Immanence and Transcendence in Patrick White: A Study of Three Novels.

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Abstract

This study critically examines three novels by Patrick White: Voss, The Vivisector and The Eye of the Storm. The emphasis is on the nature of the self-development undergone by the main characters in each novel, and the suggestion is that this is essentially 'existential', though not in the Sartrean, nihilistic sense.

White posits for each character a self-image that, at the beginning of each novel, is not contiguous with that held by the character at that point. Thus he demonstrates the existential principle of dialectic growth: the individual develops by becoming aware of himself as 'not-being', by seeing himself as lacking something, towards which he then proceeds to strive. The lack, or sense of 'not-being', is concretised as a goal, thus becoming the antithesis to the thesis of the character's original position. This theoretical point of view is examined in the introduction, as are the terms 'immanence' and 'transcendence'. The former is used to refer to the states of being that exist both before the character has begun to formulate his goal, and as the need to strive for that goal begins to assert itself. The latter term refers to the process of self-growth occasioned by the need for change, and also to the state of being that follows the fulfilment of that need.

It is important to note, however, that while the dialectic of existentialism, as well as its concept of self-realisation, are present in White's novels, he has applied them in a

unique and individual way. For him, the realisation of self is not merely a move away from one state of self to another that is 'higher' or more fulfilled; it also involves the thorough exploration of the 'immanent' mode of existence that is to be transcended. Similarly, the transcendence dialectic is not merely a continual process of self-actualisation, it is also an opening of the self to others, and to the divine presence. In this sense White moves closer to existential humanism and religious existentialism both of which emphasise the dependency of self-transcendence on authentic communication.

In Chapter one, Voss is considered in the light of the above theory. White portrays him as a visionary, a man who has set out to reinforce his self-image by facing the greatest challenges to it that he can conceive of. The vehicle for this challenge is the journey across the Australian desert. As the novel progresses, however, Voss is seen to become aware of qualities and characteristics that he lacks, and he begins to strive toward them. The chapter intends to demonstrate how the 'immanent' Voss, who is self-enclosed and arrogant, achieves a state of 'transcendent' being, in which the mutuality of existence and the possible existence of a divine consciousness are acknowledged.

In The Vivisector, which is the subject of Chapter two, much the same approach is adopted. Hurtle Duffield, the central character, is shown to be self enclosed, using his art as a means of avoiding the 'reality' of existence. The point is

also made that this behaviour is exacerbated by his artistic vocation, which demands an analytical stance and thus prevents him from understanding the limitations of his 'immanent' situation. Gradually, however, Hurtle becomes aware of a richness of self, a reality of being, for which he begins to strive - and eventually obtains.

Chapter three deals with the three main character of The Eye of the Storm - Elizabeth Hunter and her children, Dorothy and Basil. Each character is shown to have an ideal for themselves towards which they strive, and an attempt is made to measure the success or failure of that striving. Once again, 'immanent' being - the self that posits the goal, and 'transcendence' - the moving away from that self towards the self which will attain the goal, are examined. The chapter also aims to show a development in White's theory of self-transcendence. # Whereas in the other two novels, especially in The Vivisector, self-transcendence seemed to be the privilege of the exceptional and to be achieved by single, isolated individuals only, in # The Eye of the Storm the scenario is a little different. The protagonist, Elizabeth Hunter, though both visionary and eccentric, is a character accessible to the reader by virtue of her 'mundanity' - she is neither explorer nor artist. Her vision is transmitted to Mary de Santis, who, when she takes a rose to her new patient, symbolically carries it into the rest of the world.

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Contents

Introduction

When Sartre says in his essay 'Existentialism is a Humanism' that 'Man is nothing else but that which he makes of himself' (Langiulli 395), he is expressing an idea familiar to all of White's main characters. They, like Sartre, are aware of themselves as continually moving towards a future, and know that 'Before that projection of the self nothing else exists...' (395). They are able to conceive of themselves as existing within a set of rules different from their given position, and feel the need to actualise that conception. It is this that makes them 'visionaries'. Thus it is that Voss so fiercely desires to cross the Australian desert, and Hurtle so much needs to continue painting - their actions are a means to the concretisation of the future.

This drive to grow, the placing of so much importance on a future state of being is, as well as being the motivating force of many of White's characters, also the first principle of existentialism. As Sartre says, man '...first of all exists, encounters himself, surges up in the world and defines himself afterwards' (395).

The implication of this experience of existence, however, is that of extreme subjectivity. It is subjective because it is lived, because the individual can perceive his universe only as an individual one, because, though he needs to be self-surpassing to exist, he can '...grasp objects only in relation to his self-surpassing...' (Sartre 415). In other words, though the individual is free to actualise himself as

he chooses, he cannot move beyond human subjectivity - something illustrated over and over again in White's novels. His characters, having postulated some form of future identity for themselves, do not (initially, at least) attempt to fit others into that postulation. Voss, for example, negates the validity of others' points of view and is caught within a monumental, subjective, arrogance; Hurtle uses others as a source of inspiration for his art, but fails to perceive them as thinking subjects; and Elizabeth Hunter, seeking a state of pure being, relates to others only insofar as they could perhaps precipitate that situation. Each character, aware of the fact that he or she exists only to the extent to which they are realisations of a certain conception they have of themselves, attempts to actualise that conception at the expense of all else. In this, they conform to the inevitable limitations of existentialism. As Roberts points out, one of the potential weaknesses of existentialism is that the isolated individual, so acutely aware that only he can create his own existence and his own reality by using his own freedom to find out just what he wants to become, becomes '...so preoccupied with <u>his</u> freedom, <u>his</u> struggle...that he is cut off from fruitful contacts with nature, society and God' (10).

The consequence, as shown in each of the three novels dealt with, is solipsism and the potential failure of vision. Voss, Hurtle and Elizabeth, having developed an acute self-awareness, perceive that to be an authentically existing subject means to reject the 'subject status' of every other

human being. In his philosophical work, Being and Nothingness, Sartre discusses man's relations with others in terms of the conflict-structure inherent to them. For him, individual freedom is an absolute. Therefore, if it is practiced as such by another individual, it cannot be an absolute for the protagonist. The latter's freedom is then undermined, and can be won back only by 'making the other to object', and vice versa. Sartre sums up this process in his concept of the 'stare'. It is the 'stare', or the glance, of another that makes one individual aware of another as subject. The only way he can avoid this is by 'staring' in his turn, making the other the 'object' of his glance. Thus it is that Voss is so disconcerted by his garden conversation with Laura. In describing him, she treats him as an object of perception and so diminishes his view of himself as independent subject. At the same time, she reveals herself as an independent subject, threatening Voss's 'subject-status' even further. It is this that prompts the vehemence of his rejection. He shakes her off, dismissing her words and the image of himself they contain, realising that to engage with them would mean the negation of his awareness of himself as essential subject.

Hurtle and Elizabeth have similar encounters. Nance, for example, has to be totally destroyed because of the threat she poses to the subjective self actualised in Hurtle's art. The painter cannot afford to engage with the objective image of himself she presents him with. To do so - as is shown when he is moved to destroy the self-portrait after Nance's

comments on it - is to court self-destruction. Elizabeth too, must avoid this, which is why, at one point in the novel, she mentally rationalises her 'taste for human flesh' (White The Eye of the Storm 87).

Yet, unlike Sartre and other nihilistic existentialists, White cannot accept this as the final word for his characters. He has given each of them a vision: Voss wishes to 'know everything', Hurtle to experience and define the attribute of God that, on the dunny wall at least, remains unformulated, and Elizabeth to assimilate into herself the spiritual endlessness felt during the eye of the storm. These are the 'projections of self', the conceptions of 'not being' that each character wishes to actualise, the visions of future identities which make each person a truly 'existential' subject. At the same time, they are visions which demand for their realisation the overcoming of the narrowly existential mode of communication. Voss cannot 'know everything' if he continues to shut out the reality of others' subjective existence, Hurtle cannot tap into a concept of the divine if he is not prepared to open himself to its manifestations, and Elizabeth cannot assimilate spiritual endlessness if she is determined, as she so often is, to keep the circle of herself unbroken. Thus it is that in dealing with his characters' need to find new modes of communication, new ways of evaluating themselves in terms of others, White approaches the concepts of 'religious' existentialism.

Gabriel Marcel, as a proponent of 'religious' existentialism holds the view that man, in trying to exist authentically - that is, by actualising the vision he has posited for himself - is attempting to do more than attain a new state of being by merely manipulating his circumstances. He is, in fact, attempting to 'transcend' himself, to find a meaningful paradigm beyond the limitations of his self, and is therefore implicitly striving towards a greater state of being, or Being. As Marcel would have it, however, the kind of fulfilment the existential individual has in mind is not contained in the approach to something timeless and abstract, as in the dogmatic concept of 'God, but is rather something lived' (Roberts 312). In other words, there is an element of mysticism involved because 'transcendence', movement beyond the self, does not occur on a purely rational basis. Instead of merely positing a desired reality and fulfilling the requirements necessary to attain it, the individual creatively strives for a union of soul with a state of being, of Being that is greater than he.

This view corresponds well with that found in White's novels. Though his characters posit a vision for themselves and strive to actualise themselves in terms of it, thus conforming to the criteria of the 'existential' individual, they are also seeking direct experience or immediate awareness of a reality greater than their own, and greater, finally, than the personal actualisation for which they strive. Voss, for example, 'transcends' the self of the beginning of the novel by becoming the explorer, the hero,

that he dreamed of being. Yet he discovers in the process that beyond the journey, beyond the new self actualised in the desert, is a still greater state of being that, ironically, he can enter into only by surrendering his self.

In this lies another concept central to 'religious' existentialism, namely that reason, so essential for structuring the individual vision, is in the end inadequate. Hurtle, carefully ordering and explaining his experience of life through his art, does become the creative self he dreams of at the beginning of the novel. But it is only when he abandons this rational structuring and selection, when he '...painted with, and through, and on' (White The Vivisector 614) that he is able to approach the 'endless obvi-indigoddd' (White The Vivisector 617).

In the course of the three novels, as the characters become aware of the presence of, and their desire for, this greater state of being, they also become aware of the inadequacy of their responses to their current circumstances. However, because the essence of the existential individual is the idea of self as subject, and because that subjectivity is regarded as an absolute, the 'other' is constantly perceived as a threat, and so is negated in order to preserve self-identity. In addition, the actualisation of self, which involves the transcendence of an existing state of being in the direction of one which promises greater fulfilment, is seen as attainable only if the individual allows no interruption of

his subjectivity - he has to carefully fulfil his destiny, without looking for outside help. Yet these modes of behaviour - inherent in all three characters mentioned - become inadequate in the face of the realisation that there is a state of being lying beyond the individual destiny, a state which is not realised when individual destiny is realised, and which is not brought any closer by the protection of the self as subject and the preservation of individual autonomy. Elizabeth Hunter finds this in her encounter with Athol Shreve. Intending to actualise her 'taste for human flesh' by indulging it - an act which conforms to her (and White's) belief that every aspect of existence must be explored before it can be transcended, and which, because it represents a desire to transcend, is 'existential' in nature - she finds that instead of opening new doors for her, the meeting traps her into self-disgust and self-criticism. Thus she becomes aware that such encounters, though they have a function in terms of realising an individual aim, do not bring her any closer to that greater mystery which lies beyond her own self-realisation.

This type of encounter ties up directly with Buber's distinction between 'I - it' and 'I - thou' relationships. In the former, man is goal-oriented and using a thing or a person as object in order to reach that goal - much as Elizabeth Hunter uses Athol Shreve as a means to self-understanding. But, as Buber states, man's life '...does not consist merely of activities that have something for their object' (Solomon

306, 307). He also stands in relation to things and people. Buber refers to this as a 'relational event' (Solomon 309), and says: '...the relational event includes the I. For by its nature this event contains only two partners, man and what confronts him, both in their full actuality' (Solomon 309). Because in this kind of encounter both parties are present 'in their full actuality' - in other words, neither has been made an 'object' in order to preserve the other's 'subjectivity' - Buber makes the further claim that in such circumstances, '...through everything that becomes present to us, we gaze toward the train of the eternal You; in each we perceive a breath of it; in every you we address the eternal you...' (Solomon 307).

It is this that each of White's characters learns during the course of his spiritual journeys. Each one begins with a vision of personal transcendence, and, in order to reach that vision or goal, attempts to remain self-enclosed, isolated from others, mistaking this state of being for 'wholeness'. Yet, at the same time, each character experiences the anguish of isolation, catches glimpses of another and greater mystery lying just beyond their chosen paths, and begins to long for it - a longing, significantly, often expressed in terms of communion. The latter has implications of sharing with others, of breaking bread together, and suggests that the other and greater state of being can be reached through intersubjectivity, through open communication with others who are allowed to retain their 'subject' status.

Each character gradually approaches this 'greater state of being' as he or she learns to communicate authentically with others. Voss, as he learns to commune with Laura and not regard her as a threat to his self, realises the ultimate self-transendence of '...man returning into God' (White Voss 386). Hurtle, when he learns to open himself to Kathy, rather than destroy her as he did Nance, and when he learns to love Cutbush rather than reduce him to the self-destructive grocer depicted in 'Lantana Lovers', is by the end of the novel able to approach the endlessness of 'God', rather than, as he sets out to do, protect his artistic self at all costs. In the same way, Elizabeth Hunter is able to re-enter the eye of the storm only after she is shriven of self, after she has learned not to regard others as ciphers in whatever power-game she has embarked upon.

Thus it is that most of White's characters realise the existential ideal. Aware of themselves as subjects, they posit goals and visions for themselves, attempting, as they struggle to realise them, to create meaning and purpose in their lives. For some, such as Basil and Dorothy in The Eye of the Storm, this is as far as they dare venture, and they remain for always in a hell of their own making. For them, self-actualisation is a transient, because essentially limited, goal. For others, however, the existential act of self-cration provides a pathway to a greater state of being, allows the, in fact, to merge into Being. Their acts no longer worship themselves; they have blended with their prayer. It is this process that I

have tried to demonstrate in my analysisis of the three novels.

In many ways White's style, too, is reflective of his existential concerns. In this philosophy, the individual is thought of as enclosed within his own consciousness and, initially at least, as incapable of identifying himself with the self of an 'other'. In addition, 'truth' is not seen as a finality, or not while the subject is still alive; it remains a persistent striving and becoming. It is probably for these reasons that White, especially in Voss and The Eye of the Storm, is careful to present us with a combination of individual views. We are allowed into Laura's mind before she meets Voss for the first time, for example, as we are allowed into the minds of Dorothy and Basil as they exist independently of their mother. This anthorial tendency reflects the existential principle of individual isolation, allowing as it does each character to stand alone. Yet, by sheer co-existence, they form a world of interaction. (A similar technique, though more exaggerated, is used in Beckett's Play, in which each character narrates his own story and the action results from the almost accidental overlapping of these accounts.) Perhaps it is in The Vivisector however, dealing as it does with the most intensely 'subjective' of beings, an artist, that the idea of individual isolation is most clearly reflected in technique. Here, apart from the few sentences that now and then allow us a glimpse of the 'real' Cutbush or Rhoda, the narrative point of view belongs almost exclusively to Hurtle.

White, however, is not limiting himself to the exploration of an individual, subjective consciousness in its attempts to actualise itself. He is also attempting to demonstrate the potential connection between it and a higher state of being, one that, though implicit in, lies beyond the realisation the individual. It is for this reason that his technique of third person narration, often with ironic interpolations on his part, is so effective. When he comments on one of his characters, though often a negation of that character's immediate, or immanent, position, the remark serves to focus the reader's attention on th person's 'essence' - be it that for which he is striving, or that which he is inauthentically suppressing. In both cases a discrepancy between the character's current actions and his future goal, (which represents the 'true' self he wishes to become) is emphasised. In this way, White conforms to the Kierkegaardian concept of irony, which the latter defined as '...a liberation of the individual...as infinite, absolute negativity... [which] permitted man to negate the actual, putting himself above it...' (Kern 10). Thus it is that, when White says of the child Hurtle (just after he has cruelly repudiated Rhoda's clumsy attempt to express love for him): 'He was relieved that his thoughts, and Rhoda's, were again fully clothed' (121), he is in fact emphasising the boy's horror of feeling exposed, his fear of contact. In the larger context of the novel this emphais gains impact. The result is the reader's realisation that, though Hurtle is realising himself by becoming the artist he dreams of, he is nevertheless cutting himself off from his 'essence'

- that part of him which longs to share in the endlessness of pure Being.

White's technique is existential in a third sense also, namely in his extensive use of interior monologue and dream sequences. These are used almost exclusively for moments of self-understanding, of transcendence, on the part of his characters: Voss meets Laura, the catalyst for self-transcendence, in dreams and visions; Elizabeth relives and understands her past - in which is the key to her re-entering the eye of the storm - in dreams, and it is through an intensely visionary experience that Hurtle finally perceives the significance of the 'blessed blue' (White The Vivisector 617), and enters into the final, triumphant, endless oblivion. The use of this technique therefore not only allows White to affirm an inherent existential principle - the essentially subjective nature of all experience - it allows him to incorporate that element of revelation, that 'irrational' (inasmuch as it is not controlled by the individual) glimpse of a transcendent state of being, or Being, which all of White's characters, with varying degrees of success, strive towards.

Chapter one: Voss

> 'We in cities rightly grow shrewd at appraising man-made institutions - but beyond these tiny concentration points of rhetoric and traffic, there lies the eternally unsolvable Enigma, the preposterous fact that both existence and non-existence are equally unthinkable' (Burke 272).

It is my contention that Voss's journey into the Australian outback is not merely a '...coming to terms with a recognition that, even in the knowledge that there are things more than human, man must live as a social being, and accept, indeed celebrate, what follows of joy as well as of disgust' (Strauss 274); nor is it a representation of the idea that '...life can be won only outside "Society" - and, perhaps, only outside society...'[1] (Buckley 423), though both these comments are relevant. The journey, rather than focusing exclusively on the relationship between society and the individual, is the externalisation of the internal conflict experienced by the German explorer, containing within its physical (and spatial) parameters the spiritual pilgrimage that gives Voss's death a lasting relevance. It is, in fact, an exploration of the idea that '...both existence and non-existence are equally unthinkable' (Burke 272), and an attempt to reconcile the two extremes.

Voss, an outsider to Australia by birth, a social outsider by choice[2], determines to hold himself aloof from those who,

like Mr Bonner, huddle together on the fringes of the awesome vastness of the outback, hoping that participation in a social structure will be enough for happiness and security. He wishes, as Laura puts it, to 'exalt'[3] his own situation. Yet, however hard he tries, Voss cannot dismiss the 'man' in him - his unwilling need of Laura and his attraction to Rhine Towers are just two examples of this. He is uncomfortably aware of these 'feminine' (48) impulses in himself, and this awareness is to grow until Voss can perceive what Laura understands from the beginning: that his determined isolation not only smothers the humanising impulses and humanitarian characteristics of his own nature, it causes him to run the risk of, in Laura's words, being 'dammed' for his pride (89).

It is this conflict that prompts Voss to leave the comforts of suburban Australia, representative of all that he regards as weak in man, and journey into the desert, a symbol to him of his self-sufficient individuality. But, instead of finally severing the bonds that still link him to his fellow man, instead of confirming the image he has of '...himself as the Superman to whom will is the answer...' (Argyle 45), the explorer finds that the desert - and Laura - force him to fall back on his own resources. It is the exploration and acknowledgement of the limitations of these resources that enables him to achieve some kind of harmony, a reconciliation between his divine aspirations and his humanity.

The journey, then, being a movement away from society into the desert of isolation, externalises the conflict between Voss's unwilling recognition of his humanity and his wish to assert his self-sufficiency. In addition, it provides the explorer with an unexpected paradox by throwing his lonely figure into relief against an endless expanse of land and sky, forcing him to see himself in perspective, and eventually to accept the productive failure of his attempt to achieve '...apotheosis of self in the image of a deity...' (Bliss 60). In the end, Voss's journey could be seen, as R.F. Brissenden suggests, as '...a many-levelled allegory, a parable in which Patrick White tries to illuminate, in religious terms, the struggle...between pride and and humility, faith in oneself and faith in God, and in which he tries also to analyse and lay bare the nature of Australian life, to cut through to the spiritual centre of Australian society...'(Patrick White Writers and their Work series 29).

If the aim of the novel is to demonstrate Voss's 'transcendence' - his return to humanity and simultaneous and paradoxical attainment of the divine - the action of the novel focuses on his exploration of his 'immanence'. It is only by recognising that his original need to prove self-sufficiency and power is, again paradoxically, in fact limiting and weakening, that Voss can achieve wholeness and self-fulfilment. To do this he has fully to experience that limitation and weakness, which involves coming to grips with all his human impulses. Voss is determined to hold himself

aloof, however - something that is illustrated in the opening chapter of the novel. During their first meeting Laura describes him as 'sufficient in himself' (15) and as an 'enclosed man' (15), an evaluation he inadvertently confirms when he responds with suspicion to Mr Bonner's recommendation of Angus and Judd: 'Anonymous individuals were watching him from behind trees as well as from the corners of the rich room. He suspected their blank faces. All that was external to himself he mistrusted, and was happiest in silence, which is immeasurable, like distance, and the potentialities of self' (21,22). As Ashcroft says: '...Voss desire[s] to enclose the whole of perfection by recovering it within himself' (131).

The same quotation, however, also demonstrates Voss's fear of being drawn into relationships with others. He feels threatened by the 'anonymous individuals' (21) because he is not sure whether he can maintain a wholeness of self, a personal perfection that has no connection with the realities of others. He reflects that '...thirst, fever, physical exhaustion [are] much less destructive than people' (18), showing that even at this early stage of the novel, his self-sufficiency, to which he clings so tightly and which he goes to such great lengths to prove, is but a fragile thing.

Voss refuses to acknowledge these feelings of fear and uncertainty, however, preferring to flee Sunday lunch at the Bonners' and '...the fresh mortification to which he had submitted himself' (27) by '...hoping soon to enter his own

world of desert and dreams' (26). It is this effort to '...extinguish all human impulses in himself that makes Voss a tortured figure ' (Wilkes 161). He is unable at this point to face the shortcomings revealed to him by his inability to communicate with others, and avoids an uncomfortable realisation of this by projecting his current feelings of 'mortification' (27) into the future, onto the journey that he hopes will forgive him this failure. He hopes that, by undertaking what he sees as a far greater struggle, his inability to rise to the challenge of everyday existence will be overlooked. What he does not understand, however, is that the lesson he is refusing to learn here will be unavoidable when, of necessity, he comes face to face with himself in the desert.

White ironically emphasises this failure to understand by shifting the point of view from which the explorer is described as he walks away from the Bonners. Voss attributes his turbulent reactions and his need for flight to the attitudes of others, who have made him 'the victim of his body' (26) by forcing on him an awareness of a 'nastiness' (26) in his character he would not otherwise have attributed to himself. But White, as omniscient narrator, interjects a comment here, stating: 'He was not lame, but could have been' (26). The conditional immediately implies that the limitations which Voss feels are forced on him are in fact inherent, and that the explorer is not considering this possibility. As Carolyn Bliss points out, when White uses the conditional he '...appear[s] to confine himself to what

any observer might see, [while] in reality he retains control of the reader's response by restricting the range of meaning...' (192).

White's comment ties up with one he makes a paragraph earlier: 'However high his vision had soared, the now leaden German trod in thick boots along the gravel. The indifference of voices in a room, even of the indistinct voices, becomes a criticism '(25,26). The change to the gnomic present in the latter part of the quotation suggests that the word 'criticism' is used by White, not by Voss. The implication is that Voss is running from that criticism while failing to identify exactly what it is he is running from, something which is made even more explicit later in the passage, when White follows the description of the explorer as '...a man of obvious strength when observed in the open' with the words '...yet who could have been trailing some humiliation...' (26). The concessive again serves to enlarge the field of potential meaning, suggesting that the strong, self-sufficient image Voss has of himself is not entirely an accurate one, because he has not faced and overcome the challenges that threaten it. For this reason his refusal of the bread offered him by the man in the beaver assumes a symbolic significance borne out by the rest of the novel. He is refusing 'communion', refusing to accept that his insufficiencies and failures can provide a pathway to wholeness and transcendence.

When Voss hastily leaves the Bonners', humiliated by the glimpse he has caught of himself in the mirrors of their eyes (hence the reference to '...laurels [which] blinded with insolent mirrors' (26) during his return journey), he is experiencing the consequences of what existentialists refer to as 'inauthentic intersubjectivity'. This is a central concept of nihilistic existentialism, which has as its premise the idea that estrangement is the basic characteristic of man's relationship to other selves. As Roberts says: 'Although I can make myself the centre where experience of things is concerned, the other person breaks into my egocentric pattern as a threat to its claims...the other's subjectivity...remains wholly inaccessible to me' (205,206). Thus, to protect the self, the individual refuses to deal with the other as a subject in his own right, regarding him instead as a threat and an 'object'. The consequent failure to communicate on an equal basis is designated 'inauthentic intersubjectivity', something which, in the early stages of the novel at least, Voss is frequently guilty of. Acutely aware of himself as subject, he is unable to deal with the fact that others see him as an object, and his reaction to objective scrutiny is therefore so violently defensive that he fails to perceive even those aspects of his mirror image which are accurate. His instinctive defence is to ignore the danger to his idea of self, and to reassert his status as subject in any way possible.

The obvious consequence of this is something which has already been referred to: Voss's need to stand apart from

society, to remain aloof from people. But, as does the typical existentialist, Voss reacts with more than a mere 'stepping back'. He attempts to neutralise potentially threatening attitudes by, in his turn, regarding others as 'objects' and thereby asserting both his control and his supremacy. As Edgecombe justly remarks: 'Hubris, followed to its logical conclusion, must issue in solipsism, the contempt of pride for everything that is not itself' (141).

An example of this is the way Voss listens to Topp's music,[4] accepting it as '...homage of a kind. At intervals he might lift a hand, graciously acknowledging a phrase, but out of that great distance to which he was so often withdrawn' (31). He fails to see that the music represents an honest attempt to find self-fulfilment by the creation of something inherently beautiful, and his failure acts as a negation of the music-master's creative struggle and is therefore a dismissal of the man's individual identity. By claiming the 'Exquisite, pearly, translucent notes [that] would flower on that unpromising wood...' (30) for himself, Voss is denying Topp's voice the right to be heard, and is also preventing himself from hearing any challenge to his own vision that it might contain. He does the same thing to Harry Robarts when he says dismissively: '"There is Robarts...He is an English lad. We are met on board. He is good, simple." But superfluous' (21); and later to Turner, of whom he states: 'A cunning man can be used if he does not first use' (42).

The reductive quality of such an attitude is self-evident. Voss may be protecting himself, but he is also limiting himself to estranged, sterile relationships, and so - in the words of Martin Buber - is failing to perceive the 'thou' in the other. As Buber maintains, without this, no experience of the greater 'Thou', no approach to the divine, is possible (Solomon 307). It is this that Voss must learn, but to learn it, he must acknowledge that the 'self' he values so highly is one among many, and as such is subject to those weaknesses and failings he so much despises in others. Not only that, he has to explore those failings - his 'immanence' - in order to grow, or 'transcend', from them.

The image of Voss drawn up to this point suggests a man determined to stand aloof from others, determined to assert his self and his vision at the expense of all others, and without the wisdom to perceive that in so doing he limits himself, prevents himself from reaching that pinnacle of knowledge and self-fulfilment that he mistakenly sees as the natural consequence of the expedition. In fact, he is a man divided against himself, wanting those very qualities that he is denying by his chosen attitudes.[5] Nowhere is this more apparent than during those rare moments when Voss, tired, or caught unawares, admits to human emotion. Such a moment occurs when, after finally convincing Frank Le Mesurier to join the expedition, 'The German began to think of the material world which his egoism had made him reject. In that world men and women sat at a round table and broke bread

together. At times, he admitted, his hunger was almost unbearable' (36).

It is significant that Voss's need is described in terms of the 'breaking of bread', or 'communion', as his admission that he longs for the communion of souls that will feed his hungry spirit comes only a short while after we have seen him refuse the handful of bread offered him by the man in the beaver. He does this in spite of the fact that he had avoided dinner at the Bonners' and was hungry. In narrative time, his admission of need comes before his refusal of the bread, which gives his reply to the old man greater significance: '"But I have eaten...only recently I have eaten"' (27). It is as though, having feasted on the spiritual food provided by his decision to turn away from men and to journey into the outback for the sake of his soul, he cannot admit that his chosen food is unfulfilling. So he goes hungry, even though he is crying out for nourishment.

Another example of Voss's refusal to face his own needs can be seen in his reactions to the committed religious beliefs of Palfreyman and the farmer, Müller. When Palfreyman states that '"It is rather the will of God that I should carry out certain chosen undertakings"' (47) during one of their walks in the Botanic Gardens, 'Voss [draws] up his shoulder to protect himself from some unpleasantness' and knows that '...he would have liked to dispose of Palfreyman...' (47). Thinking about this later, he '...consider[s] almost with disgust' the men who '...merge themselves with the concept of

their God...', and contemptuously denotes faith as '...an occupation for women, between the preserving pan and the linen press' (48).

Voss is here taking a firm stand against the idea that the validity of another will should have to be acknowledged. He is reasserting his self-sufficiency, including God (the 'Thou') in the rejection of others (the 'thou') that he made after his Sunday encounter with the Bonners. But White, as he does during Voss's homeward walk, again questions the explorer's retreat into categorical self-assertion. Describing Voss's reflections on Palfreyman's statement, he says: 'During the days that followed, the German thought somewhat surreptitiously about the will of God' (48). The damning words are 'somewhat surreptitiously', indicating again to the reader that Voss can approach challenges to his position only obliquely, almost in spite of himself, and that his approach consists only of a glance as he moves quickly past and away from the contentious issue. Similarly, just as his refusal to meet the challenge of 'oneness with man' was followed by the admission that his longing for that state was sometimes almost unbearable, his refusal to meet the challenge of 'oneness with God' is followed by the confession that he '..would sometimes feel embittered at what he had not experienced, even though he was proud not to have done so' (48).

Voss wants the wholeness, the commitment, that comes with surrender to a divine will, but he cannot yet admit that his

own will is not absolute. He is unwilling to allow anything, or anyone, else to occupy the centre of his vision, yet he is unable completely to ignore the stirrings of need, of uncertainty, within him. Because of this, he cannot prevent the backlash of humiliation and discomfort he experiences when circumstances force these needs to his attention. Thus he exists in a state of uneasy truce, neither giving in to, nor completely stepping back from, those things that would cause him to question his purpose. White emphasises this when he says of Voss: 'Yet he remembered with longing the eyes of Palfreyman, and that old Müller, from both of whom he must always hold himself aloof, to whom he would remain coldly unwedded' (48). The words 'coldly unwedded' are especially apposite here, emphasising as they do Voss's sterile but irrevocable connection to his spiritual and social needs, and to those who represent them.

These few glimpses of Voss's struggling with needs to which he would prefer not to admit alert us to the fact that the reasons we have been given for his taking on the expedition are not entirely accurate. Voss, does, as he says in the beginning, see the journey as a means of 'know[ing] everything' (27), of asserting his will and developing his strength. But, by demonstrating the unrealistic limitations he is placing on himself, White leads us to suspect that Voss is also using the expedition as a means of fleeing personal conflicts, of avoiding 'lesser' questions by substituting for them a seemingly greater struggle.

Whites's portrayal of Voss is not as simple as the description so far implies, however. The explorer is more than a self-enclosed egotist, determined to deny the human and spiritual qualities of his soul for fear of admitting to weakness. Nor is the journey merely a thematic device, providing the means to change the main character 'in spite of himself', and so demonstrating a moral lesson for the reader. Voss is also revealed - not least by his involuntary need for spiritual and social communion - as a man who has the potential for genuine 'transcendence'.

When Voss, after asking Le Mesurier to join the expedition, says to him: '"To make yourself, it is also necessary to destroy yourself"' (34), and defines the prospective journey as an attempt '...to discard the inessential and to attempt the infinite' (35), he is interpreting the needs discussed above in terms of personal striving for fulfilment and not - as Mr Bonner would - simply as needs to be practically met by means of institutions such as 'the family' or 'the church'. His first comment is unwittingly ironic in that, up to now, he has been revealed as a man attempting to 'make' himself without first destroying himself, but the very fact that he is capable of this kind of perceptive remark argues that his self-denial, though mistaken in that it limits and divides him against himself, stems from a refusal to accept easy answers, and the realisation that there is a dimension to self-fulfilment that is not represented by the answers readily available to him. In consequence, the expedition gains another purpose - it is important as a means of

actualising the potential for growth that exists in Voss's character.

While the journey may aid in the actualisation of growth, however, it is Laura who provides its impetus. Voss, if left to himself, would have set off on the expedition in a state of mind no different to the one already described - still determined to prove his absolute power, his self-sufficiency; still divided against himself and refusing to admit to essential needs, still containing an unawakened potential for change and self-transcendence. Without Laura to act as catalyst, it is debatable whether the hardship and desolation of the desert would alone have been enough to force Voss to his Knees, and to make him look upwards. He would have - as he always has - continued to refuse confrontation with the inadequacies revealed in his mirrored image.

In Laura, however, Voss confronts a mirror that does not waver. As P. Beatson says: 'She gives a face and a voice to that half of his own nature which he represses,[8] and begs that, instead of trying to free his mind from the body, he should descend and embrace the material, mortal side of his nature' (The Three Stages 114). She does not, like Mr Bonner, enthusiastically and unthinkingly support his ambitions and so give him reason to be complacent and condescending. Nor does she, like Harry Robarts, depend on his strength and so prevent his questioning it. Having proclaimed herself an atheist, she does not possess the

secure belief a Palfreyman, and never having '...been tempered in hell...' (137), she does not have Judd's inviolable uncertainty that he has faced the worst and survived. Thus, she does not tempt Voss to set himself up as a destroyer. In addition, she is sufficiently different from the explorer for him not to be able to dismiss her, as he does Le Mesurier, as representative of a state of mind he has experienced and surpassed.[7] She is strong enough to confront him, enough like him to give her stand validity, and just far enough outside his prejudices (if such one may call them) to elude his attempts to negate her validity, to render her an 'object' and so ignore her challenge to his vision.

All this is illustrated in the much-discussed 'garden scene',[8] when Laura and Voss confront each other in the garden after a dinner party at the Bonners'. She accurately sums up his character, stating:

> '...you are fascinated by the prospect of desert places, in which you will find your own situation taken for granted, or more than that, exalted. You sometimes scatter kind words or bits of poetry to people, who soon realise the extent of their illusion. Everything is for yourself. Human emotions, when you have them, are quite flattering to you. If those emotions strike sparks from others, that also is flattering. But most flattering, I think, when you experience it, is the hatred, or even the mere irritation of weaker characters' (88).

With these comments Laura shows not only that she has the perception to see through his actions, but that she has the strength to confront him with her conclusions. She demonstrates their similarity when she says: '"You are my desert!"' (88), implying that she, like Voss, feels the need for a journey of self-exploration and does not accept the ready answers of her fellow-men. In addition, by admitting to the fascination Voss holds for her, she openly recognises his power, thus rendering him unable to use it as a weapon against her. For the first time in the novel, Voss finds himself in a position where he is tempted by the prospect of 'authentic' communication without at the same time feeling threatened by it: 'In such circumstances, repentance, he felt, might have been a luxury' (88). But, perhaps because the temptation is exactly that - a temptation and not a necessity - he is easily able to dismiss the feeling: 'But he did not propose to enjoy any such softness. Besides, faith in his own stature had not been destroyed' (88).

Nevertheless, it is the first time Voss has considered abandoning his position of self-sufficient authority, and the consideration has brought him closer to Laura. For once, he is slightly disarmed, and therefore unprepared for the unwelcome shock of the statement: '"It is for our pride that each of us is probably damned"' (89). Laura has intuited Voss's refusal to relinquish his stand, and, still unafraid, has confronted him with the reason behind it. To Voss, her judgement has greater validity because she has more than half-convinced him that her internal struggle is similar to

his - even to the point where he has felt compelled to deny such a similarity. It is for this reason that he reacts to her comment with such vehemence: 'Then he shook her off, and the whole situation of an hysterical young woman. He was wiping his lips, which had begun to twitch, though in anger, certainly, not from weakness' (89). The defensive assertion in this statement, namely that it is anger, not weakness, that causes his lips to twitch, suggests once again Voss's suspicion that 'weakness' could well mean his refusal to face the challenge to his position of those emotions he despises, rather than, as he has continually maintained, his surrender to them.

That it is Laura who awakens this response in Voss so early in the novel is appropriate, as it is Laura who provokes him to self-examination, and prompts self-revelation, throughout his desert journey. The two remain in constant contact, at first through dreams[8] and letters, and later by means of a mystical, 'telepathic' link (Macainsh, Voss and his Communications 439). Each appearance Laura makes to Voss marks a moment in his development, or comments on a decision he has made. An examination of these moments, therefore, yields insight into th success or failure of the explorer's personal struggle.

The first 'contact' between the two, after their momentous meeting in the garden, occurs after Voss's arrival at Rhine Towers when, during his first night there, he dreams of the the hills he saw on first approaching the property. They

assume the quality of 'suave flesh' (139), and White comments here: 'That which would have been reprehensible, nauseating, frightening in life, was permissible, even desirable, in sleep. And could solve, as well as dis-solve' (139). The comment is ironically enlightening in two ways. First, it causes the reader to refer to Voss's ecstatic reaction on seeing the sun set behind the hills at Rhine Towers for the first time. We are reminded that he desired to 'sink' (128) into the landscape, that he was strongly attracted by the homestead's quality of 'poignance' (131), a quality that suggested to him the paradoxical success of 'Incidental failure' (131) - the strength that has its roots in humility, regarded by him as a kind of failure. And we are also reminded that Voss chose to turn his back on all this, deciding that 'He had been wrong to surrender to sensuous delights, and must now suffer accordingly' (129). By pointing out that, for Voss, what is really desirable to him can be approached only in sleep, the state in which the unconscious can truthfully assert itself, White hints that the explorer's decision is prompted by fear, and that Voss is in fact running away from what he really wants.

The comment is also an ironic reflection on Voss's relationship with Laura. The hills of Rhine Towers assume the quality of flesh, and from there become the hills on the hand Laura is holding out to him. The link between the two suggests that Voss sees in the latter many of the qualities he associates with the farmer, and so his refusal of Laura's overtures of friendship - symbolised by his roughly throwing

the clay hand from him - is also being mocked. White again suggests that Voss refuses what he really wants to accept.

The dream is more than a comment on Voss's behaviour, however. In taking the hand, a symbol of Laura's offer of friendship and love, Voss is implicitly acknowledging that those qualities have the power to change him, to solve the moral dilemma in which he finds himself. When he remarks on the hill of love, and sees that it '...would not be gone around' (139), he is admitting that love - which he has tried to avoid for fear of its weakening him, forcing humility on him - is something he will have to face squarely. As P. Knox-Shaw remarks, it is through this realisation that Voss proves himself '...unwilling to evade the hill of love', and so 'He allows Laura to offer him two further hands' (The Country of the Mind 176).

The first of these is of fired clay, suggestive of the pottery of the Sandersons which is '...distorted by the intense heat in which [it] had been tried...' (131). The link implies that the hand, like the pottery, contains the quality of poignance that Voss finds such a threat. In addition the hand is reminiscent of the 'potter's vessel' (Psalm 2:9) that has been tempered in the Lord's 'refiner's fire' (Malachi 3:2), a connection that the arrogant explorer is sure to find difficult to accept, rejecting as he does the superiority of God and the redeeming qualities of humility. Accordingly, the hand, with its poignant imperfection and its suggestion of humility, is roughly shattered. The action

symbolically affirms Voss's reassumed divinity by ironically echoing the full quotation from Psalms: 'Thou shalt break them with rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel' (Psalm 2:9).

The second hand, of grain, has little connection with the 'nauseating' world of 'suave flesh', nor does it, like the hand of fired clay, confront his conscience with uncomfortable reminders of the value of humility. Nevertheless, it '...testifies...to Voss's need for love, [and] elicits what is simultaneously a gesture of rejection and acceptance' (Knox-Shaw The Country of the Mind 217): 'So he shut it up in his bosom. He was afraid to look at it again' (140). The implication is that he is accepting the validity of failure as a means to success, even if, as is suggested by his discarding of the clay hand, he is not yet prepared to accept this as an axiom for his own life.

It is through Laura, then, that Voss can approach his ambivalent reactions to Rhine Towers, and it is with her help that he takes the first tentative step towards acknowledging those things - love, the need for humility - that he has spent his life determined to negate and avoid. In fact, as Walsh suggests, laura represents a world of 'possibility' that is strongly contrasted to the 'actual' world of the expedition, and the contact maintained between the two characters not only keeps the worlds in touch, it is also a means of ensuring that the former world offers a possibility of salvation to the latter (Patrick White's Fiction 45). Given

Voss's growing awareness of this, it is not surprising that his next contact with Laura takes the form of a letter of proposal, a letter which is an actualisation of the insight he gained during his dream.

The proposal is prompted by his attraction to Rhine Towers' '...strength of innocence which normally he would have condemned as ignorance, or suspected as a cloak to cover guile' (152), a quality which he allies to Laura's '...rather stubborn innocence [in which] her greatest strength lay' (152). As he looks back at the homestead from the river, he feels '[...]..purged [...]..possessed even of some of the humility, which Palfreyman extolled as a virtue' (152), a feeling that hints he has understood the meaning of his dream. For the present, at least, he has suspended his 'normal' reactions of condemnation and suspicion. Thus it is that he is able to think back to Laura's words in the garden, and where before he '..shook her off...' (89), he now admits that '...her words had struck deeper for their clumsy innocence, and could have delivered, as he had feared, or desired, a coup de grâce' (152).

The result of Voss's new insight is his proposal letter, the concrete evidence of his growing desire to reach out for love, and the symbol of a dawning understanding that will eventually lead him to discover his humanity. But, characteristically, the explorer's admission of need, his tentative reaching out to the strength of innocence, does not reflect the spirit which inspired it. Instead of addressing

Laura as an equal, confessing to the feelings that prompted the letter, he attempts to draw her into the circle of his pure will. 'Dear Miss Trevelyan', he says, '...do not pray for me, but I would ask you to join me in thought , and exercise of will, daily, hourly, until I may return to you, the victor' (153). The awkward structure of this sentence reflects ironically on Voss. His intention is to assure Laura that he will return victorious, but '...return to you, the victor', places the appositive relation of the phrase in doubt and makes it seem as though Voss is calling Laura the victor. The ambivalence of the sentence reflects the struggle for dominance between the two.[10] In order to maintain his self-sufficiency and authority, Voss constantly dares Laura to challenge the attitude she has criticised, and Laura, who constantly rises to the challenge, continues to force him to face new and more difficult questions. However the letter may be phrased, though, it does represent a moment of change in Voss, the first victory in what is to be a long and difficult series of battles.

Shortly after this, while at Jildra, the last stop before the the party enters the desert, Voss receives Laura's acceptance letter, and dreams of the consummation of their relationship. The dream has its roots in the discussion he has with Palfreyman about the lily the latter is sketching; '...a big, dreamy lily propped in a tin mug' (186), which has seeds '..of a distinct shape, like testes, attached to the rather virginal flower' (187). The lily is indeed a symbol of virginity, usually featured in depictions of the

Annunciation, but it is also a symbol of love. It is used in this way in the Song of Solomon: 'As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters' (2:2), where it is also used as a symbol of unity: 'I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine: he feedeth among the lilies' (6:3). The implications for the novel are obvious: At one extreme of Voss's vision is the self-contained, untouched individual - the virginal lily. At the other is the social being, subject to the 'humiliation' and 'filth' of humility and physical decay - the lily of love and passion. But, because the lily is both these things, it is suggestive of a state of existence which is neither sterile nor repellent (Laidlaw 6). Voss, by 'feeding' on Laura's 'innocent' love, should feel strengthened and fulfilled, as should Laura. For a while, this proves true. Voss dreams of himself and Laura. '...swimming so close they were joined together at the waist, and were the same flesh of lilies, their mouths together, were drowning in the same love-stream' (187). But their ideal union does not last. Consummation has come too soon for Voss, and he is not yet ready to accept the surrender of self, the abdication of total power, that it implies. He says: 'I do not wish this yet, or nie nie nie niemals. Nein' (187).

Laura responds by attempting to show Voss what he has just begun to realise. She says: '"Together" is filled with little cells, And cuts open with a knife, It is a see seed' (187). Her words are apt. Their union is indeed a 'see' seed, a potential source of the insight Voss needs to break

the spiritual limitations he has placed on himself by demanding that he 'enclose..perfection' (Ashcroft 131). Voss's response: 'But I do not' (187), interjected almost with desperation, is painfully honest. He does not see, is as yet unwilling to accept, the pain of the 'human obligations' Laura goes on to talk about, and so tries, literally and metaphorically, to withdraw from her, to '..resist the Christ--thorn. Tear out the black thing by the roots before it has taken hold' (187). He is determined to wrest himself from this union, even to the point of self-mutilation.

Voss's desperate struggle to withdraw, to isolate himself again, to destroy that part of him which lusts after union (for the 'Christ-thorn' becomes both a sexual metaphor and a symbol of humility here), is strongly contrasted to Laura's being '..humbly grateful for it [the Christ-thorn]' (187). She is able to accept the dual nature of the lily, symbol of both separate individuality and life-giving unity. Thus '...she continued to bathe her hair in all flesh, whether of imperial lilies, or the black, putrefying, human kind' (188). Seeing this, Voss attempts to excuse his withdrawal, saying : 'I do accept the terms. It was the sweat that prevented me from seeing them' (188). But Laura has realised that he is not ready to commit himself, that he is still afraid of being weakened, undermined, by recognising his essential humanity, and so she mocks him with his own fear: 'You are in no position to accept. It is the woman who unmakes men, to make saints' (188). Voss is indeed afraid that Laura will

'unmake' him, and this fear places him, as Laura justly observes, in no position to accept the terms of a sincere relationship. But she points out how foolish he is being when she says that his 'unmaking' could well elevate him to sainthood. By exploring his humanity, he could discover his own potential for the divine.

Voss understands what she is saying, but he cannot bring himself to admit it. Realising that 'It is all mutual', 'It was his tongue that would not come unstuck' (188). He is still unable to make the admission that would lead him onto a path very different from the one he has chosen, and so he finally and irrevocably commits himself to the journey into the desert.

Despite this failure, however, Voss has come a long way from his arrogant assertion that 'He had no more need for sentimental admiration than he had for love' (41). Whereas before, riding to Judd's smallholding, 'It had become quite clear from the man's face that he accepted his own divinity' (144), now, riding into the desert from Jildra, '...the immensity of his presumption did accuse him. The dome of silence was devoid of all furniture, even a throne' (191). The small fire he makes causes '...its maker [to be] overcome by the distance between aspiration and human nature' (191), and, where once he asserted that 'Two "zusammen" should gain by numbers but lose in fact' (188), he now realises that he and Laura '...had threatened each other with the flashing weapons of abstract reasoning, while overlooking their common

need for sustenance' (190). At last he can say: 'But now we shall understand each other...' (190). All those things which he at first refused to acknowledge - his arrogance, the overwhelming immensity of his ambition, the sterility of his chosen isolation - now force themselves on him, and he is able to perceive them clearly, if not yet able to act on his knowledge.

It is significant that it is shortly after this that Laura makes her first 'real' appearance - no longer merely a figure in a dream, or words on a page. She comes to him in a '...thick, travel-stained habit', with a '...swathe of greeny-white veil around the hard, dark crown of her hat' (192). The implication is that Voss has finally lowered his guard enough to see those things she has been trying to communicate to him, and so is also able to see her more clearly, to approach her as a 'subject' and not merely dismiss her as an 'object' that contains a threat to him. But even though he has come this far, Voss's perceptions are not yet entirely clear, or whole. He cannot see Laura's eyes '...Because, she said, you cannot remember' (192). He admits as much in his next letter to her, when he says: '...you will see you have inspired some degree of that humility which you so admire and in me have wished for! If I cannot admire this quality in other men, or consider it except as weakness in myself, I am yet accepting it for your sake' (216). But his original desire, to conquer, to 'know everything' (27), is still strong. He says: '...but I

cannot kill myself quite off, even though you would wish it, my dearest Laura. I am reserved for further struggles, to wrestle with rocks, to bleed if necessary, to ascend. Yes, I do not intend to stop short of the Throne for the pleasure of groveling on lacerated knees in company with Judd and Palfreyman' (217).

From this point on, Voss's hard arrogance and determination to resist any form of humility, and therefore - as he sees it - any weakening of his position, becomes more and more evident. The liver from the sheep Judd slaughters on Christmas eve, and which he offers Voss as a kind of homage, is refused because 'He would not, could not learn, nor accept humility, even though this was amongst the conditions she had made in the letter that was now living in him' (199). He goes on to reaffirm this refusal in his letter to Laura, his murder of the dog Gyp, his clash with Judd about the loading of the flour onto the raft, and in the incident of the goat's milk Judd brings for the ill Le Mesurier. The latter, as well as the lack of awareness that leads him to plunder the meagre greenstuff Palfreyman seeks to grow for Turner and Le Mesurier, are the natural consequences of his determination to negate any form of need, to refuse any kind of contact. Furious that Judd has dared to contribute in any way to the task of nursing Le Mesurier, which he has taken on himself, Voss gives the sick man the milk Judd has brought, even though he knows it will cause the patient distress: 'Seeing the convict seat himself in the vicinity...the German persuaded the unwilling Le Mesurier to sip at the

controversial milk, and was rewarded later by the patient's suffering an access of diarrhoea' (283).

His callousness, his determination to prove a point, are here deliberate reflections of the conscious choice he has made '...not [to] consider the personal appeals of love...' (290). But this determined choice limits him in a far deeper way. When he rapes Palfreyman's seedbeds - for his casual desecration and selfish use of what amounts to a miracle in that desert can hardly be called anything else - White remarks: 'So a sleepwalker is caught, but will not understand' (288). Voss's blatant arrogance has blunted him at a level deeper than consciousness. How else could he have found it in himself to murder Gyp, to whom he was strongly attached? It is not a coincidence that he describes Laura and Palfreyman in terms reminiscent of the dog: 'At times he could have touched their gentle devotion, which had the soft, glossy coat of a dog' (289,290). Gyp's death could well be interpreted as the symbolic murder of any needs and emotions Laura and Palfreyman might have awakened within him.

There is another aspect to Voss's destructive behaviour that needs to be considered, however; one which suggests that his arrogant cruelty is as much a result of his greater awareness of, and keener desire for, those things that Laura represents as it is a refusal to recognise them. This is especially illustrated by his decision to nurse Le Mesurier, whom he describes as '...a yellow lily, but hairy, and stinking' (268). The reference links the man to Laura, who, during the

consummation dream, also appeared to him as a lily, representing both innocent love and the possibility of a fulfilled relationship. Voss, driven to a point where he can no longer ignore the demands of that dream, or the needs it has awakened within himself, uses Le Mesurier's illness as a defiant attempt to recognise the validity of these things, without at the same time allowing them to affect him. He is '..all tenderness for the patient...' (268), but his tenderness is a determined demonstration of the task he has set himself; to '...show the extent of his capabilities' (268). He concentrates so on trying to prove that he belongs within the new parameters Laura has set for him that he forgets what he is really about, and has to 'remember suddenly' that his task is actually to 'dispense love' (268). For a moment he tends the sick man honestly, with the emotions that Laura intended him to recognise. He is humble, trembling '...for fear that his stock of love might be exhausted, or the bungling of divinity recognised' (268). But, as the word 'dispense' suggests, Voss is determined to maintain his distance, to give love on his own terms, and so he fails to experience mutuality, or to recognise the 'other' as equal to himself.

He shows this clearly when he approaches the dream Laura who appears to him in 'stone form' (269). He is pleased with the effects of his attentions to Le Mesurier, which have '...done more good to him than to the patient' (269), and thinks to approach Laura in the same way. He offers to '..administer this small white pill, which will grow inside you to gigantic

proportions' (269), a symbol of the child that should be the natural culmination of their previously experienced 'consummation'. But, as with Le Mesurier, he is approaching Laura from a position of superiority, and is careful to stress his dominance: 'Please note: the act of giving is less humiliating than that of receiving. Can you bear to receive what will entail great suffering?' (269). Voss is in effect admitting the validity of those things Laura stands for, and he has taken the further step of trying to actualise his admission. But he is doing so in a way that will not undermine his self-containment. He is trying to enclose those things he has come to realise are important and necessary without interrupting the unbroken circle of himself.

Laura realises this, and her reply to Voss is cleverly ironic: 'If I have suffered the Father, she smiled, then I can suffer the Son' (269). On one level she means that if she has 'suffered' consummation with Voss, then she can suffer the pain of bearing his child. On another, however, she is pointing out that Voss, the divine Father, the man who 'accept[s] his own divinity' (144), has not changed because he now seems to want what he has previously rejected with horror. He has merely become 'the Son', more aware of what lies beyond him, perhaps, but still seeing himself as God. The words also return the veiled insult Voss delivers when he says: '...the act of giving is less humiliating than that of receiving' (269). He is implying that any communion with her in the past has been unwelcome, and that he is refusing to

accept any future gifts she may bring him. Laura's use of the word 'suffer' conveys similar things - Voss's 'divine favour' is tolerated only.

Voss immediately understands what she means. No longer the separate 'implicit physician', he '...sense[s] the matter ha[s] attained flesh-proportions [and is] nauseated' (269). Refusing to acknowledge the truth of Laura's observation, he reacts with determined rejection: 'He was no Moslem. His trousers were not designed for parturition. I am One, he protested, forming the big O with his convinced mouth. And threw the pill upon the ground' (269). With this action he abandons the idea of the further consummation of their relationship, and, with the thought: 'His trousers were not designed for parturition', he refuses the idea that he could give birth to his humanity. But the episode has marked him. He realises that his ostensible victory is in fact a failure, that greater sacrifices lie in store. And so his response to Le Mesurier's assertion that they '"..are both failures..."' is uncharacteristically honest, if characteristically qualified: '"You will not remember anything of what you have said. For that reason... I will agree that it could be true"' (272).

It is therefore accurate to say that, while Voss's arrogant cruelty asserts itself most strongly during the sojourn in tent and cave, it is a result of his much greater awareness of, and his much keener desire for, those things which he successfully excluded from his life before meeting Laura.

Voss, the 'complete' man, for whom the expedition has meant the assertion of that completeness, is finding himself confronted with flux and change. His journey, instead of being the confirmation of his self, presents him with alternative and perhaps greater selves, towards which, he angrily realises, he should perhaps strive.

White's beautiful description of the sun's struggling to break through the rain, which Voss watches as he stands in the mouth of the cave, is a fitting metaphor for the spiritual progress the explorer has made so far. 'The infinitely pure, white light [which] might have remained the masterpiece of creation...' could well be the new Voss, just awakened to new insights, as the rising sun, the '..fire [which] had.. suddenly broken out 'and '..was challenging water, and the light of dawn, which is water of another kind' (282), could represent Laura and those qualities within Voss she has awakened. In the same way, the rain, which, like the '..grey blanket in which he [Voss] had prudently wrapped himself...'(282) could be the cloak of arrogance and isolation that he has donned to protect himself from hurt and weakness. Laura has challenged him, as the rising sun challenges the rain and the dawn. But, at this point in the novel at least, Voss has proved the stronger and has defeated Laura, just as, in the struggle with the rain, the sun '...was spinning, swimming, sinking, drowned, its livid face, a globe of water, for the rain had been brought down again, and there was, it appeared, but a single element' (282). The explorer, though closer than ever before to change, to

movement away from his isolated, immanent being, will not be tempted. '"I will not consider the personal appeals of love", he [says], "or deviate in any way from my intention to cross this country"' (290). The rising sun has been refused, and Voss has returned to a state of troubled immanence; newly aware of human needs, of demands that have to be met before he can be truly whole, but as yet lacking the ability and the resources necessary to manifest this awareness. Now, more than ever, he is aware of his inadequacy when faced with the need to change, and, perhaps for the first time, needs to believe in something beyond himself. Thus, when Jackie disappears, he says: '"I have great confidence in this boy"...and would continue to hope until the end, because it was most necessary for him to respect some human being' (285).

White's words here imply that Voss can no longer respect himself, nor, having deliberately turned from Laura, can he look to her for aid. And it is in this spiritual state, somewhat humbled, a great deal more aware, but still lacking the perception necessary to understand the strength that lies in weakness, that Voss decides to continue his journey in the same spirit that it was begun, not realising that he is entering the 'approaches to hell' (336) where he will confront Laura's challenge in its most inescapable form - his own death.

The inexorability of what he must face is brought home to Voss when he dares to read Le Mesurier's prose poem, titled

'Conclusions'. In the first stanza he finds a description of himself as he was during the early stages of the journey (John and Rose-Marie Beston 103), a comparison made more emphatic in that the words of the poem are similar to those of the song he sang as he approached Rhine Towers. Untroubled by thoughts of weakness, secure in his own divinity, he sang: 'Eine blosse Seele ritt hinaus/Dem Blau, entgegen/...Sein Rock flog frei...'(189), an image Le Mesurier elaborates when he writes: 'Man is king. They hung a robe upon him, of blue sky...He rode across his kingdom of dust, which paid homage to him for a season with jasmine, and lilies, and visions of water...Fevers turned him from man into God' (296).

The telling comparison continues in the second stanza: 'My blood will water the earth and make it green. Winds will carry legends of smoke...and trees will spring up to celebrate the godhead with their blue leaves' (296). The words are a direct parallel to Voss's original vision, when he hoped that '...his material body [would be] swallowed by what it had named' (41). In the third stanza, even his brushes with humility, the knowledge that his power is not as absolute and his self not as complete as he first maintained, are represented, as is his growing knowledge that 'Only godness is fed' (296).

Voss cannot help but see himself reflected in the poem, and so realises that its conclusions must also be applicable to him. But the poem ventures further than the explorer has

dared to go. Voss has not yet been able to say: 'Now that I am nothing, I am, and love is the simplest of all tongues' (297), and he is still steadfastly refusing to admit that he is '..not God, but Man'. Nor is he yet able to see that, in total humiliation, when his pride has been 'cut off' and his charred bones gnawed, his spirit can ascend, become part of the 'true love of all men' (297) and part of God.

It is because the poem presents Voss with images of himself that he cannot accept that he '..clap[s] the book together', and '..protest[s] very gutturally, from the back of his throat, from the deepest part of him, from the beginning of his life' (297). He finds the vision completely unacceptable, the more so because he recognises it from the mirror Laura holds up to him. He tries to dismiss the poem as the 'occupation' of a sick man, but '..the sane man could not assert himself enough in the close cave' (297). He tries to blame the vehemence of his reaction - which extends even to dry-mouthed trembling, the symptoms of fear - on exhaustion, but, in the end, can find comfort only in the thought that 'There remained his will, and that was a royal instrument' (297). Once again he asserts his power, even though this time he is desperately afraid and '...calling: Laura. Laura' (297). His assertion of self undermines his appeal to her, however, and so he cannot look at her, even though she comfortingly cradles his head in her hands. Laura '..remain[s] powerless in the man's dream' (298). Voss has reached a point in the struggle where she cannot, as she did before, take his weakness into her hands. It is up to him to

break the deadlock, or face the dream that '...must remain with the child [Voss], and will recur for ever' (298).

As Voss's reliance on his will to get him through this moment of turmoil implies, he has elected to continue in the state of mind with which he began the journey, rather than confront the issues so frighteningly illuminated by Le Mesurier's poem. And, as before, when he came closest to transcendence during the consummation dream and reacted by cruelly asserting his will and self-sufficiency, he follows the same pattern of behaviour now. He can barely bring himself to return to the men in the cave, thinking that 'Nothing could have been more awful than the fact that they were men' (333). The obvious implication is that he neither considers himself a man, nor is able to communicate on a human level. He further asserts his divinity by thinking of the aborigines as his 'subjects', riding across to them with the belief '...that he must communicate intuitively with these black subjects, and finally rule them with a sympathy that was above words' (334). He tries to wring confirmation of his strength and power from both Harry and Le Mesurier when he asks what he has taught them. In Harry's reply: '"Why sir, to live, I suppose"' (360), he finds what he seeks. 'He was shouting with laughter to hide his joy...So, in the light of his own conquest, he expanded, until he possessed the whole firmament. Then it was all true; all his doubts were dissolved' (360). If Le Mesurier's reply: '"To expect damnation"' (360), is less to his liking, he soon makes up for it by asserting authority over Jackie. '"He will be my

footstool", he said, and fell asleep, exalted by the humility of the black's perfect devotion and the contrast of his own heavenly perfection' (361).

But it is Voss's treatment of Palfreyman that is the cruellest example of the explorer's determination to refuse change. From the beginning, he has resented the scientist, even been a little afraid of him, for being a man seemingly at one with his faith, a man made untouchable and strong by his very admission of weakness and humility. Like Judd, Palfreyman '...inflames the evil side of Voss's egotism...' because he feels that the man has '...a hateful equality with himself...' (Walsh, Voss 23), and so the explorer does his best to undermine the scientist, even attempting to convince him that his (Palfreyman's) reason for joining the expedition was to escape his failure to help his sister and not, as he has maintained, to atone for it.

When he sends Palfreyman to 'negotiate' with the aborignes, it is with the same motive. He is '..confident..that by a brilliant accident he ha[s] hit upon a means of revealing the true condition of a soul' (341), and he greets the scientist's acceptance of the mission, expressed in the words: '"I will trust to my faith"' (341), with glee: 'It sounded terribly weak. Voss heard with joy, and looked secretly at the faces of the other men' (341). Palfreyman dies with a spear in his side, believing, at the last moment, that he has failed. But Voss '...has not been able to prove Palfreyman's faith an illusion...' (Wilkes A Reading of Voss

169). As he walked away from the group, he reminded everyone in the party of '...the paradox of man in Christ, and Christ in man' (342), suggesting that he had at least achieved the harmony between the human and the divine that for Voss is still a tormenting dream.

Be that as it may, Voss, believing that he has finally proved Palfreyman's weakness, feels no remorse at sending the man to his death. He even prevents Judd from firing at the blacks, 'For they were his' (343). He urges a hasty burial for the scientist, only half-seeing Laura's reproachful face, which he drives off, '...together with the flies' (344), ignoring both her and the importance of Palfreyman's death.

It is only when, deserted by Judd, captured by the blacks, and close to death, Voss admits to his wea ness, that he once again takes up the burden of his spiritual cross. Significantly, as soon as he does this, he and Laura are once again able to communicate with one another. She gives him the assurance that she will not fail him, 'Laying upon his sores', which he is '...at last openly wearing...', the '...ointment of words' (363). They come together, Voss at last admitting his humanity by acknowledging '...their common flesh, which he had attempted so often to repudiate' (364). He shares with her the 'hell' of being human, realising that he is no better, and no worse, than his fellow men, and understanding, finally, that '...his relationship with Laura is a source of strength, not weakness ' (Morley 120). But, though he has come this far, there remains one final step for

which he is not yet quite ready: the open acknowledgment that he is not God, the final abdication of his power. This is why, when Laura says: '"Man is God decapitated"' (364), and points to his blood, he makes no reply and '..would not look at her face yet' (364).

Shortly after this, every outward manifestation of Voss's power falls away. He fails to assert his will over Jackie, previously his 'footstool' and source of 'perfect devotion' (361), and is faced with the thought that the aborigines, once his subjects, might wish to kill him. He attempts to assert his will, saying: '"They cannot kill me...it is not possible"' (365), but in the face of such implacability Voss's will is useless. For the German, Jackie and his people were the means of shoring up his own position of power each time it was undermined by Laura or one of his party. Now these last symbols of his authority and omnipotence have moved out from under him, and he is left powerless. His acknowledgment of this is implicit in his awkward fall from his horse when he tries to mount in order to follow at their command: 'It was an incident which, in the past, might have made him look ridiculous. But the black men did not laugh' (366). Voss, no longer desperately striving to stay on his throne, cannot be undermined by an accidental unseating.

After this, Voss voluntarily divests himself of the authority which he once strove so hard to maintain. When Harry cries to him: '"Lord, sir, will you let them?..Lord, will you not save us?"', Voss replies: '"I am no longer your Lord,

Harry"' (366), and in the face of the boy's continuing devotion, wonders only if he can accept it. He is no longer looking for confirmation of a status he no longer believes in. This becomes even clearer when he responds to Le Mesurier's implicit plea for a plan, a salvation, with '"I have no plan...but will trust to God"' (379), and, finally declining to be this man's God, says: '"I suggest you wring it [hope] out for yourself, which, in the end, is all that is possible for any man"' (380). Le Mesurier, who regards Voss as a saviour, is left sitting, '...looking in the direction of the man who was not God...' (379).

Voss's new humility is not reflected in words only, however. After his final conversation with Harry, '...Voss believed that he loved this boy, and with him all men, even those he had hated, which is the most difficult act of love to accomplish, because of one's own fault' (382). The man who was incapable of love before, who shied away from the touch of men and nursed Le Mesurier only because the role of healer was a compromise between his convinced superiority and his growing awareness of his own limitations, is finally able to face a situation where both individuals are given their full value, where one does not have to become an 'object' in order to confirm the other's status as a subject. This is a marked contrast to Voss's attitude at the start of the expedition, when he described Harry Robarts as '"..good, simple." But superfluous' (21).

The ceremony with the wichetty grub is both a confirmation and an extension of the above. Humbled, Voss is aware that 'All men were, in fact, as wichetty grubs in the fingers of children' (380), and, because he realises this, he is able to participate in the 'communion' service staged by '...the old blackfellow ...in the presence of a congregation...' (388). The wichetty grub the old man places in his mouth during this ceremony has several meanings. It is the '...struggling wafer of his boyhood, that absorbed the unworthiness in his hot mouth, and would not go down' (388). But, because it tastes of almonds, which, like the soul '...also [are] elliptical' (388), the grub is also representative of harmony, of transcendence, of 'divinity' attained through humility. In addition, the word 'mandorla', meaning the pointed oval used as an aureole or halo in medieval sculpture and painting, in Italian also means 'almond'. The implication, then, is that the grub is a symbol of sanctity and of the true strength gained through humility. Also, because Voss links almond and soul with the words: 'For, in the end, everything was of flesh, the soul elliptical in shape' (388), we can infer that the grub is a symbol of the new state of his soul - at last fully human because made of flesh and subject to decay, but also 'elliptical' like the mandorla or vesicle, and so sanctified and holy.

It is this image, of the elliptical soul made of flesh, that is most revealing of Voss's final triumph. As he lies in the hut, he reflects that 'Grace lay only in the varying speeds at which the process of decomposition took place, and the

lovely colours of putrescence that some souls were allowed to wear. For, in the end, everything was of flesh, the soul elliptical in shape' (388), and so realises that the soul can obtain grace only through destruction. Thus, when he accepts the wichetty grub, he acknowledges that he, too, is subject to decay. In fact, he totally abdicates the throne of self-sufficient superiority, and admits to his weaknesses. He has reached the last of the three stages: '..God into man. Man. And man returning into God' (386).

It remains only for Voss to ratify his newly-gained insights by presenting them to Laura, and this he does when they metaphorically ride into the future the night before his death. The dream is an apotheosis of all that he has experienced so far. It is prefaced by a previously inconceivable admission of fear, of weakness, of terror in the face of '..the great legend becoming truth' (390), by an appeal to Christ to save him, and it contains elements of all those things which tempted him during the course of the journey, and which he angrily rejected. The 'pearliness' of morning, the '...persuasive..air which flowed into and over their bodies...' (393), the '..sleek, kind gelding...' (392), the 'transparent river' and the '...valleys...broken by tenuous Rhenish turrets of great subtlety and beauty' (393) are all reminiscent of Rhine Towers, where harmony of being created the quality of poignance that simultaneously attracted and repelled. The '...wounds in the side of a brigalow palm...' (393) recall Le Mesurier's terribly apposite poem, where he wrote the words that Voss could not

accept: 'Humility is my brigalow, that I must remember...' (296), and the '...species of soul, elliptical in shape, of a substance similar to human flesh, from which fresh knives were continually growing in place of those that were wrenched out' (393), is representative of the explorer himself, and the many knives he had to endure before attaining humility and accepting the wichetty grub with all its implications. The '..objects of scientific interest' are reminders of Palfreyman, the scientist who was at peace with his religious faith, and whose humble serenity inspired angry disgust in Voss.

The presence of these elements, all of which Voss confronts with equanimity, suggests that he has at last made peace with the threats and temptations of his past. It is not surprising, therefore, that it is during this meeting that he and Laura attain a lasting communion of souls, a consummation that is once again represented by the lily. In the first consummation dream, the flower was a symbol of Laura's innocent love, which the explorer failed to use as nourishment for his further spiritual growth. In this dream, however, the flowers become her prayers, which are again offered as a source of nourishment. Instead of rejecting them, as the arrogant explorer did in his proposal letter when he said '...<u>do not pray for me</u>...' (153), the humbler Voss is able to sample the nourishing blooms with acceptance, and suspects that '...the juices present in the stalks would enable them to be rendered down easily into a gelatinous, sustaining soup' (393). The reference is another example of

the explorer's having come to terms with past threats. It refers to Judd's soup, made with flour not packed on the raft as Voss had ordered. At the time, the incident rankled as an undermining of his authority and strength, the anger it evoked preventing him from taking the step out of himself that was so close as he watched the rising sun challenge the rain. Now, with the lilies, fruit of his journey and symbol of his new self, he is prepared to make that once-humiliating soup himself.

Thus it is that in his final meeting with Laura, all his struggles are overcome, and, in the constructive harmony of their union, he is able to find strength. He wakes from the dream 'His faculties promis[ing] support, and he felt that he was ready to meet the supreme emergency with strength and resignation' (393). So he meets his death. 'His dreams fled into the air, his blood ran out upon the dry earth, which drank it up immediately' (394). Voss's original desire to '..leave [his] name on the land, irrevocably, his material body swallowed by what it had named...' (41) has been fulfilled, but in a way far more in keeping with the humble failure described in 'Conclusions' than with his first self-assertive aim.

There is irony in Voss's death, however. He receives 'communion' from the hand of - symbolically at least - one who is to 'betray' him and bring about his death, as did Christ at the last supper. Those who kill him are from the race he claimed as 'subjects', as Christ was the 'father' of

the Jews. He cries out during his torment as '...at one stage the spear seemed to enter his own hide...' (392), as it pierced Christ's side. 'For all suffering he screamed' (392), as Christ cried out on the cross. And after his death, Judd is to say: '"Voss left his mark on the country...He is still there...he is there in the country, and always will be' (443). Yet the novel makes clear that unless Voss was to step down from his throne, abandon his attempt to identify himself with God, to be God, he would be damned. And his desire to '...leave [his] name on the land...' (41) is part of that attempt, part of his nature before he begins to change, before he is even fully aware of the need to change. The question, then, is whether White's identification of Voss with Christ, and the ultimate achievement by Voss of an aim which has been postulated as an attempt to assert authority and emphasise self-sufficiency, in any way undermines the German's final self-transcendence and attainment of humility (McAuley 44).

Perhaps the question is best answered by quoting Laura: 'How important it is to understand the three stages. Of God into man. Man. And man returning into God' (386). Voss, though described in terms of the suffering Christ in the days before his death, no longer makes any claims to divinity. White, by placing the traditional religious symbols - the communion ceremony, the crucifix seen in the stars of the southern cross - within the romantic perspective of Voss's journey (Vanden Brake dissertation abstract), is expressing realities which, though transcendent, are not dogmatically Christian.

The explorer's original aim, though ironically realised, is not an indication of his purpose at the end of the novel. Instead of exalting his own divinity, he has achieved '...a condition of grace in which man stands at ease with his own self-knowledge and is acquiescent to the greater powers and mysteries that surround him and include him only at his death' (Wood 142). If humility and self-exaltation seem intertwined, then it is perhaps because, as Laura says: '"When man is truly humbled, when he has learnt that he is not God, then he is nearest to becoming so"' (387). In Veronica Brady's words: 'The cosmic order, not the individual will, prevails' (175).

The Vivisector

Hurtle Duffield, the hero of The Vivisector, is in many ways similar to Voss. He, too, attempts to stand back from the world of people, from contact and interrelation with others, claiming, as did the explorer, that he is '...not in need - of anything, or anyone' (257)[11]. When Nance and Hero die - directly as a result of the objective exposure Hurtle forces on them through his art he too is guilty of regarding others as objects, of using them for his own aesthetic and self-creative ends. And, when he admits that 'In the given circumstances, he ha[s] to resist' the 'polypous' love heaped on him by his parents and by Rhoda, even though '...his instincts leched after them' (242), he is in fact admitting to the conflict that took Voss a desert journey to overcome. Both men have a vision, and are determined that the less insightful masses should not pollute that vision. For this reason they choose isolation and arrogance. Yet both men need the life-giving force of human contact, need to learn that without it sterility can result, and need to recognise that they cannot ignore their very real lust for 'communion' in both its human and divine contexts. The challenge they face is the reconciliation of their lovely visions and their human selves. They need to connect their spiritual aspirations with the reality of human experience.

Hurtle, however, is in many ways facing a challenge far more difficult than that of Voss. The latter chooses as a vehicle for his vision the journey through the desert, a vehicle

which is not structurally or inherently opposed to personal change. It is possible for the explorer to learn the lessons of humility and love while he continues to express his original visionary insights through the journey into the hells of desert and self. The expedition does not make change impossible. In fact, it becomes the catalyst for his ultimate spiritual transcendence. One could, of course, say exactly the same of the concrete manifestations of Hurtle's vision. His art, like Voss's desert, is also a vehicle for the vision which demands arrogance and isolation and which, again like the desert, occasions the projections of self which result in the overcoming of destructive solipsism. Like Voss, Hurtle has to learn that the apotheosis of spiritual striving can be attained only when it is firmly rooted in a carefully explored, totally accepted, experiential ground - what White calls the '<u>Dreck</u>' (392) of human existence. But Hurtle's art, unlike the desert journey, inherently demands for its very existence an objective point of view. He cannot adequately express until he has analytically dissected its object; the work of art in fact demands that his emotions be coolly examined, if not entirely set aside. Hurtle, an artist, is compelled to reach synthesis through the creation of an object, an act which ironically forces him to distance himself from the very aspects of his being that he tries to unify. In his case, achieving personal synthesis would mean losing the alienated, analytical quality that makes him an artist. One could almost go so far as to say that, without divine intervention,

Hurtle would have had to achieve personal synthesis at the expense of his art.

In other words, although Hurtle mistakenly uses his art (as Voss uses the journey) as a means of self-exaltation and as an escape from a possibly threatening experience, the very nature of his visionary vehicle encourages him to do this. He is therefore facing a battle on two fronts. Not only does he need to '...connect [the] intrinsic self back into the nature from which [it] emerged' (Docker 49), he needs to make of his art '...a medium of organic oneness between self and universe' (Docker 54). Given the essentially categorising nature of art, this would appear to be an impossible task, far more difficult than personal synthesis. It is probably for this reason that 'revelation' plays a greater part in The Vivisector than it does in Voss. Hurtle, struck down by a stroke at the end of the novel, is forced to turn to God as the ultimate ordering principle, and so the previously unchallenged and seemingly unchallengeable omnipotence of aesthetic distance is overcome. While he, like Voss, can painfully achieve at least partial synthesis on his own, it takes divine intervention to change a destructive aesthetic principle into a medium for transcendence.

Hurtle's journey towards self-unity occurs dialectically. Each conclusion he makes, true to Hegelian theory, is based on the awarenesses achieved in the one preceeding it. For example, there is a clear-cut opposition between the Duffield era of Hurtle's life, with its aura of sensuality and

physical communication, and the time he spends in the Courtney household, where he learns to adopt the prevailing attitudes of cultural sophistication and reserved emotional coolness. The Duffield family is associated with his deeply-felt connections to human experience, to the contact that he unwillingly recognises as an essential source of his creative thrust. The Courtney family, on the other hand, is linked to his fear of being swamped by experience and his consequent withdrawal from it, and to the careful and distanced reflection needed to give form to his overwhelming creative urges. The opposition between the two gives rise to a tension that is resolved only when, years after fleeing the seemingly unsolvable conflict, Hurtle meets Nance. In his unbridled physical relationship with her, he gives full reign to his need to experience and assimilate the '<u>Dreck</u>' of human existence, and, because he is at the same time exploring his creative impulses, he manges to unify the two extremes in the painting 'Animal Rock Forms'.

However, the work, which in itself represents a synthesis, becomes the thesis for yet another dialectic. It generates a feeling in Hurtle that he has finally come to terms with himself, so much so that he embarks on a self-portrait which he hopes will demonstrate this. The portrait, however, shows the artist at his most self-enclosed, wallowing in its own experience rather than transforming it. Its aura of isolated indifference to all but itself prompts the hopelessness that leads to Nance's death, and forces Hurtle to face the fact that he has not achieved the hoped-for personal synthesis.

The conflict that results is resolved, partially at least, only when he meets Cutbush, and paints 'Lantana Lovers under Moonfire'.

It is this dialectical movement of the novel that constitutes Hurtle's transcendence of self, his movement away from the nihilistic separation of his human and creative urges. It is therefore this movement that has to be carefully examined in order to ascertain the eventual success or failure of his attempt to achieve wholeness, a synthesis between experience and vision, between experience and art. The conflict he has to resolve is encapsulated in White's statement of the artist's overriding desire, which is '...to shoot at an enormous naked canvas a whole radiant chandelier waiting in his mind and balls' (207). The sexual overtones emphasise White's point - that creativity has its life-giving roots in the most intense of human experiences, even though it must of necessity be mediated by the mind. The fact that Hurtle identifies the artistic illumination he wishes to express with the chandelier, however, a collection '...of glass fragments that prismatically encompass the colour spectrum, breaking down the white light into vivisected colours...' (Baker 210), suggests that his experience is of division and fragmentation rather than the unity hinted at by the author. Yet the vivisected colours of the chandelier (reminiscent of Voss's perceptions of '...the lovely colours of putrescence that some souls were allowed to wear' [Patrick White Voss 388]), do hold out '...the enigmatic promise of an attainable integration', a higher, possibly preternatural, unity of white

light...' (Baker 211), and it is this promise that Hurtle needs to fulfil. He needs to obviate the separation necessiatated by his fear of human intercourse and by the inherently analytical nature of his art, to move through the myriad vivisected colours towards the unity of self represented by the unity of white light.

Hurtle's early experiences do not prepare him for this, however, his first insights being of himself as separate and different from his family. Born into the sensual muddle of the Duffield's, a world where communication is by touch rather than through words, Hurtle is aware that he does not belong, that though he 'smoodges' (13) around Mumma and participates in his father's ritual of cleaning the harness, he does so less because he enjoys the acts than because he senses that these are the only paths of communication with his parents open to him: 'It was like as if he made her [Mumma] nervous, as if she had lost control of him, worst of all, control of his thoughts. She would look at him as though he were sick. Till he brushed up against her. He had learnt that this worked with his mother, and with Lena and the girls' (17). He realises that 'There was so much of him that didn't belong to his family', that his answers to their questions '...weren't the ones they wanted' (14), and distances himself even more by learning to read and by taking lessons at the rectory. He perceives that 'Mothers and fathers, whoever they were, really didn't matter: it was between you and Death or something' (55). The artist in Hurtle, that part of him which stands apart from life, thus

surfaces early on in his childhood. It causes him to feel imprisoned in his life with the Duffield's, to long for a freedom that cannot be his while living close to the animal-like resignation to suffering that characterises Mumma and Pa.

It is for this reason that the Courtney household, with its order and cleanliness, its aura of cultural sophistication, seems to Hurtle to be the desirable antithesis of everything he has thus far known. Gone are the muddle, the noisy, dirty children, the bottles and the endless sheets. Instead, he finds there the symbol of his deepest desires: 'his own chandelier [which] made [him] at time jangle and want to explode in smithereens' (53). There is also the painting in the study, which disturbs him to the extent that 'His heart was knocking, more than it had for Mrs Courtney. To touch the smooth, touchable paint' (61). For Hurtle, the very existence of these objects in the Courtney household suggests to him a freedom that he has never felt before. They are symbols of the world of the cultured rich, a world to which the potential artist within him is exposed, and in which he finds, initially at least, the aesthetic liberation represented by his baptism of light as 'He stood looking up through the chandelier holding his face almost flat, for the light to trickle and collect on it' (32). He visits Mumbelong, and sees the world of light that stirs his imagination, and when he goes to church with Maman he is filled with fragmented visions of light that '...start him tingling electrically, afraid he might never be able to pin

down his own insights, let alone convey them to others' (143). For the first time he feels at home, free to give expression to that which made him an outsider among the Duffields.

However, the creative, analytical nature which made him an outsider among the Duffield's paradoxically affects his life with the Courtneys in the same way. Hurtle, though able to communicate on the physical, sensual level of Mumma and Pa, moved away from them because of his need to express himself on a creative, analytical plane. Although the atmosphere at the Courtney's is conducive to such expression however, we find that, instead of achieving a balance, he moves further and further away from any kind of contact at all. He learns instead to use his art as a defence mechanism, as a means of shutting out any personal contact whatsoever. After seeing the vivisected dog in London, for example, Hurtle catches a glimpse of himself and Rhoda in the hotel mirror '...looking rich, protected and overdressed' (136). He is so shocked that he deliberately attacks his sister, then feels guilty: 'His own behaviour on top of other things hurt and horrified him to such an extent he took up the pencil the waiter had forgotten, and began drawing...as he always did when a situation became unbearable, practically as though playing with himself' (136). His art here performs a dangerously onanistic function, threatening to become an alienating force rather than an agent for constructive self-growth. As Mitchell suggests, Hurtle's paintings '...transform people [and experiences] into equivalences from the inanimate

world...' resulting in a 'depersonalisation' of both subject and artist' (11).

Perhaps the Duffield in Hurtle would have come to his rescue, would have allowed him to achieve a balance, had his natural tendency to withdraw not been encouraged by the suffocating, oppressive sensuality exuded by his new mother. As Beston points out: 'To survive his mother's vivisection Hurtle adopts certain of her vivisecting qualities' (The Making of the Artist 88). Alfreda Courtney's sudden action as she '...shove[s] her head amongst the limp dresses', which produces a sensation of '...blinding, then of a delicious suffocation...' (89) is only one example of her desire to metaphorically blind him. She is only too aware that his eyes '...could see inside the faces of people who faile[ed] to get behind [his] own' (89), and her attempts at '...getting him drunk' (89), at seducing him, which culminate in the scene in his room where 'She began gulping at his mouth...' (166) all combine to make the house '...an inescapable form: of a great padded dome, or quilted egg, or womb...' that is both 'meticulous' (165) and dark. Hurtle, always wary of immersing himself in physical or emotional involvement, finds such an atmosphere unbearable - so much so that it begins to inhibit even his artistic responses. The cultivated air of the Courtney household, which once represented creative liberation, is no longer a positive force. Even the chandelier, once the symbol of his freedom, '...dwindle[s] and dull[s] above the hall' (139). As a result, he realises that he must break 'the caul' (168), and so escape the

continuous '...dragging round the spiral, always without arriving, while outside the meticulous womb, men were fighting, killing, to live to fuck to live' (165).

With this statement Hurtle in fact asserts the side of himself that he moved away from when he left his natural family. The words '...to live to fuck to live' recall the sound of squeaky bedsprings that accompanied much of his early childhood, and which heralded the moments of more honest communication between Mumma and Pa. They also, with their bald harshness, stress the simplicity and intensity of the human drive to exist, and suggest Hurtle's need to experience the power of such a drive. He discovered early on that sensual existence alone could not satisfy him, just as he now discovers that a cultivated, careful approach can lead to suffocation and limitation. His dilemma is encapsulated by his skirmish with the 'larries', when he realises that neither his new nor his old persona fits him completely. Chasing them, he is reminded of the possum with the bell round its neck that frightened the others as it ran after them, and he is eventually left standing in the street '...the two languages he knew fighting for possession of him. At the worst, though brief moment, when it seemed unlikely he would ever succeed in communicating through either tongue, he heard himself blubbering' (125).

The same feeling overcomes him when, after finally leaving the Courtneys, he reflects that no longer being a member of his family has left him '...bankrupt...what he needed was to

go home, to renew himself, if there had been somewhere specific, some person left with whom he might establish contact' (178). As Hurtle's use of the words 'caul' and 'meticulous womb' implied when he expressed his need to flee the Courtneys, he has been born into a new world. But, as his need to 'renew' himself suggests, this new world, containing as it does the almost paralysing conflict represented by his two families, seems to offer him no hope of fulfilment, no hope of unity. He needs to find the resources within himself to once again gain forward momentum, to throw himself wholly into the battle for personal unity.

Hurtle's liaison with Nance and the paintings he creates as a result of it represent his first serious attempt to deal with the opposition between his Duffield and Courtney natures,[12] and more importantly, to deal with the threat of suffocation and possession that the sensual and erotic represents to his 'real and secret life' (92). He allows himself to become immersed in a physical involvement with Nance, the Duffield in him wanting to '...splash amongst the gasping, sucking, tropical colours which had flooded them both in their struggle towards a climax' (189,190). But, characteristically, the Courtney in him intervenes. Instead of accepting his relationship with Nance as given, instead of naturally exploring it and using it as a means of self-exploration, he attempts to distance himself, reflecting that 'Whether he desired her sexually was a matter of how far art is dependent on sexuality' (189). In using his art to express his experience he compartmentalises his responses,

with the result that his early paintings of Nance represent '...only one aspect of him in her' (189). The result is an impoverishment of artistic vision that reduces him to '...fiddling, rubbing, masturbating in nervous paint on a narrow board' (190). His determined effort to remain distant from Nance, induced by his desire to represent her significance in paint, is strengthened too, by his innate fear of her intrusion on his privacy. When during his stay at the shack, day after day passes without her promised visit, Hurtle 'As self-protection..start[s] painting again' (220). He works on a series representing the rocks in the valley, but the initial 'abstractions' hardly satisfy him, and he '...heal[s] himself by adding to their flesh, by disguising their scars, with touches and retouches of paint' (221). Once again he nervously masturbates in paint, again failing to make the connection between experience, self and art that is so essential for both personal and artistic wholeness.

Nance does finally visit him, however, and sees immediately that his paintings contain no real vitality, no life. She tells him that '"Nature's all right...but it's too big for most people'", that what's needed is '"the 'uman touch"' (224), her words reaffirming her earlier opinion of Hurtle as '...all gummed up in the great art mystery...' unaware that other people were '"...alive, and breakun their necks for love"' (197). His reaction to this is one of self-doubt. Already, because of Nance, 'Art as he had known it... [which] had appeared more desirable, not to say more convincing, than

life...' (199) no longer appears in the same light. As Walsh correctly states, '...the purity of Duffields's artistic purpose needs to be liberated and nourished by the courseness, toughness and sensuality embodied in Nance' (Patrick White's Fiction 104), and it is this realisation that has caused him to doubt. Now, again because of Nance, he begins to doubt his own integrity, wondering whether '...he was an artist, and ascetic, or a prig, as Nance Lightfoot's conversation lurched like iron trams through the afternoon' (224).

Nance's words also have a positive, catalytic effect on Hurtle, however. Temporarily divorced from his objective, artistic self, he is able to enter into physical 'communion' with her without revulsion, and in the contact find spiritual and creative 'rejuvenation'. They '...recognise each other's bodies with delighted shivers', and, 'staggering' outside hand-in-hand, are '...divested..of their clothes of flesh' by '...the cold floods of air and whirlpools of darkness...They couldn't have entwined so closely if they hadn't been so disintegrated...' (225). Nance leaves, and Hurtle's momentary wholeness, paradoxically attained by his willing submission to the total disintergration of self, is translated into a heightened awareness of the rocks he has for so long been trying to paint, the '...pink rocks [which] were still drowsing and exhaling' (227).

The result is 'Animal Rock Forms', where the landscape is both animated and eroticised in order to give form to what he

has experienced with Nance. The 'big, pink, cushiony forms 'of the rocks '...neither crush nor cut, but offer themselves trustfully to the one-eyed sun...' (228), representative of the artist. The latter, seen many times in the novel as the destructive vivisector with knife-like eyes who lay bare the inner secrets of the victims of his creativity, is here seen as the benign sun '...scattering down on them [the rocks] a shower of milky seed or light' (228). The artist and his subject are in harmony, the eroticism of the rocks is unthreatening, and the painting, instead of symbolising an essential but analytically destructive division between artist and subject, between the creative spirit and its physical ground, represents a union between the three conflicting elements of Hurtle's life-physical experience, spiritual growth, and the expression of the latter in an objective and therefore divisive, form. As Herring states, it is '...Duffield's sexual consummation with her [Nance], corrupted goddess of earth and fire and the hearth, that finally releases him into the world of creative art' (The Vivisector 321).

Significantly, however, the unity expressed in 'Animal Rock Forms' is temporary. Hurtle is still plagued by his instinctive fear of participating fully in emotional and physical existence, and is unable to quell the growing conviction that Nance, like Maman, is an agent of creative suffocation. He feels again the familiar threat of oppressive sensuality, even directly associating Nance with Mrs Courtney. When he visits Nance in Sydney, the scent bottle on her table evokes Maman '...who rose like a

genie...accusing him of faithlessness: to a class which had adopted him; to the education invested in him; to a love not so very different, which smelled of melting chocolate and illicit brandy, instead of musty poundcake and a whore's powder' (232). The Nance of the rock painting, the 'sleeping animal' (228) which offered itself trustingly to the artist in Hurtle, thereby prompting the fulfilled and life-giving response symbolised by the 'shower of milky seed or light' (228), is no more. Instead, he sees in her only the threatening image of the possessive Alfreda, and finds in her words 'I could eat you up raw' (217) only the sickening voluptousness instigated by his mother when she '...began gulping at his mouth...' (166) the night he announced his enlistment. The stifling threat of erotic fulfilment proves too much, and Hurtle retreats to the solitude of his shack, symbolically severing the emotional and sexual tie that binds him to Nance by painting the self-portrait. He hopes that by excluding her, or Maman, or any form of contact; by creating a balanced, unified image of himself, he can assert a self-unity he has finally attained. Contemplating the portrait, he reflects that 'However much of a coarse, thickset, moral scavenger the present showed, a lyrical onanist of the past hadn't been altogether suppressed. Here he had caught the two of them in flagrant delight, in his own unlikely body, in paint' (237).

He is mistaken, however. By painting the portrait in isolation, by representing a sought-after unity without reference to its roots, he is in fact refusing to confront

those forces which have worked on him and with which he has interacted. It takes Nance to reveal to him the truth of what he has created: '"There, she sa[ys]...'That's Duffield. Not bad. True. Lovun 'imself"' (248). Hurtle immediately realises what she means, realises that he has painted a self distorted by its deliberate isolation from all that feeds it, and that he has failed to catch his past '...in its true prismatic colours' (248). The self-portrait sprouts '...jagged diagonal teeth, womanly gyrating breasts, the holes for titivation by lipstick and tongue and prick' (248), becomes '...furtive, ingrown, all that he had persuaded himself it wasn't...' (248), and prompts him to react with determined violence. Patiently and seriously he sets about '...smear[ing] all that he repudiated in himself' (249) with his own excrement, and, realising his failure to unify past and present selves, throws into the chasm the last remaining symbol of his connection to his past, his grandfather's ring. The action is defiant, suggesting Hurtle's frustration, his feeling of imprisonment, and symbolising his determination to entirely discard the past with which he cannot come to terms. Furious that 'His only true achievement was his failure' (248), he asserts that failure at the expense of all else. Even Nance is sacrificed. Ironically, she dies searching for the ring, and Hurtle refusing to acknowledge her value as a bridge between his desire for experience and his fear of it, mourns not for her or for '...the full stop of suffering...', but '..for the inspiration withheld from him' (252).

It is as though this incident also marks a full-stop in Hurtle's spiritual development. When next we meet him, despite the fact that the narrative makes clear it is many years later, the dialogue he has with Cutbush plunges us back into the same conflict. Reflecting on his possible 'murder' (258) of Nance, he refuses even now to examine the incident too closely, aware that to do so would call his chosen isolation into question, and would force him to face the fear that caused his repudiation of his past. Instead he rationalises Nance's comments on the portrait, attempting to blunt the deeply-felt, implicit accusation they contain. '"I've been accused of loving myself"' (258) he says, substituting acceptable self-examination for the solipsistic self-absorption that is a more accurate description of his behaviour. Like Voss, he chooses to ignore the destructive side of his isolation, and so is able to state: '"But I've never been in need of consolation! I have what I know and what I can see. I have my work ' (258). With these words, he inadvertently reveals the emptiness he has been experiencing during the years since Nance's death, an emptiness occasioned by his determination to assert himself as objective artist, his determination to turn away from those such as Nance, who enable him to perceive the necessary link between experience and creativity, and from his past which, had he acknowledged it, would have provided a source of nourishment for his art, as well as a channel to self-unity. He is still caught in the same dilemma, still fighting the same destructive and sterile battle that has prevented him from moving onwards, from assimilating the

lesson of 'Animal Rock Forms'. Even his new house in Flint Street reflects his still unresolved conflict (Kiernan Treble Exposure 106). Looking out as it does on the unabashed life in Chubb's Lane as well as on the careful secretiveness of Flint Street, it contains in its two faces the two elements that '...together..made what was necessary for his fulfilment and happiness' (264).

But the two faces are separate. The house itself, filled with its dusty furniture, contains no hint of their unification, suggesting, correctly, that Hurtle is at this point unable to deal with the sterility that has resulted from his refusal of complete involvement with life. Because he has turned so firmly away from the agents of that involvement, however, he is also unable to admit this, and so is caught in a trap of his own making. It is for this reason that his meeting with Cutbush, the androgynous grocer, is so significant. Set apart by the difficulty he has with his sexual ambivalence, the shopkeeper is not part of the sensually threatening world that Hurtle dismissed along with Nance. He is not tempting the artist into further interaction, not challenging his isolation or accusing him with reflections of his limitations. Instead, the isolated Cutbush is an echo of the androgynous artist revealed in the self-portrait, a character so similar to Hurtle that he feels no danger in 'expos[ing] himself' (265). Having turned his back on 'authentic' communication, on 'communion', and with the knowledge that self-analysis and self-interpretation as represented by the portrait brings only further alienation

and solipsism, an encounter with an alter-ego, someone who represents the negativity in which Hurtle finds himself, is really the only means available to the artist in his battle to break his spiritual deadlock. The meeting could in fact be seen as a modification of the artist's creation of the portrait. Once again he is seeking a reflexive image of himself, but this time he finds it in the slightly more dynamic face of another human being, rather than in the self-accusing face of an inanimate object. Unable to participate in a real encounter, and unwilling to resort once again to onanistic self-enquiry in paint, Hurtle finds a compromise, however incomplete and wanting, in confession to a man as limited as he.

The product of the meeting is 'Lantana Lovers Under Moonfire', a painting as reductive in its isolation and cruelty as it is constructive by virtue of its creation. Almost all that it depicts is symbolic of the artist's alienation, his refusal to engage in experience, his belief in a vivisector god and his view of himself as a destructive force. The unthreatening eroticism of the animal rocks is translated into the self-absorbed 'dislocated lovers' (267), who lie in sinister shadows and are under attack from both moon and the man on the bench. The artist is no longer symbolised by the life-giving sun which scatters down the milky seed, or light - symbols of both life-giving force and a sense of personal fulfilment. Instead, he becomes the 'big-arsed moon' (267) 'shitting' (336) on the couple in the lantana, as well as '...the cryptoqueer grocer' who 'machine-

guns' (267) them from his seat on the bench. In addition, the '...waves of enlightened evil proliferating from above' (336) suggest a link between the moon and Hurtle's newly-affirmed belief in the divine vivisector, a god not benign and life-giving, but destructive and cold. As Baker states: '"Lantana Lovers" records the spiritual nadir of Duffield's pilgrimage, a state of ultimate estrangement from nature and his own creative power, a power grown monstrous and conceived in terms of Swiftian excrementality' (Romantic Onanism in Patrick White's 'The Vivisector' 221).

However negative and isolated the statement made by the painting, its creation does have a cathartic effect. Hurtle unequivocally depicts in all its awfulness that which has been haunting him since Nance's death, finally facing, if not coming to terms with, the consequences of his spiritual choices. He has not allowed himself to re-enter the world of authentic communication, and so has run the risk of artistic and spiritual sterility. Short of going back on his decision to remain isolated and aloof, the only way for him to avoid creative and personal paralysis is the action he is how taking; a deliberate, almost defiant look at the exact nature of the attitude he has chosen for himself. If he cannot learn to change, he has at least to learn to fact the consequences of his own choices.

That this is what he achieves with the creation of 'Lantana Lovers' is suggested by the almost instantaneous restoration of his creative abilities. When he looks back at the moonlit scene after leaving Cutbush, he sees '...what he already

[knows]; it was already working in him' (262), and, as he returns to his house, he can even see '...how his composition would be divided ' (267). Because his encounter was limited, however, an exploration of an alienated state of mind rather than a transcendence of it, 'It was [only] Courtney, not Duffield, who mooned his way back to the upper rooms' (268). Nevertheless, the cerebral, analytical Courtney is able to produce what is to become one of his finest works, if also one of his cruellest - the painting of his hunchbacked sister Rhoda standing beside her bidet. His partially revitalising encounter with Cutbush has allowed '....at least a kind of formal exploration' (269) of some of the guilt and self-hatred he has been carrying with him since leaving his families, and Nance behind; an expiation which, combined with the restoration of his creativity, frees Hurtle to confront with greater honesty the two sides of his nature he has for so long tried to balance. On the one hand is his longing for experience and involvement, a longing crushed partly because of his own natural loneliness, and partly because his experiences with Alfreda Courtney and Nance have left him convinced that 'real' engagement with others brings with it only the threat of sensual suffocation. On the other is his determination to keep his creative soul separate from and untainted by others, a determination that he has discovered can have as consequence spiritual sterility, and the paralysing guilt caused by the consequent necessity to deny the reality of others' existence. The artist has in a sense explored each of these alternatives already, indulging his need for contact through the relationship with Nance, and

asserting his creative isolation both by withdrawing from her and by indentifying himself with the vindictive moon in the painting of the lantana lovers. Yet the polarised nature of these two experiences, the conviction Hurtle has that all of life must be either one or the other, has not enabled him to find equilibrium. No matter which of the two stands he makes, he is left feeling incomplete, always searching for that which would bring him greater fulfilment and insight. By the end of 'Lantana Lovers', he has managed only to confront each of his two selves, he has not managed to come to terms with them.

It is for this reason that his involvement with Olivia/Boo Davenport and Hero Pavloussi are so important. Each woman seems to represent one of the by now familiar poles of Hurtle's life. Olivia, with her aesthetic sensibilities and carefully structured existence, is all too reminiscent of Alfreda Courtney, suggesting once again to him the attractiveness of the Courtney world, and re-evoking an echo of its stifling and suffocating atmosphere. Hero, described in overtly sexual terms, represents another Nance, a chance to once again engage fully in experience and so hopefully attain fulfilment. Yet this time the divisions are not as clear. Boo, though she echoes Alfreda Courtney, has an understanding of Hurtle's creativity that surprises and attracts him, and Hero, though she seems to promise fulfilment, in fact causes him to experience the depths of degradation. Both the sterility of artistic isolation and the life-giving nature of sensual involvement are qualified,

bringing the two closer together, and Hurtle one step nearer to personal integration.

When the artist first encounters Olivia Davenport, it is to learn that she is the Boo of the 'monstera delicosa' of his childhood. As such, she represents a link with his past, which he had thought to put behind him, a link reinforced when he finds the Boudin painting that used to hang in Harry's study on her wall. Both the painting and the adolescent sexual adventure behind the 'delicious monster' are associated in the artist's mind with the threat of personal exposure. In the former case, he was afraid to reveal the intense tactile and erotic pleasure he finds in paint (for which Rhoda mocked him when she discovered him touching the work), and in the latter, he was afraid that the simple necessity of the physical release occasioned by his first sexual encounter be discovered and ridiculed. Although his feelings about both incidents demonstrate his need to remain distanced from others, they also show the destructive effect of the Courtney code of behaviour, which is never, if possible, to demonstrate simple emotion through simple actions.

Olivia, who carefully structures the social world in which she moves, and who concentrates with dedication on the effect of appearances, seems to be guilty of the same dishonest inhibitions. And when she leads Hurtle into her bedroom to show him the paintings, and later seduces him at the Flint Street house, the suspicion is created that she like Alfreda

Courtney, substitutes for the expression of natural emotion the insidious, suffocating sensuality of a self-deceiving and frustrated woman. The implication is that Hurtle would once again, however unfortunately, be justified in withdrawing from further contact with her, and therefore that withdrawal, even if it does lead to sterility and solipsism, is the only way open to him. This, after all, is the conclusion he has reached before.

But Olivia is different from Alfreda, notably so in that she understands the creative impulses behind his paintings and can tap into his most private thoughts. We see this when she correctly informs Hurtle that he is attributing to his painting of Rhoda the hysteria of the (presumably) epileptic girl at the party, and when she immediately understands the vindictiveness of the moon in 'Lantana Lovers'. Where Alfreda mostly ignored Hurtle's work, either misinterpreting it or running from it when she did confront it, Boo lives with it, experiences it, and does not turn her understanding into a weapon. Thus it is that, when the two do make love, even though she echoes Alfreda's transferring the chocolate from her mouth to his by '...thrust[ing] her tongue into his mouth' (303), she does not overwhelm him, smother him, attempt to suffocate that which she is afraid to understand. She does not have Alfreda's desire to blind him for fear that he may see too clearly.

For the first time, then, Hurtle is confronted by a relatively isolated, aesthetic sensibility that is neither sterile nor desperate to maintain itself at the expense of

others. Boo neither forces him into a defensive assertion of his self-sufficiency, nor assaults that self-sufficiency, with its undertones of the visionary, because of a fear for her own safety. Yet the relationship between the two never seems to cross into an area where both feel entirely comfortable. Boo continues to find it necessary to assert her superficial 'Olivia' side, unable to stand continuous proximity to her more honest insights, and Hurtle, ever-conscious that to expose himself within the confines of a relationship is to court destruction, is never quite able to overcome that fear. Neither individual finds in the other the impetus to positive change. Hurtle implicitly acknowledges this, and pinpoints its cause, when he says of Olivia: 'Here was another one...offering her throat to be cut, but by a more tortuous, a more jagged knife' (281). With these words he allies her to Nance, realising that to enter into a relationship with her would be to create a situation that could have only a destructive outcome. He is able to see, this time, exactly what qualities in each of them would make it impossible for constructive change to take place, and so he is able to refuse '...the invitation to a second murder ' (281).

The implication is that Boo has functioned in much the same way as Cutbush. Whereas the latter was a qualified restatement of the insights gained through the self-portrait, an examination of which allowed Hurtle to take a stumbling step forward on the road to self-acceptance, so Boo is a modified echo of Alfreda Courtney, presenting the artist with

the hint, if only by virtue of the absence of grasping possessiveness, that destructive solipsism is not the natural consequence of a need of distance. Through her, he learns not only to refuse that consequence, he opens himself to the possibility of engagement with others.

This new attitude, the feeling that contact can be sought without it necessarily resulting in a suffocating encounter, is to be tested, ironically enough, by Hurtle's relationship with Hero. The artist approaches the involvement with a '...desire to worship and be revered by someone else's simplicity of spirit...' (322), confessing that, while he was '...falling in love with Hero Pavloussi' (322), it was '...not in the usual sense of wanting to sleep with her...' (321). It is as though, having learned from Olivia that human relationships have the potential at least to be constructive, he is looking around for someone with whom he can develop his theory. Unfortunately, his choice falls on a woman who is determined to enter the ultimate depravities of sexual contact; who wants, not the communion of souls, but an accomplice to her acts of self-destruction. With her 'stumpy' legs and 'webbed' hands (353), her 'squelching feet' and 'terra-cotta' skin (350), she is suggestive of some ancient, half-evolved creature which acts blindly and instinctively, uncaring of the destruction it is wreaking in its soul. No wonder, then, that they can embrace only '...for his own stillborn idea of the pure soul...' (353), for the 'miscarried child' (345) that is his desire for an innocent relationship with Hero.

Hurtle's relationship with her is ironic in yet another sense, however. Not only is she totally unfit for the role he wanted her to play, she is in a sense the embodiment of all he has fearfully projected on to sexual - or even closely personal - encounters. She, far more than either Alfreda or Nance, is demanding, aggressive, smothering; one of those women who '...wish to hold somebody else responsible for their self-destruction ' (369). In her he confronts in reality what before has always remained an at least partly-imagined ghost, quickly run from or destroyed; the spectre of a voraciously devouring relationship which, if completely entered into, would result in creative annihilation.

The problem is one Hurtle has dealt with previously by divorcing himself from the situation. He literally ran from Alfreda, and by refusing to acknowledge any responsibility for Nance, or even any bond with her, he brought about what he later with a hint of honesty called her 'murder'. His reaction this time is similar, in the beginning at least. He longs to '...ignore the tremors of his own balls...' (369), and admits that Hero has begun to mean less to him as a woman than as a work of art. He muses that 'Since he had transformed the drowning Hero into a work of art, he desired her physical beauty less' (359), and realises that '...he had been feeding on her formally all these weeks ' (373). His comments imply a reduction of their relationship from essential engagement to a state of inauthentic communication where each party pursues his or her own self-image at the

expense of the other's, and therefore hint at the danger to which he has succumbed before - the danger of retreat into an identity that, once again isolated from others, will have to feed on itself to remain in any way creatively functional.

This time, however, Hurtle is able to find a way out that does not necessitate precipitate flight, perhaps because, as a result of his encounter with Boo, he is less convinced of the necessarily destructive aspect of human intercourse. In addition, he is beginning to perceive that '...the hideous and depraved can become aesthetically acceptable' (361), a perception he actualises when he paints the work representing himself and Hero: 'So, in the hot, little dusk-bound room, 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' (361). The physical intensity of the imagery, the vividness of the colours, suggests a beauty not unlike that Voss found in '...the colours of putrescence the soul was sometimes allowed to wear...' (Patrick White Voss 388), a suggestion taken up in the artist's later thought that '...the least related corners of his vision borrowed her tones of mind, the most putrescent of which were often the subtlest' (373). The implication is that Hurtle is at last beginning to perceive, however dimly, that in the sordid extremes of human intercourse, in the constructive engagement with the 'Dreck' of existence, there is hope of transcendence, a hint of beauty that can be transubstantiated into food for the creative spirit. As Beatson says:

'...[White] does insist that the only path to salvation lies in accepting all the implications of the soul's foster-home...' (The Skiapod and the Eye 220).

It is the beginnings of this realisation that prompts the artist to accept the invitation to accompany Hero on her pilgrimage to Perlialos, even though he has long since abandoned the hope of renewal through innocence. Whereas she approaches the visit in the belief that '...the devils may be cast out in the holy places...' (373) Hurtle is sure that '...can't afford exorcism' (374) because he is an artist. That which tempts him to the island is not Hero's vision of 'being saved' (376), but that of the '...half-conceived landscape..in which the wooden saints were threatened by their own tongues of fire' (374). In other words, he is interested more in exploring the destructive potential of the individual vision, than in offering himself as a sacrifice on the altar of some abstract god.

Once there, he sees, instead of the perversion of the once holy that confronts Hero, a landscape dependent for '...every figure in the afternoon's iconography...' on '...God as a formal necessity...' (388). Instead of being horrified at the excrement in the chapel, Hurtle concentrates on the sea, which '...rejoic[es] in its evening play...' (390), and finds his spiritual illumination in the little hen, which, though she '...remain[s] consecrated to this earth...scurr[ies] through illuminated dust' (393). In fact, he puts into practice during the visit the words that Hero utters only

after she has been disillusioned at every turn: '"Well, I will learn to live with such Dreck as I am: to find a reason and purpose in this Dreck' (392). He understands the rationale behind the village woman's request that they kiss the corpse, realising that to commune with the devils of the physically-bound soul, to confront the fears and desires that threaten to overwhelm it, is a more constructive way of seeking 'regeneration' (387) than Hero's returning to the island to hear again the words spoken by a lice-ridden priest, words remembered not for their meaning, but for their sound.

Hurtle's experience of Perialos does not result in complete personal synthesis, however. 'Half-shriven' (378) by a landscape '...which was [only] becoming his ' (383), he is not quite able to prevent the characteristic retreat into himself that has before marked either the onset of destructive alienation or the equally destructive refusal to deal with a human relationship. At the end of his visit he reasserts that '...the only life he could recognise as practical was the one lived inside his skull' (391), and even goes so far as to call the process of learning that has occurred on the island '...a process of self-fertilisation' (391). In so doing, he reiterates the condition on the basis of which he became involved with Hero, namely that, in his desire to worship and be renewed '...he [should] not forsak[e] the pursuit of truth' (322), or, to paraphrase, the pursuit of his art. But the pursuit of art for Hurtle has always meant taking a step back from life, bringing him

dangerously close to Hero's assertion of belief: '"I am glad I am, in the end, dependent on nobody or nothing but myself"' (391), she says, and avoids his eyes 'Because her final statement didn't bear looking at...' (391). Even now, despite the fact that he does not go as far as articulating his feeling of self-sufficiency '...because of certain apocalyptic moments on their journey to the other side of the island...' (391), Hurtle has not abandoned his life-long policy of non-involvement. Though he is aware that the island has afforded him insights he might not have come to on his own, he is quick to state that these '...might have been experienced in time...' (391) if he had been left alone for long enough among the familiar debris of Flint Street. In the same way, he attributes the creative stimulus received from the island to 'self-fertilisation' rather than to an external situation. Seemingly, although he has learned the '...language in which [to] commune with devils' (384) and the 'varieties of exaltation' (383) which follow from this, he is not yet ready to put his knowledge into practice.

It is for this reason that the news of Hero's death, and Cosma's accusation that he was responsible for it, has the power to suspend Hurtle in a state of creative abstraction. Not yet ready to explore his inner demons, not yet ready to acknowledge the life-flow that would result from doing so, it is easy for him to accept the guilt forced on him, to regard Hero as another Alfreda, another Boo, another woman who tempted him into the role of vivisector and destroyer. The result is the paintings of furniture, which, although 'lucid'

and 'simple' (396), are devoid of life and almost emotionless. Thus it is that, after being made aware of his separation from the mainstream of life by the girl in the small goods store, after realising that, thanks to her '...the membrane separating truth from illusion' (396) has been torn away, he sees in his works only '...the appalling window which opened out of the easel on to his interior emptiness' (396). It becomes clear to him that, since his return from the island, his work has served as a means of withdrawing from life, and, as Bliss correctly says, of using '...abstraction as another means of neutralising the painful and personal' (119). He wryly accepts that 'He [is] constipated, too: when a smooth, velvety stool might have been the great rectifier' (396), implicitly admitting, in his comment that '...much more depended on the bowels than the intellect was prepared to admit' (396) that his connection with the 'Dreck' of human existence, which has the potential for illumination, is no longer strong. In attempting to ignore its existence, he has become 'Permanently costive' (397).

Having come to these insights, however, Hurtle reacts in a way that reveals his spiritual growth. When previously faced with the evidence of his self-isolation in the portrait, his response was to withdraw even further, condemning himself to many years of creative impotence. This time, sitting in the dunny and mulling over the unfinished inscription on the wall, he listens 'As the sounds of life flow along the lane behind him, breaking and rejoining, [and] his only desire

[is] to mingle with them' (397). For a moment he recaptures the desire born in him on Perialos, to enter into real communication, to 'commune', even if it must be with his devils. But now, as then, he attempts to do so without forsaking the pursuit of truth. He participates in the life-stream from '...behind closed eyelids, in his secret shrine...' (397), and it is only the dreadful picture of the eccentric, lonely old man who could die '"Amongst the cockroaches and oil-paintuns. And nobody know"' (398), painted for him by the coarse, gossiping Jean, that drives him out into the streets. Hurtle's words to the small goods girl, that '...the only truth is what one overhears' (395), prove ironically true.

The upshot of it all is his meeting with Mothersole, a meeting intended by the artist to serve as a means of regeneration, and conceived of in terms similar to his encounter with Cutbush: an encounter with a stranger, to whom he might confess and by whom he might be shriven, and from whom he can walk away without any of the humiliation attendant on his having exposed his innermost soul. In other words, though motivated by a more insightful attitude than before, Hurtle seeks still to attempt contact at no expense to himself. Nowhere is this more apparent than in his words to Mothersole about love. After defining it as a '...matter of suffering and sacrifice' (403), the printer says, '"I've had my fair share of that "', and the artist replies: '"Yes, I suppose so. And I have my work"' (404). Once again, he is substituting art for life.

No wonder then that the rebirth he experiences '...by grace of Mothersole's warm, middle-class womb' (405) is illusory. True, his confession to the man does reawaken within him the desire to give birth at last to the creative child he has so often miscarried in the past, and certainly it brings life to the work he had despaired of that morning. Instead of accusing him emptily, the paintings 'vibrate[e] on the walls' (406), pregnant with feelings and experience that can be used. In the memory of the sea '...coiling and uncoiling round the foreshore in its ritual celebration of renewal' (406), he glimpses again the illumination of Perilalos and, in the terrible vision of '...the cancer glow[ing] inside the monstrance of Hero's womb' (406), he approaches once again he promise of life that comes from communing with one's devils. But all this is achieved on false pretences. The seed which spilled onto the receptive rocks is now no more than scattered pieces of cardboard '...sown in the white furrow' (405) of the boat's wake, no longer even a vindictive stream of light from a defiantly isolated moon. In choosing an inauthentic, one-sided encounter, Hurtle has in fact betrayed the potential for transcendence within him, a potential that he has by this point in the novel come to at least partially understand. No wonder, then, that the excitement and expectation generated by the stirring of his unborn child is followed by the bald statement: 'It left him' (407). He realises, or rather suspects, that he has '...been deluded into mistaking a monstrous pregnancy of the ego for this child of joy he was preparing to bring forth'

(408).

It is in the child-artist Kathy Volkov that Hurtle is to find an answer to his problem. Unable, as he once was to content himself with one-sided, limited contact - because he has grown enough to recognise the necessity for interelationship - he nevertheless still faces the difficulties inherent to his artistic nature. He has, somehow, to enter into authentic communication with another, even though his creative nature will inevitably cause him to use that other as a subject for his work, and therefore result in the reappearance of the vivisector side of him. The consequences of this are those we have seem demonstrated before - the failure of the relationship and the possible destruction of one or other of its protagonists.

In Kathy, however, he finds a nature similar to his own. She, too, has a vision, and funnels all the experiences of her life into the expression of that vision, thus enabling her to avoid destruction at the hands of the vivisector-artist. This 'egotism' (429) has another function, however, in that in addition to protecting her, it evokes a need in Hurtle - perhaps the first totally unselfish one he has ever admitted to - to protect her from the consequences of her selfishness. During their second encounter, he finds himself thinking: 'She has already so much the egotist her eyes were blind to anyone or anything but herself. He wanted to protect from that situation. At this instant he was prepared to give himself up wholly to the salvation of Kathy

Volkov' (429). Hurtle, in his desire to protect Kathy from herself, is not only opening himself entirely to a mutual relationship, he is implicitly admitting the limitations of his own egotism, and for the first time attempting to move beyond them.

Kathy has another function, however, in that Hurtle also regards her as his own work of art. Because she is an artist in her own right, beginning her own journey of spiritual discovery, he feels that by influencing her he can create a living work that will express for him all his spiritual aspirations. Thus it is that, for once, his creative urge is expressed in a relationship itself, rather than in the more objective form of a painting. The implication is that this encounter, unlike those with others less similar to himself, has the potential to lead Hurtle to greater self-unity. As Thelma Herring says: Kathy '...is metamorphosed into an equivalent of the mystic rose of love' (The Vivisector 13), and serves to '...guide the soul to God' (The Vivisector 15), an idea reinforced by the fact that, after their first encounter, the artist portrays her as the 'Flowering Rosebush'.

But Kathy Volkov is more than just a symbol of and means to the personal synthesis that is so important to Hurtle. When she kisses him, '...pop[ing] into his mouth what began as a smooth jewel but which melted abruptly into all that was soft and sweet-succulent' (435), she echoes Alfreda Courtney's action in transferring a chocolate from her own to Hurtle's

mouth, and, by aligning herself with the stifling eroticism represented by Mrs Courtney, she seems to perpetuate the idea that sensuality and eroticism are destructive to the creative spirit. This is why, after the first time they make love, Hurtle refers to her as 'his aborted spiritual child' (466). He would have liked her to be as he painted her after their first innocent meeting as the 'Flowering Rosebush': '...the face at the heart of the bush reduced to an eye, its remote candour undazzled by its setting of rose-jewels; the original seascape dissolved in space by fluctuations of gelatinous light, in which a threat of crimson was still suspended' (425). The image is one distanced, though illuminating, beauty, containing within it the echo of the sea '...rejoicing in its evening play...' (390) which he found so uplifting on Perialos. Kathy is pictured as beautiful by virtue of her pure self-absorption; a clear, perfect consciousness that generates, as did the sea, its own dazzling light.

Yet it is the 'threat of crimson' (425), Kathy's sensuality, that is the source of the synthesis that Hurtle manages to achieve in 'Girl at Piano'. The '...real Katherine Volkov, almost a woman, of studied ice and burning musical passion...' (471) dares him '...to transfer his own passion to the primed board' (471). The result is a work which conveys the fierce desire he feels for Kathy, and which they both feel for their work, a desire made more intense by their belief that through their artistic media they can convey the 'truth', a belief almost constituting a religious faith. And

for once, achieving unity through an act of objective creation does not necessitate the destruction of source and subject of that act. Kathy Volkov's influence, unlike that of Alfreda Courtney's or Nance Lightfoot's, does not have to be negated in order for the artist to survive - if only because she has in a sense been 'created' by Hurtle and is therefore distanced from him. In fact, Kathy constitutes his masterpiece as far as personal synthesis is concerned, '...a flawed masterpiece certainly, but one in which the artist most nearly convey[s] his desires and faith, however frustrated and imperfect these might be' (515).

The synthesis is not complete, however, precisely because Kathy is a living 'creation' and an artist. She may represent to Hurtle a unity of the ideal and the actual, but that unity, in view of Kathy's own struggle to achieve a greater purity and truth in her art, is constantly sacrificed to creative growth. Kathy, then, is more a symbol of the dialectic of synthesis, of the striving to unify physical and spiritual, fact and idea, than an encapsulation of unity itself. As Baker says: 'Kathy is not Yeats' mechanical golden bird but the outward embodiment of Duffield's creative "nisus", an artist in her own right who, as Duffield's heir, will continue to create and, by that very fact, validate Duffield's involvement neither wholly in nature nor on some ideal plane, but in an ongoing process of dialectical creation...' (223). Hurtle still has to find a means of synthesis that comes from within himself, and which is not dependent on the existence of another (however much

influenced by him) vivisector-artist. Yet, such a synthesis seems to be eternally beyond his reach, at least for as long as he remains an artist, for with each painting he has to step back from both the experience which led to it and the spirit which questions it, and employ the distanced artist's vision that subsumes both into a distorted self-consciousness.

It is at this point in the novel that the problem is taken out of Hurtle's hands. He is 'stroked by God' (613), and as a result is not only removed from his omnipotent position as both vivisector and artist, he is given a glimpse of the divine contained in the image of the 'extra indigo sky' (549), for which he is to spend the rest of the novel striving.

The description of Hurtle as 'stroked by God' is a telling one, as it picks up and expands imagery that has been used throughout the novel to describe those characters who are in some way deformed or doomed. Soso, the child condemned to return to the reserve, is called 'my poor kitten' (356) by Hero, who, in her turn, is referred to as 'the drowning Hero' (359) by Hurtle, a reference to Cosma's sackful of cats '...with parti-coloured skins [which] were fighting their sentence inside the bag' (354) - a sentence imposed by the '...God [with] his black eyelids' who '...chokes[s] the daylight out...' (354). Rhoda, too, the woman destined by a physical deformity to spend her life alone, is frequently described in feline terms.

When Hurtle, remembering the Courtney family's flight from the varnished, vivisected dog in a London shop window, thinks: 'How could he forget the smell of their own wet frightened fur as they huddled together escaping in the cab?' (445), he for the first time sees himself as one of the drowning cats, but it is after his stroke that feline imagery becomes more obviously applied to him. When Rhoda visits him in hospital he responds to her comments about the cat Ruffles's death by linking himself to the incident: 'Didn't believe it anything about him her cat her buried brother...' (550), and the cats with 'parti-coloured skins' ties up to Hurtle's reference to his 'parti-coloured selves' later in the novel. The implication is that his autonomous position has been undermined, that he has become one of these cats, the victim of the vivisector-artist God of the dunny wall. No longer represented by the vindictive moon, or allied to the grocer-figure and his attempts at evil, Hurtle, the vivisected rather than the vivisector, is freed from the 'necessity' of synthesising personal unity at the expense of others.[14]

The appearance of Don Lethbridge is proof of this. With his androgynous appearance, he is reminiscent of Cutbush, the man who served as the mirror for and confessor of the desperate soul that had no means of salvation except that to be found in a limited encounter. Because Don is a source of support, however, he is also a reminder of Mothersole, symbol of Hurtle's more insightful search for human contact. Yet the

young man has a vision which the artist recognises as 'the twin' (556) of his own, and is therefore also reminiscent of Kathy Volkov, Hurtle's 'psychopomp' and saviour. In fact, he represents an apotheosis of all those contacts that the artist has embarked upon, but without the element of necessity that characterised them. Hurtle, who is '...being painted with, and through, and on' (614) is not in need of an object of inspiration or a ratification on his own position, and so does not 'use' Don in any way. The latter is thus able to learn from the artist, to act both as disciple and archangel, a bridge to the greatest insights that Hurtle is ever to achieve. The latter is finally open to the beauty and illumination that lies on the other side of solipsism, of egoism, and of the need for self-protection.

Confirmation of this is received when Hurtle, anxious for the first time to bathe in '...the streets [that] were rivers of life' (557), goes for a walk and encounters Cutbush. The grocer, once representative of the most alienated phase of Hurtle's development, confesses ironically that the same encounter that gave birth to the artist's vision of himself as evil and alienated has 'consummated' him. He says: '"Of course I never told anybody that we'd sort of given birth"' (560), and confesses that the experience helped him deal with '"...conflicts between [his] home life and [his] temperament"' (560). It is as though Hurtle, having found wholeness and peace within himself, is able to sow those seeds in others. Hurtle the vivisector has suddenly become Hurtle the healer.

Cutbush's words prove difficult for the artist to assimilate, however, even though he has come so far as to be able to admit to the previously unthinkable search for '...god- a God - every heap of rusty tins amongst the wormeaten furniture out the window in the durry of brown blowies and unfinished inscriptions' (561). The impact of the man's words, '...working like sheet lightning' (560), prompt in him the need to retreat, expressed in his desire to '...seize [Rhoda] the cold pure rose by her thorns...' (561). Returning home, he thinks of Rhoda as '...one of those Japanese pellets which need a tumbler of water to flower...Rhoda's paper rosette opening into an underwater rose' (562). She becomes the symbol of the same mystic rose of love that he originally sees in Kathy; the ideal, aesthetic love that will save him from the sensual, transient world.

The change in Hurtle's life and in his creative position has been too radical for him to be able to sustain this longing, however. He tells Rhoda that he has been 'intercoursing' (561) with Cutbush, suggesting a completeness of contact he was not previously able to achieve. In addition, the encounter makes him feel 'strangely normal' (561), implying that he has finally understood the necessary relationship between experiental contacts and personal synthesis. Also, as mentioned earlier, the meeting provokes the realisation of his new creative endeavour. Thus it is that he abandons his initial urge to define for himself ideal love by exploring the concept as symbolised by Rhoda. His decision indicates that his sister,

once the only solution to his conflict, is no longer necessary to him: 'In other days, he might have exploded the variations on Rhoda's paper rosette opening into an underwater rose. He couldn't now. There was no time for trifles' (562).

It is now that, accompanied by his 'psychopomp' Kathy Volkov and his archangel Don Lethbridge, (or Lethe-bridge, as Kiernan [108] suggests), Hurtle dares to go on the spiritual journey to the ultimate 'indigogoddd'. He becomes absorbed in his painting, once more holding himself aloof, but this time because Rhoda (and the outside world she represents) '...trailing the rose-peony-camellia-flesh she couldn't offer' (556), cannot provide him with anything he needs for his last transcendence. Now, when the world does intrude on him, in the presence of Gil Honeysett and the retrospective exhibition, Hurtle is unable to obliterate them with the 'cultivated deafness' that he once managed. At best, he excludes them by means of '...swirling onrush of half-visualised images and raw idea' (568). At worst, he feels their intrusion as his 'victims' - Rhoda, Nance, Hero - must have once experienced the cut of his knife - like eyes: '...while you continue gasping throbbing for what you had experienced for what you now understood of the indignity of rape' (569). After the exhibition, he makes one last stand on the side of his old vivisector self: 'If he could have chosen, if, rather, he had developed the habit of prayer, he would have prayed to shed his needled flesh, and for his psychopomp to guide him, across the river, into an

endlessness of pure being' (603). But for Hurtle, what is to be Elizabeth Hunter's surrender to 'myself this endlessness' is not enough (Patrick White The Eye of the Storm 532). Her physical and spiritual synthesis, in his life, has also to be unified with his creative being, something that he now unequivocally states: 'But how bloody dishonest! As if he could ever wish to renounce his memories of the flesh even when renounced by it pleasures: the human body, unbroken by its own will, leaping and bucking to unseat, but rapturously, the longed-for, the chosen, though finally abstract rider' (603).

The synthesis is not complete, however. When Hurtle begins to paint after the above affirmation, he achieves '...insights of such intensity he felt he should have been able to relate them to actual experience; but in this he failed mostly' (605). He still attempts to '...build at one point a city fortified against assault by [all those] possessed of doubtful intentions' (605), trying once again to keep himself aloof, to find within himself all he needs instead of admitting the richness and depth that comes from interrelationships.

It is Mrs Volkov's letter which frees him for his final transcendence. In calling him 'stroked by God', she conjures an image in his mind of himself as a '...tucked-up mongrel dog, beggarly tail scraping the ground between its legs' (614) - a far cry from the artist who, if not entirely confident of his ability, was always confident of his vision.

His humility allows him to be '...painted with, and through, and on' (614), to achieve '... daringly loose strokes of paint, which might have looked haphazard if they hadn't been compelled and so, to '...experience a curious sense of grace' (614). Hurtle has finally, completely, opened himself to experience, and in so doing has achieved both the dreamed-of endlessness of pure being that represents free creativity, and the intense rapture that comes from accepting the 'bucking' of the human body. As Aschcroft says: 'The overcoming of self involves an acceptance of the body so that man can live in his acts of consciousness and thus make directly available to himself the actual transcendence of the world' (127).

Finally, Hurtle joins those who represent the imperfect syntheses he attained in the past - Cutbush and Kathy - for the last few moments of his ultimate journey. Sensing his psychopomp's standing beside him, he mixes '...the never-yet-attainable blue' (616) which Kathy reassures him will be understood, '...apparently unaware of the precarious state of his faith' (616). Hurtle, the '...frankly feeble brush...' (616), 'bludge[s] on the blessed blue' (617) which 'All his life he had been reaching towards...without truely visualising, till lying on the pavement he was dazzled not so much by a colour as a long-standing secret relationship' (616). As Riemer points out: 'He [Hurtle] struggles to achieve the necessary knowledge of INDIGO, with its cryptogrammatic suggestion of 'God' and the affirmation of 'I' (both as a pronoun and as an indication of unity) as well

as the further possibility of 'I' in God' (254). In addition, the artist's tired pity for Rhoda - 'O rose Rose' (617) - as she kneels beside him, seems to suggest a patient withdrawal from the 'ideal love' she (and Kathy) represented for him and which he for so long mistakenly strove to attain. It is no wonder that his and Cutbush's 'common sweat' does not produce flowers, but the '...thorns [which] sprang up in celebration of their victory' (616). The 'flowers', ideal but unconsummated love, are reserved for the 'gelatinous light', moving force of his creative power. His final words: 'Too tired too end-less abvi indi-ggoddd' (617) merge his tired, limited physical body to the endlessness of his spiritual goal, the two made one through the creative medium of indigo.

Riemer makes the point that the culmination of Hurtle's vision is '...not provided with the sense of climax and achievement such states possessed in the earlier novels' (252), and that '...instead of the triumphant affirmation of Unity...we are given merely the shadowy psychopomp he glimpses during his search, in a state of prostration for the elusive blue' (253). Insofar as his conclusion is that Duffield's vision ...is much more personal... There is, consequently, a retreat from the largely objective, universal statement of vision (254), Riemer's comment has validity. Hurtle Duffield's final synthesis is entirely personal, and can be reached only through the perceptions he himself employs. This does not make it any less valid as a personal

- and desirable - triumph, simply less accessible to others, a problem Patrick White overcomes in The Eye of the Storm.

> 'Life, as he began in time to see it, is the twin consciousness, jostling you, hindering you, but with which, at unexpected moments, it is possible to communicate in ways both animal and delicate.'
>
> (White The Solid Mandala)

When Elizabeth Hunter experiences the eye of the storm, she is described, as she comes out of the bunker and walks along the beach, as '..no longer a body, least of all a woman: the myth of her womanhood had been exploded by the storm'.[15] At the moment of her death, she thinks: '..I am no longer filling the void with mock substance: myself is this endlessness' (532). These two moments represent the apotheosis of her striving, the ultimate end of her hope '...to experience once again that state of pure, living bliss she was now and then allowed to enter' (24). Both are moments when the body and all that goes with it are reduced to insignificance, to the 'mock substance' she describes it as in the last moment of her life, hinting that it, and its physical existence, are imitations of true being.

In this observation lies the centre of the novel's theme - the intense awareness of the polarity of body and soul and the gradual revelation to one or more of the characters of a state of pure Being, or true self, which is achieved finally only after death, and which can exist only when the soul is not inextricably entangled in the flesh, and the mode of existence that the latter demands. This is why the novel

does not end with Elizabeth's experience of the eye. When the storm is over and her rescuers find her, 'She [is] glad to find herself reunited with her womanly self...' (411), and on learning of Edvard Pehl's safety, she thinks: 'She was only saved up...' (41). In other words, Elizabeth has returned to the self which sought answers for her existence in the spinning of the webs of fascination for those weaker and less intelligent than herself - even though the acts of possession and manipulation have never satisfied her craving for a fuller, truer life. She still has to undergo a 'trial by recollection', (Beatson The Skiapod 229) reliving the many forms of love betrayed, the struggle for power, the chosen modes of self-expression that were in fact betrayals of the will to self-discovery. The pierced noddy[17] she sees represents the suffering she has not fully undergone, and makes her realise that she '...has not experienced enough of living' (410).

Implicit in the idea that the soul, or true self, or pure form of Being, is at its most triumphant and perfect when the body is at it weakest or most insignificant, is the mystery of the Incarnation. The latter is essentially a movement away from perfection - the incarceration of an infinite soul in a temporal body. To overcome the dilemma of Word made flesh, to reach the element of divinity in the self, and to perceive 'the eternal Thou' (Buber I and Thou 307), to achieve rebirth or salvation by transcending the self and merging the soul with God, it is necessary not only to be aware of the 'taint of matter' (Beatson The Skiapod 225), but

to participate in every aspect of the life which that matter prescribes. The essential core of being is not identical with the mode of life, the central thrust of earthly existence, but that temporal life is the only way in which the essential 'I' can be known. As Aschcroft says, this is so '...because in every act of consciousness that which is hidden, that which transcends the physical, is implicated in the horizon perceived' (More Than One Horizon 125). Elizabeth Hunter, unlike her children, has always realised this, and has greedily drunk from the fountain of life, just as she eagerly accepts Mary de Santis's 'cold and pure' draught of water in the first chapter: 'When she had raised her patient's shoulders, the neck worked; the lips reached out, and supped uglily at the water. The lips suggested some lower form of life, a sea creature perhaps, extracting more than water from water' (22).

The description points forward to the skiapod, a creature in which Elizabeth sees herself: '...not her own actual face, but the spiritual semblance which will sometimes float out of the looking glass of the unconscious' (194). She describes it as '...half-fish half-woman [which] appeared neither allied to to, nor threatened by, death: too elusive in weaving through deep waters, her expression a practically effaced mystery; or was it one of dishonesty, of cunning?' (194). Elizabeth Hunter first sees the skiapod in a book of French engravings belonging to her husband, when she returns to 'Kudjeri' to nurse him through his last illness. It is significant that she should be confronted with it at this

time, the first moment of partial illumination she experiences that hints at '...a state of mind she knew existed, but which was too subtle to enter except by special grace' (15). She finds with Alfred a '...sere honeymoon of the hopeful spirit' (192), an '...emotional need to merge herself with this child who might have sprung in the beginning from her body' (195) and she feels, in nursing him, that '...she was involved in a mystery so immense and so rarely experienced, she functioned, it could have been truthfully said, by reverence, in particular for this only in a sense, feebly fluttering soul, her initiator' (198). But Alfred dies with the word 'Whyyy?' on his lips, and Elizabeth, unable to participate in the 'miraculous transformation' she was expecting, moves from intimations of heaven to '...dipp[ing] her toes in hell'. As Johnson says; Mrs Hunter, when she nurses her child-husband, feels his 'feebly fluttering soul' to be her initiator. But he dies before the translation (Patrick White: The Eye of the Language 346). Looking in the mirror, she is faced with the spiritual semblance of the skiapod, her '...Doppelgänger: aged, dishevelled, ravaged, eyes strained by staring inward, in the direction of a horizon which still had to be revealed' (198). It is this experience which, when describing herself as a skiapod to Edvard Pehl, makes her say: '"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"' (390). As Bliss suggests '..even the skiapod is to be forgiven, because a quester...the suggestion is that Elizabeth's failures at love will not preclude her seeking the moment of sublimity' (Patrick White's Fiction 138).

The skiapod is more than a representation of the spiritually seeking side of Elizabeth's nature, however. It is not merely an intimation of 'a practically effaced mystery', or a hint that Mrs Hunter at that point was neither 'allied to, nor threatened by, death' - both of which descriptions apply to the old woman. In the novel's present tense narrative groping and dreaming her way towards true being and physical death. The skiapod also contains the dishonesty, the cunning, that belongs to Elizabeth Hunter existing in time, the woman who, faced with the unrevealed horizon at Alfred's death, makes herself '...remember the bodies of men she had dragged to her bed, to wrestle with: her "lovers"' (198). In this context it is only slightly ironic that Edvard Pehl adds a gigantic mouth to the Elizabeth-skiapod. '"A characteristic of some deep-sea fish is the enormous mouth. It makes it possible for them to swallow prey much larger than themselves"' (390). Elizabeth is indeed voracious. She reflects after her lunch, shortly after Dorothy's first visit:

> 'She was greedy, always had been, though they hadn't guessed when she was younger...Instead they accused her of devouring people. Well you couldn't help it if they practically stuck their heads in your jaws. Though actually you had no taste, or no sustained appetite, for human flesh. There was this other devouring desire for some relationship too rarefied to be possible' (87).

In other words, the skiapod is the symbol of Elizabeth Hunter's twin consciousness, the two sides of the self that

she has to bring together. Some sort of continuity must be found between the devouring, voracious woman with a taste for human flesh and the spiritually seeking woman with a devouring desire for 'that state of pure, living bliss' (24). She summarises her struggle when she reflects that

> 'Lal Wyburd would naturally have interpreted as selfishness every floundering attempt anybody made to break out of the straitjacket and recover a sanity which must have been theirs in the beginning, and might be theirs again in the end. That left the long stretch of the responsible years, when you were lunging in your madness after love, money, position, possessions, while an inkling persisted, sometimes even a certainty descended: of a calm in which the self had been stripped, if painfully, of its human imperfections' (28).

What Mrs Hunter realises is that every aspect of the human existence of the soul has to be lived through, understood and transcended. She knows that '...souls have an anus they are never allowed to forget it...' (188), but she also knows that by recognising and accepting this fact - and by exploring it - a state of grace can at least be approached: '...remember any stench is sanctity the odour of each time a painful I lie again if I'm lucky in the arms of my DEAR LORD whose strength increases as he weakens I the guilty...' (190).

One of the episodes that forms part of Elizabeth Hunter's 'trial by recollection' (Beatson The Skiapod 229) is the seduction of Athol Shreve, an incident which shows her in one of her most manipulative, power-hungry moods. She gives in to the desire to 'Play Gladys [Radford] for ringing you after

trying probably everyone else' (87). She eludes the invitation until Gladys's annoyance is almost uncontrollable, gives in at the last moment, and thinks cynically: 'She [Gladys] had almost lost her voice achieving what she wanted' (89). At the dinner, her 'taste for human flesh' asserts itself. She takes 'quick bites' of Athol Shreve's '...cratered skin, the heavy hands, concentrated eyes, and hair so thick and stiff you knew how it felt without having to touch' (90). She perceives him as a fake: 'Only his hands were genuine: in shape and texture, at least, and if you ignored the history of his political betrayal' (91); but she is prepared to sleep with him to appease 'the explosive force of her lust' (93). She says: 'You had never recognised your own lust; you hadn't often been troubled by it. But it exists - alongside those unrealiseable aspirations' (92).

The act of adultery is as revolting as she anticipates when she thinks: 'He [Athol Shreve] was the awfulness, the reality she had decided unconsciously to risk' (93). They are '..driven together in a collision which sounded like that between two objects in solid bone or hard rubber...' (94). Elizabeth experiences 'Disgust for his body, his exploratory hands, the rasp of hair against her skin', but this [does] not diminish her own lust'. Yet when they finally separate, '..squelching back out of their mutual revulsion', all she feels is 'You would have liked to separate, move from your lover, from your own body' (95).

Here Elizabeth is presented as she was before the storm's eye caught her in its centre; betraying her love for Alfred ('She went at one point into the cloakroom to whimper over Alfred. The other awfulness is: you can sincerely love those you betray' (93)), and misdirecting her aspirations to '...some condition she knew she had aspired to above the placid waters of marriage the eruptions of adultery' (95). She does this by focusing them on people like Athol Shreve, instead of using her energy to understand and visualise what she dimly understands as 'this probably super-human relationship' (95). So she ends up further away than ever from the spiritual goal she hoped to achieve finally even feeling 'hat[red] of her own aspirant' (95).

But this Elizabeth Hunter is placed in perspective by the old woman lying in the bed in Moreton Drive - the old woman who has experienced '...the great joy..while released from her body and all the contingencies in the eye of the storm' (413) - and who now sees all the identities she possessed or assumed in the past in relation to that one moment of self-without-taint. We see her here not only as adulteress and socialite, but also in these roles as she sees herself. Thus, when the ironic comment 'There was a worm in the Radfords' de Lucca peach' (92), is followed immediately by a return to the present and the bald statement that 'All Elizabeth Hunter's worst nightmares occurred at noon' (92), the reader has no difficulty in believing that to the spiritually alert woman of the present, the compromised, ugly encounter with Athol Shreve must indeed be one of her worst

nightmares. She continues playing out the past 'on the dark screen her lids provided...' (94) and concludes the scene with a comment from her move recently attained self-awareness:

> 'If you could have said: I am neither complete 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' (98,99).

By presenting us with two views of this incident - as he does with many other episodes from Elizabeth's past, White demonstrates that the will to spiritual change, the achievement of true being, can be developed or attained only when all that was hidden or unacknowledged in a past experience is revealed - in this case Elizabeth Hunter's real motive for adultery, and the pain that she would not then admit at betraying Alfred's love. Thus she has to re-examine past motives and actions in the light of a new awareness, suffer the torments occasioned by them, and so undergo a purgative, cleansing process that will end in rebirth.

Elizabeth's deliberate flirtation with Edvard Pehl, her competition with her daughter for his attentions, is the last time she actualises her need to dominate, the last time she gives in completely to her less spiritual impulses and appetites. Manfred MacKenzie has aptly titled the episode 'her Sanseverina swan song' (Tradition 155), and from it, and

from the eye of the storm, she emerges as 'An old woman' (411) - a stark and vivid contrast to the woman she was shortly before the storm who, as her '...white classic form poised at an admirably cool, though unconvincing, parallel distance from the body to which she was ministering...was preparing to outdo the night...'(388).

Elizabeth begins her stay on the island by conducting a flirtation with the helicopter pilot. As Dorothy unkindly (but probably justifiably) remarks: 'Mother could start a flirtation at a street crossing, waiting for the lights to change' (359). She continues by 'seducing the children' (360), and, that done, turns to Jack Warming and makes an uncharacteristic remark about a party they had been to - '"It was a riot, wasn't it?"' - (360) using his idiom to create fellow-feeling between them. She responds to the foresters' waves, embraces Helen Warming with tenderness, and becomes '...the family triumph..a living breathing object of worship and source of oracular wisdom' (363). Her place in the family secured, she is free to conquer the only one still outside her spell - Edvard Pehl, the marine ecologist.

She does this, as she does most of the above, at the expense of her daughter.[18] Even taking into account Dorothy's many shortcomings, which render her incapable of establishing contact with her children, or fitting in Helen's cheerful domesticity, one can surely still blame Mrs Hunter for not in any way attempting to ease the awkward agonisings of her painfully self-enclosed daughter. When Dorothy walks in on

the potato-peeling ceremony on their first night, Elizabeth and Helen sigh: '...they had been interrupted' (367). Elizabeth, who with her incisive perceptions must surely have about Dorothy's bumbling attempts at a flirtation with Edvard, nevertheless sends the professor to look for her shortly after the Warmings have left, justifying her action by expressing 'fears for [her] whereabouts' (380) - a natural enough emotion in anyone except a woman as lacking in maternal instinct as Elizabeth. By doing this, she implies implying that Dorothy is the weaker, thus undermining her daughter's position, and so cleverly turning Edvard's attention to herself.

From there, for a woman with Elizabeth's flair for creating the right atmosphere and pressing the right psychological buttons on her victims, fascinating Edvard is a simple undertaking. With music, candlelight and a flowing white dress, she creates a seductive ambience, and effortlessly rounds off her conquest by stroking soothing calamine lotion onto the professor's sunburned back. Dorothy, spying through the window, is forced to witness her mother in the role she had envisaged for herself. She leaves the next morning, unable to find in herself the resources to assert herself, either against her mother, or against her own often gratuitous feelings of humiliation.

The above episode is described entirely from Dorothy's point of view, and given her satiric placing one is justified in questioning her outright condemnation of her mother, her

moral disgust at 'a mother's perfidy' (391). But after she leaves, and Elizabeth continues the narrative, the latter confirms that there was a grain of truth in Dorothy's feeling that her mother was acting at her expense: '...poor old Dorothy...' (Elizabeth Hunter thinks to herself); 'Only natural that she should bear grudges, whether imaginary or justified, especially against a mother whose love of life often outstripped discretion, in the eyes of those who were drab and prickly' (401). She goes as far as admitting: '...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' (401).

This is the last time Elizabeth Hunter is to assert herself in terms of the destructive possession of others. Her perception does not dim, and she does not relinquish her power easily, which is why she becomes a goddess-figure to the sisters Manhood and de Santis. But as she walks into the Brumby Island forest, the voracious, 'material' side of her self begins to fade. She gets down on her knees in a clearing '...to insinuate herself into secrets, to pick, to devour, or thrust up her nostrils, or carry back to die on her dressing table. When she discovered the desire to possess had left her' (402). This is a dramatic contrast to the woman who, a paragraph earlier, had allowed the free flow of her hair to hint at the translation 'of her present movements into recollections of another person's sensuality'.

But the change of self-identification is only beginning. She has already felt a twinge of alarm that '...she might have lost not only Professor Benthic Aggregations Pehl, poor Princess Menopause de Lascabares, Alfred the Good, Basil my Beloved only son, Athol Shreve the -ugh! Arnold the Pure - but Everyone' (400). She has already sidled up to self-honesty: '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' (401). She has also felt the beginnings of fear at the immensity of her future...which stretched ahead of her as far as the horizon and not even her own shadow in view' (401). But in spite of all this she qualifies the fading of her possessive desires by thinking: 'Ah, but temporarily, and flowers' (402). She asserts that 'She could not believe, finally, in grace, only luck', and turning away from spiritual transcendence goes to find someone to talk because 'she needed to reassure herself that she could still fit into the pattern of someone else's life' (402).

The Elizabeth continues to catch glimpses of the self she must become before she can identify the 'condition she had aspired to' when she reduced Athol Shreve. She grasps the opportunity to prove that she can '...still fit into the pattern of someone else's life' when she talks to the foresters. She responds to the '..heavy air [which] was impregnated with bleeding sap' by, characteristically, attempting to devour it. She tastes a chip from the tree, intending the act to be a sensual reaffirmation of her

involvement in life. Instead, the chip becomes a 'transmuted wafer', suggestive of the communion ceremony and therefore hinting that, if Elizabeth Hunter were to savour the chip, she would be affirming her belief in a transcendent reality and would therefore perhaps attain that state of bliss to which she so aspires. The moment in effect evokes the ritual of communion, and therefore of the confession and absolution which must precede it. In this way, as Bliss suggests, '...a supernatural sanction is accorded to the whole experience without having to call directly on the God Elizabeth would just as soon dispense with (Patrick White's Fiction 139). The fact that she '...might have dropped this transmuted wafer as quickly as she could' however, suggests that she is not yet ready for such a commitment. Her ambivalence causes her to lose conviction in her role - she feels herself 'brittle and pretentious' (403), and is unable to accept '...a reverence to which she was not entitled' (405), but which before this moment she would have demanded as her due. When she returns to the house and plays the piano, she is no longer the woman who '...had control over more than this hackneyed, girlhood piece, [but] over music itself, and the threads of a brilliant sunset, and experience in general' (406). She merely fetches '...the thrummed, disjointed phrases out of the salt-eroded, moth-eaten depths of the piano. Thrumming. Drumming in the end. Until she was outdrummed' (406). And so Elizabeth washes and anoints herself for the coming ceremony, when, from being the centre of a circle of manipulative power radiating outwards, she is swept up into a cyclonic circle of far greater power than her own.

When she feeds the black swans, Elizabeth Hunter reaches the climax of the spiritual enlightenment prompted by the storm. The once voracious woman, who had a 'taste' if not 'a sustained appetite' for human flesh, who was unable to breastfeed her son, admitting that he '...must have drawn off the pus from everything begrudged withheld to fester inside the breast he was cruelly offered' (408), now 'officiates at a communion of her own hosting' (Whaley 210). She voluntarily feeds those creatures whose '..wings were acknowledging [her] an equal' (410), thereby initiating and participating in the communion that, just before the storm, she refused to share with the foresters.

But the ceremony is still incomplete. Mrs Hunter does not herself partake of the loaf she feeds to the birds, as she does not ratify her experience by sharing it with another human being. Thus it is that she still has to undergo her 'trial by recollection', which culminates in Lotte's last dance. She identifies totally with the frenetic, despairing, but utterly necessary movements of the purgative dance: '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 first relive the tenderness: It's the lashing, the slashers, and near-murder. So Elizabeth Hunter moaned' (527). She links the dance with her own impulses to murder - kicking the dying cow for which 'there was nothing you could do... - anymore than for yourself (an image which recalls the

skewed noddy on Brumby Island, and therefore also links the dance with the storm, and with her attempts to justify herself and to be in a position of power; 'You danced to show you were not in the wrong that you didn't belong to them except as the child they 'loved'...you danced because you knew more than the people who loved you more than the stones of the walls of houses' (528). And in a last attempt to assert her voracious, physical self, she tries to swallow the wind Lotte's dance is creating around her: 'Elizabeth Hunter was trying to plant her bungling lips on the wind...'. She fails however; 'She was the prisoner of her chair' (528).

But the failure of her body to assert its desire leaves her at the mercy of the meaning of the dance. Mrs Hunter subsides, finds that 'Her other self had been released from their lover's attempts to express tenderness in terms of flesh', and so by freeing her from the demands of physical existence, the dance delivers her to the shore of her spiritual sea she hears '...the waves open and close at this hour of the morning in the nacred shallows.: (528), and finds the will '...by some miraculous dispensation' (532) to walk across the '...sand benign and soft between the toes' and towards the 'precious water' (532). As she wades into it and re-enters the spiritual eye of the storm, she for a moment fears that her 'human will once the equal of their [the swans'] own weapons...' will prevent her from fitting into this ultimate peace; that she is 'born to a different legend' and will be savaged by the '...suppressed black explosion the crimson beaks savaging...' (532). But, as she

fought and suffered her way through every one of her past 'sins', so she is able to fight this last battle and appeal, with new spiritual awareness: '...don't oh DON'T my dark birds of light let us rather - enfold.' And so she dies, fulfilling Flora's ironic comment that '...the same tinkle that brought [her] might summon the Holy Ghost' (531). As in the religious ceremony, water is transubstantiated when the bell rings, so Elizabeth achieves union with the divine, a final irrevocable knowledge of true Being, by sloughing off her physical existence. Her spiritual emptiness, which she continually strove to overcome, has been transubstantiated: 'Till I am no longer filling the void with mock substance: myself is this endlessness' (532). Elizabeth Hunter is one who has weathered the storm, and she has found grace and salvation at its centre.

Dorothy Hunter, the Princess de Lascabares, is a perfect thematic counterpoint to her mother, her failures serving to ratify and emphasise Elizabeth's final Truipmph. Where Elizabeth spends her life questing after the significance of self, Dorothy spends her life trying to escape it. Where Elizabeth throws herself into experience, thinking thereby to become like the vines on the Warmings' island '...which had survived their writhings to become abstractions' (401), Dorothy 'adopts a philosophy that keeps her inaccessible to such forces' (Wilson The Splinters of a Mind Make a Whole Piece 221). She responds to the '...bland golden flood' of peace in the Moreton Drive garden, to the 'fluttering, flirting' birds with the thought: '...this is what I must keep in mind, at all times: the light, the

movement of birds' (214). But walking up the path she knows '...she was giving herself a piece of hopeless advice: as if you can possess the moment of perfection; as if conception and death don't take place simultaneously' (214). And so she cuts herself off from moments of even partial perfection, and therefore from any chance of ultimate spiritual fulfillment.

THe situations in which Dorothy confronts herself extend her role as counterpoint to her mother. As Kelly says: '...Dorothy's spiritual life is defined negatively with reference to experiences she does not have...it is being pointed out that from the depths of their absence she still insincerely aspires towards them'. (65). Dorothy, too, sees the eye of the storm as representative of spiritual salvation. She, like Elizabeth Hunter, finds a kind of purity in the thought of Arnold Wyburd as a lover. She also identifies herself with the skiapod. And when she returns to 'Kudjeri', her role in the lives of the Macrory family parallels the one adopted by Mrs Hunter on the Warmings' island. But her conflict is not merely one between body and soul, although it includes this aspect. Dorothy has to break through an additional wall - the one preventing her from experiencing the 'taint of matter' to its fullest - something Elizabeth does with a will. Dorothy only dreams of adultery with Arnold; her conception of herself as a skiapod is no more than half-remembered, something she '...had perhaps only half-discovered - on the banks of the Seine? In dreams?' (389), and her role-playing at 'Kudjeri' ends not in rebirth, but in incest. It is not surprising that the closest she

comes to the eye of the storm is an account given by her Dutch companion during the journey to her mother's bedside. Because she flees from self-confrontation - as she fled Brumby Island - and refuses to face the humiliations, agonies and brief ecstasies of the situations natural to her temporal, unredeemed self, she cuts herself off from the partial illumination possible when the soul struggles to free itself from its physical entanglement. As Beatson puts it: 'The fruit of the tree must be eaten...and those who refuse to participate - or be aware of their participation - in the taint of matter, cannot experience redemption...life will remain only at the level of "having' or 'doing", and both the crimes and the triumph lack justification' (The Skiapod 225, 226).

Because Dorothy constantly experiences life at second hand, continually flees from experience, finds security only in the 'blessed' anonymity' of flight (both literal and figurative) as it carries her back '...with speed and discretion to Europe' (394), she has to do more than merely perceive a continuity between the temporal, physical self, and the spiritual, aspirant self. She has to establish a connection between her past and present selves, and find the point where ability to experience has given way to self-immolation. Only by re-capturing her spontaneity, her willingness to live every aspect of her life, will she reach a stage where she can confront her spiritual self with any degree of sincerity and success. Thus she returns to 'Kudjeri', the source of all that she

remembers as happiness and the symbol of her spiritual and physical roots.

In her mental return, she '...recognise[s] an avator in every skeleton tree and then their own totems casuarina and willow the oval rosebed in front of a house from which the no longer revengeful siblings tumble down to greet the travellers and merge at last into one another' (422). In this dream lie all Dorothy's hopes; the incarnation of a deity to point the way to the union of self and soul is projected onto 'Kudjeri's' trees, the hoped-for worship and union with her clan (and individual) image is expressed in the finding of the totem, and her final vision is one of her past self, one of the 'no longer revengeful siblings', tumbling down to greet her and merging with her present self 'at last'.

The actual return to 'Kudjeri', however, does not live up to Dorothy's dream. Instead of '..driving on a positive mission with her brother', she feels 'they were in fact allowing the past to suck them back' (448), and admits that there has been no essential change of emotional or spiritual orientation, even though they are ostensibly returning to seek renewal: 'Emotionally at least, things were what they used to be, the tall poppies bowing mock apologies to those who held them guilty of the worst' (449). Basil's boyhood ritual of the pie that Dorothy allows herself to participate in provokes only '...tears hurtling hot down her cheeks to join the mess round her mouth', and a thought that '...she came close to

committing it [suicide] each time she betrayed the past' (452, 453). The thought is a revealing one, in that it hints at Dorothy's realisation that the pilgrimage into the past, apparently for self-resurrection, is in fact a search for self-justification, prompted by their decision to 'murder' Elizabeth by having her committed to the Thorogood Village. This idea is confirmed later when the two struggle to remove the old boot that Basil finds in the implement shed. As they fight to free themselves from what comes to represent a natural deformity (491), they fight '...for their self-justification and freedom from awfulness' (492). In addition, as the siblings approach 'Kudjeri' the sky '..drained as shallow as a sheet of colourless waxed paper had resumed its cyclic promises: all of them mysteries which strangers drowning in their purple depths must fail to solve' (456). The strangers are Basil and Dorothy, and they are indeed 'drowning' in their own 'purple depths', unable to participate in the cyclic development of time or self.

When Dorothy reads her father's copy of the Charterhouse of Parma during her first night at 'Kudjeri', she '...thought how she would enslave others, Anne Macrory for a start, and perhaps one or two of the children, simply by using her eyes' (467). The desire is identified with the character of Sauseverina, who '..wandered after that into deeper velvet' and imagines herself the possessor of a love that '..can only be the purest noblest occurring with a delicacy Stendhal cannot realise' (468), a thought she prefaces with; 'It could not be called adultery' (467). The incident has irony from

several perspectives. Elizabeth Hunter, too, is identified with Sauseverina, and in that guise she inspires a true love in Alfred. But to deserve that love she fights several other love battles - with Athol Shreve and Arnold Wyburd - real adulteries conducted in the parents' bed Dorothy sleeps in. The 'purest noblest' love is hers only after she has ceased to be Sauserverina, the woman who aimed '...to possess rather than be possessed' (483). Dorothy, however, wants only to emulate her mother's Sauserverina role, thinking thereby to reach a pure, noble love. What she does not realise is that the character is flawed and has to be transcended. Thus she does not indulge in more than dream adulteries: '...till Fabrizio breaks open his bronze and there is the knuckle with this one ugly scab on Basil Bas Ber Bazzurl' (468). She is unable to see that her Sauserverina role is not a final answer, that it has to be played out in all its sordidness and anguish, and it is then only a stepping stone to confrontation with true Being.

When Macrory 'barge[s] in' (483) to the study where Dorothy is attempting to 'woo her father's charity' (482), she notices that 'Rory Macrory was a man who had not been designed for clothes: they emphasised all they were meant to conceal' (484). She responds to her involuntary observation by concentrating '...harder than ever on her own wrist' (484). With his 'inarticulate mind' in a 'highly articulated' body (486), he is reminiscent of (and contrasted to) Edvard Pehl - whom Elizabeth Hunter 'seduced' far more convincingly than Dorothy does Rory. Dorothy, playing her

mother's role, fails to play it to the full, and ends by humiliating herself when she offers payment for their stay. Rory responds to her gesture with the words: '"I have never thought of friendship as something you pay for, Dorothy. Not like love"'. Dorothy is humiliated, thinking 'If he had only left it at that, but he didn't: he carried on smiling at her, for an improbable proposition she had made, or worse, a professional service she demanded and he could only half-heartedly perform' (506). As she leaves the room she is haunted by her mother's voice taunting her with the parody of the Edvard-Elizabeth encounter that her confrontation with Rory has become: 'Whatever the name - Hubert Edvard Rory - didn't you know Dorothy it's the same man one chases? With mother forcing you to look back it was impossible to escape shame' (506). So Rory remains a dream adultery, emphasised by the fact that her Sanseverina dream thought '...and there is the knuckle with this one ugly scab' picks up the observation 'He was picking at the scab on his knuckle' (484) she makes during her first conversation with him.

Her other dream lover, although not mentioned as she lies in bed, also parodies an experience of her mother's. During her first night at the club, shortly after her arrival in Australia, she dreams of Arnold Wyburd's '...untying the pink ribbon which holds your character your deeds together Arnold W as methodical as Edvard with the v..she was only consoled by the touch of milky legal silk his long old transparent testicles dangling trailing over her thighs' (209,210).

She is horrified by her dream, and at 'Kudjeri', as she walks away from the study and Rory, she hears her mother's voice: 'Nobody - least of all you Dorothy - likes to admit to all the names Arnold isn't one it would be too ridiculous..' (506,507). Elizabeth Hunter - or Dorothy's conscience - is right, it would be too ridiculous. Arnold's adultery with Mrs Hunter allows him to 'leap a barrier' (37), to experience a brief spiritual translation '...as flesh was translated into light air nothing at all' (578). Dorothy is not capable of experiencing this herself, let alone inspiring it in others.

Thus, Dorothy's conception of her Sanseverina role as the agent which will free the love 'which has been imprisoned a lifetime in this tower which is also incidentally a body' is an ironic one. Not only is the way she envisages her Sanseverina role shown up by Elizabeth Hunter's, it collapses into a fantasy of incest (albeit spiritual incest at this stage) with Basil: 'till Fabrizio breaks open his bronze..oh Basil Bas Ber Bazzurl tu es le seul à me comprendre' (468). Her Sanseverina is undermined not only because Elizabeth Hunter has played the role more efficiently than she, but because she adopts the character in artifice only. Her 'adultery' will be incest - the interpenetration of her self and a self equally lacking, resulting not in an exchange of identity for a fuller one, but a relegation to a self made the more arid by its pseudo-experience of spiritual unity.

On the same evening as her last encounter with Rory, Dorothy cries to Basil when he comes into her room: '"What have we got unless each other? Aren't we, otherwise - bankrupt?"' (508). So the two spiritually bankrupt beings comfort each other in Elizabeth Hunter's bed, their '...bones (almost) broken by their convulsions on this shuddering rack' (508). When they look out of the window at the moonlit landscape of 'Kudjeri', a short while later, Dorothy calls it '"beautiful, but sterile"' (509). Basil's reply and Dorothy's reciprocation place the seal on their empty union: '"That's what it isn't, in other circumstances." "Other circumstances aren't ours."' And so they lie 'huddled together', trying '...to conjure their former illusion of warmth, under a reality of wretched blankets' (509). The incident marks the end of their pilgrimage to 'Kudjeri'.

The next morning Dorothy turns away from Basil, unwilling to face the consequences of what is probably the only experience of her life that could have provided the impetus for spiritual change (Bliss Patrick White's Fiction 145). Characteristically, she wants to run away: 'If only she could lock a door, lose the key, and never again open' (540). White's final comment on Dorothy as she leaves 'Kudjeri' sets the seal on her spiritual failure, a failure which like so much else in her life, is clarified by reference to her mother. Elizabeth, always voracious, collected jewels, gloating over the exotic, brilliant objects. But after the eye of the storm, after she has perceived herself as 'a flaw in the centre of this jewel of light' (409), she tells '...her once blazing, if now

extinct beads' (42). When Dorothy leaves the farm, 'A sword of light from the risen sun clashed with the rings she had not been wearing at 'Kudjeri'' (541). For her, there are only the lesser jewels.

Basil is different from Dorothy in that, when she refuses to participate in 'the taint of matter', her refuses only to be aware of his participation. In a sense, this makes him closer than his sister to his mother's spiritual state. Where Dorothy keeps herself aloof and sterile, Basil, like Elizabeth, is at least willing to plunge himself into the excesses of life. This he shows when he sleeps with Flora, experiences completely the sordid encounters of Bangkok, has the courage to return to 'Kudjeri' in an attempt to reconnect with his past, and when he does not turn away from the reality of his incest with Dorothy. But, where his mother's 'writhings' are all attempts to gain a glimpse of true Being, Basil's become performances, self-conscious struttings across an uncomfortably exposed stage. He does not allow his intimate, spiritual self to experience the lashings of his physical being, and comes close to admitting this several times in the novel. Sitting in the Botanic Gardens (ironically separated by a hedge from his sister, who is being tormented by the sight of lovers on the grass), he thinks: 'There had been a time when he saw clearly, right down to the root of the matter, before his perception had retired behind a legemain of technique and the dishonesties of living' (264). And when he considers his intention to have his mother committed to the Thorogood

Village earlier in the novel, he realises that 'When he had thought himself ready for piercing the heart of the matter with a ruthless blade, he might, he feared, fall back on brandishing the theatrical counterfeit of a weapon' (125).

All of Basil's appearances in the novel are characterised by the 'brandishing' of his theatrical weapons. His first meeting with his dying mother is called 'the theatre of reunion', which is played according to a script and judged in terms of '...the rapport he was establishing with the whole auditorium' (120). During the interlude in Bangkok, he is described as '...this old ham it was their misfortune to bump into' (129), and as he leaves the hotel room, the scene of the debâcle with Janie, he thinks: 'Thank God for your clothes: nothing like costume for security' (139). During the meeting with Wyburd and Dorothy he is described as 'the shining actor' (261), and when he offers Flora a drink in his hotel room he becomes '...intent on the touches with which he would build up a performance into something recognisably his' (301). He even goes as far as to say: 'I have been able to control my own life ever since I learnt the technique of living, which is also the technique of acting' (234). All these, and many more references, point to Basil's shielding himself from the essential reality of his experiences by assuming his actor role, protecting himself with technique and assumed responses.

The protective screen placed around the bed of Basil's childhood becomes an evocative metaphor for his current state

of arrested growth. He describes it as ...'that gray screen, or blackcloth, he had seen in his boyhood as standing between himself and nothing: and which he resurrected even now in times of flux and fallibility.' (234). Placed to protect him from draughts, it becomes in itself a threat, hinting terrifyingly at the awful things it might be screening from his gaze. Basil admits that although he was desperately afraid of it, although 'the strapped arm made it agony to watch the screen', (234) he kept attempting to turn towards it: '"I longed to look behind the screen, but was too afraid of what I might find"' (237). He acknowledges that the terrifying, yet comforting spectre of that childhood screen has stayed with him for the rest of his life: '"This screen thing - it materialises again when you feel you're beginning to slip...You're less than ever inclined to look behind it. And you're sure that if it blows over, you're lost"' (238).

The adult Basil's screen is the role of actor, which he plays instead of himself when he is in difficult, demanding, spiritual situations. But it is also Lear, the character that tempts him the most because it is one in which, though publicly successful, he feels he has failed It is the screen between his competent, easily assumed Don Alvaro, in which he makes a 'fine figure' (307), moving his audiences with the lines he does not believe in; ('God neither wishes nor seeks anything. He is eternal calm. It is in wishing nothing that you will come to mirror God' (307)), and Mitty Jacka's idea of the impromptu play - for Basil representative of the 'great suicide risk' (576). Although Lear represents agony

to him because he can '...perhaps only [be] begotten by purity of the inner man' (228), Basil continually plays with the idea of re-attempting the role, even though it means abandoning the comfortable Don Alvaro, and having '...to start again, imposing physical penance, and more painful still, by dragging up form the wells of the unconscious the sludge in which truth is found' (123). Mitty Jacka's liver-stained note is a more accurate observation on the state of Basil's soul than she knows: '...an actor tends to ignore the part which fits him best <u>his life</u> Lear the old unplayable is in the end a safer bet the unplayed I...' (238). For Basil, whose acting is a means of defence, it is impossible to take on Mitty's play, which has as its theme the expression of the fullest self.

Impossible, that is, unless he can find the courage to take down the screen, face the horrors of self that lie behind it, begin again, and this time '...ask to create one <u>whole</u> human being' (143). And how better to begin again than by returning to one's childhood? Thus he decides to return to 'Kudjeri'. As he says to Dorothy '"...this journey might put me in touch with a reality which I no long - which <u>everybody</u>, right? tends to underrate and forget - and which no artist, of any kind, can afford to ignore". (421).

But, as we have noted, Dorothy and Basil's 'pilgrimage' to their childhood is approached, not with true aspirations to rebirth, but with the intention of finding self-justification. Instead of approaching 'Kudjeri' Shriven of

the self, as Elizabeth Hunter was before the eye, Basil affirms as he stands in the frozen garden that 'What he craved was confirmation of his own intrinsic worth as opposed to possibly spurious achievement' (460). As he muses, he senses that '...the house behind would probably never share its secrets with one who had renounced life for theatre' (460).

He comes closer to reuniting the two sides of his self, the actor and the man, when, at the dam, he thinks that '...he would have liked to feel certain that he had actually loved somebody, that he had not been only acting it' (474). He transforms the desire into symbolic action, taking off his shoes, and walking into the water, an image here of purification and spiritual change, and reminiscent of Elizabeth Hunter's final, transubstantiated holy sea. There he finds, as a reward, for daring the painful, fanged clay, that his art can 'come to terms with his surroundings'. In metaphorical terms, he des as Dido in his speech; stands on the edge of the '...wild sea banks, and wavid [his] love to come again '...(475) by speaking from his soul to the emptiness around him, and finding silence 'the applause he valued.' But the protective actor, uncomfortably exposed by 'The light now streaming over the eroded ridge [which] was her [Elizabeth Hunter's] same glistening white' (476) suddenly returns. With panic he thinks of the imminent Macrory's reaction to his 'embarassing' gift (476). 'Walking not so steady now on his Shakespeare legs ' he makes his way back to the bank, ignoring the vision of his mother's

'old freckled claw...beckoning through the brown water...' (476).

This failure to hold on to the moment when his 'art came to terms with his surroundings', when the actor in him united with the man, leaves him 'stranded in his own egotism and ineptitude' (477). He pays for his shortcomings. The blood that he sheds from his cut foot represents more than a physical wound, and when '...the clay impressions of hooves, or teeth' bite into his 'existing wounds' (474,477), it is a symbol of the return of all the past humiliations and sufferings - sharper now for their pointlessness. Once again, it is Elizabeth Hunter who shows Basil in his true colours. She has found the strength to wade into the purgative, renewing water, she has understood that screens have to be lifted, she has played out all the roles that life offered her, and so, finally, she has become the 'one whole human being' that Basil so much wants to create. This idea is emphasised by the fact that it is Elizabeth who most successfully plays Lear in the novel. As Bliss points out, it is she '...who has the Lear scene, discovering herself in the storm as "the thing itself. Unaccommodated man" and a "bare forked animal" (143).

On the flight home, he visualises a scene from the Jacka play, revealing as he does so the irrevocable fact of his spiritual failure. He identifies Elizabeth Hunter's lilac wig with Lear's crown, but when it his turn to wear it he finds 'the wig the crown' (574) is made of plasticine. He

comments wryly that 'Plasticine will suffer more on the road to Dover...' (574), showing that he is aware of how ill-equipped he is to walk the path to the whole self that he still holds as an ideal. He imagines a rebirth scene; '...natch it's the womb stint you're got to expect in living theatre well it happens doesn't it...' (574,575). But his comment; '...at least you were born at last...', is more indicative of relief at having reached the end of the 'writhing and lithing' tunnel of bodies than it is of having achieved a new state of being. The final part of his dream is of Dorothy's uprooting his penis, symbolising his death as a man. But man and actor are inseparable, as Basil realises when he, as the plasticine king, says: '...then I am free if only you take my tongue too and perhaps uvula for good measure no more an actor...' (575). So his failure at 'Kudjeri' to reunite his two selves ends in the sterilisation of both Basil the actor and Basil the man. He wakes and thinks only to 'Persuade this vivandière to remember charity and bring out another little bottle of scotch' (576).

The spiritual sterility of Elizabeth Hunter's children, weighed against her spiritual translation, provides a balance of opposites. Had Patrick White not ended the novel with a scene centred on Mary de Santis, however, the balance might arguably have remained at equilibrium, with praise and blame distributed equally on both sides. But he does end the novel with Mary, and in so doing places on Elizabeth Hunter's final triumph the seal of his favour and approval.

Mary, of all Elizabeth's acolytes, is the one who has '...deeper access to the heart of the creature around whom they revolved...' (18). She possesses the ability to communicate, to perceive what Buber calls the 'thou' in the other and to speak to it, thereby conferring spiritual redemption on herself. This is shown when she takes Elizabeth's hand, and is 'equisitely united' with her in '...a world of trust, to which their bodies and minds were no more than entrance gates' (11). In Elizabeth, she perceives '...the beauty she herself had witnessed, and love as she had come to understand it',and it is she, therefore, who is most fit to communicate the nature of Elizabeth's triumph. She acts out what she has learned when she feeds the birds on her last day at Moreton Drive: 'Light was strewing the park as she performed her rites. Birds followed her, battering the air, settling on the grass...She ducked, to escape from this prism of dew and light, this tumult of wings and her own unmanageable joy...The light she could not ward off: it was by now too solid, too possessive; herself possessed' (589). The bitter words especially show that Mary, too, has achieved a spiritual translation, a transcendence of earthbound self, and this makes her decision to '...take this first and last rose to her patient Irene Fletcher' (589) important. The rose is symbolic of the beauty and love Elizabeth Hunter has taught her, and her giving it to Irene is a symbol of her desire to pass on what she has learned to the paralysed child. As Beatson so aptly says; the rose hint 'at two modes of transcendence...the transcendence of continuity, through which the experience of one generations passed on, at

the end of a cycle, to the next, and the transcendence of life after death' (228).

Thus it is that Elizabeth Hunter's spiritual experience is made universal, accessible to all. Not dependent on unique artistic vision, as was the triumph of Hurtle Duffield, nor born of an almost megalomanic arrogance, as was Voss's search for self, Mrs Hunter's spiritual striving is not limited to a single consciousness, and does not, finally, depend on the vivisection of others. Through her, White found a means of constructively actualising his belief that the only hope for meaning in life lies in authentic self-transcendence, the striving for a spiritual reality that lies beyond immanent, human existence.

Notes

[1] 'Rodney Mather has taken this idea a step further. He points out that Voss is trying to find an individual identity outside of society, but finds the creative impulse of the novel to be the same attempt on White's part. He states that the novel is an example of the artist's unconscious desire to protect his self from contamination by others, and by the material world, concluding that it '..is demonstrably a great example of a nevertheless limited kind of art-self-projection...' (93). He maintains, finally that this flaws the novel, that '...the objects of his [White's] irony are too often men of straw, caricatures, only a token challenge to his own deeply embedded attitudes' (97).

[2] Voss's social isolation is emphasised by the many times he is referred to as 'the German'. Noel Macainsh suggests that the impressions evoked by this title, as well as the description evoked of the explorer's youth, link him '...to the various imperialistic superman versions of the "Renaissance man" (39), which are characterised by inwardness, extreme individualism and rejection of society. He suggests that these biographical factors, when incorporated in the narrative, become the social causes of Voss's isolation (The Character of Voss 38-40).

[3] White, Patrick. Voss. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979. All subsequent references are to this edition.

[4] Music, as Heseltine mentions, is a significant element in all White's work. He states that: 'It may be diffused into a pervasive pattern of metaphor...' or, as it is here, used '...as a means of evaluating character'.(69).

[5] Peter Beatson points out that this division of self is a theme in all White's novels: 'All his works embody the sense of a temperament divided: on the one hand turning away, through fear and fastidiousness, from life: on the other willing itself to turn back, to immerse itself in the stream, to involve itself in the world of compassion and passion' (The Three Stages 112).

[6] White has in fact identified Laura as Voss's 'anima' - the feminine side of himself (Flaws in the Glass 130).

[7] As Patricia Morley states: 'Frank...exemplifies what Voss would have been without his arrogance...[his] suicide...and life...expresses the novel's theme in its demonic form: "Atheisms is self-murder"' (127-128).

[8] Garebian suggests that the garden is a crucial image in Voss. A symbol of ordered society, it is contrasted to the untouched nature of the desert, which is antagonistic to human progress. Garebian allies Laura with the garden and Voss the desert, and states that through their union, the spirit behind the garden: '...an attempt to exorcise the spirit of the Australian terrain...' (564), is enriched and changed by the 'knowledge of soul' (569) attained in the desert.

[9] Dreams play an important part in all White's novels, as do drunkenness and delirium. They are portrayed as positive experiences, usually enabling the character to make a valuable perception. Van den Driesen suggests this is because White has a distrust of the purely rational. She quotes White as saying: '"I don't reject it [reason] but I think intuition is more important"' (79). This is clearly illustrated in Voss, where

the explorer's spiritual development is prompted by dreams and fantasies.

[10] For a detailed discussion of this aspect of the relationship between the two see Beston's article: "The Struggle for Dominance in 'Voss'" (Quadrant 16).

[11] White, Patrick. The Vivisector. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981. All subsequent references are to this edition.

[12] Brian Kiernan elaborates on this theme, suggesting that '...the natural Duffield and the social Courtney 'houses'...embody Hurtle's two selves...and express his conflicting impulses to surrender to the flow of life, or to impose his will on experience and control and shape it (104).

[13] Morley suggests that 'The spiritually aborted child (Kathy), like the pilgramage to Perialos, forcibly confronts us with the novel's paradoxes of Dreck and beauty, rottenness and purity. Both artists are nourished by the beauty and joy as well as the horror of their relationship, and art itself rejuvenates and purifies; (The Mystery of Unity 224,225).

[14] In her essay "Patrick White's 'The Vivisector'", Thelma Herring stresses the importance of this event. She says that 'It is an essential part of White's conception that Duffield the vivisector is also vivsected..[by] God, whom he himself describes as the Divine Vivisector and the Divine Destroyer...The artist in his role of vivisector usurps God's function, but the joke is on him when God turns artist and chooses him as victim' (10).

[15] White, Patrick. The Eye of the Storm. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982. All subsequent references are to this edition.

[16] For a discussion of the eye of the storm as a structural metaphor in the novel, see Michael Cotter's article "The function of imagery in Patrick White's novels".

[17] A 'noddy' is a species of seagull.

[18] Beston makes the point that, because the novel grants illumination to a mother who is dominating and destructive, it could seem '...to be mellow work of reconciliation to such a woman'. He goes on to say, however, that this is not so because '...in apotheosising Elizabeth Hunter, White has capitulated to the destructive mother that she represents' (The Making of the Artist 87). Perhaps the point is rather that White is not attempting to reconcile his readers to Elizabeth, but trying to show how destruction of others follows naturally from inauthentic existence.

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