of the man was exchanged for knowledge. His rough skin was transparent in that light. (284).

The privacy of Stan's knowledge is further defined by its resonant association with the wisdom of the two figures in the novel whose lives are most decidedly beyond the social pale: the idiot Bub Quigley and the artist Mr Gage. Bub, a more tranquil prototype of Miss Hare, a more innocent forerunner of Harry Robarts, is, like these later figures, at his most content in the natural world: where, typically, he is seen lying beneath the trees chewing a twig (48). Among his most treasured possessions is a skeleton leaf 'of most curious, mysterious workmanship' (116) which, when he is called upon to part with it, becomes even more precious. 'Circles of mystery, beauty, and injustice' expand inside him at the very prospect of surrendering '... the leaf' (116). After the fires which denude the landscape, when the 'green blur' (186) of regenerating vegetation increases 'in veins and pockets, then spilling over' (186), it is Bub who feels 'the green blur grow, of grass and leaves, before anyone else' (186), amongst the trees his 'boy's eyes ... bright in his older face, looking for things' (187). Bub's easy participation in the cycles of the natural world clearly identifies him with the multifaceted central leitmotif of the tree, revealing a more transparent view of the mysteries of which Stan is aware.
With Bub, there is no expression of his wisdom but in his living of it: with Mr Gage there is no living of his vision but in the expression of it. His 'picture of an old wooden fence with a couple of dead trees behind' (103) eventually becomes for Amy the opening on to 'an experience of great tenderness and beauty' (289). The picture's genesis begins as a study in suffering:

And it had been in the beginning a poor sort of a scrawny fettler-Christ, a plucked fowl of a man that had not suffered to the last dregs of indignity, but would endure more, down to gashing with a broken bottle, the meanest of all weapons, till left to suppurate under the brown flies, beside the railway lines. (289).

It is Mr Gage's perception of the physical world as a repository of profound significance which is the strength of the painting, Amy sees:

because she ... had not suspected such jewels of blood as the husband of the postmistress had put on the Christ's hands. Then the flesh began to move her, its wincing verdigris and sweating tallow. (289).

Amy responds to the implications of the painting as to 'Great truths' which 'are only half-grasped this side of sleep' (289), for Mr Gage has revealed in it his vision of the tree of man. White's adoption here of the specifically Christian aspects of the archetype is one of the most explicit statements of the image's significance in the novel:

So she looked at the picture of Christ, and knew about it. Without moving much, she looked about at the other pictures that the husband of the postmistress had left. He seemed to have painted a great many trees, in various positions, their limbs folded in sleep or contemplation, or moving in torture. And the dead trees. The white forms of these did not look a bit dry and sceptical, as bones do in a paddock. So also a bottle can express love. She had never before seen a bottle of adequate beauty. This one tempted her to love her neighbour. (289).
In Amy's epiphanous understanding of the subject of Mr Gage's intense vision, White illuminates the significance and indicates the centrality of the leitmotif of the tree in this novel. Exemplified in the development of the leitmotif is the quotation (389-90) from Housman's *A Shropshire Lad*:

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There, like the wind through the woods in riot,
Through him the gale of life blew high;
The tree of man was never quiet:
Then 'twas the Roman, now 'tis I.
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Fittingly the novel concludes with an affirmation of the continuing flux of human existence and of the experience in which its reality is disclosed to those who will reflect on it:

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In the end there are the trees.... quite a number of them that have survived the axe, smooth ones, a sculpture of trees.... the white and the ashen, and some the colour of flesh. (498).
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Stan's grandson, wandering through the bush at Durilgai, planning his 'poem of life, of all life, of what he did not know, but knew', and putting out his 'shoots of green thought' takes the novel back to where it began: at the centre of things, where 'in the end' there is 'no end' (499).

White thus adopts the archetypal image of the tree as the central leitmotif of this novel with good reason, developing it with great skill and subtlety to present the range of human experience with which he wanted to fill the void. His general methodology is seen in his variation of the vehicle of the image of the tree in order to elaborate its tenor. The leitmotif's centrality is determined by the frequency, both with which it is

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1. 'The Prodigal Son', 39.
presented at critically important moments in the growth of the characters and with which it brings to such moments the efficacious resonances of the entire structure of tree imagery in the novel. In his presentation of this archetype at the poetic centre of the novel, White implicitly and sometimes explicitly announces the status which he would accord to the common, simple experiences of the Parkers, who are 'ordinary' but by no means 'average'.

Transformation of the Archetype: the Chariot

as the Poetic Centre of Riders in the Chariot

In Riders in the Chariot White's preoccupation is still very much with 'the extraordinary behind the ordinary', although by comparison with Stan and Amy its four protagonists are extraordinary indeed; even Mrs Godbold, that model of plainness. The novel itself is an extraordinary, controversial and most ambitious work, in which White has taken on the task of presenting the experiences of no less than four major characters as well as a host of minor figures. The lives of these four characters are so completely different from each other in circumstantial detail that the task of demonstrating what they have in common must have been a major aesthetic problem. Moreover their common experience, the consciousness of themselves in relation to the infinite, is a potential aesthetic quagmire for any novelist: a theme which could so easily be allowed to drift into either lurid banality or shadowy theorising.

1. 'The Prodigal Son', 39.
White's approach to the problem was to centre the novel's poetic structure on an archetype, as he had done in *The Tree of Man* and was to do in *The Solid Mandala* and *The Eye of the Storm*. Since the Chariot, as ancient as literature and mythology, is traditionally associated with transcendence in the world, it is obviously wholly appropriate to the subject matter of this novel. In centering *Riders in the Chariot* on this archetype, White draws upon a deep fund of both Eastern and Western culture, but he acknowledges two particular sources of the Chariot in the novel: the Merkabah, with which Himmelfarb becomes obsessed, and an unnamed, perhaps fictional, work by a French Impressionist painter. The most specific reference to the source of the Chariot is, of course, made in the episode in which Himmelfarb reads Ezekiel from Alf Dubbo's Bible in Rosetree's factory.


Interesting and illuminating as the subject of White's use of sources is, however, it is what he makes of the Chariot that is most relevant here. Although in Himmelfarb's reading from Ezekiel its importance to the novel is clarified, White does not directly offer a description of the archetypal Chariot. He does, however, describe a series of physical objects, of natural phenomena and of human emotional, intellectual, instinctive and creative experiences, which the characters relate to the value and significance that they attach to the vision of the Chariot.

White's quotation from Blake in the epigraph to the novel suggests the way in which the Chariot should be understood, particularly in the words of Isaiah: 'I saw no God, nor heard any, in a finite organical perception, but my senses discover'd the infinite in everything'(2). More than with any of White's other novels, critical discussion of Riders in the Chariot seems almost inevitably to tend towards evaluation of his religious notions. Essentially religious as White's thematic preoccupations are, however, he is neither theologian nor philosopher and the principal critical interest of his novels is with the fictive means by which those themes are developed in them; for, as Peter Beston has remarked:

White is first and foremost a novelist and as such his chief concern is with human existence, not with gnosis.... It is in man's spiritual predicament, not in theosophy, that White is particularly interested.

Thus, unlike the author of Ezekiel, White presents his Riders in the Chariot 'dressed in the flesh of men' and not clothed in 'allegorical splendour, of Babylonian gold' (348). He draws together at the poetic centre of the novel several leitmotifs which, in embodying human intellectual, emotional, instinctive and creative experience, constitute the novel's central image of the discovery by the senses of 'the infinite in everything'. Those who journey in White's Chariot do so in recognizably temporal circumstances, of which the religious and sometimes visionary correlative is the Chariot archetype. Miss Hare, Himmelfarb, Mrs Godbold and Alf Dubbo see no God, nor do they hear any 'in a finite organical perception': but through their finite organical perceptions they become aware of a higher significance in their circumstances and experience. In that these four characters share such an awareness, they are placed at the top of the novel's hierarchical pattern of characterization.

At the bottom are such minor figures as the workers in Rosetree's factory who, clinging to the nebulous consolations of 'mateship', are victims of an inhuman and trivial enterprise. They are reduced to a state in which they cannot be seen as sources of spiritual possibility and, in their escapist dreamworld of Sarsaparilla, there is no question of any of them perceiving significance beyond the material present. Occupying the same world, but considerably more in control of it, are Mrs Jolley and Mrs Flack who speak with the authentic 'voice of Sarsaparilla' which takes for granted its right 'to pass judgement on the human soul, and indulge in a fretfulness of condemnation' (235). Their
materialism strenuously denies significance to anything beyond 'the neat brick homes, with sewerage, gutters, and own telephones' (255).

There is also an intermediate group of characters formed by those who, though conscious of the possibility of higher significance, fail to perceive it because they are unwilling to make the necessary sacrifices of ego. Norbert Hare’s dilettantish casting-about for truth in beauty is symptomatic of the government of his life by self-gratifying 'humours' (21). The Rev. Timothy Calderon longs for 'some more virile expression of faith', to 'flame in the demonstration of devotion' (358). His imagination is his 'misfortune', however, in that it is insufficient 'to ferment the rest of him, yet too much for failure to support' (357). His sister, Mrs Pask, subordinates whatever artistic vision she has to a misguided evangelism, and has a life-denying compulsion which enables her to gain an iron control of her human impulses, sufficient to shut out reality at will. Where these two are destroyed by their inhuman practice of religion, Moshe Himmelfarb is in no such danger, but he has not the will to rise above his benevolent materialism. Neither has he the inclination, for he is 'a sensitive man' (107), who prefers to avoid personal crises and does not 'grow haggard, like some, from obeying the dictates of religion'; and is 'reasonable, respectful, rather than religious' (109). Jinny Chalmers-Robinson also shrinks from commitment to anything more than the acquisition of a certain social distinction, or gratification of the superficial levels of self. A 'Minerva in a beige cloche' (274), she has reached 'the stage of social evolution where appearance is not an end, but a martyrdom' (274).
Finally in this pitiful assembly there are the Rosetrees whose attempts to escape, in suburban materialism, the terror of their former lives as refugee European Jews is a pathetic denial of authenticity. Though critical of their compromised lives, White demonstrates his compassion for them in drawing attention to the 'heap of naked, suppurating corpses' which haunts Harry (227) and to Shirl's memory of 'the foetus she had dropped years ago, scrambling into the back of a cart, in darkness, to escape from a Polish village' (431).

The four protagonists of the novel differ from these other characters in their openness to experience; in their acceptance of a purpose in their lives beyond self-gratification; in their unswerving willingness to identify that purpose and to fulfil it in their actions. Their consciousness of that purpose is figured in the novel by the most significant difference between the protagonists and the other characters: their vision of the Chariot. In that sense, the Chariot is a poetic embodiment of the novel's moral centre and the interactions of these four characters are focussed on the presentation of the traditional archetype, which White transforms into the terms of familiar human experience.

The Chariot is variously manifested in the novel, thus conveying the implication that the infinite in everything may be variously perceived, depending on the sensibility of the visionary. Miss Hare's instinctive perceptions, Himmelfarb's devotional and contemplative fervour, Alf Dubbo's imaginative response to physical
experience and its spiritual connotations and Mrs Godbold's practice of a kind of loving virtuous wholesomeness of common forms leads each of them towards fulfilment. Fulfilment also varies as to individual perceptions of it but what the four have in common at the end of the novel is the peculiar integrity with which each has fulfilled the higher purpose of which each is conscious. Miss Hare cannot be expected to understand what the Chariot is in a rational way, nor does she, because instinct is her predominant faculty. Mrs Godbold's Chariot is located within the symbolic codes of her evangelical Christianity and manner of living. Alf and Himmelfarb share something of the same conception of the Chariot, in that they both derive their initial knowledge of it from the world of Art: Alf from a painting and then from Ezekiel; Himmelfarb from the more devotionally-oriented form of Hasidic and Kabbalistic poetry. Of the four, only Himmelfarb and Miss Hare perceive a vision of the Chariot in nature, though twice there are ambiguous references to Mrs Godbold's doing so (73-4, 551-52) and Alf, in painting the Chariot, certainly relates his experience of the external world to his internal vision (512-15).

For each of the protagonists the Chariot encompasses the possibility of 'ultimate revelation' (26) for which they must strive. Miss Hare is made aware that she, for one, cannot identify the 'riders in the Chariot' of whom her father speaks in their exchange on the terrace at Xanadu, when both are mesmerized by the sunset:
Who, indeed? Certainly she would not be expected to understand. Nor did she think she wanted to, just then. But they continued there, the sunset backed up against the sky, as they stood beneath the great swinging trade-chains of its light. Perhaps she should have been made afraid by some awfulness of the situation, but she was not. She had been translated: she was herself a fearful beam of the ruddy, champing light, reflected back at her own silly, uncertain father. (25).

Although Miss Hare has considerable intuitive understanding of the natural world, she has little knowledge of human beings, having been taught by rejection to avoid them. Her father's question, because it hints at the possibility of a higher order of human experience than that which she has known, adds an unexpected dimension to the significance which she perceives in the natural world.

Himmelfarb seeks 'ultimate revelation' in the Hasidic and Kabbalistic texts in which he discovers the concept of the Chariot, but merely the concept. His approach to understanding is deliberate and scholarly - 'the driest, the most cerebral' - and he remains unable to make 'the ascent into an ecstasy so cool and green that his own desert would drink the heavenly moisture' (152). Far from being able to comprehend the meaning of the Chariot-vision, he can only assemble in his mind the metaphors by which the abstract notion of transcendence is conveyed. He tells his wife:

It is difficult to distinguish. Just when I think I have understood, I discover some fresh form - so many - streaming with implications. There is the Throne of God, for instance. That is obvious enough - all gold, and chrysoprase, and jasper. Then there is the Chariot of Redemption, much more shadowy, poignant, personal. And the faces of the riders. I cannot begin to see the expression of the faces. (151).

The two distinctive aspects of the Chariot for Himmelfarb,
divine transcendence and human salvation, are in fact the notions which pervade his life and direct his activities in relation to others. He is convinced that he is numbered among the elect of his generation, the thirty-six addikim whose function is to 'go secretly about the world, healing, interpreting, doing their good deeds' (173), a conviction that is upheld by such characters as Reha, his wife, the dyer and Liebmann the printer, who expresses the expectation that Himmelfarb will 'illuminate' the 'many problems' (138) that beset the Jewish community and, by extension, humanity in general.

Mrs Godbold first becomes aware that 'ultimate revelation' might emerge from her daily experience as she listens to music in the cathedral near which she lives during her early life and which is 'both a landmark and a mystery' to her (262). Brought as close as she is ever likely to come to a state of mystical ecstasy by the 'shining scaffolding of sound' (265), she is so confused by the intensity of the experience that she retreats from it. Her panic is evoked in the images of the 'golden ladders' collapsing into 'falling matchsticks' (265) and clearly her withdrawal from the experience is decisive. Equally clearly, however, she is as sensitive to transcendence in the world as the other three protagonists. If she is unable to commit herself completely to the visionary experience it is because to do so takes her from the practical manifestation of goodness which she has come to value.

Mrs Godbold is the most earthbound of the protagonists and appropriately the Chariot manifests itself in association with her
ties with other human beings. She is partial to the enthusiastic rhythms of the hymn which she loves to sing, surrounded by her children as she works:

See the Conqueror mounts in triumph,
See the King in royal state
Riding in the clouds His chariot
To His heavenly palace gate. (257).

The Chariot here is an expression of Mrs Godbold's emotional attachment to her faith, which is essentially practical. More brutal, but no less earthly, is the manifestation of the Chariot in the haycart which crushes the head of her brother (266-67). In the context of Mrs Godbold's experience, especially at this time when her existence centres on the agricultural world of the English fen country, White's presentation of the Chariot is at its most earthly level. Mrs Godbold's own earthliness is evident both in the richness of her emotions and in the definite limits which White allows to her understanding. Thus the concept of the Chariot is beyond her, although the depth of feeling which it provokes is certainly not.

Even Alf Dubbo, whose response to the French Impressionist's painting of the Apollonian Chariot is perhaps the most lively of all the discoveries of the Chariot, is unable consciously to grasp its import. The link between religious and artistic experience is prominent in Alf's discovery of the Chariot, as it is elsewhere in White's novels:

In the picture the chariot rose, behind the wooden horses, along the pathway of the sun. The god's arm - for the text implied it was a god - lit the faces of the four figures, as stiff, in the body of the tinny chariot. The rather ineffectual torch trailed its streamers of material light. (360).
Alf’s expression of enthusiasm is spontaneous and uninhibited:

The arm is not painted good. I could do the arm better. And horses. My horses ... would have the fire flowing from their tails. And dropping sparks. Or stars. Moving. Everything would move in my picture. Because that is the way it ought to be. (361).

In Alf’s desire to improve on the painting, White focuses on the disparity between Religion and Art of which Alf is uncomfortably conscious at this time, feeling that 'Either he could not understand, or gods were perhaps dummies in men's imaginations' (370). In his later desire to paint the Chariot he learns to reconcile these two dominant concerns in his life. He is only capable of doing so, however, after experiencing the unspoken fellowship of the other three protagonists.

In presenting the Chariot as the visionary correlative of the highest point of reference in the different worlds of the four characters, therefore, White makes not only the point that there are numerous ways to illumination, but also the corollary that in their commonality his illuminati constitute the highest form of human good. Hence the Chariot's recurrence in the context of the interactions between the various characters. In the episode in which Miss Hare tells Mrs Godbold about the Chariot, and in which Mrs Godbold possibly shares the vision vicariously, the bond which has grown between the two women sets into permanence. Mrs Godbold, in that first meeting with Miss Hare, appears to be gently sceptical of the older woman's semi-delirious talk of the Chariot. There is a sense conveyed, however, of her deeper emotional response, which takes the form of a reticence that stresses the fragile quality of mystery that
is so important to the notable human confluences of this novel.

In her talk with Miss Hare, Mrs Godbold plays the part of the protector of such fragility:

'Gold,' Miss Hare mumbled. 'Champing at the bit. Did you ever see the horses? I haven't yet. But at times the wheels crush me unbearably.'

Mrs Godbold remained a seated statue. The massive rumps of her horses waited, swishing their tails through eternity. The wheels of her chariot were solid gold, well-axled, as might have been expected. Or so it seemed to the sick woman whose own vision never formed, remaining a confusion of light, at most an outline of vague and fiery pain.

'Never,' complained Miss Hare. 'Never. Never. As if I were not intended to discover.'

Whereupon she succeeded in twisting herself upright.

'Go to sleep. Too much talk will not do you any good,' advised the nurse.

And looked put out, at least for her, as if the patient had destroyed something they had been sharing. (73-4).

Despite Mrs Godbold's demurrals, Miss Hare is afterwards 'convinced they would continue to share a secret' (74) and sees Mrs Godbold as 'the best of women' (71). She is for Miss Hare 'the most positive evidence of good' (72): the opposite of Mrs Jolley, who Miss Hare suspects 'might ultimately have everybody at her mercy' (75) with her instinct for other people's vulnerability and her talent for destruction.

The Chariot thus takes on threatening overtones in the context of Miss Hare's fear of Mrs Jolley. When she is disturbed by her housekeeper on the terrace, the dangers of Mrs Jolley's criticisms seem immense to Miss Hare and she envisages in the sunset 'Great cloudy tumbrils ... lumbering across the bumpy sky towards a crimson doom' (77). On the same occasion, Mrs Jolley's
sarcasm about Miss Hare's parents is figured for Miss Hare in the 'marbled sky' which she sees as 'heartrending, if also adamant, its layers of mauve and rose veined by now with black and indigo' (78). Her insinuations about Miss Hare's part in her father's death are instrumental in bringing on the seizure in which Miss Hare is 'removed from herself, at least temporarily' (79). This incident gives Mrs Jolley the necessary psychological edge over her employer later when she decides to announce her wish to leave Xanadu. Miss Hare's earlier ramblings about the Chariot afford Mrs Jolley with the material to practise a form of moral blackmail: 'Who is not wicked and evil, waiting for chariots at sunset, as if they was taxis?' she asks, and Miss Hare is reduced to a state of exhaustion and alarm (97).

Miss Hare's discovery of Himmelfarb's knowledge of the Chariot is 'as eventful as when a prototype has at last identified its kind' (171). Her acceptance of humanity, begun in her association with Mrs Godbold, is advanced in her relationship with Himmelfarb in whose story she finds occasion for great pity. When she is moved to refer to his mentioning the Chariot, 'the word she had dared utter hung trembling on the air, like the vision itself, until, on recognition of that vision by a second mind, the two should be made one' (171). In their colloquy on good and evil, on the possibility of redemption, and on the notion that 'quite common objects are shown to us only when it is time for them to be' (173) Himmelfarb tells her of the zaddikim, to whom he refers as 'the Chariot of God' (173). After he asserts that she is one of them, Miss Hare
is moved to declare their fellowship; that two 'are stronger than one' (175). Confident that she is not alone in opposing the evil which she finds in Mrs Jolley and Mrs Flack, Miss Hare is eventually 'reduced to the status of a troubled human being' in her relationship with Himmelfarb (341). She later completes her metamorphosis in her attempt as 'shaggy love itself' (474) to rescue Himmelfarb whom she believes to be trapped in his burning shack.

The ease with which Himmelfarb and Miss Hare establish the bond between them contrasts strongly with the attempts he makes to reach other people after Reha's disappearance and later in Sydney where he is rejected as 'some kind of nark or perv' (347). The fact that he has shared with Miss Hare his testimony to the belief that the 'intellect has failed us' (221); and that she has responded with understanding is underscored by the presence of the Chariot. Miss Hare in the horror of an epileptic seizure, has known the power and terror of the Chariot, for which sometimes, as on the evening before Mrs Jolley's arrival:

she would wait, with the breath fluctuating in her lungs, and the blood thrilling through her distended veins....And sure enough, the wheels began to plough the tranquil fields of white sky. She could feel the breath of horses on her battered cheeks. She was lifted up, the wind blowing between the open sticks of fingers that she held extended on stumps of arms, the gold of her father's bloodstone ring echoing the gold of trumpets. If on the evening before the arrival of a certain person, an aura of terror had contracted round her, she could not have said, at that precise moment, whether it was for the first time. She could not remember. She was aware only of her present anguish. Of her mind leaving her. The filthy waves that floated off the fragments of disintegrating flesh. (40-1).
She is therefore fully qualified to understand the experience of Himmelfarb during the bombing of Holunderthal, for both have witnessed the crushing might of order become chaos. Indeed, in that degeneration Himmelfarb has had his first vision of the:

Then wheels were arriving. Of ambulance? Or fire-engine? The Jew walked on, by supernatural contrivance. For now the wheels were grazing the black shell of the town. The horses were neighing and screaming, as they dared the acid of the green sky. The horses extended their webbing necks, and their nostrils glinted brass in the fiery light. While the amazed Jew walked unharmed beneath the chariot wheels. (190).

In the face of this kind of reality Himmelfarb is made to see the truth that he formulates in later life, when recalling the air raid: 'there could never be an end to the rescue of men from the rubble of their own ideas' (345). Despite his effort to reassure Miss Hare after she tells him of her fear of the vision of the Chariot, he acknowledges to himself 'his involvement in the same madness' (344), recalling the terrors of the air raid.

Yet for Himmelfarb the Chariot also retains its more benign aspect as the vessel of the 'creative light of God', the token of redemption of which he speaks to Miss Hare (173). Clearly his relations with Mrs Godbold are informed by this notion, nowhere less than after his disastrous visit to Rosetrees, when she brings him the shankbone which matches the one he has earlier placed on his Seder table (443-44), or when, in the painful aftermath of his 'Crucifixion', he sees her as 'a presence of unwavering strength' which 'had begun to envelop his momentarily distracted being' (479). Mrs Godbold is one of the novel's controversial
figures, not least because, as Burrows has pointed out, White's resolution of her development appears to be more of an act of authorial will than the natural issue of aesthetic integrity.

Mrs Godbold witnesses a hint of the Chariot at the end of the novel, for instance, where she has seen none before:

Even at the height of her experience, it was true there had been much that she had only darkly sensed. Even though it was her habit to tread straight, she would remain a plodding simpleton. 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.

That evening, as she walked along the road, it was the hour at which the other gold sank its furrows in the softer sky. The lids of her eyes, flickering beneath its glow, were gilded with an identical splendour. But for all its weight, it lay lightly, lifted her, in fact, to where she remained an instant in the company of the Living Creatures she had known, and many others she had not. All was ratified again by hands. (551-52).

Mrs Godbold has 'her own vision of the Chariot': a practical commitment to 'love and charity' (549). Sometimes her relations with others are farcical, as they are with Alf in the Khalils' brothel (317-20); or ineffectual, as they are with Jinny Chalmers-Robinson (298-300) or with Tom her husband (293-96); or even plainly destructive, as they are in her 'rescue' of Tom from Khalils' (320-22) and her tactless 'consolation' of Harry Rosetree (499-502). Her limitations remain with her throughout the novel, perhaps confirming her election as one who, in the words of Mrs Chalmers-Robinson, 'knows ... what we may expect' (545); but who will 'walk on, breathing heavily ... to the shed

in which she continued to live' (552). The problem is, as again
Burrows notes, that White seems less conscious of her limitations
at this point than he is earlier in the novel.

The presence of the Chariot is, then, always associated with
events of great consequence in the lives of the characters from
the time it is introduced and it continues to recur throughout
the novel as a register of their inner state at any given time.
Thus its presence recurs in the context of the Himmelfarb's
'extraordinary non-relationship' (347) with Alf Dubbo is affirmed
by his discovery of Alf's Bible, open at Ezekiel (348-49).
Despite Alf's 'demonstration of perfect detachment', Himmelfarb
is 'heartened by his study of this other living creature, to whom
he had become joined, extraordinarily, by silence, and perhaps
also, by dedication' (351). At this point, Alf is unable to
commit himself to a relationship, but he recognizes that 'a state
of trust' (417) exists between them by 'subtler than any human
means' (417-18) and he is 'comforted to know that the Chariot
did exist outside the prophet's vision and his own mind' (418).

In Alf's striving to bring the Apollonian Chariot to life,
White presents a series of images in which the meaning of his
own Chariot is clarified. In Alf's attempts to reconcile his
religious understandings with his aesthetic sensibility, the
Chariot of the French Impressionist is profoundly significant.
The image retains its original rigidity and Dubbo's response to
it is as vague as ever when in adulthood he finds the painting

1. 'Archetypes and Stereotypes', 67-70.
again in a book of prints, despite his hope that 'he would now transcribe the Frenchman's limited composition into his own terms of motion, and forms partly transcendental, partly evolved from his struggle with daily becoming, and experience of suffering' (385).

The process of assimilation begins in earnest with Alf's rediscovery of the Bible which he reads because he 'can see it all' (350). His passionate response to Psalm 148, with its vision of the cosmic manifestation of God, is an outburst of joy which comes from the discovery that what he has known receives confirmation from beyond himself. The ecstatic conviction with which Alf responds to the psalmist's praise of God is signalled by his insertion into the poetry 'here and there words and phrases, whole images of his own' (397). More than that, however, the psalm serves to release his own capacity for praise. He becomes possessed of an ambition to render the essence of that which is manifest to his senses: 'to clothe the formless form of God' (397), in fact. But he is still unable to get beyond a cartoon of the Chariot and he knows that the reason is simple enough: 'Ezekiel's vision superimposed upon that of the French painter in the art book, was not yet his own. All the details were assembled in the paper sky, but the light still had to pour in' (398).

Despite his 'rage to arrive at understanding' (417), Alf is unable to digest imaginatively what he finds in his reading of
the Prophets or the Gospels because he cannot relate their content to his generally destructive social experience. The ultimate reconciliation of his belief and his talent comes, however, as a result of the combined effects of all his dealings with Miss Hare, Mrs Godbold and Himmelfarb. The ratification of his 'extraordinary non-relationship' with Himmelfarb is an overt confirmation of the bond to which the two of them are already tacitly committed. What each senses in the other is not at that point specified, though their fellowship is certainly based on a finite, fundamental humanity of the kind which Alf, paradoxically, also finds in his strangely saurian meeting with Miss Hare (68-9).

In his contact with Mrs Godbold in the Khalils' brothel, Alf is moved to realize the form which the riders in his painting of the Chariot might eventually take. Mrs Godbold's rather sentimentalized gesture may seem to be somewhat strange in the setting of the brothel on the outskirts of the situation of grotesque hilarity which Dubbo has himself provoked. However, it is not inconsistent with the behaviour of Mrs Godbold herself at this time: her mission of love, her attempt to 'save' Tom Godbold by fetching him from the brothel is of course clumsy and of a piece with Mrs Godbold's sometimes overpowering tendencies to protect. Yet Dubbo sees beyond the circumstantial sentimentalism of the act itself when he says as he looks at Mrs Godbold: 'That is how I want it. The faces must be half turned away, but you still gotta understand what is in the part that is hidden' (318).
Alf can understand 'what is in the part that is hidden' only in the context of his fellowship with the other *illuminati*. Indeed, in witnessing the tortures to which Himmelfarb is subjected by the Lucky Sevens, Alf experiences an epiphany in which is resolved the conflict within him between Art and Religion:

> Because he was as solitary in the crowd as the man they had crucified, it was again the abo who saw most. All that he had ever suffered, all that he had ever failed to understand, rose to the surface in Dubbo. Instinct and the white man's teaching no longer trampled on each other. (463).

White produces here a paradoxical resolution of the problems and possibilities of Alf's dividedness. In this state of understanding, Alf is vividly conscious of what he has always had the capacity to understand, but has been prevented from grasping by his own underlying contempt for humanity. Only at this point can Alf paint the Chariot. The human sympathy with which his vision is now endowed transforms the wooden god into an image of human integrity.

In Alf's painting of the Chariot the riders themselves are shown with elemental simplicity and their form evolves from Alf's understanding of his own nature as well as that of the three other visionaries. In a union of mutual recognition, in which 'the souls of his four living creatures were illuminating their bodies, in various colours' (515), the point which they have reached in their journey is preliminary to final illumination. 'Their hands, which he painted open, had surrendered their sufferings, but not yet received beatitude' (515). The position reached by the riders...
therefore represents the farthest point on the human end of the spectrum which it is possible to reach. The suffering and frustration arising from the contradictory antagonisms of experience has been left behind. Yet, as the form of the riders suggests, this has only been possible after their painfully-established resolution. The picture therefore imaginatively captures a transitional state.

The painting of the Chariot is not, as an act, a leap into understanding. Rather, it is the expression of the wisdom that the artist has acquired prior to the act of painting. The image of the painting, like the other images that constitute the Chariot vision of this novel, is therefore not a representation of wisdom but an indication of the visionary's possession of that wisdom. The Chariot, that is, incorporates a number of images that are associated not with final illumination but with progress towards it. Alf's painting may well suggest the exaltation of his riders in the chariot, yet there is also a qualification implicit in his rendering of their hands, which had 'not yet received beatitude'.

The location of the Chariot at the centre of the novel's imagery supports its function as a gathering-point for the novel's thematic material. The occurrences of the images of fire and light throughout the novel assure that the Chariot remains constantly present in the reader's mind. Mrs Godbold's well-stoked copper, the bombing and burning of Germany, the burning shed in which Miss Hare's goat dies, the burning shack from which she tries to rescue Himmelfarb, the jagged and fiery love-making of Alf and Mrs Spice are all examples of fire imagery in which the
concept of the Chariot is evoked. To the same end there is a constant recurrence of light imagery throughout the narrative. The variations of kind within the pattern of light imagery are numerous and wide-ranging. Light imagery evokes the peace experienced by Himmelfarb in his shack surrounded by willows, as he gazes through his one window 'on green tunnels, and the obscurer avenues of contemplation' (220). In contrast to this tranquility is the surrealistic depiction of the grief of Ruth Godbold standing at a city crossing after her husband's death, surrendering for once to circumstances as 'Fingers of green and crimson neon grappled for possession of her ordinarily suetty face' (324). The triumph of the wilderness over Xanadu's solidity is most tellingly witnessed by Miss Hare as she inspects the collapsed wall of her drawing room and sees that 'a whole victorious segment of light had replaced the solid plaster and stone' (326). Alf Dubbo's perception of the world is constantly associated with light, as it is before he begins his final, most significant paintings (508).

Alf's insistence, when he discovers the painting of the Apollonian Chariot, that 'Fire and light are movement' (361) draws together the imagery of both of these patterns. The statement also relates them to the motif of travel or movement which figures in the novel most importantly in terms of the inward journeys of the protagonists, receiving support in the narrative by the description of actual physical travel. The leitmotif comprises the journeys made by Himmelfarb, Alf and Mrs Godbold to Sarsaparilla and in the exploration by Miss Hare
of Xanadu's wilderness. This correspondence between spiritual and physical realities is worth noting as one example of the deliberateness of White's style, particularly in relation to the Chariot, which undergoes several inversions and reductions to accentuate the quality of the experience of the visionaries as well as qualifying that experience with irony. Himmelfarb's journey in the train across Europe and his train trip to Rosetrees are episodes that function in this way, as does Harry Rosetree's 'long glass car' (497) and Norbert Hare's expectation of perfection in horses (26).

The poetic unity of Riders in the Chariot is essentially dependent on such configurations as these leitmotifs of fire, light and movement and on their association with the various images of transcendent understanding presented in the four strands of the narrative. It is in the cohesion of all of these images that the Chariot has its being as the central archetype which informs the narrative and dramatic levels of the novel. In Riders in the Chariot, then, there is a unification of many images, consisting of an assortment of vehicles which function together to produce a single comprehensive tenor which is the poetic centre of the novel. It is a sophisticated technique, which is also to be found in the three novels which follow Riders in the Chariot, becoming progressively simpler in each of them: and being the more successful for that reason.

In Riders in the Chariot the reader is given to understand that the spiritual world may be approached through the physical world in many ways. These possible approaches are conceived of as
belonging to the areas of human experience which are engaged through instinct, intellect, emotion and creative imagination. None of the approaches is entirely satisfactory since all are interdependent; so that the influence of the leading characters on each other's perception and behaviour is crucial to the successful dramatization of the novel's metaphysic. As Dorothy Green has written, however, the problem is 'not to state these truths but to relate them dramatically to the situation in which man finds himself today'.

White's attempt to do so has left *Riders in the Chariot* lacking, in the view of many critics, especially those who explore the question of his characters' depth of psychological motivation. That criticism is substantially valid, and it is ironic that it gains force from White's own deliberateness of style in the creation of the central reference point of the Chariot. Though, as has been claimed earlier there is no Chariot *per se*, there is much of the transcendent in the world of nature which may be approached by the fusion of instinct, intellect, emotion and the creative imagination. The cohesion of images related to these functions depends upon the degree of credibility with which the Chariot is accepted. The great problem with the Chariot's appearances is that they seem to contradict the very realities that they are meant to reveal. The distance between the visionary experience of the protagonists and the Chariot is very great, in that these experiences represent an intense perception of the transcendent as immanent in the physical

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world, whereas the Chariot of Ezekiel is otherworldly. It emanates in
allegorical fire, light and whirlwind. What is convincing about
the visionary experiences of the leading characters in Riders in
the Chariot is the great range of references to the world of human
perception that are bound together to symbolically express White's
version of the claim by Blake’s Isaiah that he 'saw no God, nor
heard any, in a finite organical perception', but that his 'senses
discover'd the infinite in everything'. The Chariot, however,
hovers 'straight and silent' (345) as a tenuously established
metaphysical counterpart of the way to the core of truth which
is reached by the protagonists.

The Eye of the Storm: Dramatic and Poetic
Unity Determined by the Central Image

The conviction that common perceptions and the range of
human experience are informed and enriched by a 'mystery and poetry'
is most convincingly dramatized in The Eye of the Storm, although
this novel is built on essentially the same principle of
aesthetic design as its flawed predecessor. The success of the
later novel's devising can be accounted for by the greater
stylistic control evident within it and, more specifically, by
the firmer connection between narrative and poetic structure in the
life of the central character. Elizabeth Hunter's life is
presented in a vast elaborate image of the concepts of being
and becoming which are present throughout White's work. It is
Elizabeth Hunter's life, brought sharply into focus in the episode
of the storm, which is the central image of this novel.

In the novel's opening pages, Mrs Hunter is seen lying on her deathbed 'with her eyes closed listening to her house, her thoughts, her life' (14). The point of departure taken by the narrative, then, is the deliberate ritual of assessment of her experience with which Elizabeth Hunter is engaged in the context of her impending death. Only in her mind is she any longer part of the world of action, but the physical frailty which removes her from it cannot significantly hamper her efforts to invest her experience with a unified meaning. On the contrary, as Sister de Santis sees, Elizabeth Hunter enjoys the advantage of a certain detachment from what she has done and been, an objectivity that enables her to gain a sense of what she is. In the terms Mary de Santis might use, Elizabeth Hunter is a living encompassment of wholeness: 'her house, her thoughts, her life' all appear as aspects of what she is. Though a 'ruin of an over-indulged and beautiful youth, rustling with fretful spite when not bludgeoning with a brutality only old age is ingenious enough to use' (12), she is 'also a soul about to leave the body it had worn, and already able to emancipate itself so completely from human emotions, it became at times as redemptive as water, as clear as morning light' (12).

The combination of these two things - a thoroughly worldly investment in the life of the senses and its motivations with a shedding from her essential self of these karma-like accretions - is the essence of Elizabeth Hunter's experience. In that respect, she re-enacts the relation between the inner and outer

forms of the self which have always been central to White's vision of human wholeness. As with all of White's protagonists, Elizabeth Hunter's consciousness is formed around a dogged conviction that ultimate self-knowledge is attainable, though desperately elusive:

She would have given anything to open a box containing the sum total of expectancy, but as this did not happen (except in a single comforting dream, in which she discovered in a little marquetry casket a splinter of rock crystal lying naked and unexplained on the lead lining) she must expect her answers outside boxes, in the colder contingencies preparing for her. (102).

Moreover, Elizabeth Hunter's quest for ultimate truth, as it is contained by and contains self-knowledge, is characterized by a solitariness, typical in White's fiction. Lives do not as a rule join, only touch, the reader finds in all of White's novels. In that sense, the individual consciousness is envisaged as an island, the nature of which can only be properly understood by its possessor, if it is to be understood at all. So that very few of her acquaintance recognize Elizabeth Hunter's desire to 'experience a state of mind she knew existed, but which was too subtle to enter except by special grace' (16), and only de Santis realizes her need to 'experience again that state of pure, living bliss she was now and then allowed to enter' (24). Such a need cannot be conveyed, Elizabeth Hunter realizes, especially by one in her own circumstances:

If you could have said: I am neither compleat wife, sow, nor crystal, and must take many other shapes before I finally set, or before I am, more probably, shattered. But you couldn't; they would not have seen you as the eternal aspirant. Solitariness and despair did not go with what they understood as a beautiful face and a life of outward brilliance and material success. (102).
The 'many shapes' of Elizabeth Hunter's life are equally significant to her role as 'eternal aspirant': her 'conglomerate existence' (241) is constructed as a product of their unification, in which the lives she shares and enters become vital to her quest for 'the sum total of expectancy'. In being possessed of 'this other devouring desire for some relationship too rarified to be probable' (90), she is driven beyond the superficial notions she has of her inmost self to confront 'her Doppelgänger' (205) by 'staring inward, in the direction of a horizon which still had to be revealed' (205). The imminence of her death brings an urgency to her probing, as well as a ruthless deliberateness to her determination to perceive that unrevealed horizon and to cross into the territory beyond. Her assessment of her past life is an examination of her present self, into which 'The past has been burnt' (32). Also involved is her striving towards 'a calm in which the self has been stripped, if painfully, of its human imperfections' (29).

A predominant implication of the necessity of stripping the self is that, beyond the outer layers, it is impossible to predict what will be found. Either completeness or annihilation awaits the one who strives for such a reduction, and the only certainty about the nature of the process, or indeed about the view of humanity in relation to itself and to the cosmos that is conveyed in White's work, is its uncertainty. Only the possession of a certain stubborn heroism, therefore, sustains the characters in the face of the demands of the existential journey towards such an indeterminate condition. In *The Eye of the Storm*, White presents this striving as a ritual that celebrates the union of
past and present, deliquescence and regeneration, in a mysterious wholeness. Elizabeth Hunter, whether as the celebrant of that mystery, as an aspirant to the understanding of the mystery, an idol embodying the particular qualities of the mystery, or as an observer of herself in all of these roles and of other characters as they play out their supportive activities, is the centre around which the ritualized life of her household revolves.

Throughout the course of Elizabeth Hunter's life nothing is rejected, though much is destructive or painful. Her understanding is as immense as her acceptance becomes comprehensive, and White brings both to a point of completion as the narrative progresses, first to the scene of the storm and then to that of Elizabeth Hunter's death. The two crucial events have much in common with each other as major crises in the character's development, and neither could function effectively without the influence of the other. In the first, it is given to Elizabeth Hunter to know herself; while in the second she is enabled by her own efforts to create herself. In both, time is so compressed as to bring every aspect of her conscious life into composite integrity which reflects and is reflected by a sense of universal order.

The essence of Elizabeth's experience in the storm is a reduction of the self which is undergone by all of White's major characters. Accompanying the natural cataclysm is a dissolution of inessentials by which she is later enabled to understand her falseness - 'her flaws too perfectly disguised under appearances: enormous, gaping, at times agonizing flaws' (334) - but also that 'perhaps you are reserved, through these same flaws, for other
ends' (334). The first stage in the presentation of this process begins with the isolation of the character, after which White begins the dissection of the image he creates in the figure of Elizabeth Hunter. In this first stage, his attention is fixed on the outer layer: that aspect of the character which is given to frivolous 'conspiracy ... with herself' (414). The insubstantial quality of this performance of herself to herself is plain enough and, when recognized, replaces itself with a melancholic sense of its own futility, as Elizabeth Hunter finds herself to be 'alone. Not even herself for company' (414). The recognition of 'her own type of useless, beautiful woman' (414) can be made in this state of absolute privacy, but the dialogue she has with herself is maintained at a level of superficiality at which self-abasement is a form of luxury, as the rhetoric given to her at this point reveals:

She was a woman who had encouraged her lovers' lust; indeed she had made it inevitable.... Above all, she was a mother whose children had rejected her. (415).

Even here White's attention is beginning to penetrate more deeply into the workings of the image, as the character's self-recognition becomes more complicated in the second stage of her reduction:

To confess her faults (to herself) and to accept blame when nobody was there to insist on it, produced in Elizabeth Hunter a rare sense of freedom.... She even went so far as to admit: in some ways I am a hypocrite, but knowing does not help matters; to be utterly honest, spontaneously sincere, one should have been born with an innocence I was not given. Which Alfred had. (416).

The recognition given to the moral complexities in which the striving, yet imperfect spirit is involved and in which an account is taken of the value of innocence and vulnerability of those who,
like Alfred, are 'utterly honest, spontaneously sincere' is
integral to the wisdom that Elizabeth Hunter finally gains. The
difference in presentation of this insight with White's treatment
of such a character as Thelma Forsdyke in The Tree of Man, is
quite marked and signals his endorsement of Elizabeth Hunter's
intuition. Where Thelma is moved to gain self-knowledge, she
clearly does so as part of her overall enterprise of 'social
improvement': 'Knowing oneself is the saddest luxury. And she
had achieved this through experience and study, along with the
French tongue and the fur coats' (424).

Far from trivializing Elizabeth Hunter's quest for self-
knowledge, affected in the manner of Thelma Forsdyke's as its
beginnings might be, White develops her self-awareness into
an awe of herself. In her reflection that 'Alfred, not she, had
been hurt, deceived, tortured, and finally destroyed. While
she had continued demanding and receiving more than most women
would have dared envisage' (416), Elizabeth Hunter expresses a
sympathy and self-awareness that bears out de Santis's later
observation that 'Mrs Hunter was composed of the many relationships
she had enjoyed' (160). Moreover, as this second level of
Elizabeth Hunter's self becomes more fully realized in the
narrative, White sets up a series of correspondences between the
material and the spiritual that begin the journey towards wholeness
in their fusion:

Even her beauty had only just begun to dim; her
body remained supple at the age of seventy. For
the first time she was disturbed by the mystery
of her strength, of her elect life, not that
frequently unconvincing part of it which she had
already lived, but that which stretched ahead of
her as far as the horizon and not even her own
shadow in view. (416).
Already the physical surroundings in which the character is placed begin to act symbolically to reveal her inner self. The horizon between present and future seals off a mystery which must be penetrated in order to achieve wholeness, as she begins to sense after the death of her husband:

Towards morning she caught of a reflection in a glass and was faced with her *Doppelgänger*: aged, dishevelled, ravaged, eyes strained by staring inward, in the direction of a horizon which still had to be revealed. (205).

In view of the mystery she is to herself, Elizabeth Hunter is 'led into the cool depths of the rain forest' (416), on a journey of which the physical setting suggests the quality of her introspection. Protected by her rationality against the risks that others have succumbed to - 'elderly women lured into the scrub by an instinct for self-destruction ... an old man driven mad after days imprisoned in a blackberry bush' (416) - she is nevertheless beginning, at this point, the detachment of self which makes itself apparent, for instance, in the paragraph describing her hair, 'that most recalcitrant, though habitually controlled part of her' (416). In her present frame of mind, her hair connotes an abandoned, apparently unimportant, aspect of her self:

Now it floated round her face, almost completely veiling it at times, at others opening for her mind to surface and identify a foreign substance, or translate her present movements into recollections of another person's sensuality. (416).

As this second stage draws towards its conclusion, several images signify the changing state of her emotions. The 'variety of ground orchid' (416), with its 'tongue returning into the tufts of fine-drawn green sprouting from the gristle of its own sickle-
shaped ear' (416) is a lush representation of the natural world into which she is drawn and also carries resonances of the eroticism she exploits while testing the depths of her own capacity for lust with the brutal Athol Shreve. Manfred Mackenzie offers the proposition that 'Elizabeth Hunter's affair with Athol Shreve seems as much a kind of rough justicing as a betrayal. She ruts with Athol Shreve as the punishment her unworthiness of Alfred Hunter merits'. ¹ To this idea I would add the suggestion that even such self-inflicted punishment is part of Elizabeth Hunter's exploration of herself. In no longer wishing to possess the flowers - 'to insinuate herself into secrets, to pick, to devour, or thrust up her nostrils, or carry [them] back to die on her dressing table' (417) - she is moving towards a state discovered, though not entered, by Basil Hunter in a line from one of his successful plays, The Master of Santiago:

\[
\text{God neither wishes nor seeks anything. He is eternal calm. It is in wishing nothing that you will come to mirror God. (317).}
\]

But that frame of mind is here something hinted at rather than truly achieved, as Elizabeth Hunter's next reflection, couched in a register of socialite cliché worthy of Jinny Chalmers-Robinson, indicates: 'By allowing her inescapably frivolous and, alas, corrupt nature the freedom of its silence, the forest had begun to oppress her: she could not believe, finally, in grace, only luck' (417).

¹. ""Dark Birds of Light": The Eye of the Storm as Swansong', Southern Review, 10 (1977), 270-84; 282.
Nevertheless, a genuine sense of self-criticism is approached at this time, as Elizabeth Hunter rather ostentatiously performs the rites of the sensory Nature-initiate before the bemused foresters:

She did actually taste a chip from the tree, and might have dropped this transmuted wafer as quickly as she could; but managed to put it down instead. It slithered off the trunk and fell to the ground.

For herself she was again brittle and pretentious. (418).

As Elizabeth Hunter's life is a ceremony, her activities before the coming of the storm are certainly a ritual of preparation for a concentrated and theatrical performance of the most significant part of that ceremony. White prepares for her final reduction with a number of allusions by which a series of elaborately-constructed external circumstances are provided. Narrated from Dorothy's point of view, the first of these - Elizabeth Hunter's introduction of graciousness to the Warmings' holiday cottage - is presented with an acidity that is not quite sufficiently potent to destroy the effect of the makeshift kind of panache to which Mother must resort:

Elizabeth Hunter had opened up what was officially the living-room. Under Helen, they had congregated almost exclusively in the kitchen, in an atmosphere of fry and good-fellowship. Elizabeth's accession promised subtler nuances. She had stood a pair of candles on the old cottage piano, and further tricked it out with a piece of music, the banality of which, together with a certain hypnotic sweetness, partly accounted for its being a performer's first choice when shaking the dust off a long neglected talent. She might have appeared to greater advantage if the piano had been a concert grand set in a waste
of uncluttered carpet. As it was, however high
she raised her head, exposing her famous throat,
her lily neck, the size of the instrument and
the rather warped, salt-cured keys, made it look
more as though she were hunching her shoulders
over some harmonium. There was her back though,
white amongst the shadows, and light in her hair,
and she had obviously dressed herself for an
occasion, in a long white robe of raw silk, of
unbroken fall if it had not been for a corded
girdle, and faint flutings which gave her
slenderness an architecture. (396).

This aesthetic semi-triumph of candle light and music is followed
up by further artistry as Dorothy grudgingly admits when her
mother serves the meal:

Whatever else, Mother had transformed 'Edvard's
magnificent catch' into a work of art: she had
grilled it and laid it on a bed of wild fennel,
and strewn round the border of a fairly common,
chipped dish a confetti of native flowers. (398).

Again, Dorothy's 'sombre glee' (398) in her attempt to devalue the
impact of her mother's élan-'Do you realize that for every fish
cooked, a still life is sacrificed?' (398) - is not quite
sufficiently destructive. Her mother's inveterate devotion to
appearances is as formidably implemented on the island as it has
always been elsewhere. Thus, when Elizabeth Hunter returns from
her introspective ramble in the rain forest she rests and then
continues to embellish that which had been threatened by
solitariness:

She got up and washed herself as well as you
can from a jug and basin. She powdered her revived
skin. She anointed herself. Why not? Her life
had been a ceremony. She put on the dress she had
worn the night before. Though in fact old, age
had not tarnished its splendour, nor blunted its
fluting: like certain classic sculptures, the dress
was designed not only to ravish the human eye, but
to seduce time into relaxing its harshest law.
Tonight she plaisted her hair, and wound, or moulded
it, into a crown; then bowed her head before slipping
over it the gold and turquoise chain (420).
The seductive periods here, the primacy of verbs evoking an artisan-like deliberateness in her preparations, complete the external setting as Elizabeth Hunter, like David's Napoleon, crowns herself. Almost immediately, however, as if the image were complete, White introduces an abrupt change of tone in which insecurity and a practical-minded form of disillusion shape the character's perception of herself and of her situation:

She dared only a quick look in the glass. The wind had dropped. There was a breathlessness before sunset; irrelevant feathers of cloud were strewn on a white sky, just as she, at another level, was an irrelevant figure hanging around the veranda, living-room, kitchen, for no purpose she could think of, and in what was after all a ridiculous get-up. (420.)

The association of the character's thoughts about herself with the inanimate forms of the natural world begins the third stage of her passage towards illumination. The brief intermezzo formed by the anointment and draping of the character serves to round out the orchestration of the sequence as a whole by introducing variations on the main theme. These in turn emphasize the completeness of the destruction of the appearances by which Elizabeth Hunter's flaws are generally disguised. Art and nature blend as a preliminary to the powerful movement that is the passage describing the storm. Elizabeth Hunter's 'affectation hammering its way through the Field nocturne' (421) is joined and then superseded by the rumbling of the stampeding brumbies. At this point, with Elizabeth Hunter's perception of the actual physical horizon as a 'single stretched black hair' (421), a suggestion of clarity is made in contrast with the confused sense of the
horizons of her consciousness that emerges after Alfred's death (205), and during her walk in the rain forest when she envisages her future life as an uncharted distance.

The compositional aspects of the portrayal of Elizabeth Hunter's developing understanding are, therefore, quite clearly vital. The character emerges as a sharply defined figure: an image of the single soul dominates a background composed of minutely-realized physical and circumstantial detail. Writing of the storm sequence of *The Eye of the Storm*, William Walsh refers to the 'Conradian energy and insight' with which it is rendered.¹ Walsh's neatly-turned phrase is a fitting, though summary, response to White's use of the image of the storm to represent the intensity with which his central character engages with given experience in order to arrive at the still point that is at the heart of her own being. The onset of the cyclone is powerfully shown from Elizabeth Hunter's point of view, revealing a bond between the natural disturbance and the mind and experience of the character:

Quite suddenly a bluish dark had possessed and contracted the landscape. She lit her gentle lamps. Out to sea a blue lightning tattered the sky, which gradually lost its paper flatness, becoming a dome of black, thunderous marble. The night below had begun to snuffle. From undulating at first, the wind slammed hard at the land. She saw trees recoiling, heels dug in as it were, like a crowd resisting physical prostration. (421).

The image of the trees here, in being compared to a crowd, suggests the correspondence between human and inanimate forces which grow to full-scale enactment as the sequence progresses. Elizabeth Hunter's racing perceptions are conveyed in an interior monologue that both selects the details of her experience and contributes to characterization:

Something flying could have been a board grazing her temple oh but sharp. For the moment a wound was less frightening than exhilarating the wind roaring into her lungs inflating them like windsocks. The bluest lightning could not make her flinch. (421-22).

The bravado of Elizabeth Hunter's response to the storm takes up the leitmotif of the reckless pursuit of experience that recurs in the novel in the references to Lilian Nutley, 'galloping wildly towards her death on the banks of the great Asiatic river' (24). Elizabeth Hunter's appreciation of that aspect of Lilian Nutley's bizarre end is clear and she prides herself on her 'hearing the thud of hooves ... seeing the magnificence of Lilian's full gallop' (24). The connection of this motif with the storm is established at first by juxtaposition with Elizabeth Hunter's own internal commentary on the Nutley murder's implications for herself: 'She also knew she had no desire to die however stagnant her life had become: she only hoped she would be allowed to experience again that state of pure, living bliss she was now and then allowed to enter' (24).

Elizabeth Hunter's initial exhilaration in the early stage of the storm is transformed quite sharply into the terror of her powerlessness:
Till cold and sober, she saw black walls on the move across what had been a flat surface of water. She was blown back no longer any question of where twirled pummelled the umbrella of her dress pulled inside out over her head then returned her breasts rib-cage battered objects blood running from her forehead she could feel taste thinned with water a salt rain. (422).

At this point the narrative is directed towards the inwardness to which Elizabeth Hunter is led by the violence of her external circumstances. The shift in emphasis from description of the storm to documentation of the character’s awareness takes the reader to the most significant aspect of the storm sequence its metaphoric function. In contrast with the figure of Elizabeth Hunter as a celebrant of her own lavishly simple beauty, the image of her body is now delineated as a figure of almost complete insignificance: 'In this solid rain herself a groping survived insect a staggering soaked spider fetching up at what must be the bunker behind the house where they keep their wine' (422). The ability to envisage clearly the truth of her situation is a characteristic given to Elizabeth Hunter throughout the novel and here the fact that her physical reduction is not accompanied by a total collapse of the spirit is crucial to her later attainment of enlightenment.

More awkward to dispose of than her jackknife body was the mind which kept lumbering around inside the walls of her bruised head, or streaking off independently by flashes. The lightning was soon as free to enter as her thoughts to sky-rocket, for the sturdy door of the bunker, till now wedged ajar in a drift of sand, was forced off its rusted hinges: she heard it somersaulted away. (422). Like the 'broken celluloid doll' (442) at the entrance of the bunker, Elizabeth Hunter has been reduced to total passivity. Her control of her own being is lost with the symbolic snapping of the bunker's hinge, much as the speaker of David Campbell's
poem, 'The Return of Jason'\textsuperscript{1} - from which comes one of the novel's epigraphs - has found in his discovery of himself:

\begin{quote}
I know the ways of the wind.
It blows this way and that way
In the changeable mind
Until the will snaps like a hinge.
One time fortune made me cringe.
Reeds are wise, reeds bend. (ll. 7-12).
\end{quote}

Thus the random quality of Elizabeth Hunter's perception amounts to a 'trial by what is referred to as Nature' (425) in parallel with another 'by that unnaturally swollen, not to say diseased conscience which had taken over during the night from her defector will' (425). From a 'continual juggling of fireballs, either in the sky, or ... at the back of her eyesockets' (422-23) emerges a tirade of the images of memory in which the significance of a whole life is dramatized. The roar of the storm is associated with 'the rumble of goods trains passing through Gogong, and on into precious memory' (423), where Elizabeth Hunter is given to see the strength that is represented in her dead husband's vulnerability. His protectiveness seems to her to be talismanic as she stands in the bunker, thigh-deep in water, surrounded by a confusion of 'several stiff objects, bottles, and dead fish' (423). Along with the reality of these objects is present the wholly imagined 'little shagreen travelling clock (a present from Alfred, one of several, when Basil was born)' (423). In this confused state, she finds in the noise of the ocean outside an implicit accusation of her responsibility for the supposed death of Edvard Pehl whom she imagines to have refused the opportunity of sheltering with her.

\textsuperscript{1} Selected Poems, Sydney: Angus and Robertson, enlarged edition 1973, 147.
More important than this mistake in her perception is the accuracy of her observation about her own capacity for destructiveness:

Perhaps it is you who are responsible for the worst in people. Like poor little Basil sucking first at one unresponsive teat then the other the breasts which will not fill in spite of the nauseating raw beef and celery sandwiches prescribed by Dr Whatever - to 'make milk to feed your baby'. Instead of milk, 'my baby' (surely the most tragic expression?) must have drawn off the pus from everything begrudged withheld to fester inside the breast he was cruelly offered. (423).

From the intimations of personal sharing in general guilt grows an apocalyptic intuition of the festering nature of human destructiveness: 'This night (morning by the shagreen clock) it is the earth coming to a head: practically all of us will drown in the pus which has gathered in it' (423). At the peak of the violence of her loathing, she is no longer able to resist the prostration of spirit, foreshadowed in the image of the recoiling trees in the description of the storm's coming. Her state is one of deepest reduction:

Elizabeth Hunter was almost torn off her shelf by a supernal blast then put back by a huge thrust or settling of exhausted atoms. She lay and submitted to someone to whom she had never been introduced. Somebody is always tinkering with something. It is the linesman testing for the highest pitch of awfulness the human spirit can endure. Not death. For yourself there is no question of dying. (423-24).

At the point of most vigorous disgust and physical helplessness an intimation of hope begins to assert itself in Elizabeth Hunter's deluded denial of her mortality. Yet in this hallucination of personal indestructibility is the beginning of a far greater certainty of knowledge of the relationship between limited human understanding and the boundlessness of which it is part. When Elizabeth Hunter's uncontrolled acknowledgement
of powerlessness to resist the annihilation of the ego is made, she in fact reshapes Mitty Jacka's phrase 'our conglomerate existence' (241) with its connotations of stolid non-development. From the reshaping emerges a formal triumph in which human and all existence flow together and merge. In such a requalification of her experience, even Elizabeth Hunter's resistance of the limitations so evidently imposed on her by her mortality seem to offer an apotheosis:

She could not visualize it. [Her own death.] She only positively believed in what she saw and was and what she was was too real too diverse composed of everyone she had known and loved and not always altogether loved it is better than nothing and given birth to and for God's sake. (424).

At this point of the narrative is therefore introduced the boundlessness of individual consciousness that is so important an aspect of the later description of Elizabeth Hunter's death. For the present, however, White concentrates on the exposition of the most significant single event of the novel as Elizabeth Hunter perceives the peace and harmony at the eye of the storm which she has only been able to reach after the gradual, though in the end rapid, stripping-away of the outer levels of her consciousness. She crosses her much-anticipated horizon 'into a state of semi-consciousness from which light as much as silence roused her' (424), and after yet another requalification of her experience that is imaged as 'a débris of sticks, straw, scaly corpses, a celluloid doll' (424), enters the eye of the storm.
White then proceeds to demonstrate the meaning of the remark which in *Riders in the Chariot* he had given to Himmelfarb to make:

that 'a moment can become eternity, depending on what it contains'

(172). A state of being is physically perceivable for Elizabeth Hunter and the experience is rendered in language of simple elegant beauty:

Round her a calm was glistening. She climbed farther into it by way of the ridge of sand and the heap of rubbish where the house had stood. At some distance a wrecked piano, all hammers and wires, was half buried in wet sand. (424).

In the images of the storm-broken piano and the rubble of the house are presented the ephemerality of the culture and social order which have been the context of Elizabeth Hunter's beauty, privilege and success. Equally, however, these images have borne the connotations of Elizabeth Hunter's destructive possessiveness which has been such a robust component of her rage for experience.

In a symbolically significant gesture, therefore, she must pass through their wreckage much as Theodora, having survived the fire in the Hôtel du Midi, is made to witness the burning piano as a prelude to her personal reconstitution in her experience with Holstius. Around her, Elizabeth Hunter is faced with the geography of her own fragmentation:

Without much thought for her own wreckage, she moved slowly down what had been a beach, picking her way between torn-off branches, great beaded hassocks of amber weed, everywhere fish the sea had tossed out, together with a loaf of no longer bread, but a fluffier, disintegrating foam rubber. Just as she was no longer a body, least of all a woman: the myth of her womanhood had been exploded by the storm. (424).
The meaning of the events with which White leads up to this point, is clearly that nothing less than the total annihilation of the outer layers of consciousness will serve to provide the character with the necessary detachment from circumstance to apprehend her part in the whole of existence. Unlike Dorothy, who is at one stage pictured as 'enclosed by an emptiness' (389), Elizabeth Hunter is fulfilled by this reduction of the self, the stripping-away of the outer levels of consciousness in order to reach the essential core of being within herself. No longer aware of herself as a socially-existing being, she perceives coherence in her existence:

She was instead a being, or more likely a flaw at the centre of this jewel of light: the jewel itself, blinding and tremulous at the same time, existed, flaw and all, only by grace; for the storm was still visibly spinning and boiling at a distance, in columns of cloud, its walls hung with vaporous balconies, continually shifted and distorted. (424).

Within the enclosed circumstances of this experience, her relationship with the swans is one that confirms her knowledge of herself as 'unhallowed ... a swan herself but black' (333), as she feeds them with the remains of the loaf of bread she has found, which, like herself, is 'sodden' (425) and near to disintegration:

Expressing neither contempt nor fear, they snapped up the bread from her hands, recognizing her perhaps by what remained of her physical self, in particular the glazed stare, the salt-stiffened nostrils, or by the striving of a lean and tempered spirit to answer the explosions of stiff silk with which their wings were acknowledging an equal. (425).
Despite the suggestions of spiritual debilitation that may be engendered by the use of the passive voice in this passage - in which the eye of the storm is a 'dream of glistening peace through which she was moved' (424) and in which 'All else was dissolved by this lustrous moment made visible ... and would have remained so, if she had been allowed to choose' (425) - Elizabeth Hunter's role is that of an active participant. Her fellowship with the swans is the act of a solitary, but of one who has experienced 'the striving of a lean and tempered spirit' (425). Elizabeth Hunter now is poised between two possible options. She cannot, she knows, prolong the peace in the storm's eye, where time and space coalesce in a 'lustrous moment made visible' (425). The impossibility of so continuing leads her to the contemplation of the first of her options - to surrender the choice to act that is inherent in existence:

She would lie down rather, and accept to become part of the shambles she saw on looking behind her: no worse than any she had caused in life in her relationships with human beings. In fact, to be received into the sand along with other deliquescent flesh, strewn horsehair, knotted iron, the broken chassis of an upturned car, and last echoes of a hamstrung piano, is the most natural conclusion. (425).

The acceptance of human vulnerability and of mortality, however, does not in the end equate with abandonment of the responsibilities of continued existence, as Elizabeth Hunter realizes in implementing her second option as the eye of the storm passes away. In simply agreeing with the proposition of suffering offered by a continued engagement with experience, Elizabeth Hunter sets in motion the means of her own becoming which, as her death reveals, is a joyful experience. As even her son Basil realizes, however, the price must first be paid in a manner something after his own drowsy
reflections on Lear:

this is why He is unplayable by actors anyway
at those moments when the veins are filled with
lightning the Fool flickering in counterpoint
like conscience conscience dies first so that
you can feel more thoroughly destitute nothing
else matters but this pure destitution not all
the stalking the blood Goneril and Dorothy not
jellied eyes not even the misunderstood Cordelia
nothing is truly solved unless at the last
button why Mother is closest but how close to
the undoing Mitty the Jacka would cut it off
before its time in one of those bursts of negative
fulfilment. (272-73).

Elizabeth Hunter's own fulfilment is neither negative nor
positive at the point at which she is led by 'some force not
her absent will' (425) to face the desolation attendant upon
being, in the image of the gull impaled on a broken tree branch.
Its destruction is complete, having 'been reduced to a plague in
haphazard bones and sooty feathers' (425). Yet even in such a
total loss of viability as this, extending even to the shattering
of its physical integrity, the image of the dead gull has a
creative function in Elizabeth Hunter's consciousness: 'Its
death would have remained unnoticed, if her mind's ear had not
heard the cry still tearing free as the breast was pierced' (425).
Her later discovery that the dead gull is of the kind known as a
'noddy' (427), carries interesting implications in that the
secondary meaning of that term - 'knave' or 'fool' - unites the
symbolism of this passage with that describing the Lear-Fool relation-
ship of Basil's reverie in the Botanic Gardens. White's repeated
reference to the word 'noddy' seems to reinforce the validity of
this reading; and certainly Elizabeth Hunter's experience in the
storm and her discovery of the 'skewered' (425) gull are analogous to
Basil's understanding of Lear's personal cataclysm 'at that
moment when the veins are filled with lightning the Fool
flickering in counterpoint like conscience' (272-73). Elizabeth
Hunter symbolically accepts the course which she later explains
to Dorothy: 'I think I was reminded that one can't escape
suffering. Though it's only human to try to escape it. So I
took refuge. Again, it was the dead bird reminding me that the
storm might not have passed' (409). White's presentation of
the acceptance gathers greater intensity by virtue of the echoes
of Lear:

At least the death cry of the insignificant
sooty gull gave her back her significance. It
got her creaking to her feet. She began scuttling,
clawing her way up the beach by handfuls of air,
an old woman and foolish, who in spite of her age
had not experienced enough of living.
So she reached her bunker. She re-arranged
herself, amongst rust and cobwebs, on her narrow
shelf, protecting her skull with frail arms, to
await the tortures in store for her when the
storm returned. (425).

Her restoration to the world of ordinary perception is
established in the images with which her growing, returning
awareness of herself is presented. Her first awareness is of
'the thin ribbon of silence' being 'stamped very faintly then
more distinctly with voices' (426). In turn she becomes for
herself a 'thing on the shelf', an 'old woman ... in the hole
which had once been the doorway to a bunker in a sandhill' and
finally 'The woman' who is 'glad to find herself reunited with
her womanly self' (426). The eye of the storm, having withdrawn,
has become a memory of unreality, 'the delusions of her feeble
mind' (426). In this sense, her past is shaped by her present,
so that all experience becomes a function of her perception of it.
Elizabeth Hunter's reliving of her past experience is a making of herself in the present, in the sense that her knowledge of the nature of the storm's relationship to its eye gives some point to her existence. Her understanding amounts to a perception of the essential self as analogous to the eye of the storm and, correspondingly, of the ego as the flux, the threatening chaos which contains it.

The experience of the clear peace of the eye of the storm, though it is supremely significant to Elizabeth Hunter, is transient. As such, it is one of those experiences of which Peter Beaston writes in his discussion of the nature of revelation and illumination in White's novels:

> It is strongly suggested in all the books that man may achieve union with the One, but this is only reached through a lifetime of encounters with a series of Moment Gods, between which encounters vast tracts of desert must be crossed. It is his experience of the desert, as well as of the moments of Grace, that finally brings man to salvation.\(^1\)

In the fifteen years between the storm and her death, Elizabeth Hunter's consciousness eventually develops to the extent that it embraces both the 'deserts' and 'Moment Gods' of her experience. In the moments preceding her death Elizabeth Hunter strives to maintain this unity in a permanence towards which she wills herself when she understands that:

> 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. (550).

\(^1\) *The Eye in the Mandala*, 10.
In 'the eye of the storm' passage, White emphasizes passivity in the sense that illumination is given 'by grace' to the participant who acts in accordance with opportunity. In the scene describing Elizabeth Hunter's death, however, there is a vigorous sense of the character making her own opportunities, while acknowledging that she is allowed only by 'grace' to do so. There is for Elizabeth Hunter an urgency to act in the face of 'the question of how much time she would have before the eye must concentrate on other, greater contingencies, leaving her to chaos' (550).

Despite her dependence on the protectiveness that is represented in the selfless figure of Alfred, the vulnerable husband of whom she has failed to be worthy, she knows that in the time given her the responsibility to act is her own and tells herself that 'I alone must perform whatever the eye is contemplating for me' (550).

White's creation of the image of Elizabeth Hunter's self finds its most significant centre in the episode of her death and final illumination for, as Veronica Brady has pointed out, Elizabeth Hunter's death 'serves to confirm not destroy the power of vision'. White's language in this episode brilliantly conveys the death of the body, while enacting the expansion of the individual consciousness towards identity with the One.

1. Here I disagree with the view taken by A.P. Riemer, in 'The Eye of the Needle: Patrick White's Recent Novels', that there is 'always a suggestion present that her death is merely death, and that, as an extension of this, her experiences on the Island are significant only in a personal, subjective way; that they contain little, if any trace of absolute truth'. Southerly, 34 (1974), 248-66; 262.
2. 'The Eye of the Storm', 65.
There is a diffusion of the boundary between the objects of Elizabeth Hunter's mind and her own physicality and physical surroundings. Thus the threat of chaos outside the eye of the storm is imaged in the rise and fall of the curtains in her room:

That [chaos] was threatening, she could tell from the way the muslin was lifted at the edges, till what had been a benison of sea, sky, and land, was becoming torn by animal passions, those of a deformed octopod with blue-suckered tentacles and a glare of lightning or poached eggs. (550).

That union established, White then presents the death of Elizabeth Hunter's body simultaneously with her first tentative movement towards an affirmative spiritual exhilaration:

To move the feet by some miraculous dispensation to feel sand benign and soft between the toes the importance of the decision makes the going heavy at first the same wind stirring the balconies of cloud as blow between the ribs it would explain the howling of what must be the soul not for fear that it will blow away in any case it will but in anticipation of its first experience of precious water as it filters in through the cracks the cavities of the body (550).

Elizabeth Hunter is presented here not as escaping from matter into nothing, but as unifying in wholeness the body and the spirit and both with the great sense of the One that is evoked by the encroaching water with its baptismal connotations. The swans carved on the handles of the commode may perhaps be seen less as talismanic representations of the actual swans in the eye of the storm, than as a variation on that image suggesting the unity of Elizabeth Hunter's being as she finally ascends towards illumination in:
blue pyramidal waves with swans waiting by appointment each a suppressed black explosion the crimson beaks savaging only those born to a different legend to end in legend is what frightens most people more than cold water climbing mercifully towards the overrated but necessary heart a fleshy fist to love and fight with not to survive except as a kindness or gift of a jewel. (550).

The parallel between the physical processes of death and the upsurge of the spirit towards euphoric enlightenment is subtly established here in the images of 'a suppressed black explosion', 'the crimson beaks savaging only those born to a different legend', but supremely in the image of 'the overrated but necessary heart a fleshy fist to love and fight with not to survive except as a kindness or gift of a jewel'. This use of the pathology of death as an image of self-realization is then taken to its limits as matter, spirit, time present and past, the individual consciousness and the One all coalesce:

The seven swans are perhaps massed after all to destroy a human will once the equal of their own weapons its thwack as crimson painful its wings as violently abrasive don't oh DON'T my dark birds of light led us rather - enfold.

Till I am no longer filling the void with mock substance: myself is this endlessness. (550-51).

White's final bold claim as to the illusion in the appearances by which human consciousness must strive for knowledge of the ultimate is a fitting end to his narrative of the many-faceted life of Elizabeth Hunter. Within the image which this character becomes is contained a brilliant representation of humanity's capacity and potential for the 'endlessness' to which Elizabeth Hunter aspires, and with which White has demonstrated his fascination over many years.
In the image of Elizabeth Hunter's life much is incorporated, both physical and spiritual, with a completeness which is perhaps most closely related to the act of musical composition. White's interest in and indebtedness to the non-literary arts is well-known, but its results are hardly better seen than in the success with which he images, in the life of Elizabeth Hunter, a wholeness of experience defined both in terms of time as well as of space. The analogy to musical composition is therefore the most illuminating way of approaching the notion that an image may represent the non-physical world; as well as depicting the physical, as it is usually understood to do. This proposition differs from the idea that the non-physical may grow into imagined life from the metaphorical power of an image representing the physical. It insists on a unity, as White does, of the physical and the non-physical. A life may be in fiction - as it is in the world that fiction presents - a single thing, composed of many interlocking and overlapping parts: but still one thing. The concept might be illustrated by a remark of Mozart's describing the experience of bringing together various musical ideas into a single composition. From the many possibilities that suggest themselves, comes a vision of the work as a whole:

Provided that I am not disturbed my subject enlarges itself and becomes methodised and defined, and the whole, though it be long, stands almost complete and finished in my mind, so that I can survey it, like a fine picture or a beautiful statue - at a glance. Nor do I hear in my imagination the parts successively, but I hear them, as it were, all at once.]

1. Quoted in G. Humphrey, *Thinking: An Introduction to its Experimental Psychology*, London: Methuen, 1951, 53. I am indebted to Dr R.F. Brissenden of the Australian National University for bringing this passage to my attention.
Mozart's description applies equally to the relationship between the central image of *The Eye of the Storm*, Elizabeth Hunter's life, and the other images that predominate in the novel — such as the storm and the house — but also to the integrity of the character of Elizabeth Hunter in her various manifestations and, finally, to the beautifully-wrought dynamic patterns of characterization contained by the narrative.

In *The Eye of the Storm*, the technique of establishing a central image as the embodiment of the novel's meaning is at its most sophisticated. So completely are theme, structure, characterization and plot unified in this novel that in it White has arrived at a radically different notion of what an image might become in prose: that it is indispensable to the creation of the 'structure of reality'.
IV

THE CORE OF REALITY:

WHITE'S MOTIFS
The concept of a motif in literature, a frequently recurring technique or metaphoric configuration, is a familiar one. Notions commonly held in Western culture, for instance, are figured in the image of Christ as a figure of transcendent humanity; of the river as an image of passing time and thus of the human life span; of bread as an image of physical and, by metaphoric extension, of spiritual sustenance; and so on. The major characteristic of the motif is indeed that it automatically imbues the work in which it is presented with some degree of a priori significance. Obviously this does not mean that a writer cannot present such significance from a perspective or in a context of his or her own devising. If it did, motifs would assume a merely algebraic status which is foreign to their function of illuminating and enriching the significance of the events, characters and situations with which they are associated in a work of literature. In fact, then, the motifs which are consistently presented by any writer inevitably reveal the essence of his or her fictive world, from which grow the dominant themes of the works which encompass it. Moreover, any writer of stature, whose work has continued over an extended period, will almost certainly fashion and develop certain motifs which are his or her own.

Patrick White's creative effort spans more than four decades, eleven novels, two volumes of poems, two volumes of short stories

and at least eight plays. During this period and within these numerous works, he has formulated a number of dominant images. Certainly such images are prominent in the novels, poetically registering the centrality of his concern with 'the core of reality'. They have thus become the motifs of White's prose, the frequently recurring images which embody the aesthetic equivalent of the world proposed by the novels.

The world of White's novels is founded on notions of character rather than of situation, or of elaborate developments of plot. Obviously characterization techniques are evolved in the conduct of the narrative in any novel, however, and some of White's novels indicate his ability to develop an intricately-knit plot or to order an impressively large number and variety of events, in the interests of characterization. The tightly-plotted structure of The Aunt's

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1. Included in this summary, in addition to White's better-known works, are his unpublished Bread-and-Butter Women, a three-act comedy; The School for Friends, a one-act comedy; and the comedy Return to Abyssinia (See A.J. Lawson, Patrick White, Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1974, 8). Also included is his privately (?) published Thirteen Poems (See L. Cantrell, 'Patrick White's First Book', Australian Literary Studies, 6, 1974, 434-36) and the short stories which have not yet been published in a collection: 'The Twitching Colonel' (London Mercury, 35, April 1937, 602-609), 'Cocotte' (Horizon, 1, May 1940, 364-66), 'After Alep' (Bugle Blast, 3rd series, London: Allen and Unwin, [1945], 147-55) and 'Fête Galante' (Meanjin, 36, 1977, 3-24). The eleventh novel, The Twyborn Affair (London: Cape, 1979), has been published too recently for consideration in this thesis.
Story exemplifies the intricacy of White's narrative structures. The diversity of the four-fold plot of Riders in the Chariot reveals what R.F. Brissenden refers to as White's 'sheer versatility'. His command over the problem of time in The Solid Mandala and The Eye of the Storm results in sequences that are both elegant and sophisticated. For all of his skill, however, it remains true that the plots and structures of White's novels are directed towards, and evolved to allow the emergence of, his prime concern of characterization. In White's novels, characters are not developed to respond to events, so much as events and situations are designed to reveal aspects of character. White's own remarks encourage a view of characterization as central to his novels:

Characters interest me more than situations. I don't think any of my books have what you call plots.... I always think of my novels as being the lives of the characters.  

With such an emphasis on character, it is not surprising that White's novels are addressed to the deeper psychological and emotional levels of human awareness and being. Figure after figure in White's novels persist in the search for, the identification of and the growth to wholeness of the essence of their being. Whether his major subject is 'the Word made Flesh', or 'the problem of being Australian', or something at once narrower and more wide-ranging than both of these, the habitual revelation of 'possibilities beyond the present moment',  

it is with his characters' deepest responses to the world and with their clearest, most comprehensive understanding

3. The quotations are from, respectively: Peter Beatson, The Eye in the Mandala, London: Elek, 1976, 105; Veronica Brady, 'A Fringe of Leaves: Civilization by the Skin of Our Own Teeth', Southerly, 37 (1977), 123-30; 124; and Harry Heseltine, 'Patrick White's Style', Quadrant, 7, 3(1963), 61-74; 74.
of themselves and the world that White is most concerned.

Three central motifs have evolved in White's novels as a direct result of this concern and these provide a pertinent insight into his 'core of reality', for within them White develops the fundamental concepts of the self, the world and the perception and understanding of the world by the self. Three basic conditions of human existence are thus proposed by White in his works: to be, to be in the world and to pursue understanding of the self and the world. The image of the human body is the motif in terms of which the characters' humanity - the condition of their being - is explored. Images of the natural world constitute the motif of their circumstances, the most significant setting for the conduct of that exploration. What might be called the motif of revelation and understanding is established in White's departure from verisimilitude in the narrative, as a means of evoking the emotional states of his characters, and in his presentation of the imagery aesthetic experience, in which the characters gain profound insight into themselves and the world. There can be no question of examining in detail the very many occurrences of these images in White's work, but a selective study of the themes associated with White's dominant motifs does clarify the fact that he embodies the 'core of reality' of his novels within his imagery.

The Image of the Human Body as Motif

Notwithstanding the centrality of White's concern with the states of mind of his characters, he insists on their physicality. Indeed, the image of the human body is almost always presented in the context of the development of the characters' inner lives.
Harry Heseltine has made the point that White's characters are revealed 'as much through their hands, their skin, their breathing, as through anything else' and that the image of the human body is one of a number of images within which 'White has developed a very precise means of dealing with the intangibles of human behaviour'. 1 Heseltine provides ample illustration of this point which has remained so self-evidently valid that any analysis in support of it here would be gratuitous. Nevertheless, in the broader context of thematic development within White's novels in general the characters have significance beyond themselves which is readily observable in White's presentation of the image of the human body.

The condition of being in the world is evoked in White's presentation of this image. In Happy Valley, 2 for instance, human beings are said to be 'by inclination static' (115), a proposition on which White elaborates at the beginning of Part II:

Watch a man complaining at sundown over a glass of beer, watch him wipe the dust off his mouth, listen to his pale, yellow voice, if you want to understand what I mean. Because there you will find that static quality I'm trying to suggest, I mean, the trousers hanging on, but only just. Well, time got over this and any more positive protest, though things continued much the same, the washing on the line Mondays, the geranium dead on old Mrs Everett's window-sill, with Mrs Everett's geranium face wilting and inquisitive above the pot. Mrs Everett, like her geranium, no longer underlined the seasonal change. She twittered in a dead wind. She clung on through habit adhering lichen-wise to the rock.

Mrs Everett's brown face was more than this, was the face of Happy Valley seen through dust, those dust waves churned by a car passing down the main street. (115-16).

1. 'Patrick White's Style', 64, 65.
This passage is of some technical interest as an early instance of White's evocation of the intangible in his presentation of the tangible. Yet there is also a thematic significance here, albeit a fairly subdued manifestation of it at this stage in White's writing. Clearly White in this passage has begun to evolve the line of thinking which later leads to his preoccupation with the relation between the spiritual and the physical dimensions of human existence.

An important component of that relation is the concept of the body as both the vehicle by which the spirit expresses itself and the medium through which it becomes aware of the world around itself. In *The Living and the Dead*, that concept is expressed in Eden Standish's realization that 'Compassion is oddly physical' (139), an idea that comes to her when she encounters the crippled Welshman:

It made you sick, the business of being Eden Standish, the books skipped beside a midnight fire, the futility of walking winter streets. Promising yourself that soon - And then against the iron fence, the man in the macintosh, the voice half frozen, half liquid with the words of the Welsh singing, that she heard, not so much her ear, as right inside her, she was listening to it with her whole body, that became the contorted body of the man, sick inside the greenish macintosh. Feeling a scurry of grit on her face, she told herself she was sentimental. She was listening to the singing of a Welsh cripple. She was moved by the sick pallor of the face, the bones of a singing face, and the red, inflamed boss that grew from the side of the nose. She would walk, was already walking away. But she felt a tightening in her mouth. She was older, she felt

older. She would go inside and look in the glass and find that this was true, that she was actually several years older. And it went on inside her, the singing, the voices of faces in the street, that flowed past her, melting with her own face. (139).

Indeed, as here, not only compassion but much that is not physical is presented as 'oddly physical' in White's novels. Suffering, for instance, yokes the two states, as anguish fuses with physical pain and the torments of the spirit are presented in terms of what, in Riders in the Chariot, White calls 'the dreadful frailty of the human body' (460). In that novel, or for that matter in White's work as a whole, the image of the body functions nowhere more potently than in the figure of the Lady from Czernowitz. At first whimsically resigned to her treatment at the hands of the Regierung, she is made to bear the full horror of the gas chambers of Friedensdorf, of which she herself becomes the most horrific emblem:

Her scalp was grey stubble where the reddish hair had been. Her one dug hung down beside the ancient scar which represented the second. Her belly sloped away from the hillock of her navel. Her thighs were particularly poor. But it was her voice which lingered. Stripped. Calling ... from out of the dark of history, ageless, ageless, and interminable. (205).

At the other end of the presentational range, the body of Himmelfarb images his all-consuming devotion and spiritual elevation as he prays in his shack at Sarsaparilla:

the purest leaf touched the Jew's eyelids; his lids were shaped in gold. His veins were lapis lazuli in a sea of gold, the thongs of the phylacteries were turned to onyx, but the words that fell from his mouth were leaping crystals, each reflecting to infinity the words contained within the words. (449).

Whether anguish or joyful transport, then, the condition of the soul is envisaged in White's novels in terms of the image of the body. The motif encompasses also the complication of those extremes which typifies White's fictive world. Even at this moment of intense spiritual illumination, for instance, Himmelfarb's body is made to convey the opposite pole of his experience:

The shawl fell back from his shoulders in the moment of complete union, and the breeze from the window twitched at the corner of his old robe, showing him to be, indeed, a man, made to suffer the torments and indignities. The hair lay in thin, grizzled wisps in the hollow between his breasts; the thongs of veins which bound his scraggy legs, from the ankles to the knees, were most arbitrarily, if not visciously entangled. (449-50).

The Spiritual and the Physical

The merging of the spiritual and physical dimensions of human existence upholds the notion of spiritual fulfilment propounded in the novels. White's concern with the ascendance of the spirit does not, however, imply a denial of human physicality. The position is rather more complicated than that, for in White's novels, as Beatson has observed, 'while the body is essential to the soul it is of less ultimate value; it is simultaneously the most and the least important of the soul's possessions'. Thus, in The Tree of Man, recurring images of Amy's physicality, of her earthbound nature, are set against Stan's conviction that there is

a mystery in the physical world which, once revealed, would explain
the nature of human existence. Stan's identification of God in
the gob of spittle (495) is a culmination of White's continuing
endorsement of that conviction. His discovery that 'greater clarity'
is as obvious as a hand' is made, significantly, at the very moment
in which he stands 'waiting for the flesh to be loosened on him' (497).

Where the spirit, seen as the centre of human understanding
and feeling, is ultimately of greater significance than the body in
*The Tree of man*, in *Voss* the paradox of the interdependence of body
and soul is further developed. In this novel, White pointedly
presents the body as an image of human vulnerability to spiritual
suffering. Laura's physical illness is associated with her spiritual
torment as she struggles with the need to clarify the meaning of the
Incarnation, the connection between the two levels of suffering
being made especially clear in the image of her shaven head, drained
by leeches. There is clearly an interplay of connotations of
physical and spiritual strength in Laura's exchange with Dr
Kilwinning at this point when she is told that she will be
'strengthened' by the loss of blood (410).

Le Mesurier's diarrhoeic condition adds a further dimension
to White's metaphoric alignment of physical and spiritual suffering,
in that it challenges Voss's conception of the human body as subject
to the exercise of Will. Voss's initial attempts to assert the
primacy of the spirit involve the 'bitter pleasure' of masochism,
according to which it is 'wrong to surrender to sensuous delights' (138).

Voss is at Rhine Towers convinced that the mortification of the body

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ensures dominance over it by the spirit. Only when later he accepts
the limitations imposed on the spirit by its association with the
body is he 'truly humbled' to the point where 'he may ascend' (411).
Yet the relationship between body and spirit is more than a matter of
the dominance, or even the superiority, of the one over the other.
Voss must be spiritually, as well as physically, humbled before he
can fulfil Laura's 'three stages'. The relative weakness of the
body, the vulnerability of Voss's body to the fatal hardships of his
expedition, is analogous to that of his spirit in relation to divinity,
despite the greatness of Voss's spirit by comparison with those of
others. Spiritual fulfilment, that is, depends on an acceptance
of human limitation.

As White's presentation of Miss Hare indicates, however, that
acceptance avails little unless complemented by the development of
human possibilities. She is one of those, like Theodora or Rhoda
Courtney, to whom Beatson's observation would apply: 'Ugliness is
not in itself a virtue, but those who possess it cannot take refuge
on the surface, and must look for truth at deeper levels'. Miss
Hare suffers because of her ugliness, perhaps most of all in her
father's accusation that she is 'Ugly as a foetus. Ripped out too
soon' (61) which he makes just before his folly catches up with him
in death (63). Even this suffering is moderately constructive,
for the terms of her father's accusation identify Miss Hare with one
of his earlier speculations, that 'Only the unborn soul is whole,
pure' (39). Yet, in itself, such wholeness and purity is of little
more practical value than Voss's strenuous denial of the body, for
in the terms proposed in White's novels symbiosis of body and soul

1. The Eye in the Mandala, 106.
is all. Thus Miss Hare's physical ugliness can only be turned to positive account in the more general context of her authenticity as a human being. As what her father calls 'one of the unborn' (39), Miss Hare is 'at most an animal, at least a leaf' (520). In her dealings with Himmelfarb, her humanity is asserted, but not by any evasion of physicality, as Himmelfarb sees when she offers him her protection:

She was at her ugliest, wet and matted, but any disgust which Himmelfarb might have felt was swallowed up in the conviction that, despite the differences of geography and race, they were, and always had been, engaged on a similar mission. Approaching from opposite directions, it was the same darkness and the same marsh which threatened to engulf their movements, but however lumbering and impeded those movements might be, the precious parcel of secrets carried by each must only be given at the end into certain hands. (342).

Their 'mission', the establishment of bonds of the 'loving-kindness' which inspires Himmelfarb (176) and of which Miss Hare is conscious as a child 'at the roots of trees and plants, not to mention hair', provided it was not of human variety' (523), is intrinsically human and, in Miss Hare's case, genuine spiritual birth is coterminous with a recognition of her botched body as human rather than as some aberrant form of animal life. Towards the end of the novel, Miss Hare's ugliness becomes proverbial of outraged virtue, the natural extension of her earlier 'unborn' condition, as she becomes 'the avenging angel', the 'monster of truth' (475) in the episode in which Himmelfarb's house is burnt down and she attempts to rescue him:

Nobody who saw would ever forget how Miss Hare had emerged from the burning house. She was a blackened thing, yet awful. Her wicker hat was turned to a frizzy Catherine wheel, wings of flame were sprouting from the shoulders of her cardigan, her worsted heels were spurred with fire. Most alarming was the swollen throat from which the terror, or more probable, the spectators felt, the orders and the accusations would not immediately pour. (475).
White's emphatic presentation of the image of the body in this passage, although it does exemplify Miss Hare's acceptance of her humanity, also projects an apocalyptic transcendence. The transfiguration of Miss Hare images but one aspect of the concept of transcendent humanity which White explores in his novels. In *The Solid Mandala*, his presentation of Mrs Poulter suggests another, in Arthur's perception of her as a figure whose spiritual fecundity contrasts with her physical barrenness. As Dulcie is Arthur's 'Athene', his figure of 'understanding', Mrs Poulter becomes his 'Demeter', whom he loves 'for her fulness, for her ripe apples' (223). For Arthur, Mrs Poulter evokes 'pictures of contentment' (260) which are all of rich physicality:

She had a little black pig which ran rootling round the back yard. She could lift the combs out of the hives without ever bothering to put on a veil. She stored pears on high shelves, the burn fading out of her skin towards the armpits. (260).

In the presentation of Mrs Poulter, White begins to move from the notion of the earthbound figure as it is seen in Amy Parker and Mrs Godbold, towards that of human physicality as indicative of immanent transcendence. The difference between this position and that adopted in *Riders in the Chariot* where, among other things, the body is dignified by its association with the spirit, is apparent in *The Vivisector* in the figures of Nance and Hero. Despite Nance's possessiveness and sentimentality, Hurtle is inspired by her beauty 'to shoot at an enormous naked canvas a whole radiant chandelier waiting in his mind and balls' (215). It is 'not her actual body

so much as its formal vessel' (210) with which Hurtle is aesthetically concerned. Even so, the body has become in this novel an image from which strongly transcendent overtones are evoked, and from the inspiration provided by Nance's body Hurtle intends 'to pour forth his visions of life' (210).

Overwhelmingly, however, the presentation of the image of the human body in *The Vivisector* involves an insistence on the negative for, as Hurtle says, he finds it 'easier to visualize the devils than the saints' (261). In the image of Hurtle's painting 'Lantana Lovers Under Moonfire', the pathetic sordidness of Cec Cutbush is stated as emanations both of human and supra-human depravity, 'the big-arsed moon aiming at the dislocated lovers; the cryptoqueer grocer-councillor machine-gunning them from the Council bench' (278). Hurtle sees in the figure of Cutbush more than 'a damned soul in the body of a solitary masturbator' (350), however, and although the painting testifies to human degradation it expresses a more profound conviction, as he explains to Olivia and Hero:

>I met the bloke one evening on this bench. He had something rotten about him, but only slightly, humanly rotten in the light of the Divine Destroyer. I mean the grocer's attempts at evil are childlike beside the waves of enlightened evil proliferating from above; and he usually ends by destroying himself. (350).

The demonic transcendence presented in this painting carries with it implications of the idea expressed by Beatson, that the soul's involvement with the body makes it vulnerable.¹

Vulnerability is the keynote of White's presentation of Rhoda, but it is associated with a toughness and, at times, even a perverse beauty which is crystallized in the development of Hurtle's 'Pythoness at Tripod' series. These paintings initially grow from Hurtle's youthful examination of his aesthetic intentions towards Rhoda's body: 'the light he would show burning in the cage of her ribs; the belly sloping down from the winkle of a navel towards the flame she couldn't put out with her sponge' (135). Later, on an impulse, Hurtle begins the painting as 'a kind of formal expiation' (280) of his betrayal of 'a timid, wizened tenderness by raucously breaking open the door protecting her nakedness' (280) at St Yves de Trégor. From the beginning he knows 'how he should convey the iron in crippled bones ... the mesh of light, the drops of moisture in the Thermogene tuft' (280). When he next thinks of the painting, his emphasis is strongly negative, but by now the image has become a good deal more comprehensive:

In the darkness of his hands the problems of Rhoda's flesh flickered tantalizingly. Sometimes he was closer to, sometimes farther from solving them. Her skin had the transparency of thinned-out watery milk, the shrill smell of milk on the turn; while under the skin the flesh should have the tones, rose to yellow, of skinned chickens. From behind his fingers he could recall the pliability of chickens' breastbones. He had never touched Rhoda's breastbone, but it must have had the same sickening pliability as those of dead chickens. (301).

When the series is well under way, the vulnerability which is stressed here becomes even more pronounced; Hurtle having witnessed the suffering experienced by a young woman in an epileptic seizure, when 'the possessed one glanced at the only other of her kind, and they were swept up, and united by sheet lightning, as they never could have been on the accepted plane' (311).
This new aspect of suffering is brought into the 'Pythoness' paintings as a 'vision of sheet lightning' (312). The figure of Rhoda is transformed when 'sheet lightning invaded the eyeballs' (313), suggesting the idea of 'a human cow driven by something she couldn't see or understand' (315). Humanity is therefore presented at this point as the victim of its own capacity to comprehend 'the waves of enlightened evil' which influence its being. Yet from that point White's presentation of this series of paintings moves towards a qualified optimism, according to which the painting of Rhoda becomes an image which is more suggestive of endurance than of deformity. As Hurtle and Rhoda stare at the painting, they see 'the thin, transparent arm; the sponge as organic as the human claw clutching it; the delicate but indestructible architecture of the tripod-bidet, beside which the rosy figure was stood up for eternity' (462).

The vision of a flawed humanity, blundering about in an inexplicable world, is a major concern of White's novels, especially the later ones. In *The Vivisector*, even the flawed nature of White's human beings is held to be of signal importance in the achievement of enlightenment: that, as Christiana McBeath writes to Hurtle, 'the afflicted' are 'united in the same purpose' (637) which he 'as an artist and the worst afflicted' through his art 'can see farther than [the] mere human diseased' (638). Hurtle's experience bears out this proposition, especially when after being maimed by the stroke, he is 'reduced ... to niggling round the edges of totality' and in this condition experiences the 'curious sense of grace' (639), by which he is granted his vision of 'end-less obvi indi-ggoddd' (642). Obviously, Hurtle's physical state images his spiritual limitation.
Transcendent Carnality

In *The Eye of the Storm*, the motif of the human body is developed further within the concept of flawed humanity. White centres his exploration of the relationship between the spiritual and the physical in this novel on the figure of Elizabeth Hunter, especially in the two episodes in which her face is made up by Flora Manhood. Flora's dedication to voluptuousness, the 'certain air of reverence' (117), with which she anoints her patient, inspires both of them to 'the necessary level of abstraction' (118) at which a quasi-mystical experience is attained. Clearly Flora experiences something of a translation in the first of these episodes:

Anything she knew of art, all that she had learnt of sensuality, Sister Manhood drove into this mouth which was not her own. If she had never before attained to selflessness she succeeded now, forcing an illusion to assume a purple reality. (119).

In the make-up episodes, in fact, the image of the body functions as an emblem of Elizabeth Hunter's self. Thus Flora views the anointed figure as:

in one sense ... nothing more than a barbaric idol, frightening in its garishness of purple-crimson, lilac floss, and fluorescent white, in its robe of battered, rather than beaten, rose-gold, the claws, gloved in a jewelled armour, stiffly held about the level of the navel, waiting apparently for some further motive which might bring them to rest on the brocaded lap. (120).

The image of Elizabeth Hunter's body is presented in a variety of ways, each of them a succinct manifestation of the novel's themes. Each presentation is multi-faceted, so that there

is a constant emphasis on what Brian Kiernan has succinctly referred to as 'the simultaneity of being and becoming'\(^1\) that is so characteristic of White's fictive world. Hence, despite the disgust and fright she feels upon seeing the 'barbaric idol' here, Flora is made to experience its power to suggest the contiguity of many things within it:

In spite of her desire to worship, the younger woman might have been struck with horror if the faintly silvered lids hadn't flickered open on the milkier, blank blue of Elizabeth Hunter's stare. Then, for an instant, one of the rare coruscations occurred, in which the original sapphire buried under the opalescence invited you to shed your spite, sloth, indifference, resentments, along with an old woman's cruelty, greed, selfishness. 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. (120-21).

White has never before this novel made such claims for the possibility of the illumination of truth within habitual sensuality. To be sure, he does not neglect the opportunity of parodying his own investment of the sensual with intimations of transcendence. Elizabeth Hunter cannot, for instance, become either an idol or the goddess hidden inside through the 'subtler resources' of Flora Manhood's 'art, or vocation' (118), before both of them have been subjected to the author's sense of the ridiculous:

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Her own lips invoked, "Deep Carnation,' and let it die in a breathy hush.

'You've forgotten the teeth, Sister. The teeth! You can't possibly work on my mouth before you've stuck the teeth in. Don't you realize?'

Sister Manhood was corrected. She fetched the expensively created, natural-yellow teeth: never without a shiver. It was Mrs Hunter who began to hoist; but you had to shove, until you were both involved in what must have looked like part suicide, part murder. (118).

Moreover, White's engagement with the transcendent aspects of human existence is made in an integrated way through his treatment of both the sensual and the spiritual. Both are very positively inter-related in The Eye of the Storm as they are in the other novels, but nowhere are they so explicitly connected with the evil or pettiness of which humanity is capable in the same degree to which they are seen as intrinsically invested in the good. Dorothy Hunter wonders why it has been 'given to Elizabeth Hunter to experience the eye of the storm' (73) and whether 'anything of a transcendent nature' could 'have illuminated a mind so sensual, mendacious, materialistic, superficial as Elizabeth Hunter's' (589). The fact is that, unlike Dorothy, Elizabeth Hunter accepts every aspect of herself and in doing so she enacts the meanings of the first two epigraphs White has given to this novel. Knowing that she has been 'given by chance this human body so difficult to wear' (7), she accepts all of the conditions that are imposed on her and in doing so she is shown as experiencing 'what could have been a tremor of heaven's own perverse love' (7).

Indeed, in his presentation of Elizabeth Hunter, occurs White's most radical view of the relationship between the body
and the spirit, according to which human physicality is seen as a source of revelation:

As light as unlikely probably as painful as a shark's egg the old not body rather the flimsy soul is whirled around sometimes spat out anus-upward (souls have an anus they are never allowed to forget it) never separated from the brown the sometimes tinted spawn of snapshots the withered navel string still stuck to what it aspires to yes at last to be if the the past the dream life will allow. (194).

Elizabeth Hunter's present internal commentary on her past experience is affirmative of both the carnal and the spiritual. Her 'souls have an anus they are never allowed to forget it' is a realisation of the spiritual and the physical as a totality. In his novels before this one, White has accepted the dichotomy of matter and spirit, for all his preoccupation with the Incarnation. His protagonists have had to come to terms with their physical existence before they are able to penetrate the outer shell of themselves, entering a metaphysical understanding in the spiritual realm within. Even Hurtle Duffield's aspirations to represent the basic reality and honesty that is held for him within such common objects as tables and chairs is an implicit recognition of the essential separateness of spirit and matter. True, if there is in White a breaking down of the concept of spirit and matter as a dichotomy, it occurs in Art: the expression of a highly organised sensibility, which reshapes the environment from which it grows. If matter needs to be vivisected in order to reach the spirit within, however, the two cannot be the same. Indivisibly linked though they may be, their relationship must necessarily be dichotomous in such circumstances. In The Eye of the Storm the differences between the physical and the spiritual are not such
as to divide them or to unite them; they are held to be indistinguishably one in the quest for transcendence.

In *A Fringe of Leaves*, Ellen suppresses her sensuality to conform with the expectations of the Roxburghs, especially her husband who, when she responds to him 'with a natural ardour!', is repelled as if by 'having tasted something bitter' or by 'looking too deep' (76). Clearly enough in this novel, White extends the ideas developed in its predecessor, by presenting sensuality as central to both physical and spiritual experience. In the episode during which Ellen visits St Hya's Well to cleanse herself of 'no specific sin' but of 'presentiment of an evil which she would have to face sooner or later' (110), her purification is both physical and spiritual:

Presently, after getting up courage, she let herself down into the pool, clothes and all, hanging by a bough. When she had become totally immersed, and the breath frightened out of her by icy water, together with any thought beyond that of escaping back to earth, she managed, still clinging to the bough, to hoist herself upon the bank. She sat awhile in a meadow, in the sun, no longer crying, perhaps smiling, for she could feel the skin divided on her cheeks as though into webs as she sorted out the tails of her hair. (110-11).

Later, recalling this incident, she remembers that the 'black waters' of the saint's pool 'had cleansed her of morbid thoughts and sensual longings' (273).

Significantly, however, her first memory of the occasion comes to her when she feels threatened at 'Dulcet' by Garnet Roxburgh's 'coarse and sensual' presence to which her inner self responds (83).

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She is disturbed when 'faced with her own vulnerable image, swimming at her out of ... mirrors' (111) because she knows that Garnet incites the longings of her inmost self: 'the being her glass could not reveal, nor her powers of perception grasp, but whom she suspected must exist none the less' (92). After their inevitable lustful encounter, 'an experience of sensuality she must have awaited all her life, however inadmissible the circumstances in which she had encouraged it' (116), Ellen realizes that Garnet has been 'less her seducer than the instrument she had chosen for measuring depths she was tempted to explore' (117).

Only after the shipwreck, when Ellen has been reduced to 'bestiality' but also elevated by the Aboriginal women to the status of an anointed 'demi-goddess' (267), does she again explore those depths. White renders the process of exploration as an alignment of both the depths and heights of the spiritual as well as the physical aspects of Ellen's humanity. In reaching the depths after bolting down a feast of near-raw fish, Ellen is 'gorged, bloated, stupefied' (261), while 'her soul had grown too dull and brutish to concern itself with spiritual matters' (262). In rising to the heights, having assuaged her desperate hunger by gobbling a piece of roasted snake flesh, Ellen fulfils both physical and spiritual needs. She realizes that:

reduced to an animal condition she could at least truthfully confess that ecstasy had flickered up from the pit of her stomach provoked by a fragment of snakeflesh.

She bowed her head, humbly as well as gratefully, for what she had been vouchsafed; and whatever God might have in store for her. (266).
In this episode, White prepares for that in which Ellen's cannibalism takes place. Indeed the thematic significance of that later episode has also been anticipated in the dream of Austin Roxburgh, which emerges from his reflection on the corpse of Spurgeon, that 'the steward had he not been such an unappetizing morsel, might have contributed appreciably to an exhausted larder' (231). Habitual rectitude prompts Mr Roxburgh's disgust at his own line of thought, but in dream the bounds of self-disgust are irrelevant:

He was glad that night had fallen and that everyone around him was sleeping. Yet his thoughts were only cut to a traditional pattern, as Captain Purdew must have recognized, who now came stepping between the heads of the sleepers, to bend and whisper, *This is the body of Spurgeon which I have reserved for thee, take eat, and give thanks for a boil which was spiritual matter...* Austin Roxburgh was not only ravenous for the living flesh, but found himself anxiously licking the corners of his mouth to prevent any overflow of precious blood. (231).

Even the limited Austin Roxburgh becomes one of the vehicles used by White in this novel to advance his claims for the inextricability of the physical and the spiritual dimensions of humanity. Appropriately, Mr Roxburgh's glimpse of that notion, accorded to him as a result of the 'inadmissible affection' he feels for Spurgeon after treating the boil on the steward's neck (212).

Ellen's experience is a good deal more profound than her husband's, as might be expected in view of the nature of her role as the novel's most deeply-revealed study of humanity. While her husband can translate the quotation from Virgil, 'Happy is he ... who has unveiled the cause of things, and who can ignore inexorable Fate and the roar of insatiate Hell' (34), it is she who must
experience its meaning. In fact, according to the terms proposed by this novel, such felicity is not accorded to humanity: the 'cause of things' remains obscure while the 'roar of insatiate Hell' is all too constant and loud in the ears of those who will admit to their human imperfection. Thus, Ellen emerges from her captivity, telling Jack Chance of her experience at St Hya's Well and expressing doubt that 'a person is ever really cured of what they was born with' (331-32), shortly before staggering across the Oakes's farm where she collapses, aware that she 'could not have explained the reason for her being there, or whether she had served a purpose, ever' (333). Later she expresses her acceptance of the limitation, which White proposes as inherent in the human condition, when she answers Captain Lovell's charge that Jack Chance's crimes render him ineligible for a pardon:

most of us are guilty of brutal acts, if not actual murder. Don't condemn him simply for that. He is also a man who has suffered the brutality of life and has been broken by it. (367).

Ellen's cannibalism, at first timid but then undeniably voracious, has taught her that, as she tells Pilcher, 'the truth is often many-sided, and difficult to see from every angle' (378). She has understood that she is 'a lost soul, a woman, or a rational being' (255) during her time on the island and has responded to experience in each of these roles. The guilt and brutality which unite her with Jack Chance and Pilcher, however, pertains to the essential level of herself which lies beyond these roles. Advancing towards the scene of the cannibalism in the forest, she at first adopts her role of rational being as Mrs Roxburgh, investing her action with purpose 'by remembering how her mother-in-law advocated a "healthful morning constitutional"' (270).
Next, feeling 'accepted, rejuvenated', she becomes the woman which her Cornish self is throughout the novel: 'the "Ellen" of her youth, a name they had attached to her visible person at the font' (270). Like her predecessor Elizabeth Hunter, however, Ellen's identity is pared down to its core in preparation for her most significant experience, as she realizes that her Christian name 'had never rightfully belonged to her, any more than the greater part of what she had experienced in life' (270). Like Elizabeth Hunter's, too, Ellen's loss of the outer levels of her identity is presented as a process which unites and informs the whole of her experience:

Now this label of a name was flapping and skirring ahead of her among the trunks of great moss-bound trees, as its less substantial echo unfurled from out of the past, from amongst fuchsia and geum and candy-tuft, then across the muck-spattered yard, the moor with its fuzz of golden furze and russet bracken, to expire in some gull's throat by isolated syllables. (270-71).

It is that profound level of herself which then responds to the 'most delectable smell' of roasting human flesh and which, when she blunders across 'the performance of rites she was not intended to witness', senses in the manner of the members of her tribe 'something akin to the atmosphere surrounding communicants coming out of church looking bland and forgiven after the early service' (271). Temporarily restored to her 'Mrs Roxburgh' self by the shock of her discovery of the Aborigines' cannibalism, she tries 'to disentangle her emotions, fear from amazement, disgust from a certain pity', before catching sight of a dropped remnant of the feast (272). As she picks up and gnaws at the human bone, White presents her on two levels, at the first of which she is horrified by what at the second her inner self is compelled to do:
Renewed disgust prepared her to kick the bone out of sight. Then, instead, she found herself stooping, to pick it up. There were one or two shreds of half-cooked flesh and gobbets of burnt fat still adhering to this monstrous object. Her stiffened body and almost audibly twangling nerves were warning her against what she was about to do, what she was, in fact, already doing. She had raised the bone, and was tearing at it with her teeth, spasmodically chewing, swallowing by great gulps which her throat threatened to return. But did not. She flung the bone away only after it was cleaned, and followed slowly in the wake of her cannibal mentors. She was less disgusted in retrospect by what she had done, than awed by the fact that she had been moved to do it. The exquisite innocence of this forest morning, its quiet broken by a single flute-note endlessly repeated, tempted her to believe that she had partaken of a sacrament. But there remained what amounted to an abomination of human behaviour, a headache, and the first signs of indigestion. In the light of Christian morality she must never think of the incident again. (272).

In this episode, and in the sequences preparatory to it, White's position on the nature of the body's relation with the soul has clearly advanced even from that revealed in The Eye of the Storm. Not only is the soul rendered vulnerable by its association with the body, but that vulnerability is a condition leading directly to spiritual fulfilment. Inevitably Ellen does 'think of the incident again' and in doing so considers that:

It seemed less unnatural, more admissible, if only to herself. Just as she would never have admitted to others how she had immersed herself in the saint's pool, or that its black waters had cleansed her of morbid thoughts and sensual longings, so she could not have explained how tasting flesh from the human thigh-bone in the stillness of a forest morning had nourished not only her animal body but some darker need of the hungry spirit. (273-74).
The needs of 'the hungry spirit' are problematic, whether viewed as the province of the psychologist, the psychiatrist, or of the theologian. The best the novelist can do is to offer as compelling as possible an approximation of fulfilment and White's attempt to do so involves the proposition that in general people live in the shallows of experience, where those needs remain unfulfilled and even unrecognized. In his most recently-published interview, White's personal views on this subject summarize that proposition. Asked whether his central characters 'lack fulfilment', White replied that they do, 'because most people lack fulfilment. I think most people are unfulfilled'. Furthermore, referring to the final sentence of *A Fringe of Leaves*, in which Miss Scrimshaw is seen as one of those whose 'human nature cannot but grasp at any circumstantial straw which may indicate an ordered universe' (405), White declares: 'I don't think you could ever have an ordered universe. It's not meant to be'. In view of his presentation of the image of the storm in *The Eye of the Storm*, of Arthur's dance in *The Solid Mandala* and of the many moments in which his characters achieve a sense of order in the world, White's comment may seem at first puzzling. Yet any apparent disjunction between what he has said in the public situation of this interview and the created situations in his novels is resolved if the term 'order' is taken to mean 'stasis'.

2. 'A Very Literary Luncheon', 27.
Alternatively, the impossibility of an ordered universe, of which White speaks, does not necessarily imply chaos, and White has consistently presented the world as being in a condition of flux, whether the 'flux of moving things' envisaged by Oliver Halliday at the end of Happy Valley (327); or the conviction arrived at by Elyot Standish in The Living and the Dead that in life there is 'no fixed point' (334); or the precept of Holstius in The Aunt's Story¹ that 'true permanence is a state of multiplication and division' (342). In The Tree of Man, the world is most explicitly seen by Stan to be in a condition of permanent flux, as he perceives 'a loosing and dissolving of shapes' (496) and 'a looming of mineral splendours' (496) in 'the boundless garden' (497). Looking at 'the incredible objects of the earth or at the intangible blaze of sunlight' (497), Stan no longer finds 'the nostalgia of permanence and the fiend of motion' (8) to be incompatible:

I believe, he said, in the cracks in the path. On which ants were massing, struggling up over an escarpment. But struggling. Like the painful sun in the icy sky. Whirling and whirling. But struggling. But joyful. So much so, he was trembling. The sky was blurred now. As he stood waiting for the flesh to be loosened on him, he prayed for greater clarity, and it became obvious as a hand. It was clear that One, and no other figure, is the answer to all sums. (497).

If 'the core of reality' is to be perceived or fulfilment to be experienced in the terms proposed by White's novels, that is, humanity can do no better than to refer to what is called in Riders in the Chariot 'the chafing-dish of the world' (174).

Miss Hare's conviction - 'the earth is wonderful. It is all we have' (172) - has a special relevance for her, but here she expressed one of the fundamental notions of White's works. Certainly some of the most positively-tuned episodes of the novels uphold Miss Hare's conviction, not least among them being those in which, at Xanadu, she goes about her 'many little rites, both humdrum and worshipful' (41) from which she extracts at least a momentary fulfilment:

She scattered crumbs ... and birds came down, hobbling and bobbing at her feet, clawing at her shoulders, and in one case, holding on to the ribs of her hat. With a big pair of rusty scissors, she cut crusts of bread into the sizes she knew to be acceptable. Bending so that her skirt stuck out straight behind, she became magnificently formal, like certain big pigeons, of which one or two had descended, blue, out of the gums. All throats were moving, wobbling, and hers most of all. In agreement. In the rite of birds. (41-2).

Miss Hare's sense of harmony in the natural world is unquestionably genuine and becomes all the more so here in White's counter to any hint of pathetic fallacy in the paragraph which follows this one:

Other dedicated acts were performed in order. She drew water, and set bowls. Several days earlier a snake had issued out from between the stones of the house, very black and persuasive, with tan bands along the sides. Her eyes had glistened for the splendid snake. But, although she had stood still, at once, it had failed to sense the degree of sacerdotal authority vested in the unknown woman, and returned by way of the crack in the stone, into the foundations of the house. Every morning since, she had put a saucer of milk, but the snake remained to be converted. She would wait, and eventually, of course, perfect understanding would be reached. (42).

White's qualification of Miss Hare's attitude to the living creatures of the natural world does not contradict, but rather
enriches, his ultimate affirmation of her actions and attitudes. For all that, the qualification does suggest what Veronica Brady has referred to as 'the intransigent otherness of the physical world'\(^1\) in the novels. Certainly that quality does not emerge for the first time in *Riders in the Chariot*; it underscores the presentation of the 'agents of pain' thesis in *Happy Valley*, for instance, and it has a special local prominence in *The Aunt's Story* in the two episodes during which Theodora is entranced by the little hawk at Meroë. In both episodes, Theodora empathizes passionately with the hawk's freedom. In the first it seems to her to be the very embodiment of the communicative power of the natural world:

> Theodora looked at the hawk. She could not judge his act, because her eye had contracted, it was reddish-gold, and her curved face cut the wind. Death, said Father, lasts for a long time. Like the bones of the sheep that would lie, and dry, and whiten, and clatter under horses. But the act of the hawk, that she watched, hawk-like, was a moment of shrill beauty that rose above the endlessness of bones. The red eye spoke of worlds that were brief and fierce. (31).

When the image of the hawk is reintroduced, it bears the same connotation of savage freedom seen in its first appearance. Theodora once again identifies herself with it: 'And her vision tore at the air, as if it were old wool on a dead sheep' (77); she is 'as sure as the bones of a hawk in flight' (77) before she shoots it. It is clear, as J.F. Burrows has said, that

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Theodora's actions amount to 'a symbolic suicide, a destruction of the life she might have led' with Frank Parrott,¹ whose shot at the hawk is seen by Theodora as a gesture connoting the destruction of her own freedom. 'Why, God, am I this?' (74) she cries and proceeds to destroy 'this'.

Despite the stubborn amorality of the natural world which White presents, then, the characters are seen to find within it hints of their own inspiration. In *Riders in the Chariot* for instance, the fascination of Alf Dubbo is made very clear:

The river played an important part in the boy's early life, and even after he had left his birthplace, his thoughts would frequently return to the dark banks of the brown river, with its curtain of shiny foliage, and the polished stones which he would pick over, always looking for pleasing shapes. Just about dusk the river would become most fascinating for the small boy, and he would hang about at a certain bend where the townspeople had planted a park. The orange knuckles of the big bamboos became accentuated at dusk, and the shiny foliage of the native trees seemed to sweat a deeper green. The boy's dark river would cut right across the evening. (351).

If this passage represents the moments of passive communication sensed by White's characters with the natural world, there are many correspondences between the two which are far more positive. In *The Eye of the Storm*, for instance, Elizabeth Hunter's prelude to 'endlessness', though literally set in her bedroom, is more significantly enacted in her memory of 'precious water as it filters in through the cracks the cavities of the body blue pyramidal waves with swans waiting by appointment each a suppressed

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black explosion' (550). In *A Fringe of Leaves*, too, the point is made in Ellen's hankering after 'assurance ... in a foreign country, in any of those darker myths of place which had dispersed her fears during her Cornish girlhood' (111). Later, during her captivity among the Aborigines, she begins to suspect that that assurance has been granted her in the foreign landscape, when she no longer mocks her captors' 'wailing ... of supplication or lament' (274) but joins them 'not through the failure of courage, but because the spirit of the place, the evanescent lake, the faint whisper of stirring trees, took possession of her' (274). 

Nor is there necessarily a need to identify the 'place spirits' in order to perceive meaning in the material world, as in *The Vivisector* Hurtle Duffield finds when he is about to leave Perialos and sees:

> a little golden hen ... stalking and clucking round the iron base of the café table, pecking at the crumbs which had fallen.... The warm scallops of her golden feathers were of that same inspiration as the scales of the great silver-blue sea creature ... he ... had watched from John of the Apocalypse, ritually coiling and uncoiling, before dissolving in the last light. (408-409).

White has commented on the pronouncedly religious overtones which this passage gains from its context in the novel, reinforcing in the public situation what is evident in his fictional presentation of the material world:

> that fussy, industrious little Greek hen ... is in herself a 'revelation of light'. That is why I introduced what may seem irrelevant to some readers. I do it through Duffield, whose 'celebration of the world in painting' is of course a 'mode of worship'.

All of these moments in White's fiction amount to the same fundamental proposition: that, as the epigraph to *The Solid Mandala* from Paul Eduard has it, 'There is another world, but it is in this one' (5). It is Eluard's inner world of which White's characters are given occasional glimpses, despite its 'otherness'. Like James Joyce's Stephen Dedalus, White's characters are made conscious of the need 'to express, to press out again, from the gross earth or what it brings forth, from sound and shape and colour ... an image of ... beauty'.  

Thus, Arthur Brown realizes that 'the world is another mandala' (245), as pregnant with significance as the mandalas of which he has read, or which he has seen or possessed. Like those, the world becomes *a symbol of totality* and the *dwelling of the god* (238) for Arthur as he contemplates his solid mandala:

> Sometimes he would simply lean against a post with the empty theatre of the distance spread around him, no sound but the hooting of a train in the cutting or a chattering of sods in the coral tree, as he took out one of those glass marbles left over from the school yard. Not to play with. It had developed into something more serious than play. For the circle of the distant mountains would close around him, the golden disc spinning closer in the sky, as he contemplated the smaller sphere lying on the palm of his hand. (233-34).

Echoes of the darkened theatre in which Arthur and his Quantrell relatives - notably Uncle Charlie, whose coat Arthur inherits - watch *Götterdämmerung* (217), are summoned up in this passage by Arthur's meditative leaning against the post 'with the empty theatre of the distance spread around him'. The *psychic chaos* mentioned in the definition of the mandala is seen in this

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novel as the result of the devaluation of traditional religious forms and procedures. Arthur constantly seeks the answer to the question that he himself is first given to ask: 'Who and where were the gods?' (217). In doing so, he is attempting to impose a 'pattern of order' on his life and on the lives of his family and acquaintance by gaining an understanding of the way in which the 'protective circle' of the mandala is related to actual events in the lives of people.

The Self in the World

Arthur intuitively comes to understand mandalic symbolism: by staring at his marble, he eventually connects its shape with that of the many natural objects which it emulates. In understanding this connection he relates the notion of divinity with nature and human life in the form of a microcosmic reflection of the macrocosm. An understanding of this relationship comes to Arthur through practical experience of the material world which is applied to his relationships with others. Understanding comes to a number of White's other characters in a similar way. In The Aunt's Story, for instance, Theodora's alignment of human experiences with natural phenomena is quite pronounced. Her affinity with the hills of Meroë, though at first it indicates her increasingly obsessive solitude, is developed towards the end of the novel as an affinity for the hills near Kilvert's shack as she becomes able to accept 'the two irreconcilable halves' of her experience (334). Looking from the upstairs window of the shack on the evening of Holstius's arrival, she conceives of the permanence of flux in nature as also informing human existence:
In this light the valleys did flow. At the foot of the mountains they moved in the soft and moving light, the amethyst and grey. They flowed at the roots of the black and sonorous islands. All the time the light seeped deeper into the craters of the earth.

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. Because the death rattle of time is far more acute, and painful, and prolonged, when its impermanence is disguised as permanence. 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. (330).

The analogy between setting and experience here is implicit, but it soon becomes overt in Theodora's final exchange with Holstius, where her sense of harmony in the world takes on human implications:

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 momently dependent for love or hate, owing her this portion of their fluctuating personalities, whether George or Julia Goodman, only apparently deceased, or Huntly Clarkson, or Moraítis, or Lou, or Zack, these were the lives of Theodora Goodman, these too. (342).
Although, as the foregoing remarks indicate, the motif of the material world in White's novels does encompass the landscapes of Europe and America, it is the Australian landscape that is the most potent analogue of the self in White's novels. This potency may be the expression of a peculiarly inspired relationship between the writer and the continent in which he has set the larger part of his fiction: a relationship that is perhaps akin to that of which David Campbell has written, wherein 'The surrealism of our landscape shimmers in the Australian mind'.

Be that as it may, there are significant alignments made between a number of White's characters and his image of the Australian physical environment.

Certainly in *A Fringe of Leaves* such an alignment is at the thematic centre of the novel in which, as Brady has observed, 'Australia ... represents the dark side of ourselves and of our culture'. Early in the novel, Ellen's fear that others may see her as 'a lost soul' is pointedly juxtaposed with her mistaken reflection that she 'will never explore this vast land seen at a distance through spray and fog' (69). There is also the remark in the Christmas Day diary entry that, even at Zennor, 'a country to which I belonged (more than I did to parents or family) I wld find myself wishing to be united with my surroundings, not

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2. 'A Fringe of Leaves: Civilization by the Skin of Our Own Teeth', 125. See also David Tacey, 'A Search for a New Ethic: White's "A Fringe of Leaves", *South Pacific Images*, ed. C. Tiffin, St Lucia: SPACLALS, 186-95, for discussion of Ellen's growth in her 'Australian' experience.
as the dead, but fully alive' (104). The privations of Ellen's period in her 'prison in an island' (255) lead her into union with her surroundings, as she clearly is when she joins in the wailing ritual of the Aborigines, after which she senses herself to have 'come to terms with darkness' (274). Finally, after her return to Moreton Bay, she eventually comes across Pilcher's chapel while 'thrusting her way through scrub grown denser, the going rougher, still within sight of the brown, sluggish river' (389). The chapel is more suggestive of the forest through which she has passed on her way to the scene of the cannibalistic rite, than of any building: and certainly it is unconsecrated. When Ellen at first perceives the chapel, it appears to her to be 'something which ... suggested floating, flickering light rather than any solid form', as a 'refractive white' which brings her mind back to her surroundings, from 'the obscure recesses of her mind' (389). Set among 'dusty casuarinas', the chapel's 'doorless doorway' and 'unglazed windows' render it a place in which there is 'little to obstruct ... flight, thought, or vision' (390). The images of flying birds, of 'bright sunlight in the white chapel' and especially of the 'sky-blue riband painted on the wall', providing 'a background to the legend GOD IS LOVE, in the wretchedest lettering, in dribbled ochre' (390), complete the presentation of the chapel as analogous to the landscape. It is here that at last, in 're-living the betrayal of her earthly loves' (390) Ellen finds peace in the acceptance of her flawed humanity:

she could not have seen more clearly, down to the cracks in the wooden bench, the bird-droppings on the rudimentary altar. She did not attempt to interpret a peace of mind which had descended on her (she would not have been able to attribute it to prayer or reason) but let the silence enclose her like a beatitude. (390-91).
The range of moods and conditions growing from the motif of the material world, as it is presented in the image of the Australian landscape in *A Fringe of Leaves*, develops in relatively uncomplicated fashion. In *The Eye of the Storm*, much the same can be said of the relationship between the image of the storm and the life of Elizabeth Hunter. In that novel, White presents Elizabeth Hunter's life as an elaboration of her consummate engagement with the tempest of experience and of her acceptance of the necessity of performing 'alone ... whatever the eye is contemplating' for her (550). He enriches his presentation of this relationship in the parodies of it which he himself provides. Thus, endorsement of the central character is strengthened by comparison between her experience in the storm on Brumby Island with those of her children in both similar and loosely cognate circumstances. Dorothy's storm, over the Bay of Bengal during her flight to Australia, has convinced her that 'the hostile natural elements were charged with supernatural terrors', but these in her case may be 'rationally laughed away or curtained off behind an apparently thick skin' (68). Although not parallel with the episode of the Brumby Island cyclone, Basil's performance of himself for himself at the dam at 'Kudjeri' is also a parodic version of his mother's central experience.

The episode of his declamatory antics bears out what is said of Basil earlier in the novel: 'There had been a time when he saw clearly, right down to the root of the matter, before his perception had retired behind a legerdemain of technique and the dishonesties of living' (273). Inspecting his bare feet he must admit that they had 'become useless, except to stride imagined
miles around a stage; incapable of trudging the actual miles to Dover' (492). As he suspects, Basil's 'soft white feet' do indicate 'why he had failed as Lear' (492), for as he himself tells Mary de Santis, Lear can be played 'only by a gnarled, authentic man, as much a storm-tossed tree as flesh' (350). The trek to Dover mocks Basil in the image of the dam, at the edge of which 'the hoof-prints of sheep had set in a fussy clay sculpture' which forces him into a 'foolish mincing over the fanged clay' (492). It is not Lear, but The Merchant of Venice to which Basil gives utterance:

'In such a night,' he aimed at the Australian daylight, while throughout the ritual dark he had conjured up in his mind, the pale discs were raised to receive the seed he was raining on them;

'in such a night,
Stood Dido with a willow in her hand
Upon the wild sea-banks, and wav'd her love
To come again to Carthage ...'

Legs apart, pants hitched their highest and tightest, he listened for his own voice (his worst vice) and some of it returned out of that extrovert blue. He listened again: as the circles widened around him on the muddy water, magpies' wings were clattering skywards; but the silence burning into his skin was the applause he valued. That his art should have come to terms with his surroundings gratified Sir Basil Hunter. (492).

That Basil should declaim these lines in this setting, despite his self-congratulatory impression that his art has 'come to terms with his surroundings', is clearly ironic. Indeed, the irony intensifies in the fact that here he quotes from the part of Lorenzo who at that stage in the play is, with singular obtuseness, failing to notice the concern of Jessica. Jessica's growing sense of guilt and alienation from the situation in which she is placed, following the retributions which her father Shylock has been made to suffer, evokes a very different
presentation of the child-parent relationship from that in which Basil's subtly venomous treatment of his mother is shown. It is the character-in-the-landscape image which predominates here, however, and White proceeds from this point to reduce Basil in terms of that image:

Sir Basil began frowning; he started swirling around, shouldering off his not reprehensible, but in the circumstances, embarrassing gift. He stumbled into a pothole: could have come a gutser. Walking not so steady now on his Shakespeare legs. When beneath the soles of his feet a tickling, a prickling of life, restored his balance. (492-93).

The undermining of Basil's pretensions here is complemented by references to his mother's 'practical ethics' of distancing herself from others (493) and of Basil's grudging pity for her in her present state of decrepitude. Basil also understands that in her 'old freckled claw ... twitching, clenching and unclenching, or beckoning through the brown water, perhaps appealing to him' (493), Elizabeth Hunter remains capable of cruelty and of moral blackmail. In fact, the 'crueller, more relevant trick the light was playing' in 'the illusory claw reflected in the water' conveying 'something of the same distress of the actual hand lying on the hemstitched sheet' (493) now becomes the dominant image against which Basil's self may be evaluated. Clearly, he is both victim and sad buffoon in his withdrawal from the mental situation which he has created for himself and from the physical situation in which he has unwisely chosen to do it. The images of the yabby's claw and of
Elizabeth Hunter's illusory and actual hand converge into the image of the sharp object on which Basil's foot is cut as his hasty retreat becomes positively ignominious:

This was where the Thing, no yabby playfully tickling memory, rose up out of the mud under Sir Basil's right sole. Because his innocent morning's pastime had made him spiritually vulnerable, the submerged object wounded him more deeply than rusty spike, broken bottle, or jagged tin. In his state of aggrieved anguish, his arms began swimming against the air as he made for land, jaws clenched, gristle straining in his throat. He was not yet able to hobble, except mentally, because his legs were still swathed in sheets of brown filthy ooze, in promises of septicaemia, anthrax - perhaps death, simple and unassuming; none of the Jacobean trappings when YOU are the one concerned. (493).

As Basil totters without even dignity from the dam, the episode concludes with the echoes in this passage of his earlier cogitations on tramping to Dover as Lear. His final, and humiliatingly trivial, if also distressing, pain is caused once again by 'the clay impressions of hooves, or teeth' which bite 'into his feet regardless of existing wounds' (494). Always within the undertones evoked by White here, as well as within Basil's own train of thought, Elizabeth Hunter's presence underscores the episode with irony. Where she might in Basil's view succeed as Lear (273), he fails ridiculously. Where he is distressed by the hypothetical possibility of death without 'the Jacobean trappings', she has been seen as 'an old woman and foolish, who in spite of her age had not experienced enough of living' (425). That irony informs the tenor of the image of the material world against which the self of Basil Hunter is projected.
In *Voss*, White's presentation of the self against the image of the material world is at its most complex. This novel is, as Veronica Brady points out, 'White's most explicit attempt to use the land as a metaphor for certain reaches of human experience'.

As will become clear, however, I would not fully agree with Brady's view, that in *Voss* 'the novelist takes the easy way out, turning to the land as an image of the divine'. Certainly Voss regards the country as one in which 'it is possible ... to discard the inessential and to attempt the infinite' (38). It is also true that his sense of his own potential infinitude and self-sufficiency is coterminous with his sense of the land, as White clearly shows early in the novel:

As for Voss, he had grown to grapple with the future, in which undertaking he did not expect much of love, for all that is soft and yielding is easily hurt. He suspected it, but the mineral forms were an everlasting form of wonder; feldspar, for instance, was admirable, and his own name a crystal in his mouth. If he were to leave that name on the land, irrevocably, his material body swallowed by what it had named, it would be rather on some desert place, a perfect abstraction, that would rouse no feeling of tenderness in posterity. He had no more need for sentimental admiration than he had for love. He was complete. (45).

Within this passage Voss's identification with the land is readily apparent, but it is especially significant that Voss identifies only one aspect of himself - his potential divinity - with the continent. To be sure, this notion is of primary importance in Voss's concept of himself, as the parodic image of the eucharist indicates. Voss's name, as feldspar, nourishes him spiritually here for his future reduction to abstraction in

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1. 'A Fringe of Leaves: Civilization by the Skin of Our Own Teeth', 125.
2. 'A Fringe of Leaves: Civilization by the Skin of Our Own Teeth', 125.
'some desert place'. Yet nothing in this extremely complex work is simple and Voss's identification of his own elevation with the land is mistaken, for, at one level, eventually it destroys him while at another that destruction creates him, fulfilling his own adage that 'To make yourself, it is also necessary to destroy yourself' (38).

Voss's remark is prophetic, but in terms other than those which here he proposes to Frank. As the expedition proceeds, the twin processes of creation and destruction evolve simultaneously from the conflict within him. In continually denying 'that part of himself, the weakest, of which was born the necessity for this woman' (230), Voss asserts a false creativity in his determination to succeed in 'further struggles to wrestle with rocks, to bleed if necessary, to ascend' (231): hence his mortification of the body and denial of impulses to love or to accept love or even the sympathy of others. But humility is figured as strength in that part of Voss which responds to Laura, though he himself does not recognize it as such, and his arrogance is seen as ultimately destructive and self-defeating. The resolution of this conflict is pursued through the stages which Dorothy Green has identified:

The novel moves in gradually contracting circles from the civilized fringe of the continent into the mysterious centre, in order to discover the relationship between them... In psychological terms, the fringe represents the thin layer of the conscious; the desert, the depths of the unconscious, so that Voss's journey becomes a progress of penetration to the centre of his being. In metaphysical terms, the fertile rim is the physical world at its most richly and seductively concrete, the desert its most rarified and abstract analogue. In erotic terms, the rim is the area where all the testimonies of love
are visible and tangible, the desert where they
must be taken without evidence, or trust, in
solitude.¹

The novel, however, is far from crudely schematic, as Green goes
on to argue:

But the aim of the book is not to affirm the
truth of the desert, the superiority of abstraction.
For White there are two basic marvels of life, two
basic mysteries: the mystery of the physical world,
and the mystery of the spirit, the concrete and the
abstract. The book is an exploration of the nature
and the capacities of these two rock-like realities
and their interrelationship; an exploration of the
appropriate areas of their operation and of the
possibility of a fusion between them, or of
determining their boundaries.²

What Green has said here illuminates the distortion of
Voss's sense of humanity in relation to divinity which undergoes
its final test in the desert. Voss passes from the moderate
climate of the fringe of the continent, where only he and Laura
are 'conscious of his strength' (67) and where he is contemptuous
of those amongst whom he moves:

Mediocre, animal men never do guess at the
power of rock or fire, until the last moment
before those elements reduce them to - nothing.
This, the palest, the most transparent of words,
yet comes closest to being complete. (67).

Only in the desert can Voss fulfil his ambition of 'pure will',
of going 'barefoot and alone' (74-5) through these elements.

Neither the 'gentle, healing landscape' (133) of Rhine Towers, nor
'the slatternly settlement of Jildra' (184) can seduce him from
pushing on towards 'the apotheosis for which he was reserved' (190),
for always in his mind he is, as Laura has seen him, 'standing in

¹ 'Voss: Stubborn Music', The Australian Experience, ed.
the glare of his own brilliant desert. Of course, He was
Himself indestructible' (96).

As White observes, however, 'deserts prefer to resist
history and develop along their own lines' (67), and it is in
the 'deserts of mysticism' (367) that the destruction of Voss's
pretensions is completed. He is there seen by Harry Robarts,
Frank Le Mesurier and Jackie as a figure of 'incandescence',
but White adds the corrective that Voss's head is then 'a skull
with a candle expiring inside' (382). Voss's will, then, his
determination to assert his divinity is figured in the image of
the light and fire within him, which is a pale emanation of the
concept of divinity itself. In this respect, Brady's view of
'the land as an image of the divine' has a definite appeal.
Yet the final position of Voss in the novel, as 'not God', but
a human being 'nearest to becoming so' (411) is only attained
after Voss has been broken by the desert: which is both the
desert in which he is literally and the metaphoric desert of his
hybris. At 'the centre of fire' (386), Voss is overwhelmed
at both levels:

Feeling his horse quiver beneath him, Voss
looked down at the thin withers, at the sore
which had crept out from under the pommel of
the saddle [sic.]. Then he did begin to falter,
and was at last openly wearing his own sores
that he had kept hidden. Vermin were eating
him. The shrivelled worms of his entrails
were deriding him. (387).

 Appropriately, Voss enters his final state of ascendence
in the oasis to which the Aborigines lead the party. It is here
that the motif of the material world takes on the most important
function of evoking Voss's 'luminous state' (418) before death,
and 'the world of semblance' does indeed communicate 'with the world of dream' (277). In 'a cool wind of dreaming' (417) Voss is led by Laura 'back in search of human status' (418), through 'valleys... startling in their sonorous reds, their crenellations broken by tenuous Rhenish turrets of great subtlety and beauty' (417-18).

Within this novel, White's presentation of the motif of the material world reaches its most sophisticated level in the interaction between Voss's self and the country into which it is absorbed and which expresses it, as Laura says (477-78). Indeed in Voss's expedition the self and the world, far from being alienated from each other, eventually fuse in the terms of one of Laura's final remarks, that 'true knowledge only comes of death by torture in the country of the mind' (475).

The Motif of Revelation and Understanding

Laura's remark here anticipates in its strangeness her final utterance in Voss, the reply to Mr Ludlow's question, 'If we are not certain of the facts, how is it possible to give the answers?' (478). When Laura cryptically asserts that 'The air will tell us' (478), she adopts the register of the ineffable. White is not retreating here from what cannot be expressed, however, nor is he sliding into pop gnosticism. Laura's final words in Voss represent White's continuing attempt to establish a relativity between the material world of circumstance and the non-material world of insight and of spiritual experience in general. It is an attempt, that is, to direct his art beyond the limits of the functional or the confines of the superficial. White is among those writers whose ultimate aim is 'to redefine
reality in such a way as to incorporate both the conscious and subconscious world', as C.W.E. Bigsby says of the Surrealists.1
Constituting the motif of revelation and understanding in White's novels, therefore, are a number of images of various kinds: the devices, incidents and techniques of a presentational language which reshape the world and in so doing evoke White's 'core of reality'.

The departure from verisimilitude in White's narratives is conducted in terms of language of this kind. The perceptions and states of mind of his characters, for instance, are often rendered as interior monologue in his work including the earliest in which, in fact, the technique is considerably important. White's narratives become most innovative and compelling, however, in his distorted, surrealistic presentation of the physical aspect of his fictive world. In The Aunt's Story, Theodora's first impression of Sokolnikov exemplifies the point:

The General sighed as deeply and as endlessly as cotton wool, but when he 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, which he would pick up sometimes and examine through his little rimless spectacles. Theodora saw all this after the soup. She saw in particular the ring, formed by gold claws and a deep, guilty ruby, that held his tie, pushed through like a napkin. (175).

Clearly this perception is the fruit of a very particular sensibility, so that White not only distils here the quintessential Sokolnikov but he also renders Theodora's understanding of the General and even, towards the end of the passage, a hint of her

appreciation of the tenor of his history, amidst the general evocation of eccentricity. The extravagance of White's similes here, the mock epic accumulation of absurdity, renders with great immediacy the Sokolnikov who outrageously dominates the salle à manger of the Hôtel du Midi. It is comic experience of this kind that Theodora so desperately needs after the rigours of life with her lady mother:

Anyone questioning the vastness denied the existence of Sokolnikov. Sensing extinction the General frowned.

'Vous voulez la bouchée à la reine?' le petit asked.

'Je désire tout, tout!' the General frowned. (177).

Or Sokolnikov, hammer of convention:

'Il n'y a pas de pâté de fois gras de Strasbourg?' asked the General.

'Non, je vous dis, il n'y en a pas. Il n'y en a jamais. Qu'est-ce que vous voulez? A prix fixe!'

'Merde!' said the General.

'I would like to remind you, General Sokolnikov, that there are ladies present,' said the square woman with the girl.

'Merde, merde, et mille fois merde!' said the General. 'Shame on Miss Grigg. A lady is a woman's pis aller.' (174).

Richly interwoven dialogue and narrative provide in such passages the circumstances under which Theodora's revaluation of herself and the world takes place. The 'conscious and the subconscious world' become one in the absurd comedy of the Sokolnikov episodes, but comedy is only one face of the presentation of White's fictive world: he is also capable of rendering with compelling immediacy the nadir of despair and disillusion.
In *Riders in the Chariot* this level of experience is common in the life of Himmelfarb, but nowhere does White render it with more intensity than in Himmelfarb's return from his ill-fated Pessach visit to Rosetrees'. Himmelfarb's journey is motivated by an unbearable loneliness: 'in the Season of Freedom', he feels that 'his solitary trumpet blast might sound thin and poor in a celebration which called for the jubilance of massed brass' (428). He finds himself longing to contribute to the joy of Pessach, his need being prompted by 'some welling of the spirit, need to establish identity of soul, foreboding of impending events' (428). His first attempt to contribute, by setting the *Seder* table, does not satisfy him. It seems to be nothing more than a 'conjuring', a 'farce he was elaborating' in contradictory solitariness that reduces the symbols of corporate joy to a 'property table, with its aching folds of buckram, and the papier-mâché symbols of Pessach' (428). Eventually he is 'persuaded' that he can evoke the unifying spirit of the season by himself acting the part of 'the stranger whom some doorway must be waiting to receive' (429).

His choice of Rosetrees' door is at once indicative of his desperation and of the extent to which he is at times deluded by the necessities of his quest. It is this quality of delusion which inevitably predicates the disaster which the visit becomes and deepens the backlash of emotions within Himmelfarb. Surely, for instance, only Himmelfarb in his befuddlement could imagine that to ride beyond Town Hall, Wynyard and St James towards the North Shore is to be driven on by faith. That the crossing can only have 'been arranged again for that day' (430) by officials
in the Timetable Office of the N.S.W. Government Railways only enhances White's point about Himmelfarb's delusion. And that point is made, quite apparently, to add emphasis to the rejection of Himmelfarb by Rosetrees.

The return part of the journey, with its bitter overtones of Himmelfarb's 'night of desolation' (439), is the logical concomitant of the first half, which dwells on Himmelfarb's confident, though misplaced, expectations of communality at Rosetrees'. Again the images assembled in the narrative function as an external accompaniment to the progress of developments in Himmelfarb's mind. The dahlias and the chattering plastic ladies of the outward journey take on a retrospective jauntiness, even, when contrasted with the images of 'the thin, copper-coloured blokes, and the bluish, pursy ones, bursting with hair like the slashed upholstery in trains' (439); 'the genie of beef dripping ... in his blue robe'; and the 'emptied boys, rising from sticky contemplation of some old coloured pin-up, prepared to investigate the dark' (440). Somberness prevails in this 'state of bondage' (440), where garishness does not. Himmelfarb's despair is rendered in terms of a very formal imagistic assault on its cause:

The train was easing through the city which knives had sliced open to serve up with all the juices running - red, and green, and purple. All the syrups of the sundaes oozing into the streets to sweeten. The neon syrup coloured the pools of vomit and the sailors' piss. By that light, the eyes of the younger, gaberdine men were a blinding, blinder blue, when not actually burnt out. The blue-haired grannies had purpled from the roots of their hair down to the angles of their pants, not from shame, but neon, as their breasts chafed to escape, from shammy-leather back to youth, or else roundly asserted themselves, like chamberpots in concrete. As for the young women, they were necessary. As they swung along, or hung around a corner, or on an arm, they were the embodiment of thoughts and melons. As if the
thoughts of the gaberdine men had risen from the ashes behind their fused eyeballs, and put on flesh at last, of purple, and red, and undulating green. There were the kiddies, too. The kiddies would continue to suck at their slabs of neon, until they had learnt to tell the time, until it was time to mouth other sweets.

All along the magnesium lines swayed the drunken train. Because the night itself was drunk, the victims it had seemed to invite were forced to follow suit. Himmelfarb was drunk, not to the extent of brutishness; he had not yet fetched up. Released from the purple embrace, sometimes he tottered. Sometimes hurtled. Watching.

As the darkness spat sparks, and asphalt sinews ran with salt sweat, the fuddled trams would be tunnelling farther into the furry air, over the bottle-tops, through the smell of squashed pennies, and not omitting from time to time to tear an arm out of its screeching socket. But would arrive at last under the frangipani, the breezes sucking with the mouths of sponges. Sodom had not been softer, silkier at night than the sea gardens of Sydney. The streets of Nineveh had not clanged with such metal. The waters of Babylon had not sounded sadder than the sea, ending on a crumpled beach, in a scum of French-letters. (440-41).

The shrillness of this passage, in view of the mordant attack on suburbia contained by the novel, may be White's. Yet there is an aesthetic consistency here with Himmelfarb's apocalyptic experiences in Germany and, as poetry of the devastated spirit, it is the appropriate register of Himmelfarb's emotional state at this time. It is the language of the outraged prophet of 'lovingkindness' whose despair White renders here and the question of the prophet's identity may well remain moot. Nevertheless, the Biblical overtones which convey Himmelfarb's sense of continuing moral bondage, subsequent to what he has witnessed at Rosetrees, also register the contempt within him. The last word is given, appropriately, to an unknown singer:
"O city of elastic kisses and retracting dreams!
the psalmist sang;
"O rivers of vomit, O little hills of concupiscence,
O immense plains of complacency!
"O great, sprawling body, how will you atone,
when your soul is a soft peanut with the weevils in it?
"O city of der-ree ....' (441).

The voice of the singer touches the indignation and contempt of Himmelfarb with the tone of lament. Whether White succeeds or exceeds in passages of this kind will probably always be debated, but clearly he is attempting to reshape reality by fusing the inner life of his character with the more overt levels of the action. Perception, apprehension, action and understanding are thus located on a continuum of experience which is no longer contained by the boundaries of rationality, or even of consciousness. White thereby implements in a practical way the notions which inform his presentation of the imagery of the arts, especially music, painting and the dance.

Music and the Intuition

Of all the arts, music is presented in White's novels as that which appeals most directly to intuition, creating an awareness of profound levels of experience. In Happy Valley, Oliver Halliday reflects that his single experience of feeling himself to be 'complete' has been in the church near the Luxembourg, when the music of Bach has taken him beyond his immediate circumstances:
Then he sat very still. He supposed he was breathing. He did not know. But he knew he was crying.... The music came rushing out of the loft, unfurling banners of sound. You could touch it. You could feel it. You could feel a stillness and a music all at once. You were at once floating and stationary, in time, all time, and space, without barrier, passing with a fresher knowledge of the tangible to a point where this dissolved, became the spiritual. (20).

The possibilities of awareness are extended in the abstract world of music here for Oliver, in the dissolution of the barriers between the palpable and the spiritual. Oliver's experience is 'an accident' (20), not premeditated or consciously sought. The music takes him to the point where experience can only be rendered in metaphor, and his illuminated state remains mysterious in rational terms.

In terms of the intuition, however, music becomes a most compelling language and in *The Aunt's Story*, Theodora's attendance at the concert given by Moraitis is presented accordingly. At the dinner given for the 'cellist by Huntly Clarkson, Moraitis expresses his respect for Theodora's non-rational perception when he tells her that 'It is not necessary to see things.... If you know' (125). Yet, as Theodora realizes, 'for the pure abstract pleasure of knowing there was a price paid': she understands that 'exaltation' is 'cold without the touch of hands' (126). Theodora's own playing of 'an angular music that did not exist' (127), possesses for her a meaning that lies 'in the stiff up and down, the agonising angularity that Chopin had never meant to be' (24) but which is 'part of some inner intention of her own' (24). Music for Theodora cannot be possessed as it can be for her mother: rather it expresses the emotions which underlie human interaction.
Moraïtis's music approximates for her 'the touch of hands', for it evokes their mutual understanding. The humility that Theodora perceives in Moraïtis at the Clarkson dinner party is also evident to her in his music, which she conceives of as being 'full of touching, simple shapes' (129). Theodora, 'an oblique assistant to the strings' (127), senses in Moraïtis the individualistic integrity which she herself prizes, as she listens to the 'cello 'struggling to achieve its own existence in spite of the pressure of the blander violins' (129). The analogy of her own experience is made quite clear in her response to both the musician and his music:

He believed in the integrity of his first tentative, now more constant theme. And Theodora, inside her, was torn by his threatened innocence, by all she knew there was to come. She watched him take the 'cello between his knees and wring from its body a more apparent, a thwarted, a passionate music which had been thrust on him by the violins. (129).

To convey the intensity of Theodora's response to Moraïtis and his concerto, White then presents the metaphor of eroticism:

The 'cello rocked, she saw. She could read the music underneath his flesh. She was close. He could breathe into her mouth. He filled her mouth with long, aching silences, between the deeper notes, that reached down deep into her body. She felt the heavy eyelids on her eyes. The bones of her hands, folded like discreet fans on her dress, were no indication of exaltation or distress, as the music fought and struggled under a low roof, the air thick with cold ash, and sleep, and desolation. (129).

The episode renders poignantly the condition of Theodora herself and it becomes for her a consummation of her relationship with Moraïtis. Afterwards, as she leaves the concert hall, she senses the strength of renewal in herself which she has perceived.
when 'in the last movement Moraitis rose again above the flesh' (129). The fulfilment she experiences at the concert remains with her, as White's continuing references to eroticism and gestation indicate:

the music which Moraitis had played was more tactile than the hot words of lovers spoken on a wild nasturtium bed, the violins had arms. This thing which had happened between Moraitis and herself she held close like a woman holding her belly. She smiled. If I were an artist, she said, I would create something that would answer him. Or if I were meant to be a mother, it would soon smile in my face. But although she was neither of these, her contentment filled the morning, the heavy, round, golden morning, sounding its red hibiscus note. (130-31).

Overall, the concert becomes an image of one of the rare moments in Theodora's life, 'of passing affection, through which the opaque world [becomes] transparent' (68). Indeed, unlike the episode of Oliver Halliday's entranement by the music of Bach, there is a very specific level of meaning developed from the image of music. In presenting Theodora's emotional response to the music, White is celebrating the understanding which informs her relationship with Moraitis. Nevertheless he also implies here a claim for the liberating influence of the music itself. It is his choice of the image of music that reveals the status of the arts, as direct paths to 'the core of reality', within his novels.
Painting as Revelation

Where music inspires an intensity of perception, leading to a sense of the most profound levels of the self and the infinite possibilities of a moment of experience, it is painting in which that sense is objectified. It is a painter, Willie Pringle in *Voss*, who declares the manifesto behind the status of painting in White's novels:

The blowfly on its bed of offal is but a variation of the rainbow. Common forms are continually breaking into brilliant shapes. If we will explore them. (476).

Painting is an image of higher perception, the painter the one who sees what intuition senses and whose works record the essence of that vision. The obsessions of White's painters drive them on in that task, in which they become the interpreters of experience for those whose sensibility is other than theirs. In *The Aunt's Story*, for instance, White presents Lieselotte in that role, as she shows Theodora her pictures:

Theodora saw that they were in a large room, somewhere high, the light purified by an immensity of surrounding space, the walls pierced by the open windows of pictures. And now she was drawn to the many windows, and the world these contained, the hanging gardens flowering with miraculous questions, the glass pagoda from which her own soul looked out, flaming like a bird-of-paradise. (198).

Recognition of the truth presented in painting is immediate and complete in White's novels, because the painting in question distils the experience of the observer, who in many cases is also an active source of inspiration. When Amy Parker in *The Tree of Man* looks at Mr Gage's paintings she responds to them in that way, for instance, when she recognizes, in 'the laborious woman, almost
carved out of paint' (290), her younger self:

This figure was just waking. There was a small kernel of knowledge in the almond of the eye, that was growing, and would soon put on leaves. Otherwise the figure of the waking woman was naked, except for the tendrils of hair that preserved those parts of the body in an innocent poetry. Her simplicity was that of silence and of stone. Her breasts were as final as two stones, and she was reaching up with her ponderous but touching hands towards that sun which would itself have been a stone, if it had not glowed with such a savage incandescence...

Then Amy Parker... noticed in the corner, at the feet of the woman, what appeared to be the skeleton of an ant that the husband of the postmistress had scratched in the paint with some sharp instrument, and out of the cage of the ant's body a flame flickered, of luminous paint, rivalling in intensity that sun which the woman was struggling after. (290).

White's presentation of the image of this painting closely parallels his presentation of the incident in which the painting has its genesis. During the episode which includes that incident, Amy comes across Mr Gage intently looking at an ant. When his attention is redirected to herself, Amy senses the keenness of his perception: 'the intensity of his eyes penetrated the woman's unconscious face almost to the darker corners, as if here too was some mystery he must solve, like the soul of the ant' (103).

In fact, the paragraph of narrative which follows anticipates the fruits of Mr Gage's study:

Amy Parker, who was half for pausing to satisfy some unrevealed need of the kneeling man, and half for mounting higher on her way, was at this time a young woman broadening into maturity. Her pointed face and bony cheeks had filled with almost satisfied desires. She was a honey colour in the summer day. Her thickening arms could lift great weights, when there was no man to do it, but they were better seen putting up her hair. Then her strong, honey-coloured back with the lifted arms was a full vase. She was filled with the thick, honey-coloured light of the heavy summer days. (103-4).
After their interchange has ended, Amy realizes something of its significance when she reflects that:

In company she might have questioned the behaviour of Mr. Gage, but, alone in the heat of the day, he was a child, or an animal, or a stone, from none of which she could have hidden herself. Dreamy bits of life that she had lived floated to the surface and mingled with the hard light. She looked up into the face of the sun her husband, and because she was blinded did not see that the bushes had observed her nakedness. (104).

By rendering the incident and the image of the painting which illuminates in such close terms, White can hardly be attempting to dramatize the processes of genius though Mr Gage is presented as a hidden genius. What the relationship between these two areas of the novel does suggest, however, is that the brilliance of common forms is made evident in the aesthetic experience. It is a simple, but important point and its significance extends beyond the novel itself, for, as Peter Beatson has remarked of the 'key symbolic configuration of ant, man and sun' in this novel, the painting images a conjunction which 'shows the unity of Being that runs through all things, the cosmic bonfire that burns alike in the source of fire and the smallest created particle, and which comes to consciousness in man'.

The aesthetic experience is essentially a religious one for White, and the image of painting has the decidedly religious function of revealing transcendence in the created world. The cave

1. cf. the objections of Terry Smith to White's presentation of the artist figure and of art in The Vivisector, in 'A Portrait of the Artist in Patrick White's "The Vivisector"', Meanjin Quarterly, 31 (1972), 167-77.

2. The Eye in the Mandala, 150.
paintings in *Voss* have a religious significance for the Aborigines, especially that of the Snake. In *Riders in the Chariot*, Alf Dubbo's paintings are referred to as the tokens of his mode of worship: and, 'where other men might have prayed for grace', Alf's works 'could be his only proof of an Absolute, at the same time, in its soaring blues and commentary of blacks, his act of faith' (344).

In *The Vivisector*, White's most extensive presentation of the image of painting, Hurtle is ultimately concerned with religious revelation. In a recently-published passage from White's personal correspondence, he remarks explicitly on the nexus of religion and art in his work:

> I suppose what I am increasingly intent on trying to do in my books is to give professed unbelievers glimpses of their own unprofessed factor. I believe most people have a religious factor, but are afraid that by admitting it they will forfeit their right to be considered intellectuals. This is particularly common in Australia where the intellectual is a comparatively recent phenomenon. The churches defeat their own aims, I feel, through the banality of their approach, and by rejecting so much that is sordid and shocking which can still be related to religious experience ... I feel that the moral flaws in myself are more than anything my creative source. This is what I am trying to do, perhaps more than before in *The Vivisector* ...

The wide range of religious possibilities to which White refers here is celebrated in *The Vivisector*, as Hurtle distills and expresses his insight into the essential qualities of humanity and the world. Thus the smell and sight of the lion and the elephant are given a broader metaphoric significance in his drawing, 'Death' (37-8; 40); and Nance's flesh is given the vegetable tones

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which suggest the vulnerability implicit for White in human physicality:

Now he was faced with laying on the colour: the lettuce tones; kohlrabi purple; crimson radish; old boiled swede for the shabbier pockets of skin. What he conceived that day was vegetable in form and essence: limbs spongy in substance, though still crisp enough for breaking off; the necklaces around the fibrous throat carved deeper by love-throes. Like all human vegetables she was offering herself to the knife she only half suspected. (207).

White emphasizes the process of synthesis in his incremental presentation of 'Nance Spreadeagle', echoes of the trip to Mumbelong combining with the tangible reality of Nance's body and encouraging Hurtle to think of himself as 'the lover of his perjured art, by which he would celebrate the permanence of her rolling belly' (207). Before their first sexual encounter, he is fascinated by what Nance's nakedness has in common with the lyricism to which he has been awakened in the natural world. In staring at Nance's body, Hurtle's mind is transfixed by the vision it provokes in him of 'the streaming golden paddocks on which the sun was rising through his boyhood as he sat between Sid Cupples and Father' (191). He is also most conscious of the present reality of her body, seeing that its 'ridges were perhaps more silver than gold'; its 'gullies more shadowy in which the strings of ewes heaved into a rolling scamper' (191). He is later more concerned with the detailed transformation which Nance's skin undergoes as a result of changing light and of her own movement. Noticing at first that from the 'golden-pear tones, a matt charcoal had taken over, with the long black shadows of her hair flowing into the deeper shadow of hearth
and grate' (193-94), Hurtle then sees Nance as 'at least a vision of his power' (194) in her post-coital indolence:

looking at him from out of her tent of hair, her chalk-and-charcoal skin, her black lips, began yet another transformation. Shavings of golden light were crumbled on her breasts and thigh through the slats of the decrepit blind; little rosy flames began to live around the contours of her mouth (194).

Hurtle shares with his predecessors, Mr Gage and Alf Dubbo, the methodological impulse to distillation because, in presenting his painters in that way, White enables himself to intertwine human existence with all existence in the vision of the artist and, beyond that, to suggest the presence of God in the created world.

Not only lyricism, but also passion, obsession and compulsion are presented in terms of their aesthetic, and therefore religious, possibilities in the image of painting in *The Vivisector*. In his drawings preliminary to his painting 'Girl at Piano', Hurtle suggests the figure of Kathy as an inspired contrast to her vulgar surroundings:

Out of numerous false starts and the vulgar gloss of a concert grand, the old upright piano grew, the sloping line of the inclined case almost parallel to the straight line of the young girl's back, her thick plait, the candlesticks empty except for the solid drifts of wax and encrustations of verdigris. As he saw it, any light must flow from a suggestion of the girl's face. (489).

In reviewing the drawings, however, he sees in them a painting which, passing beyond such contrasts, is to embody a statement of the artist in relation to art:

But he had his drawings; he had conceived this painting in which Kathy was present, not the sweaty schoolgirl of vulgar lapses, touchingly tentative aspirations, and at times brutal,
because unconscious, sensuality, but the real Katherine Volkov, almost a woman, of studied ice and burning musical passion, who was daring him to transfer his own passion to the primed board. (490).

During the painting stage, he becomes conscious of the dictatorship of creative passion to which both Kathy and he are subject and attempts to render the concept in the metaphor of the slashing, slashed, bleeding piano of his painting. Not until he sees the instinctive reaction to a chiming clock of one of Rhoda's cats, however, does he discover an appropriate visual image to convey his concept. On seeing the claws of the startled cat unsheathed 'to fight a duel of understanding', Hurtle draws 'the wire entanglement the barbs the coiled springs of the cat: or Cat', visualising 'the great barbed pads coiled glimmering inside the scrims of the piano case' (491). In the final version of the painting, the artist is seen as subject to the dictatorship of the creative impulse and at the same time as a figure aggressively poised to act according to the necessities of that subjection:

He painted the coiled tiger just visible inside Katherine Volkov's piano. The keys under her fingers were yellow and slightly clawed. The gashes in the woodwork would stay. He painted the long thick plait waiting to lash the music out of its glistening tail. (492).

It is essential to the synthesizing methodology of White's painters that they address their attention to the material world because they are conscious of their imperfect knowledge of it. Thus, at the end of his life, Hurtle sees that in his painting 'he had always got there by jumping out into darkness flying flying then landing on what his presence made believable and
solid' (579). In The Vivisector, that is, the image of painting conveys one of those preoccupations which are basic to all of White's novels, the process of genuinely discovering the physical world: of looking, as Hurtle does, 'for a god – a God – in every heap of rusty tins amongst the wormeaten furniture out the window in the dunny of brown blowies and unfinished inscriptions' (584). Such a discovery, the ultimate synthesis of the physical, the known, and the intangible, the unknown but undeniably present, develops into a confirmation of order in existence which Hurtle senses in sporadic moments of intuitive insight: for to embrace the physical world is to transcend it. Hence the ultimate sense of transcendence in the physical world is evoked in Hurtle's final painting, in which the basic simplicity of a single stroke of indigo pigment expresses a vision of the presence of God in the created world. Appropriately, it is the empirical value of experience, Hurtle's memory of the colour of the sky as he lies semi-paralysed from his first stroke, 'the last and first secret the indigo' (571), which leads him to the vision.

Dance as Translation

As music is associated with intuitive perception of the infinite possibilities of the given moment, and painting with the visualizing of such possibilities in the created world, in the image of dance White presents the experience of entering into them. In The Eye of the Storm, Mitty Jacka expresses one of the fundamentals of White's presentation of the arts, and in doing so illuminates the function of dance in the novels: 'Since our conglomerate existence became less conglomerate, less
controllable, more fluid, how can we express, or become part of it, unless we flow too, by giving – or losing – ourselves "essentially"? (241). In White's novels that process of giving or losing is the special province of the dance. The image of the dance occurs in almost all of White's novels, ranging from the simplicity of the country-town social, through more formal gatherings organized by the well-to-do, to complex ritual.

At whatever level it is presented, the dance is an image of translation from the everyday level of human existence, but in the presentation of dance as performed art the translation is most profound. Theodora's passion at the Parrott's ball, Mrs Standish's degradation at the Café Vendôme, Miss Hare's vicarious ecstasy at the ball organized by her mother or her humiliation in Mrs Jolley's parodic evocation of that occasion, and the inspired revelatory power of Arthur's dance, are all represented in Lotte Lippmann's performance in The Eye of the Storm.

The dominant mode of the first of Lotte's performances is satire in which the world is viewed as little more than a circus and human experience is seen as amounting to little more than stale diversion (444). Despite the cynicism and disillusionment of which Lotte sings, however, there are hints of affirmation in her second song, in which she identifies human weakness with an inherent imperfection that is often to be seen in the world in general, and tentatively proposes the major
themetic concept of the rebirth of the human soul from its own flaws (445). That theme is enacted in Lotte's second performance, which is entirely danced.

On this occasion, both performer and audience are strengthened by the power of Lotte's dance to enable them to share a summation of their experience and a realization of its significance. Beginning with 'a girlish curtsey, or obeisance' (542-43), Lotte's dance is at first uncharacteristically tentative:

The dancer at first moved haltingly: the stumpy arms hesitated to fling on impulse skyward. This was a dance she had never performed before: every twig on which she trod, alarmed; leaves turning to metal tore at her sleeked hair. So she ducked her head. (543).

The interplay between hesitation and impulse here corresponds with that between the novelty of reverence in her interpretation and the moral and ethical squalor to which the performer has become accustomed in the corrupt aspects of her relationship with her audience:

her 'public' was reaching out to snatch her back into their midst: paws fringed with reddish hair, or alternately, the white lollipop imitations of fingers, were preparing to tweak her nipples and evaluate her undersized breasts, her conic-sectional hips.

Because this was what the dancer had experienced of life she was tempted to continue clodhopping amongst familiar swine though it might not be what her mentor expected of her. (543).

The ritual of Lotte's performance is given direction by her own impulse as a performer, but the audience's response has an important function, too, as Elizabeth Hunter's admonition is designed to reveal:
'All the old cabaret stuff,' Mrs Hunter continued nagging because her housekeeper liked to suffer; 'I got that out of my system a hundred years ago.' (544).

Lotte is Mrs Hunter's housekeeper as well as a performing artist and it is at that level to which the criticism is directed. Yet the validity of the performance as a rite of liberation and revelation is not questioned, since Mrs Hunter's complaint also refers to the efficacy of the first performance given by Lotte. Moreover, the content of the internalised comment by Mrs Hunter as audience indicates that efficacy: 'a faith in love and joy' (544) is very much present in her experience of the 'old cabaret stuff', expurgated though the experience may be. Elizabeth Hunter dares to aspire to the transcendence of which she has received intimations, but in Lotte's dancing she finds a truth about herself which she dares also to accept:

But know about it too well the ein zweidrei men poking their snouts against an ear lobe as they push you past the saxophones oh yes bestiality is familiar didn't you choose to rut with that that politician Athol Thingummy you know it down to the last bristle the final spurt of lust and renounce men anyway for tonight. (544).

Almost immediately following this renunciation a new movement in the dance begins, in which the dancer sheds her former tentativeness, taking the direction through innocence towards experience and beyond both of them to the expression of an inner purity. In its first stage this new movement gently, almost whimsically, introduces the theme of childhood innocence wherein the dancer feels that:

At least she was liberated. She was free to unite in pure joy with the source of it.... So Lotte did a little dance she might have remembered from earlier in time, down the street, twitching her apron, pigtails gambolling behind her. (544).
Having entered into the spirit of her performance (544), Lotte then brings innocence and experience into close relation to each other and delivers herself up wholly to the dance, carrying her audience with her:

Lotte Lippmann had embraced her dance at last, or was embraced by it. She was dancing caressing her own arms, her shoulders, with hands which could not press close enough, fingers which could not dig deep enough into her dark, blenching flesh. She opened her fearful eyes, parted her lips, to receive an approbation she might not be strong enough to bear.

Nor might Elizabeth Hunter. Her wired limbs were creaking as she sank lower in her steel chair; the bones of her knees stuck out through the brocaded gown; the flannel nightie, the lamb's wool bootees, were no comfort. (545).

Lotte's dance is described as a form of revelatory frenzy in which the energy that she possesses, or by which she is possessed, has a Sivaic comprehensiveness that establishes a close analogy between living and dancing. Not until the dance is embarked upon will the dancer's interpretation take spontaneous shape. That shape incorporates a fearful aspect, before it is comprehended, because of its vagueness. Hence Elizabeth Hunter's anxiety as the stresses of the performance begin to make themselves felt:

She moaned for what the dancers had coming to them. All around her she could hear the sound of the woman's breathing as she fought the dance by which she was possessed. You don't at first re-live the tenderness: it's the lashing, the slashes, and near murder. So Elizabeth Hunter moaned. Like a stricken cow lying on its side. (545).

As the focus shifts from dancer to audience, the effects of the performance grow in prominence. Elizabeth Hunter's association of her moaning and that of the (remembered) suffering cow - 'IT yes it is a dying a beige cow its ribs showing white through the hide
(they couldn't surely have showed up white but perhaps they did.)' (545) - echoes the scene in The Solid Mandala in which Arthur acts his tragedy of a cow before his astonished family. Like Arthur, Elizabeth Hunter sees that 'There was nothing you could do for the cow - any more than for yourself' (545). In view of that knowledge, ordinary custom loses its protective attributes:

They were calling from the back door. Elizabeth? Where have you been? Don't you realize we worry about you? You danced to show you were not in the wrong that you didn't belong to them except as the child they 'loved' you 'loved' them in return everybody doing what is expected. I found a half-dead cow. Pooh! Putrid! It couldn't get up. An old cow. They said the poor thing can't because it is the drought don't you know Elizabeth Salkeld haven't you any pity in you? You danced because you knew more than the people who loved you more than the stones of the walls of houses. (Pity is such a private matter something between yourself and the object you must hide it from.) (546).

The essential solitariness which is strongly emphasized here, far from isolating the self, is then shown as the basis of community, as that is established when both dancer and audience resonate with the dance itself:

Now that her other self had been released from their lover's attempts to express tenderness in terms of flesh (no less touching, tragic even, for being clumsy and impotent) their movements became more fluid. They were dancing amongst what must have been trees the light at first audibly flickering between the trunks or was it trains roaring rushing you towards incurable illness old age death corruption no it was the dying away you must be hearing through moss-padded doors a bird's glistening call then the gulls scraping colour out of the sky. (What was that sooty one got pierced?) (546).
By the collation of her most significant experiences of life and death - of Alfred's suffering and death, of the Brumby Island storm with its insights into the essential nature of humanity - Elizabeth Hunter begins 'to learn to re-enter' (446) the benignity which she has always desired, and which she was unable to learn during Lotte's first performance. Lotte's art is complete and pure: her body is lost in aesthetic integrity as she is completely identified with both her performance and her audience. Like the brumbies of Brumby Island they become 'outrunners of life' (421):

Lotte Lippmann's hair had come undone. Though still part of her, it was leading a separate life. Flinging itself in opposite directions. A tail of coarse hair lashed Mrs Hunter across the mouth.

It stung. It was bitter-tasting, as might have been expected from the pace at which both were galloping. (546).

The echoes of the wild horses of Brumby Island conjoin here with those from the song sung by Lotte during her first performance. 'Wenn Mutter in die Manage [sic.] ritt' (444)\(^1\) takes on a far more positive connotation in the second performance, however, and this upward movement in the contrast is sustained by the reference to the dancer:

As she closed in towards the climax of her dance, Lotte Lippmann was shedding her sequins; though the structure of the moonlit dress held. (546).

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1. 'When Mother rode in the circus ring'. (My translation.)
As in the line of Lotte's song - 'Bis mir die Schuppen von den Augen fielen' (444) - the falling of the sequins evokes the sense of new clarity. The difference, however, is significant: in the second performance 'the structure of the moonlit dress' does withstand the falling-away of its trappings of brilliance. Mrs Hunter is then enabled to relive the experience of deliverance which was hers during the lull in the cyclone on Brumby Island:

Mrs Hunter was dribbling: to hear the waves open and close at this hour of morning in sacred shallows carrying the shells back and forth whole Chinaman's fingernails and the fragments the fragments becoming sand. (547).

For both Lotte and Elizabeth Hunter, the experience of the performance - a 'ceremony of exorcism' (547) - is a form of preparation for death, in that it encompasses every aspect of their being. Though the effects of the performance touch the most private, the deepest part of each of them, both dancer and audience are united, rather than separated. Their union is an instance of the spiritual function of art in White's work - truth is communicated and shared in the experience of the growth of the individual towards the universal - wherein exists 'the core of reality' towards the realization of which White's novels are directed.

1. 'The scales fell from my eyes'. (My translation.)
CONCLUSION
The central argument of this thesis has been that the imagery in the novels of Patrick White unifies the experience that he is concerned to render, with the very language in which he renders it. In the medium of words, that is, White presents an emulation of his subjects and themes. His mode is essentially poetic, the development of his novels founded on subtextual tides and currents within the surge of his narratives. Like his character, Stan Parker, White pushes 'out beyond the safe limits', but his ventures towards and beyond the extremes of the capacities of a traditionally discursive genre are more than 'reckless, blind expeditions of discovery'. Indeed they indicate a disciplined and masterly control of presentative language. White's imagery both shapes and reveals the essence and the fullness of his vision.

There have been many references in criticism made to White's prose as an emulation of musical or painterly procedure. White's methodology inevitably invites such comparisons because it is indeed analogical, the unspoken or implied being as, and sometimes more, important than the spoken; the appearance of things being made to convey their essence. There is, White says in *Voss*, a 'stubborn music' in the world, 'waiting for release': but, as his presentative technique is implemented to show, there can be no question of releasing it in direct description. Some insight into

3. London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 475.
the nature of the paradoxical implications of White's adoption of that technique can be gained from the words of J.E. Creighton:

There is ... a kind of symbolism peculiarly adapted to the explication of 'unspeakable' things, though it lacks the cardinal virtue of language, which is denotation. The most highly developed type of such purely connotational semantic is music.

White avails himself of that semantic in the connotative function of his imagery, but by the same means he explicates 'unspeakable' things in relation to palpable things in lucid denotation.

It is in blending connotation and denotation so succinctly yet fully in his imagery that White is also most painterly. Speaking of the influence of Roy de Maistre on his art, White has said: 'I feel he taught me to write by teaching me to look at paintings and get beneath the surface'. Clearly White conceives of painting as the art which most patently projects the hidden meaning of physical things, and it is in his attempts to do that in his own work that he is most painterly. The relationship between his writing and the art of the painter is more complex than a mere use of colour symbolism or than a descriptive precision. This is a matter long overdue for consideration and must inevitably attract some extended critical attention in the future. At present, however, little more can be

offered than the generalization that the writing of Patrick White attracts comparisons with painting because it is so precisely directed at the physical realities, while its essential focus is consummately with the non-physical states which they may suggest.

As such, White's themes are essentially religious, especially in the novels from *The Tree of Man*. The fullest awareness of self is a perception of self in union with the material world and of an implied transcendence within it. Susan Moore, writing on 'the value of religious and especially mystical...experience' in *Riders in the Chariot*, touches on an important facet of the relationship in White's novels between humanity, the material world, and God when she points out that 'understanding things as they humanly are is a basic requirement of most mystical (and most religious) schemes: the Infinite (whether regarded as immanent, transcendent, or both) cannot be perceived without a wise awareness of the human (and finite)'.

God as a non-predicable entity presents a problem for White and he presents the concept of divinity by analogy. While the material world is not a metaphor of divinity, the notion that the deity, as the origin and ground of all being, is both transcendent over and immanent in the material world presented in White's novels. At their moments of supreme exaltation, White's metaphysical questers become conscious of the nature of that presence. White's most radical position in relation to such consciousness is adopted in his concern in the later novels with the possibilities of illumination in much that is usually regarded in western society as anti-social, offensive, shocking or immoral. White's adoption of that position

1. 'The Quest for Wholeness in *Riders in the Chariot*, *Southerly*, 35 (1975), 50-67; 50.
is symptomatic of the view that evidently he has of his function as a novelist in the modern world: 'Now, as the world becomes more pagan, one has to lead people in the same direction in a different way'.

Although the religious factor in the novels is of supreme importance, White's ultimate concern is with human beings rather than with the deity, and his attention is squarely fixed on the human dimensions of the issues raised by his religious themes. The highest human faculty is an understanding of the integration of all things, whatever their condition. The quest for meaning, that is, is a quest for self-awareness, which is in turn an apprehension of self in relation to the divine as it is evinced from humanity's experience of itself and of the world. Often the simplest concepts imaginable inform that experience in White's novels: the 'lovingkindness' of *Riders in the Chariot*; the motto 'God is Love' in *A Fringe of Leaves*, for instance, assume major dimensions in the novels. Yet simplicity, White's notion of the 'only desirable' state 'for artist or for man', is sometimes dauntingly complex. Nevertheless in the novels it is clear that, although to reach that state 'may be impossible, to attempt to do so is imperative'. Moreover, as Dorothy Green points out, the familiar need by no means be without significance or value:

There is a risk perhaps that in the end White arrives at conclusions which are commonplaces of eastern and western religions and goes to a great deal of trouble to do it. Most great metaphysical ideas are commonplaces, however, and are none the worse for that.

3. 'The Prodigal Son', 39.
An additional point proposed both implicitly and explicitly by the novels themselves is that such 'commonplaces' continue to be relevant, and in presenting them so elaborately White can often be seen, like Laura Trevelyan, to be 'struggling with the simplicity of a great idea'.¹

Effective presentation of this vision demands the implementation of a poetic technique combined with the discursive amplitude of the novel. In this thesis, I have been concerned with the structural and thematic functions of White's imagery in an endeavour to analyse the marriage of these two perhaps seemingly contradictory literary entities. I would disagree with Adrian Mitchell's view that White's 'vision is essentially a verbal structure ... and the real mysticism of Patrick White is a mysticism of words',² although the fundamental argument of this thesis is that in the dynamics of White's presentative language are enacted the themes of his novels. My view differs from Mitchell's, however, on the crucial point that White's aesthetic structures are self-fulfilling ends. As I have implied throughout this thesis, they represent an attempt to approximate various experiences and conditions. There may be a mystical fascination informing the attempt, but even if that is true, it is a different state of affairs from that proposed in Mitchell's stimulating and challenging essay.

Two basic structural principles emerge from an inspection of the function of imagery in White's novels. That which I have

discussed in Chapter I of this thesis, the recurrence of images, both informs the novels with their poetic texture and clarifies the development of situation and character within them. The characters are as clearly, if not more clearly, revealed by what is implied, presented obliquely, remains unspoken, as they are by what they are given to do or say. In the patterns of recurrent imagery, indeed, what the characters do or say is placed in a rich thematic context.

In the end, however, the characters do say and do, they are placed in situations and circumstances according to which theme is evolved. I have argued in Chapter II of this thesis that, as Alan Lawson has very recently pointed out, 1 White's novels are pronouncedly episodic in structure. Yet they are coherent aesthetic wholes, united in dramatic and figurative continuity by the imagery presented in the episodes of which they consist. The two principles of recurrence and centrality are active in the episodic structure of the novels, for the interrelation of episodes is significantly affected both by the interaction of recurrent imagery within and between them and by that of images which are central to many of them.

As I argued in Chapter III, the principle of centrality is applied on the scale of the whole of some of the novels, either in terms of a cluster of images or of a single predominant image. At its best, this aspect of White's aesthetic methodology provides his novels with an all-pervading structural integrity which

very clearly indicates White's concern with the stylistic embodiment of theme in the novels.

As the line of argument pursued in these first three chapters indicates, to be concerned with the aesthetic structures of White's novels is inevitably to be concerned with their themes. In Chapter IV of this thesis, I proposed the view that the thematic essence of White's novels is figured in the motifs which have, in the course of his creative effort, established themselves in his prose. His concern with the profundities of human experience is evident in his attempts to reveal the essential self of each of his major characters. The characters themselves do not change essentially throughout the narrative, therefore, since it is their progress towards knowledge of what they are, and of where they stand as human beings in the world they inhabit, that is important in these novels. That progress is recorded and enacted in White's presentation of the image of the human body, the image of the material world, and what I have referred to as the imagery of revelation and understanding, in which White's style itself becomes at times the vehicle of the metaphor.
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