

The University of Manitoba

Patrick White's Mirrors: The Doubleness of Everything

by

Phyllis D. Webster

A Thesis

submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the Degree of Master of Arts

Department of English

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PHYLLIS D. WEBSTER

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of
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To Nina Carr

who first introduced me

to the works of Patrick White

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Abbreviated Titles

FG Flaws in the Glass

AS The Aunt's Story

SM The Solid Mandala

TA The Twyborn Affair

MMO Memoirs of Many in One

. . . there is no fixity in mythical concepts; they come into being, alter, disintegrate, disappear completely.

Roland Barthes

It must go further still: that soul must become its own betrayer, its own deliverer, the one activity, the mirror turned lamp.

William Butler Yeats.

A novel is a mirror carried along a roadway.

Stendhal.

It is the phantom of our own self whose intimate relationship with and deep effect upon, our spirit casts us into Hell or transports us into Heaven.

Hoffman.

Introduction

The Flawed Mirror

Patrick White, Australian author and recipient of the Nobel Prize for Literature (1973), has published twelve novels, two collections of short stories and four plays as well as some poetry. In his autobiography, Flaws in the Glass: a self-portrait (1981), he claims that writing has "indulged my vanity by tricking myself out in words" which have sometimes conveyed the "truth." On other occasions, he feels that truth "is the property of silence -- at any rate the silences filling the space between words, and over those I sometimes have control" (FG 42). It is the incredible control of words and silences which has earned White an international reputation as well as a solid following of readers in his own country of Australia.

The predominant concern of the main characters in the novels from the first, Happy Valley (a novel which White despises and which he has deliberately allowed to go out of print), to the most recent, Memoirs of Many in One, is the question of the "doubleness of everything" which faces them. All of the characters search for release from the fragmentation which results from the knowledge of duality.

John Colmer in "Duality in Patrick White", states that while all the main characters can sense the harmony beyond

the multilayered and multifaceted doubleness of the inner and outer world, the mind and the body, matter and spirit, the masculine and the feminine self, the individual and society, European and Australian consciousness, words and silence, all must face the "actual pain of duality" (71).

The "mirror" or "glass," for White, is of central significance in the search for the answer to the pain of duality and fragmentation. The mirror or its equivalents (chandeliers, glass fragments, marbles, eyes and faces) becomes for White, and all his characters, an omnipresent symbol for the personal search for reconciliation with the duality in his or her nature. At first, the glass represents a barrier which exists between man and knowledge of himself. However, each individual who is seeking for his twin learns to pass through the barrier which separates the two worlds of "apparent opposites" (Morley, The Mystery of Unity 63) on the journey towards self-knowledge. The mirror always represents a membrane which is flawed, often wavering as does water in a pool, behind which the characters in the novels sense a harmony which escapes them on this side of the mirror.

It is through the journey behind the mirror that Theodora of The Aunt's Story, Arthur in The Solid Mandala, and Eddie in The Twyborn Affair come to some form of reconciliation with themselves and with existence in general. The mirror is not a static symbol, however, because as each character moves towards a personal vision the mirror acts as a vehicle of change and becomes

synonymous with movement forward, through, and sometimes beyond, the "pain" of fragmentation. As Alice discovered when she stepped through the mirror into Looking Glass Land, the journey is long, hazardous, and frustrating, but also can be a dynamic and creative experience. The journey into "the landscape of the soul" is also absolutely necessary for seekers of "truth." Like Homer's Ulysses, and Samuel Johnson's Rasselas, who leave home to travel far afield, White's travellers are "foreigners" who threaten the ordered world of the rest of society. White's compatriots and his readers are not always appreciative of the mirror in which White would show them. The journey is uncomfortable, because the end result for White is often a form of "madness" (as defined by "normal" standards) or a form of annihilation.

White has often said that The Aunt's Story, The Solid Mandala, and The Twyborn Affair are his favourite novels. These three will be used to explore the central significance of the mirror in all his work.

The first chapter will focus on The Aunt's Story (1948), one of the earliest works, and the one in which he uses the flawed and refracting mirror the most. The mirror for Theodora becomes the self-entrapment of a Narcissus, a reflection of a soul in the process of forming itself, a membrane which separates experience from intuition and illusion from reality. The final "reflection" is a conversation with Holstius, a "character" who represents "wholeness and totality" (Colmer, Patrick White 21) and who

is a mirror figure of herself.

The second chapter will discuss The Solid Mandala, considered a "middle period" novel, which is a double story. Through the mirrored journey of twins, Waldo and Arthur, White explores the "landscape of childhood," the struggle between the masculine and the feminine consciousness, and presents questions about faith, the gods, and the role of the written and spoken "word" in the life of an individual.

Chapter III will deal mainly with The Twyborn Affair. In this novel, the main character, the three reflections of the self seen in the mirror, moves away from the flaws and pain to a form of reconciliation and personal sense of acceptance of his/her dualism. The mirror becomes less and less important as the "current version" walks out into the streets of wartime London. The final pages of The Twyborn Affair pose the question of whether "truth can be the worst destroyer of all" (FG 70).

The conclusion will glance at White's most recent (and perhaps his final) work, Memoirs of Many or One (October 1986), in which White comes to an understanding of the other side of the mirror without the mediation of the mirror. The mirror becomes an archetype which, when no longer needed, simply fades away: in this novel, the mirror is no longer needed because the "I" is able to meet the "I."

In his autobiography, Flaws in the Glass, Patrick White describes standing in front of a gilded but flawed

mirror in which "I fluctuated in the watery glass; according to the light I retreated into the depths of the aquarium, or trembled in the foreground like a thread of pale-green samphire. Those who thought they knew me were ignorant of the creature I scarcely knew myself" (FG 1). He is haunted by "this face in the glass which has spent a lifetime searching for what it believes . . . to be, the truth" (FG 70).

White, from early childhood, has seen himself as being different and, therefore, as an "outsider." When very young, he had overheard an adult conversation in which he was described as a "changeling." As a teenager in England, he saw himself as a "foreigner," which indeed he was, an Australian in England. However, the differences he felt extended beyond accent and idiom. He wondered if he were a "cuckoo" inhabiting the wrong nest, a "fragmented character" (FG 32) who never knew to which group he belonged. His choice of writing as a life-long profession was "the means of introducing to a disbelieving audience the cast of contradictory characters of which I am composed" (FG 20). One of the contradictions which he recognized at an early age was his sexual ambivalence. He claims, however, to have "not so much a homosexual as a mind possessed by the spirit of man or woman according to actual situations or the characters I become in my writing" (FG 80-81). His homosexuality confers upon him a "freedom" in that he can "range through every variation of the human mind, to play so many roles in so many

contradictory envelopes of flesh" (FG 35). It is not surprising, therefore, that all the characters in his novels have a strong sense of the feminine and masculine side of their natures; the struggle between the doubleness is a source of tension, and for some is also a source of growth. The recognition of the inner fragmentation leads White on the "inevitably painful search for the twin who might bring a softer light to bear on my bleakly illuminated darkness" (FG 35).

Chapter IThe Aunt's Story: the irreconcilable halves

I had learned to be a citizen of Mirror City...

Janet Frame

Theodora Goodman, the traveller of The Aunt's Story, is White's first important "outsider" (Heltay, "The Novels of Patrick White" 96). From earliest childhood Theodora has failed to slot into her mother's values of social advancement and the acceptance of material values and is, therefore, constantly aware of the "distance that separates". She is always aware of the mirror which separates her from some deeper knowing of the real Theodora. Because she has been made to feel ugly and socially gauche, she has "eyes [which are] shy of mirrors" (AS 12). While looking at herself in a glass, "She turned and destroyed the reflection more especially the reflection of the eyes, by walking away. They sank into the green water and were lost" (AS 27). The mirror represents a barrier through which she is unable to pass at this stage in her emotional and spiritual development. From an early age, however, she begins to imaginatively identify with the dreams and illusions of other people in her search for answers to her questions about the mystery of the world. She uses other people as a glass, in an attempt to learn

about the inner world which she senses is there. Her first important identification with another individual occurs on her twelfth birthday when she is thrown to the ground by a lightning bolt which destroys a huge oak tree in the yard of her home, Meroë. The "Man who was Given his Dinner," a former colleague of George Goodman, understands that this event has forever changed her life: " You'll see lot of funny things, Theodora Goodman. You'll see them because you've eyes to see. And they'll break you. But perhaps you'll survive. No girl that was thrown down by lightning on her twelfth birthday, and then got up again, is going to be swallowed easy by rivers of fire" (AS 45). He promises to return, but she instantly knows she will never see him again, and she realizes "In all that she did not know there was this certainty. She began to feel that knowing this might be the answer to many of the mysteries. And she felt afraid for what was prepared" (AS 46).

The movement towards knowledge or truth for White's characters is often connected with a mirror or some other reflective surface. At school, a place where she feels very isolated, she finds "consolation" in the deal mirror in the room which she shares with three other girls, including her sister Fanny. She gazes at the "mirror-face" which was "a vessel waiting for experience to fill it, and then the face finally would show" (AS 51). This narcissistic gazing is unrewarded even though the face had "begun to form, its bone." Theodora discovers that the "dark eyes asking the unanswerable questions" (AS 51) in the mirror have to see

and experience life before real knowledge of self and the mysteries of life is possible.

Her second important movement towards knowledge of the other side of the mirror occurs when she is out hunting with Frank Parrott, a would-be suitor, and her "artistic" sister Fanny. Theodora, who is a better shot than Frank, lets him shoot rabbits while she deliberately misses. However, she finally kills a little hawk with which she has identified: "Now she took her gun. She took aim, and it was like aiming at her own red eye. She could feel the blood-beat the other side of the membrane. And she fired. And it fell" (AS 71). Theodora recognizes that the movement to the other side of the membrane or mirror is actually a self destructive act: "I was wrong . . . but I shall continue to destroy myself, right down to the last of my several lives" (AS 71). Knowledge at this point does not bring peace; it is in fact painful and even fatal. It is a theme which Patrick White enlarges upon in all his novels.

Theodora's second contact with Frank Parrott is one of these moments of insight which is linked with the mirror's capacity to reveal that which the individual senses but does not know. At a local ball, she dances so wildly and uninhibitedly that she disgraces herself in front of family and friends. That night, in a dream, she reaches out to touch a face, her own before the lightning had struck, but finds that she is holding "the faceless body that she had not yet recognized, and the lightning struck deep." She

rises and walks into the corridor and "A stale cry came out of the mirror in the passage, choked, as if it just could not scream, even in its agony" (AS 77). The demonic aspect of the mirror haunts many of the characters throughout the novels but is also a source of parody as will be discussed later.

Theodora's quest through the membrane of mirrors appears to become an "anti-quest" says critic John Colmer (Patrick White 25): she uses the mirror as a way of exposing herself to others. When speaking to Huntley Clarkson, another potential suitor, she takes refuge in her ugliness, which she "summoned . . . up from all the reflections that had ever faced her in the glass" (AS 99).

However, even though the mirror is used by Theodora to learn about herself or to expose herself to others, it is important to recognize that only those characters who wish to journey and learn are connected to mirrors. For instance, Huntley Clarkson, a well-to-do lawyer with pretensions to be a cultural connoisseur, appears not to have a mirror in his well-planned bathroom and shaves with little regard to his face. He is, after all, a person who collects pictures for their "value" and listens to music "as a logical stage in developing the evening after dinner" (AS 104). Similarly, Mrs. Goodman, who has no inner life and sees only the solid world of everyday existence, is never seen looking into a mirror or projecting herself into the world of inner reality beyond

the glass.

In contrast, Moraïtis, the Greek cellist, becomes for Theodora a person who is always connected with mirrors. She identifies with him firstly through their discovery that both come from the country of bones. Meroë and Greece are both associated with bareness and therefore bones. Theodora, who confesses to not having seen Greece, is told by Moraïtis, "It is not necessary to see things. . . . If you know" (AS 108). Moraïtis and Theodora are compatriots and, therefore, Theodora is able imaginatively to enter his room of mirrors as he prepares for a concert. He stands in a room with two gilt mirrors "which tried to contain him, but which failed, defeating its own purpose in reflections of reflections" (AS 110). Theodora watches him as he watches himself (an act which is repeated in The Solid Mandala) as each of his solemn acts "was repeated by the mirror, and isolated, and magnified, without detracting from its privacy" (AS 110). As Moraïtis wrings from the body of the cello "a passionate music, which had been thrust upon him by the violins," Theodora becomes so close to him that "He could breathe into her mouth. He filled her mouth with long aching silences between the deeper notes that reached down deep into her body" (AS 111). The spiritual and sexual consummation through his music leaves her knowing that the waiting for something to happen has ended, "Now existence justified itself" (AS 112).

This knowledge, however, is not sufficient. Mirrors,

while her mother lives, always take on a demonic aspect. While playing cards with her mother, Theodora feels "the hatred in her mother's hand" at which time "Sometimes the mirrors swelled into the room, and the chandelier prepared its avalanche of glass" (AS 95). Driven to despair by her mother's taunts, she realizes that "Love and hate [the twin emotions] . . . are alternate breaths falling from the same breast" (AS 122). She picks up a knife "very thin and impervious" as she enters the mirrored life of Jack Frost, a baker who had recently killed his wife and daughters: "She remembered him standing by the dresser. She could see the black hairs on his wrist. . . ." The glance beyond the membrane of the mirror is broken as she sees the cup "which Mrs. Goodman held to her chin and its trembling beard of white skin" (AS 123). Theodora knows, "I have a core of evil in me that is altogeter hateful" (AS 121) and that she is "guilty of a murder that has not been done . . . blood is only an accompaniment" (AS 123). The killing of the hawk and the unfulfilled murder of her mother are reminders to Theodora that her spiritual journey has only just begun; she can see into the mirror and is fully aware of her own inner fragmentation but has not yet learned to step to the other side of the glass independently.

In the second section of the book, "Jardin Exotique", Patrick White expands the mirror into another stage, in that Theodora herself becomes a mirror for other people's lives and in so doing explores her own life and psyche.

The reader must identify with Theodora very closely as she becomes a character or even two characters in the life of another individual. This fragmentation and the necessity of being split into "myriad fragments" as each individual asserts his "dividedness" is introduced in the quotation from Henry Miller at the beginning of "Jardin Exotique" (AS 133). It is the "great fragmentation of maturity" which Theodora faces as he arrives at the Hôtel du Midi on the French Riviera.

"Always in White, illusion and reality are interchangeable", B. Kiernan tells us (Patrick White 25). All of the events which occur in "Jardin Exotique" have their counterpoint or mirror image in the earlier section, "Meroë." Theodora enters the lives, memories, and delusions of the other people at the Hôtel so fully that she rehearses her own life, and therefore expiates some of the pain of those former experiences. Theodora, who has left the constricted life of an "Aunt" in Australia for the freedom of Europe, "the gothic world" (AS 145), enters the "jardin" hoping it will be "the goal of a journey" (AS 139). However, she soon "began to be afraid she had returned to where she had begun, the paths of the garden were the same labyrinth, the cactus limbs the same aching stone" (AS 140). The inhabitants of the Hôtel are an odd collection of people, each of whom plays a role which he/she works hard at preserving. Like Monsieur Durand, the proprietor of the Hôtel du Midi who is able "to fit the landscape to the guest", Theodora is able to fit each

person's life so carefully that, like Alice who slips through the melting glass to the Looking Glass world, she becomes a character in that person's life. Burrows in "Jardin Exotique: The Central Phase of The Aunt's Story states that Theodora, in identifying so strongly with other lives, "is facing her own problems in the subtly altered perspectives that these other lives afford" (156). In Sokolnikov's words, Theodora creates "the illusion of . . . people." However, she is soon to learn that "once created, they choose their own realities" (AS 237).

Young Katina Pavlou, whose parents have abandoned her to the care of a governess, Miss Griggs, had experienced an earthquake in her childhood, an event akin to the lightning strike of Theodora's twelfth birthday. Just as Lou, her niece who has "eyes which could read a silence" (AS 13), and whose face was as "clear as mirrors" (AS 13), Katina asks to have Theodora "as a kind of Aunt" (AS 143). Theodora becomes "a mirror, held to the girl's experience" (AS 142). The earthquake is resuffered with Theodora as governess to the small child. The experience is so real that "Theodora held the body of the child. She felt the movement of death and life. Across the water, a black island moved, quite distinctly, under a chalky puff of cloud" (AS 144). The whole event is a re-enactment of the day lightning struck the tree. Katina, like young Theodora, feels abandoned by her parents and the black island mirrors the black volcanic hills of Meroe. It is important that Theodora does not take the role of the

child Katina; she is the comforting adult that she herself needed at the time of crisis.

J. F. Burrows describes this movement from reality to another reality as a "fugue," both in the psychiatric sense of a flight from reality, but also in the sense of creating "a painful personal music, of which the themes are intertwined" (156). It is from this point that Theodora moves from "reality" to the mirror or "fugue" world with so much regularity that Theodora (and the sensitive reader) see "behind the thin membrane that just separates experience from intuition" (AS 155). It is this understanding which makes this section of the novel one of the finest parts of Patrick White's writing.

Another movement through the "membrane" occurs with Mrs. Rapallo, nee van Tuyl, of American origin, who tells of a suitor in her youth, a Lucius, or Grant, or Randolph Goodman who had a cleft chin. Almost immediately, Theodora has a conversation with the other "Goodman," and with the young Elsie van Tuyl, who wishes advice about her forthcoming trip to Europe. Theodora listens "because it was her duty," but when introduced to Mr. Rapallo she does not turn to look at him, "because she knew that Mr. Rapallo would not possess a face" (AS 158). Theodora's entry into the actual life of another resident of the Hôtel is possible only if those characters have the possibility of expressing or sensing an inner world. Whether Mr. Rapallo exists physically or not is hardly the question in the Whitean world; the fact that he does not have a face means

that Theodora cannot see herself in him. Even though Theodora is able to move directly into the role of a person in another person's life or act as a mirror to that individual, she is unable at this stage in her journey to completely identify with the person she mirrors. She knows that she is still a watcher in the mirror world, rather than a full participant in the action.

It is with Wetherby, a man whose eyes "were as clear as mirrors," and who understands that Theodora is mirroring other lives and is therefore creating them, that she reaches an important conclusion. Wetherby is obsessed with himself: "You will love your obsession. You will love the faces of mirrors. You will love your own anxiety" (AS 233). Theodora realizes that the act of being a mirror to others is a task which is necessary to her life at this moment; it is, in fact, her role and her way of beginning to understand the landscape beyond the membrane of the mirror.

Liselotte, the artist, helps Theodora realize that the act of mirroring other lives is a self-destructive as well as a creative and necessary act. Liselotte owns a glass pagoda (a house of mirrors) in which Theodora sees "her own soul" (AS 167) and which Liselotte destroys with a knife. This "murder" is a mirroring of the moment when Theodora had picked up a knife to kill her mother. Theodora, who is witness to the destruction of this treasured object, raises her hands to protect herself from the "glass which did not fall" (AS 167). Liselotte, the seemingly

destructive artist, proclaims that "We must destroy everything, everything, even ourselves. Then at last when there is nothing, perhaps we shall live" (AS 168). In a strange way, Liselotte reincarnates Theodora's mother, Julia Goodman, in her inability to deal with the life beyond the membrane of the glass. Theodora, on the other hand, has the partial capacity to deal with that other world and is left "Waiting without mirrors for fresh reflections" (AS 168). The destruction of the glass pagoda releases Theodora from the destructive hold of her dead mother and she is able to move forward on her journey into the mirrored land where knowledge of the second self lies.

It is with General Sokolnikov that the ability to mirror other lives and learn from the identification rises to a climax. In Alyosha Sergei Sokolnikov's life, she becomes three women: Varvara, the woman he loved; Ludmilla, his sister; and Anna Stepanovna, the rich owner of the estate. Varvara is the woman Theodora would like to have been, beautiful, flirtatious, successful with men as was her sister Fanny; Ludmilla is Theodora herself, with a yellow complexion, a moustache, a "sense of duty" (AS 169), and a masculine view of life. Her role as Anna Stepanovna reflects once again Julia Goodman, the "vicious woman of a certain age" (AS 169). Varvara marries another man as Fanny married Frank Parrott; Anna Stepanovna lives a life of hostility and meanness and Ludmilla is eventually shot as she and her brother run through the woods to

escape. Alyosha Sergei leaves her to die alone in the snow. Theodora, who can explain nothing, least of all her "several lives" (AS 213), is, however, made aware that she has "never seen more clearly But what I see remains involved" (AS 313). She learns from Sokolnikov that what she has been doing is creating an illusion: "Illusions," he says, "are necessary. It is necessary to accept" (AS 236). However, after the creation of the illusion of other people, "they choose their own realities" (AS 237).

Each person in turn reveals his illusory self to Theodora. Sokolnikov is, in fact, not a General but a mere Major. However, for Theodora he is the closest person in "Jardin Exotique" and to a certain extent mirrors her relationship with her father, whom she adored as a child and rejected later. Both men were mortals, wise and foolish at the same time. Through entering the life of Sokolnikov, she understands that all human beings must be accepted for who they are and be allowed to choose their own realities. All the characters have been slaves to their illusions, and by acting as a mirror for them and in using them to see her own life more clearly, she has moved one step closer to the understanding of her many "contradictory envelopes of flesh" (FG 35).

Theodora, as first self has been journeying into the land of the second self, and becoming acquainted with the many different faces in which that second self allows itself to be seen. Keppler points out that all human

beings in our search for the second self or twin walk not in a straight line looking at one face after another, but rather that:

we are finding our way around in a circle, looking at one face and then another, but always looking in the same direction, inward toward the owner of them all, the strange creature who in being second necessarily partakes of being the first, who in his oppositeness to his counterpart is always the same, who walks without yet is rooted within: the ancient paradox of the self beside the self. (Keppler 13)

It is in part three, "Holstius", that Theodora moves towards a deeper understanding of the "solitary land of the individual experience, in which no fellow footfall is ever heard" (Olive Schreiner in AS 9), and in which the meaning of the mirror once again changes. Theodora has literally left the "Old Land," the "gothic" world of Europe on the verge of war, and crossed the ocean to the fields of "trumpeting" corn (AS 255) of America, the "New Land", the "Abyssinia" of her mythical childhood and of Rasselas, the returned pilgrim from the search for happiness. Having re-experienced her life at Meroe in "Jardin Exotique," she is ready to face the world unencumbered. To aid in the "newness" of her life, she throws away her handbag, her tickets, and adopts a new name, Miss Pilkington. She has literally left her old life, its values and "realities," behind. After connecting briefly with the Johnsons, who kindly dispense food and advice, she climbs a mountain to a small house with windows which are blank "because there is nothing inside" (AS 274) and therefore do not reflect.

When standing inside, she finds the the windows are coated with dust, so there is no light, nothing in which to reflect or to be reflected by. Her visitor, Holstius, immediately reminds her of the "Man who was Given his Dinner" and of how as a child she had been "infused with a warmth of love that was most thinly separated from expectation of sorrow" (AS 276). Holstius replies, "The separating membrane [between happiness and sorrow] is negligible" (AS 277). Holstius is not a person who she is mirroring. He is, in fact, the mirror half of herself, a unification of all those "contradictory" and fragmented characters whom she has met in all her circular journey. It is Holstius, the second self of Theodora, who is able to say, "I expect you to accept the two irreconcilable halves. . . . You cannot reconcile joy and sorrow. . . . Or flesh and marble, or illusion and reality, or life and death. . . . And you have already found that one constantly deludes the other into taking fresh shapes, so that there is sometimes little to choose between the reality of illusion and the illusion of reality" (277-78).

When Theodora has completely absorbed the words of Holstius, she is left with an "intensely clear vision" (AS 278) and the world outside among the trees is "curiously pure, expectant, undistorted" (AS 278). Even so, she is frightened until Holstius in his second and final visit reminds her, "We are too inclined to consider the shapes of flesh that loom up at us out of mirrors, and because they do not continue to fit like gloves, we take fright and

assume that permanence is a property of pyramids and suffering. But true permanence is a state of multiplication and division" (AS 284). Theodora accepts, at last, that fragmentation and duality are necessary, undeniable, and also positive aspects of life. Holstius never needs to speak again. The "new" person is able to walk alone and in her outer role of Miss Pilkington is able to get into the car to go to the asylum. She is able to say quietly and with honest conviction, "Actually I do exist" (AS 287). Only outwardly does she submit to the demands of the world, for her "inmost self-respect and identity are unimpaired" (Hansson 162). The mirrored lives have been reconciled and she is able to accept her destiny, even the "doubtful rose trembled and glittered, leading a life of its own" (AS 287).

Many critics have pointed out that the moments of revelation and of unity in White's novels occur either at the moment of death (e.g. The Tree of Man) or at the moment when the character loses his freedom. In The Aunt's Story, the author appears to suggest that "ultimate clarity is not achievable with the retention of full sanity by human standards" (Hansson 155). White never dictates an answer, he merely leaves the reader to decide who is mad and who is sane.

Thus, in The Aunt's Story, White has clearly elaborated Olive Schreiner's sentence, "When your life is most real, to me you are mad" (AS 253). The apparent opposites suggested in the epigraphs to the three sections, those of

fragmentation/ unity, illusion/reality, madness/sanity, and the other dualities with which Theodora struggles, masculine/feminine, dependence/freedom, the Australian/European consciousness are obviously part of life; one's individual attitude will depend on whether permanence is "a property of pyramids" or "a state of multiplication and division" (AS 284).

Thus, White uses the mirror as an archetype which suggests the possibility of wholeness. Theodora moves from a sense of total fragmentation through a meeting of the many faces in a single character, who is in fact herself without the mirror's "separating membrane" (AS 277). Holstius is the multi-faceted character who suggests that self-knowledge is possible only if the self accepts the inherent dualities of the earthly realm and those of the inner world as well.

Chapter IIThe Solid Mandala: "twin consciousness" in the mirror

One a one makes two
 One a one a one
 Two a two is never one

(SM 202)

The "second self" as twin brother is one of the "oldest products of the human imagination" (Keppler, 18). Twin brother stories are fundamental to all cultures and the twin is:

the sole ancestor of the second self of creative literature. He is a product of the apparently age-old tendency of the human imagination to think of many of its subjects as a basic oneness divided into a simultaneous twoness, while still retaining the oneness and using it as a cohesive force to counterbalance the divisive force. He is unmistakably outside but just as inescapably inside; his reality is always that of one in a pair. And as the twin of spirit origin, he also tends to be the uncanny one, the at least potentially disturbing one, the alien intruder. (Keppler 18)

White's continued concern with duality and fragmentation is deepened in The Solid Mandala, whose protagonists are twin brothers. In contrast to The Aunt's Story, in which the twice told tale is seen through the eyes of a

single character, who reflects all the lives around her until she reconciles herself to her mirrored lives in the form of Holstius, The Solid Mandala is literally a double story in which "doubling" becomes a method of exposing the "twin consciousness" (SM 76) of Arthur and Waldo, and is also an exploration of man's need to find a "oneness" in his life. White claims this novel to be very personal in that "I see the Brown brothers as my two halves. . . . Waldo is myself at my coldest and worst" (FG 146-7). Arthur, the reader assumes, is White at his best.

The novel opens with a description by Mrs. Poulter, to her new friend Mrs. Dun, of the Brown brothers who are staggering down the road, walking hand in hand. They are, in shape and size, opposites; Waldo is small, thin and dark-haired and Arthur is tall, fat and red-haired. Waldo is the "bright" twin who as a youth was good at school except for mathematics. Arthur, on the other hand, is considered "one brick short a load" or a "dill" except for his remarkable ability for figures. As adults, Waldo dispenses books and knowledge at a library and Arthur dispenses food as a grocer's helper, "each in a way sustains life and thus fends off death" (Wolfe 144).

Arthur, even though he is considered dimwitted, is the greater success socially; he had learned to speak "Australian" English immediately after the Brown family arrived from England, he accepts the quickly changing pace of life in their suburb, Sarsaparilla, and because of his sociable nature is easily accepted by all people. Arthur

tends to identify with his mother and loves to help with the "rite" of bread making and also milks the cow and churns the butter. He is the twin who is intuitively in contact with how other people are feeling, and also senses that there is a possibility of answers to the many questions which he has asked himself about the nature of the world. He carries with him four marbles won in a childhood game which represent a "mystery" which he learns to solve. They act for Arthur, and for the reader, as mirrors which reflect the inner world of which Arthur is constantly aware but which he doesn't totally understand.

Waldo, on the other hand, clings to the values of "Home" (England), largely through his acceptance of his mother's stories of her privileged childhood; he rejects change, claims to have aesthetic sensibilities, and yearns to write, but works with dry lifeless paper and systematically rejects the approaches of other people, even those of his brother. He feels that "To submit himself to the ephemeral . . . relationships might damage the crystal core holding itself in reserve for some imminent moment of higher idealism" (SM 183).

Even the clothing worn by the two old men suggests the division between them: Arthur wears a shaggy moth-eaten tweed which is stained and smelly but which suggests psychic and physical warmth. Waldo's oilskin raincoat is shiny, stiff and too thin to provide warmth. Thus, White physically represents the duality of the two brothers.

Arthur is always associated with warmth, "the red gold disc of the sun" (SM 215) and moisture; his hands are always damp and he moves "spongily" (SM 276). Waldo, on the other hand, is always associated with dryness, cold and ice and "the mirrors of many public lavatories" (SM 121). In mythic terms, they represent the "world of fire" and the "world of ice" which Arthur wants to unite into a "world of light".

As is always the case with White, the exterior view is only a comment on the inner view of the character. A description of what the men see as they gaze at their reflections in a window contrasts with the outsider's view that the two old men are "frail and putrid":

Gathered by the wind the two old men flitted across the plate glass, each examining himself, separately, secretly. On the whole each was pleased, for reflexions are translatable symbols of the past, Chinese to the mind which happens to be unfamiliar with them. Some of those who noticed the old blokes might have seen them as frail or putrid, but the Brothers Brown were not entirely unconscious of their own stubbornness of spirit. Arthur, for instance, whose mechanism had in some way threatened his continuity earlier that morning, was still able to enjoy the gutsy light of boyhood in the main street of Sarsaparilla, his lips half open to release an expression he had not yet succeeded in perfecting. His body might topple, but only his body. The drier, the more cautious Waldo walked taking greater care in spite of the strength of his moral convictions. (SM 55)

In spite of their great differences, however, each is aware that "Because they were brothers, twins moreover,

they shared secrets warmer than appeared" (SM 28). Mrs Poulter, who is also always associated with warmth and moisture, watches the two men walk up the road but finds it "difficult to decide which was leading and which was led. But one was the leader. . . ." (SM 19) In true Whitean style, the author never allows the reader to find out the answer to his questions easily.

The second and third sections of The Solid Mandala, titled "Waldo" and "Arthur", tell the story from the point of view of the named twin. Both chapters reveal that each man loves Dulcie, a young Jewess, who plays the piano and has a moustache but who eventually marries Leonard Saporta, a man who sells carpets. Both boys write verse and both give the childless Mrs. Poulter a child: Waldo gives her a large plastic doll and Arthur offers himself as her child. And in the end, each in a sense becomes a murderer to the other.

In Voss, White had used the double or "doppelganger" theme; the protagonists, Laura and Voss are spiritual halves of a whole and need not be together to communicate. Arthur and Waldo, however, are never free of the other half, which is both positive and negative. Even Waldo is aware that "Life . . . 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" (SM 76). At the same time, however, Arthur is his "uncontrollable twin" (SM 95) and is "inescapable" (174). In spite of his superior intellectual abilities,

Waldo is totally self-absorbed and simply cannot see beyond his own needs.

The mirror for Waldo is a focus for his own narcissism. He is so fond of looking at his reflection that he actually presses his mouth against the glass. This total self-absorption is a demonic parody of a conversation with "simple" Arthur who asks Waldo if he "understand[s] all this about loving" (SM 207). It is Arthur who feels "it's too big a subject . . . to altogether understand" but who is able to state the elemental truth that "If we loved enough... perhaps we could forget to hate" (SM 207). This conversation ends with Arthur comforting his brother in bed: "All the bread and milk in the world flowed out of Arthur's mouth onto Waldo's lips". Arthur is so determined to love Waldo that "by this stage their smeary faces were melted together" (SM 208). The image of the mirror has changed to a brief moment of connection and unity which could also be accused of being parodic! Only the reader is aware that a ritual marriage has taken place.

Waldo is a classic of psychic fragmentation and, therefore, of disintegration caused by his "tenacious and neurotic clinging to his myth of masculinity and self sufficiency" (Beatson, The Eye in the Mandala 95). He is filled with fantasies about being loved and being a great writer while shunning all human involvement. He asserts his masculinity whenever possible but is possessed by the ghost of his mother. He has been a victim all his life of

his bisexuality, which is best summed up in the scene in which he dresses up in an old dress which had belonged to his mother and stands in front of a mirror to admire himself:

He need not mention names, but he could see her two selves gathered on the half-landing at the elbow in the great staircase. . . . Standing as she had never stood in fact, because, although memory is the glacier in which the past is preserved, memory is also licensed to improve on life. So he became slightly drunk with the colours he lit on entering. . . . When he was finally and fully arranged, bony, palpitating, plucked, it was no longer Waldo Brown, in spite of the birthmark above his left collarbone. . . . Then Memory herself seated herself in her chair, tilting it as far back as it would go, and tilted, and tilted, in front of the glass. Memory peered through the slats of the squint-eyed fan, between the nacreous refractions. If she herself was momentarily eclipsed, you expected to sacrifice something for such a remarkable increase in vision. In radiance, and splendour. All great occasions streamed up the gothick stair to kiss the rings of Memory, which she held out stiff, and watched the sycophantic lips cut open, teeth knocking, on cabuchons and carved ice. She could afford to breathe indulgently, magnificent down to the last hair in her moustache, and allowing for the spectacle.
(SM 192-3)

Waldo, in dressing in his mother's dress and gazing through her fan, is actually providing a parodic double of his mother, while at the same time dividing in two, the self and the consciousness of self as a failure. Unlike Theodora in The Aunt's Story, he is never able "to accept the two irreconcilable selves"; in fact he is driven to expose and humiliate the two selves. His remarkable ability

to seek himself and his double image in his frequent gazing into mirrors is consistently reinforced by his other actions: his rejection of Wally's poems when his grieving sister asks his advice about what to do with them, the insinuation of sexual consummation with women to impress other men, the giving of a grotesque plastic doll to Mrs. Poulter, whom he knows longs for a child, his inability to recognize that he has plagiarized a verse from Tennyson and called it his own and, finally, the dramatic rejection of his brother Arthur when he discovers that Arthur not only reads Dostoyevsky but understands the themes and can also write poetry.

In Arthur's section of the novel, the mirror scene is focussed quite differently and emphasizes the difference between the two men:

The night Arthur, dogs at heel, brought the flour to Mrs Poulter, Waldo was acting or celebrating something. The wreath of roses, the Banksian roses, made a frame for Waldo in the blue dress. If they had been less intimate, if Arthur had not experienced already some such translation in himself of his brother's personality, then he might have suffered a greater shock, from Waldo's white, plucked arms, and the shattering torrent of glass beads. Breathing alone stirred the beads. Or tilting of a chair. As Waldo squinted between the slats of his fan. Or stroked his bit of a raggedy moustache. All the family were gathered in the glass: Dad and Mother, Uncle Charlie, Cousin Mollie and 'Adelaide', all huddled in the darkened box, waiting to see, not only what might offer itself for killing, but how their own blood run. (SM 291)

In a curious way, we, as readers are watching a double

watching a double who is watching his parodic double, while at the same time we see, with Arthur, his whole family and the two men's past. Waldo's narcissistic gazing in the mirror reinforces his monstrous egoism, while Arthur's vision is an opening into the possibility of the warmth of the family, one of the mandalas of the novel. (Beatson, The Eye 111-121). The duality of the masculine and feminine haunts Waldo. He calls his brother "just a big fat helpless female" (SM 230) while all the time trying to deny the female tendencies in himself. Arthur, on the other hand, willingly accepts his feminine side as expressed in his bread making and in his desire to act the "Tragedy of a Cow" because he understands the feminine functions of giving birth, lactating and bleeding. It is not surprising, therefore, that both men identify with Tiresias, who had lived for seven years in the form of a woman, because he had disturbed two serpents who were "the sign of the world- generating force that plays through all the pairs of opposites, male and female, birth and death". When he touched the snakes a second time he "touched the living symbol of the two who are in nature one" and was returned to his masculine self. Although blinded by Hera, he was given the gift of prophecy by Zeus, and "was in knowledge both: in wisdom greater than either Zeus, the god who is merely male, or his goddess, who was merely female". (Joseph Campbell, The Masks of God: Occidental Mythology 26)

Waldo identifies with Tiresias in a negative way, and

unlike Tiresias, he never learns from his encounters with his feminine side. In his novel, (which he writes secretly), Tiresias, A Youngish Man, Waldo had written, "In the extreme of his youth, which was fast approaching, Tiresias suffered difficulties with his syntax and vocabulary, he found that words, turning to stones, would sink below the surface, out of sight" (SM 211). The stones are the words which Waldo cannot warm into living people or meaningful ideas. The "artist" is haunted by his inability to create. At last, when Arthur holds up the dress which Waldo had thrown away when he heard Arthur approaching the house, he sees the dress as a "sheet of ice" in which he "might see his reflexion " (SM 212). Later that day, he tries to destroy his "still born" work of art by burning it, an act which he feels liberates him from his androgyny, except for his "female" brother whom he plans to kill.

Arthur also identifies with Tiresias but, in contrast to Waldo, his hermaphroditic condition does not create a lethal schism. He uses the myth to "explore the true nature of both himself and other people" (Beatson, The Eye 95). He had first heard the story from his father who often read myths to the boys. For Arthur, the myth of Tiresias helps him to understand that being a woman is perfectly acceptable: "Then there was that other bit, about being changed into a woman, if only for a short time. Time enough, though, to know he wasn't all that different" (SM 224). Later, while reading in the library,

he comes across the idea of the hermaphroditic Adam who "though he appears in the form of a male, nevertheless always carries with him Eve, or his wife, hidden in his body" (SM 281). Arthur is shocked but soon accepts the idea: "And if one wife, why not two? Or three?" (SM 281). Arthur is able, in spite of his "obstreperous mind" to understand that his strong female feelings as well as his love as a man for Mrs Poulter and Darcie are all part of him and therefore important.

Waldo, on the other hand, is unable to accept his natural self or his Tiresian feminine side. When Arthur confronts Waldo with his knowledge of Tiresias and the hermaphroditic Adam, Waldo calls it "filth" and "madness" (SM 283).

Arthur, through his reading, thinking and talking, and in spite of his mental handicap, comes very close to understanding Theodora's advice from her own Tiresian double, Holstius, who suggests that accepting the "two irreconcilable halves" is necessary. He has always sensed a sort of harmony behind the world. Hence, from early childhood, he has had the ability to enjoy the "rites" of making bread and butter, and while not able to play the piano, "he could hear, he could see in advance the splotches of sound" (SM 232). Unlike Waldo who wants to use words in a rigid way, Arthur understands that "Words are not what make you see" (SM 57). It is because of this deep conviction that words have an "inner" meaning that he can say, "I'm concentrating on words. The Word. But also

words that are also just words. There's so many kinds. You could make necklaces. Big chunks of words, for instance, and the shiny, polished ones. God . . . is a kind of sort of rock crystal" (SM 87).

It is his intuitive understanding of "words", which for Waldo must always have a rigid and fixed meaning, that helps Arthur understand the meaning of the word "mandala" when he finds it in one of Mrs Musto's books. Arthur reads that "the Mandala is a symbol of totality. It is believed to be the 'dwelling of the god' Its protective circle is a pattern of order super -- imposed on -- psychic -- chaos. Sometimes its geometric form is seen as a vision (either waking or in a dream) . . . or danced" (SM 238).

Arthur has carried with him for years his own mandalas, four marbles won in a childhood game which for him act as mirrors of the inner world. He has always sensed that the marbles had great importance to his life and his relationships with other people, in particular his love for his brother. He had given one each to Dulcie and Mrs Poulter, both of whom had understood the "Mystery" contained therein. The one marble he loved the best was the tau with the knot at the centre which "for staring at it . . . should have seen his face inside. After he had given two, in appreciation, or recognition, the flawed or knotted marble became more that ever his preoccupation: "But he was ready to give it too, if he were asked" (SM 228). The flawed marble mandala which Arthur wished to

give Waldo was rejected by Waldo who has no sense of the inner world mirrored in his brother's mandala.

Arthur "serves wholeness" (Wolfe 149). In contrast to his brother who leads a totally fragmented life, Arthur has intuited the organic continuity between himself and the universe. His understanding of the mandala, his love of the people in his life, his ability to use words ("the world is another mandala" SM 245) is expressed through dance, an art form which requires no words. The dance becomes a mirror of all the knowledge he has of the world.

Arthur's dance of the mandala has four corners: the first is the dance of himself in which he describes "the gods dying on a field of crimson velvet", the sleep of people in a wooden house" (his own house), the moon and "the disc of the orange sun, which was in a sense his beginning, and should perhaps be his end" (SM 265). In the second corner, he dances his love for Dulcie, her husband Leonard Saporta, their three children, the eldest of whom is named after him and the mandalic star which represents their Jewishness; Mrs Poulter's corner is dedicated to "ripening pears" and "rootling pigs", until he becomes "the child she had never carried in the dark of her body, under the heart from the beat of which he was already learning what he could expect" (SM 266). In the fourth corner, Waldo's corner, he dances in dry mud with reeds where words and ideas "were skewered to paper Thus pinned and persecuted, what should have risen in pure flight, dropped to a dry twitter, a clipped

twitching" (SM 266). Arthur dances until his feet had trampled the grass into a desert but he could not "dance his brother out of him, not fully. . . . At most, a little comfort gushed out guiltily, from out of their double image, their never quite united figure" (SM 266).

The climax of the dance is "the passion of all their lives, the blood running out of the backs of his hands, water out of the hole in his ribs. His mouth was a silent hole because no sound was needed to explain" (SM 266). The dance ends with "a footnote on forgiveness" (SM 267). Thus, "the conclusion to the mandala-dance does put man at the centre of mandala but a man whose image and archetype identify with divinity" (Morley, The Mystery of Unity 186).

The dance, for Arthur, is a reflection of the meaning he has given to "totality", that of "love", a "truth" which he has searched for all his life. It is significant that words have not been able to express this truth: Arthur must express his knowledge in a non-verbal form. Arthur has always known that love "is more acceptable to some when twisted out of its true shape" (SM 279) as he comforts Waldo after an accident. Waldo understands "words" only; Arthur understands the silence behind, underneath and between the words.

The consequence of Waldo's inability to accept the knowledge which Arthur has to give, and his unwillingness to accept the knotted mandala marble, the symbol of Arthur's love, is death. White cleverly withholds information from the end of the "Waldo" section until the

end of the "Arthur" section, when Waldo finally recognizes for the first time how dependent he is on his brother or second self. Both men, the man of intellect and reason, and the man of heart and intuition, recognize their "common pain" (SM 294), which has been made fully known to them through Arthur's poem, "my heart is bleeding for the Viviseckshunist" (SM 212). The poem reveals a truth about suffering and femininity which Waldo has, heretofore, not understood. At the moment of understanding, he hates his brother so much that he tries to kill Arthur and in so doing dies himself.

Arthur, the man who understands love and suffering, takes on the role of "the getter of pain" (SM 294). Manfred MacKenzie makes the interesting point that "While for Waldo the supreme shock is to become conscious that the inferior Arthur is his superior double in every respect, for Arthur it is to find out what Waldo had long wanted him to find out, that he has his double in Waldo, or is Waldo's exact and guilty double in his capacity to torment" ("The Consciousness of 'Twin Consciousness'" 248). This reader, however, thinks that Arthur, unlike the Grand Inquisitor in The Brothers Karamazov who appears to be on no one's side, is not the archetypal Inquisitor, but is, in fact, a man who "carried away inside him -- his brother" (SM 285). It is not surprising, therefore, that when Waldo had asked him to leave the library, he had started to tear the "Grand Inquisitor" out of the book (SM 285), a symbolic gesture which rejects the role of the

Inquisitor.

Waldo, even in death, is still attached to Arthur at the wrist as if he wished to bring him to trial suggesting that Waldo played the role of Inquisitor. Arthur "finally snapped the metal open" (SM 294) and was free of his brother, except for the mandala-marble which he now can never give.

Otto Rank, in "The Double as Immortal Self" (Beyond Psychology), makes the interesting point that modern man having created a civilized society has along with it created an over civilized ego. Modern man therefore:

disintegrates by splitting up [the ego] into two opposing selves. Those two aspects of the self which in modern man are opposing and fighting each other provide the original raw material for his personality makeup. Yet it makes all the difference whether they are united in the expression of a total personality or driven by conflicting strivings between the two selves. . . . A positive evaluation of the Double as immortal soul leads to the building up of the prototype of the personality from the self; whereas the negative interpretation of the Double as a symbol of death is symptomatic of the disintegration of the modern personality type. (66)

Waldo is definitely the "modern" man who sees his double or twin as a form of death; he has spent his life pushing away his own feminine instincts which Arthur has mirrored. He has rejected feeling for reason, exchanges hate and rejection for love and acceptance, offers words as stones instead of rock crystals and never learns from his

reflection in the glass and, as a result, must himself die.

Arthur, one hopes at this point, will be freed of the restrictions placed upon him by his cold and unloving brother. However, with the death of Waldo, Arthur loses the balance he needs to survive and eventually returns to a sort of childhood and is taken to "Peaches and Plums", an asylum, echoing the final pages of The Aunt's Story. Arthur and his "twin in the sun" (epigraph, Patrick Anderson), together make "one man potentially capable of perfection" (Morley, The Mystery of Unity 200): Waldo represents the man of intellect and will; Arthur represents the man of intuition and love for his archetypal brother, all other men. However, White, as author, who has intimate knowledge of both halves, knows that love is not enough. Holstius' advice was that man, to survive, must reconcile intellect and intuition and love and will; the two mirrored halves must live in balance, a feat which is beyond Arthur because he has lost his "second half".

A moment of balance does occur in the final pages of the fourth section of the novel, "Mrs Poulter and the Zeitgeist", but for a single moment only. Arthur had pulled out his own mandala-marble (having lost the knotted marble he hoped to give his twin), and Mrs Poulter "was pretty certain she saw their two faces becoming one at the centre of that glass eye" (SM 312). It is only an archetypal glance of unity, however, and the marble soon becomes a child's toy once again. As readers, we are aware

that White sees that wholeness is a possibility but none of his characters have yet achieved the balance which will allow them to live in a "normal society".

It is clear, however, that the love which Arthur has discovered as part of the meaning of the mandala radiates in Mrs Poulter's house. She kneels beside Arthur to wipe his tears. As she rises, the sergeant who has come to take Arthur to "Peaches and Plums", is reminded of his boyhood church of people "rising transparent and hopeful, chafing the blood back into their flesh after the the sacrament" (SM 313), a mirroring of the epigraph from Dostoyevsky, "It was an old and rather poor church, many of the ikons were without settings, but such churches are best for praying in" (SM 7). Mrs Poulter, as does Theodora in The Aunt's Story, accepts the tragedy of the "twin consciousness" (SM 76) and, in the end, is the individual who is able to reconcile the "irreconcilable halves" (AS 277).

Mrs Poulter "turned to do the expected things, before re-entering her actual sphere of life" (SM 316). She has understood, along with the reader, Paul Eluard's epigraph, "There is another world, but it is in this one" (SM 7). The reader also understands that the looking into the mirror in this world is necessary for the personal journey towards wholeness, but that the viewer must also work at understanding what he sees or the result is death or madness. The alternative to either of these possibilities is, however, to remain fragmented, a worse fate than

madness or even annihilation. White, as a gazer in the mirror, has tried to follow Arthur's advice to Waldo, ". . . it doesn't matter what you write about, provided you tell the truth" (SM 29). Thelma Herring describes The Solid Mandala as one of White's most humane and integrated novels and "to read it is a scarifying experience -- but it scarifies to heal" ("Self and Shadow: The Quest for Totality in The Solid Mandala" 82).

Chapter III

The Twyborn Affair: a celebration of the second self

I was more than double, I was triple,
multiple, now I could see that there was
more than one life to come, there were many.

Margaret Atwood

Very close to the end of The Twyborn Affair, Eadith Trist sits in her very fashionable brothel and contemplates that she is trapped, not only by the historical time, or the walls of her house, but by "that other prison, her self" (TA 424). Eadith (Part III), who is also Eddie (Part II) and Eudoxia (Part I), is another of White's archetypal travellers who is knowledgeable enough to be aware of the fragmentation of his or her life and who desperately seeks a vision of a personal "truth" faced by chaos both within and without. Duality in many forms haunts the "three in one" searchers in The Twyborn Affair. Mirroring takes on several new aspects as the plot moves towards its climax.

The name "Twyborn", or "twice born", immediately underlines the idea that rebirth will be a major theme. In fact, the character is thrice born. In The Solid Mandala, the "pain of duality" (Colmer, Patrick White 71) is shared by two men, each the imperfect half of the other. Waldo and Arthur are unable to totally reconcile "the irreconcilable halves" (AS 277) and the consequence is

the death of the rational side which refuses to co-operate with the intuitive side. Eudoxia, Eddie and Eadith are three reflections in the mirror each ". . . in [the] process of being born" (TA 211), each of which is created by the audience which watches that character. Each character buries or secretes his or her identity and, like an actor/actress, plays a role until the end of the performance at which time the make-up and the costume are removed. When the next character is on the point of beginning his journey on stage, a new costume and make-up are donned. The acted role becomes the mirrored second side or twin self of the person who is waiting to know who he/she is. The final role is an affirmation (or as close as White allows his characters to affirmation) of the personal quest for the answer to "Who am I?"

The first actress on the stage is Eudoxia or Mme Vatatzes, whom we first see through the eyes of a one-person audience, Joanie Golson, an Australian holidaying on the French Riviera. Joan's reflections on what she sees and what she understands are an important aspect of the revelation of the character of Eudoxia and of the theme of illusion versus reality which pervades the novel. Her thoughts regarding Eudoxia (told in the third person narrative) gradually unfold a vision of a person whom she thinks she has known formerly and yet she is not quite sure. Her role throughout the novel is that of Arthur's "Inquisitor", and like Arthur, we wonder whose side she is on. She is also a source of much of the comedy

of the novel; the contrast between Joan's enchanting description of Eudoxia sitting on the piano bench playing with her elderly lover, and the finding of an ancient enema kit, which Eudoxia has used to relieve Angelo of bowel problems, causes a laughter of a sad sort but also underlines White's constant theme of the division between the body and the soul. White never lets us forget that the body, which is in the here and now, and the soul, which is forced to inhabit it, are seldom in harmony. Eddie/Eudoxia/Eadith have constant intimations of the other world of the soul but are always aware of the disjunction of the body and soul, and therefore that he/she is playing in a masquerade. Eudoxia, after being rescued by Mrs Golson, confesses to her "I've never been brave enough to live the truth" (TA 51).

The disjunction and fragmentation of the personality is emphasized in The Twyborn Affair by a narrative technique which White has not used before. In addition to the blending of authorial third person comment, White has added the direct subjective comment in the form of diary notations, each prefaced by a date, written by Eudoxia and also a few letters written by the "watcher," Joan Golson. This form of adding the "I" has not been used before (and in fact is only used in Eudoxia's section and once at the beginning of Eddie's section) and has the interesting effect of uniting the reader with the consciousness of Eudoxia and demands that we travel with Eudoxia on her journey towards the "truth." The authorial comment, on

the other hand, demands that we remain "watchers," audience or inquisitors with Joanie Golson.

In the diary pages written on February 17, 1914, her 26th birthday, Eudoxia writes of her love/hate relationship with her lover, Angelo, whom she describes as "elderly [and] dotty." She decides "If I hate him at times it's because I hate myself. If I love him more deeply than I love E. it's because I know this other creature too well, and cannot rely entirely on him or her" (TA 23). Wearing the pomegranate shawl and holding the spangled fan, gifts from Angelo, she looks into a mirror, which for White can be a source of demonic laughter, of parody, of tragic self-discovery, or of equally tragic lack of discovery, and decides ". . . I would pass Or at any rate on the days when I don't hate -- when I can forgive myself being me" (TA 23). The reference to "E" can refer to Eadie Twyborn, his/her mother who is bisexual and the lover of Joanie Golson. On the other hand, "E" also refers to Eddie, Eudoxia, whichever self the protagonist is "wearing" at that moment, or Edward, the father of Eddie and husband of Eadie. The need for the reader to decide is not necessary, because it is clear that what one sees in the mirror is often deceptive and the way one responds to the reflection is more important than what one sees (a theme which is clearly illustrated by the mirror scenes in The Solid Mandala).

Occasionally, Eudoxia does find a reflection which is harmonious and unfragmented. After making love with

Angelo, she writes, " I do appear consecutive, complete, and can enjoy my reflection in the glass, which he has created, what passes for the real one, with devices like the spangled fan and the pomegranate shawl" (TA 27). Eudoxia is fully aware that the actor creates an illusory world which for the moment passes as the real one, while at the same time the audience also creates a real world, suspending the notion of fiction for a brief time. She knows that the audience is also responsible for part of the creation of the illusory/reality dualism which haunts her and the world in general. Eudoxia, an Australian from the "New World", is creating a real world for Angelo, but is aware of the fiction; Angelo, the man of European consciousness, lives in the past when Byzantium had been the centre of the world but was about to crumble, and rejects the notion of an illusory world while clutching that illusion to his heart. Angelo's vision of the world is paralleled with the historical reality of the times in which they live. In 1914, Europe was on the verge of war, the nations were mobilising, and yet most people such as Angelo and Joan Golson pushed away the "reality" in favour of the fantasy life which rejected the possibilities of what was to come.

Eudoxia recognizes that she is imprisoned by her love for Angelo and by the "reality" she has created for him out of her own splintered personality and in spite of her "need" (TA 65) she must escape. The image in the mirror being created by Angelo is an important change in the

"mirroring" in White's work. In The Aunt's Story, Theodora takes on other people's realities to explore her own past and sense of self by mirroring other people's lives. She literally becomes that person or two or three people in that person's life until she has worked out the "several selves" and comes to recognize the words of Holstius as her own. In The Solid Mandala, Arthur and Waldo's double lives and mirroring of each other reveal in greater detail that the other self must be accepted in some kind of balance before the "I" can move on. In Waldo/Arthur's case, of course, the harmony does not occur except that a third person, Mrs. Poulter, is aware that balance is possible and even an "outsider," the sergeant, is aware that something extraordinary and spiritual has happened.

The main character of The Twyborn Affair always mirrors the role which the reality of the time seems to demand and thereby lives a completely fictitious life. Her/his role is that of a human chameleon, who blends into the landscape and becomes part of the natural and social environment while looking for a source of personal stability such as the olive tree in the garden when, as Eudoxia, she asks herself the rhetorical question, "To have such stability -- or is oneself the strongest stanchion one can hope for? To realise this is perhaps to achieve stability" (TA 33).

It is not revealed until the last page of Part I that Eudoxia, the lover and hetaira of Angelo, a Byzantine

Emperor, is Eddie Twyborn, who in Part II plays a new role on a different stage and for a different audience. The first pages focus David Malouf's epigraph, "What else should our lives be but a series of beginnings, of painful settings out into the unknown, pushing off from the edges of consciousness into the mystery of what we have not yet become (TA 7). Eddie has exchanged Eudoxia's dresses and pomegranate shawl for the uniform of Lieutenant Twyborn who is travelling "home" to Australia by ship after active service in the trenches of World War I. In his new role, or reflection in the mirror, he finds that "At least his clothes were beginning to feel easier on him" (TA 133). Even though he is returning to Australia, the place of his birth, he still feels an outsider in the world around him and is also totally self-alienated. His feelings of disconnectedness from other people and from himself are deepened by the claustrophobic shipboard life and the passengers whose "exaggerated heartiness of returning colonials, and the patronage of the English who were going out to teach them something" (TA 133) underline the gulf between his fellow man and himself. He listens to the talk of empty heads who seem to understand nothing of the catastrophe through which the world has passed. When accused of having "real courage" (he has a Distinguished Service Order), he replies, "Courage is often despair running in the right direction" (TA 138). The role of brave soldier is the reflection in the mirror which the audience seeks but from which Eddie has to turn.

Always insecure about his sexual identity, Eddie is also haunted by his inability to decide whether he is a European or an Australian. While disguised as Eudoxia, he had admired Joan Golson's efficient rescue plan when she had twisted her ankle, "we Australians are pretty good in a crisis" (TA 59) but is also aware of the great "Australian emptiness" (TA 63). During a shipboard costume party for which he dresses "as myself" (TA 139), he is forced into dancing with Margs, an Australian who "thrust a campaigning vulva as deep as possible into his crotch" (TA 140-41) and later the Colonel dressed as a baby who made his "opulent crotch" (TA 141) very obvious. As a dancer in street clothes, Eddie is a master of disguise; only he is aware that what other people see is not the "truth." He escapes to his room to read the copy of La Rochefoucauld which he has carried as a sort of armour against intrusion while on deck. La Rochefoucauld, who represents the culture and solidity of Europe for Eddie, had written "Nos vertus ne sont le plus souvent que des vices deguises" (TA 136), but Eddie is in fact sure that the opposite is true, that our vices are in fact our virtues disguised. In his diary entry (the last of the novel), he describes his agonised acceptance of his Australian heritage; "Oh, God, but I feel for them, because I know exactly -- they are what I am, and I am they -- interchangeable" (TA 142). It is not a happy identification, however, because when he is accused of being a "Pom" (an Englishman) by a drunk in a bar, he

replies "I'm a kind of mistake trying to correct itself" and is aware that he is "the Resurrection and the Dead, or more simply, the eternal deserter in search of asylum" (TA 143). Eddie is the epitome of the modern person whom Joseph Campbell describes as one who "does not know toward what one moves. One does not know by what one is propelled. The lines of communication between the conscious and unconscious zones of the human psyche have been cut and we have all been split in two" (The Hero With a Thousand Faces 388).

The asylum for this hero, who in outward appearance reflects what people wish to see, a hero returning from the war, and who is definitely split in two, is not to be found at "home" with his mother where the dichotomy of love/hate, and acceptance/rejection become very clear. In his disguise as prodigal son, the authorial comment is "that the son with whom she had wrestled, perhaps even tried to throttle in the agony he had caused while forcing his way out of a womb where he was not wanted in the first place, had become the mirror-figure of herself" (TA 149). Mother and son walk hand in hand in "sisterhood", but it is clear that the mother is not interested in her son at all and relates well only to her lover, Joan Golson and to her little dogs. Similarly, Judge Twyborn is unable to relate to Eddie: his first words to the son whom he has not seen for many years are not of welcome but an accusation of the wife. Eddie is aware, however, that "He was going to fail them both, as it is the habit more often

than not, of the children to fail the parents -- and vice versa" (TA 160). In spite of his father's inability to express his love towards his son, Eddie continues to love him, and when the train leaves Sydney to carry him to yet another beginning, he looks out the window hoping to see "the one face" (TA 173), that of his father.

Eddie, who has struggled with the overpowering and dominating love of Angelo, and now the rejection of his mother and the unexpressed love of his father, moves on to a new stage, a sheep station where in his role as a jackeroo, he hopes to find "the real E." (TA 79) and also get to know a country he has "never belonged to" (TA 161).

He is met by the manager of the station, and immediately feels "the complete misfit in Don Prowse's aggressively masculine world" (TA 179) which is relieved a little by Peggy Tyrell, the housekeeper who recognizes the feminine in him. To escape what is basically a hostile social environment, he turns to the physical landscape for spiritual comfort and also to the very hard physical work of being a jackeroo. The landscape itself is transposed into symbols of his inner life: "The brown waters of the river reflected the thoughts of one who was unwise enough to unmask them on its bank" (TA 184). He also chooses to work hard at riding horses, digging out rabbits, learning to neuter or "crutch" sheep until at last, "He was coming to terms with his body. He had begun to live in accordance with appearances" (TA 201). The reality and the

reflection are for a brief time one, although the "audience" on the station are unaware of the change in him. As he grows more comfortable with his body, he is also more and more aware of the external world which suggests an answer to the deep personal and philosophical questions he has asked throughout his life:

In his own experience, in whichever sexual role he had been playing, self-searching had never led more than briefly to self-acceptance. He suspected that salvation most likely lay in the natural phenomena surrounding those unable to rise to the spiritual heights of a religious faith: in his present situation the shabby hills, their contours practically breathing as the light embraced them, stars fulfilled by their logical dowsing, the river never so supple as at daybreak, as dappled as the trout it camouflaged, the whole ambience united by the harsh but healing epiphany of cockcrow. (TA 223)

This "epiphany" is also related to his taking of Marcia Lushington, the wife of the station owner, as his mistress, which at first is an affirmation of his masculinity and new found feeling of "wholeness". At the same time, Eddie starts to move away from the mirror as a way of seeking a negative reflection of the "I". When dressed for a visit with Greg and Marcia Lushington, he confirms his newly felt confidence: "Looking at the reflection in the glass he had begun to convince himself of an existence which most others seemed to take for granted" (TA 212).

The movement away from the mirror as confirmation of failure is directly related to his reaching out to other people for some sort of contact. Unfortunately, his contact with Marcia Lushington, who is seen as "not unlike a great downy moth irrationally involved in an obscene but delicious cannibalistic rite; in which she must involve some other being for his initiation or destruction" (TA 219-20) is not positive. She is using him as both a surrogate child to replace the infants she has lost, and as a way of replacing that child by becoming pregnant. Eddie, in turn, is using her "to establish his own masculine identity" (TA 223) while also grasping for the loving comfort missed in his loveless childhood. In a strangely passive way, he "allows" Don Prowse, the very masculine station manager, to rape him. As victim or martyr with his face buried in the straw, he allows Don Prowse to enter "the past through the present" and he sobs "not for the indignity to which he was being subjected, but finally for his acceptance of it" (TA 284), his desire for self abnegation and the need, in some sense to be sacrificed. He, in turn, is willing to play the role of sacrificer in response to Don Prowse's need to be sacrificed. He rapes Don savagely as revenge for Don's being a "bull" to Marcia, to punish Marcia for being his "mother" and to punish himself for being who he was. Thus, Eddie learns to accept, to a certain extent, his "other self." He is able to act as sacrifice and sacrificer, victim and Inquisitor, homosexual and heterosexual.

In spite of the bleakness which these events suggest, moments of harmony do occur, for not only does he recognise the healing power of nature, he also understands that he is not the only person who bears pain on a daily basis. In Helen Winterbotham, he sees a young woman with a badly sewn harelip who mirrors his own "monstrosity or hopelessness" (TA 267). Later in a dream he recognises that he and Helen of the Harelip are sitting beside a rock pool. It is a dream unmarked by emotion, by pain or joy, but "they were united by an understanding as remote from sexuality as the crystal water in the rock basin below" (TA 273).

A similar moment of peace is recognized as he becomes a "mate" (an important aspect of the cult of masculinity in Australia) to Denny, a man who is regarded as a simpleton. Denny has married Dot made pregnant by her own father, Dick Norton, the rabbitier, and has been made very happy by the arrival of the baby. While visiting with Denny at his house, Eddie watches him holding the baby who was "laughing up . . . her tender gummy smile related at the other end of time to Peggy Tyrell's toughened grin" (TA 276). Eddie is envious of his simple friend and wonders if "Happiness was perhaps the reward of those who cultivate illusion, or who, like Denny Allen, have it thrust upon them by some tutelary being, and then are granted sufficient innocent grace to sustain it" (TA 249). Eddie, who is the master of illusion, is profoundly aware that happiness escapes him because he is unable to reconcile his "several selves," the inner and outer

"versions" of the self. It is important to recognize that Eddie, at this point, responds only to people who are also outsiders, who are different in some way. As audience, Helen and Denny, while looking into the mirror of his life, have no need to "create" the image they wish to see; instead, like children they accept what they see.

Another moment of recognition occurs when he realises "an aspect of his own condition which he had always known about" (TA279) as he chooses the dirtier sheep to "crutch", which he links to the moment when he dressed in Marcia's clothes but was "not satisfied by the image Marcia's glass presented" (TA 223). He rejects both the neutering male and neutered male who is Eddie and Eudoxia in "borrowed clothes" (TA 283). Ironically, he also knows that he has impregnated Marcie. He leaves the station knowing that he is a "pseudo-man-cum-crypto woman" (TA 298), a partial response to Eddie Twyborn " who had never found the answer to himself" (TA 287).

Eddie's third metamorphosis is in a female form; Eadith Trist is the celebrated madame of a fashionable brothel in Beckwith Street, London, in 1941. The movement forward in time of at least twenty years is important in that the personal sense of fragmentation and alienation is mirrored in the horrendous feeling of approaching cataclysmic war. The conditions, which created the first World War, have not yet been remedied and the world of Madame Trist hangs upon the brink of destruction. The movement in time also points the reader into the future,

in comparison to The Aunt's Story and The Solid Mandala, which deal with looking through the mirror into the past for answers. A Fringe of Leaves, the novel just before The Twyborn Affair, also stresses the seeking of truth by travelling backwards in time from a "civilized" European society to a "primitive" aboriginal society and back to a society which does not understand the journey which is both forward and backward in time. However, for the reader it is a journey which reconciles past and present and reminds us that man must recognize both his own past and the past of his race before the future can be approached. Eddie as Eadith is the man/woman-woman/man who is beginning to understand his/her individual past and who is, therefore, able to forge into the future towards change.

Madame Trist wears the dress and make-up of a respected if somewhat eccentric business person who sees herself in a number of seemingly opposed roles. Her brothel is her work of art because as artist she has converted it from "a drab and musty barrack into a sequence of tantalising glimpses, perspectives opening through beckoning mirrors to seduce a society determined on its own downfall" (TA 321). At the same time, 84 Beckwith Street is a convent where, as abbess, she expected her whores "to obey what she saw as almost a conventual rule" (TA 322). As readers we expect depravity, and sexual exploitation; however, we also find a community of women (where each person is loved and valued for who

she is) under their Mother Superior, Eddie, who describes the whores as "human beings" (TA 334). The balance between the artist and the abbess is difficult: "An artist must guard against the tendency to sentimental indulgence, an abbess resist threats to a vocational ideal (TA 323). Eddie is the "inspired bawd" who creates this balance.

The double exposure of both sides of the house, brothel and nunnery, also exposes the duality which haunts Eddie -- the lusts of the flesh and the lusts of the spirit and the need for both to find a harmony or balance. Arthur, in The Solid Mandala, had found "love" to be the reconciling factor which could create a balance in the personal life and perhaps in the wider world also. However, Eadith Trist, in her former selves as Eudoxia and Eadith, has learned to distrust sex and love, "that great ambivalence" (TA 311), as a way of healing wounds. She has decided that "she herself would die by an act of God and not from the wounds of human love" (TA 323). However, as the "animating principle" of the brothel she has had peep-holes put into the doors of the girls' rooms which become:

an omniscient eye, how it illuminated for her the secret hopes and frustrations struggling to escape through the brutality, the thrust and recoil, the acts of self-immolation, the vicious spinsterly refinements which shape the depravity of men -- her own included. She would have liked to believe that, even if it did not purify, lust might burn itself out, and at the same time cauterise that infected part of the self which, from her own experience, persists like the core of a permanent boil. (TA 329)

She has rejected sex herself except by being a "watcher", with an omniscient eye which gives the watcher a god-like power. She has taken on the role of the audience looking at the reflections in the mirror. She is very aware that the girls whom she has "farmed out for love" are "fragments of a single image" (TA 336), herself. She has rejected physical love but not the hope of the sort of love experienced in the dream of Helen of the Harelip. Eadith in "whatever form she took, or whatever the illusion temporarily possessing her, the reality of love, which is the core of reality itself, had eluded her, and perhaps always would" (TA 336). Eudoxia/ Eddie has always used other people to create his/her own reality. The reflection is what the audience wishes him to be rather than the real person. It is only during her walks between the "false dawn and the real" that Eadith allows herself to be "as much herself as a human being can afford to be" (TA 310), because there is no audience at that hour. However, in the nunnery/whorehouse at Beckwith Street, Eadith does learn to love Lord Gravenor unselfishly. Her love is returned but is never consummated. Eadith explains to Lord Gravenor's sister, Ursula, who has also offered herself as a lover that "True friendship . . . if there is anything wholly true -- certainly in friendship -- comes, I'd say, from the woman in a man and the man in a woman" (TA 360). It is the first of a small number of truths which arrive at

the conscious level of speech, and unlike some of White's earlier epiphanies, the moment almost passes unremarked, but is, this reader believes, one of the "truths" towards which all of White's characters have moved since Theodora in The Aunt's Story. The necessity for the man to recognize his Tiresian feminine side, for Adam to recognize his Eve, for everyone to recognize "the twin in the sun" is a very quiet moment of acceptance but is the reason why Eadith can set out on the journey towards a fourth "rebirth".

A second moment of recognizing the self occurs with Philip Thring, the mirrored double of the young Eddie. Eddie who has never been able to "find" himself, finds himself reflected in Philip as Eadith leads him down the hall to consummate the knowledge each has discovered:

The tremulous mirror he was offering her must have reflected the sympathy she felt for this boy. More than that: they were shown standing together at the end of a long corridor or hall of mirrors, which memory becomes, and in which they were portrayed stereoscopically, refracted, duplicated, melted into one image, and by moments shamefully distorted into lepers or Velasquez dwarfs. (TA 400)

In spite of the lepers and dwarfs, however, when Ada, the second in command at Beckwith Street, opens the door upon their rites with a "celebratory gesture," she knows that she is interrupting a moment of wholeness, a ritual marriage, and she closes the door on the

"celebrants" (TA 400). The "marriage," unlike the rather soggy and perhaps parodic marriage of Waldo and Arthur, is important in that a third person has been a witness, rather than a voyeur or an inquisitor. It is, in fact, the recognition by all three characters, Eadith, Philip, Ada, and the fourth witness, the reader/audience, that the past has been accepted and that, therefore, movement forward is possible. The act of accepting another person and therefore exposing the secret which he has hidden so strenuously, causes Eddie/Eadith to change. Change, for Manly Johnson, "is the condition of birth and rebirth and rebirth is the condition of resurrection, the possibility of a new covenant between man and man and the the sign of that 'loving-kindness' to the world outside the self" (M. Johnson, A Fringe of Leaves: White's Genethlion" 227).

Another "rite de passage", during which Eddie faces the reflection in the mirror without fear, occurs when Eddie accidentally meets his mother, the other "E." with whom he must reconcile himself. Their reunion takes place on a park bench outside a church where Eadie Twyborn has recently prayed. As is often the case in White's novels, speech is inadequate for the moments of spiritual insight; mother and son write notes to each other on the fly leaf of a prayerbook. Scribbled on the fly leaf are the words, "Are you my son Eddie?"; Eadie receives the written reply, "No, but I am your daughter Eadith" (TA 422). Eadie replies out loud, "I am so glad, I've always wanted a daughter" (TA 423). Eadith is relieved that his mother

has seen through his disguise and has accepted his existence as "solid and abiding" (Wolfe, Laden Choirs 225). Both woman and man, each of whom experience the other sex in their "several selves", accepts for a brief moment the "pain of duality".

Eadith/Eddie gives up his whorehouse and in his "current version" (TA 427), dressed as Eddie in a cheap suit and shoes a size too small, walks towards his mother's hotel, a journey which is clearly a movement towards a "rebirth". However, as he passes the last of his mirrors, a plate glass window, he sees: "the distorted shoulders of the shoddy suit, the pointed shoes, the cropped hair. He was disgusted to see he had forgotten to take off Eadith's make-up" (TA 428). It is clear that Eddie remains, like Tiresias, "throbbing between two lives" (Ovid, Metamorphoses). However, he is moving forward towards a goal, a reunion with his mother, a possible return to Australia, and the end of the loneliness he has felt all his life from the inability to accept the person he really was. The authorial voice points the way towards disaster as he walks. Images of war and aggression surround him as he "tottered in a fever of fragmented intentions . . . the east blazing with a perverse sunset" as the "thump and crump of history becoming unstable, crumbling" (TA 428). He has one last moment of illumination, a concentrated vision of his life:

In a moment it seemed to Eddie Twyborn as

though his own share in time were snatched away, as though every house he had ever lived in were torn open, the sawdust pouring out of all the dolls in all the rooms, furniture whether honest or pretentious still shuddering from its brush with destruction, a few broken bars of a Chabrier waltz scattered from the burst piano, was it the Judge-Pantocrator looking through a gap in the star-painted ceiling, the beige thighs hooked in a swinging chandelier could only be those of that clumsy acrobat Marcia, all contained in the ruins of this great unstable temporal house, all but Eddie and Eadith, unless echoes of their voices threading pandemonium. (TA 429)

Eddie is killed by one of the first bombs to be dropped on London, just as he reaches the corner of his mother's hotel. Ironically, he is liberated from his body just as he reaches a gentle form of reconciliation with the people in his "several lives" and with his personal fragmentation. It is not a dramatic moment, as one has come to expect in White (e.g., Stan Parker's recognition in a gob of spittle in The Tree of Man).

The ending, while puzzling, is very powerful. Eddie does die knowing who he is and his mother is also aware of who he is. Eadie sits in the garden of the hotel knowing that her son/daughter Eddie, "no matter which this fragment of my self which I lost is now returned where it belongs" (TA 432) . She has a dream of sitting in the garden, together, drying their hair "amongst the bulbuls and drizzle of taps we shall experience harmony at last" (TA 432).

The vision of the garden, of mother and child

together, of water and birds, appears idyllic and an affirmation of life, a justification for suffering, a sort of "heaven on earth." It is undercut, however, by the little bulbul who shakes "his little velvet jester's cap and raised his beak towards the sun" (TA 432). The irony contained within the image of the jester and the sun underlines White's life-long themes of the intrinsic contradiction between that which man desires, and that which he experiences, but also points towards the sun which is the source of light, growth, and salvation. The irony is always present but so is the source of hope.

Even the process of writing is an act of dualism:

I think intuition [as opposed to reason] is more important, creatively in the beginning... everything I write has to be dredged up from the unconscious -- which is what makes it such an exhausting and perhaps finally destructive process. I suppose all my characters are fragments of my own somewhat fragmented character. My first draft of a novel is a work of intuition, and it is a chaos nobody but myself could resolve. Working it up after that -- the oxywelding -- is more a process of reason. The last version is your last chance -- and you hope it won't be suicide. ("A Conversation with Patrick White" 139)

For Eddie the "last version" is not a suicide, but he was not able, in fact, to reach the garden where his mother sat drying her hair and the harmony which seemed possible.

An act external to himself (many would call it "an act of God," others "an act of man") prevented the last version

from reaching the goal.

In Flaws in the Glass, published in 1981, two years after The Twyborn Affair, White asks, "Am I a destroyer? this face in the glass which has spent a lifetime searching for what it believes, but can never prove to be, the truth.

A face consumed by wondering whether truth can be the worst destroyer of all" (FG 70). It would appear that truth killed the "current version" of Eddie Twyborn, a fact which Eadith Trist had understood earlier, that the "phoenix inside her . . . in the nature of things would never experience re-birth" (TA 410).

Conclusion

Memoirs of Many in One: The "I" meets the "I"

... there is no fixity in mythical concepts, they come into being, disintegrate, disappear completely.

Roland Barthes

Is White ever comfortable with the face in the mirror, the vision of the other half, of the inner world, the landscape through the melting glass? His most recently published novel, Memoirs of Many in One (1986), gives a partial answer. The narrative style of the novel acts as a parallel to the act of writing as formerly described by White and is also a parallel to the dualities experienced within the "play".

There are two actors or voices, the Writer of the Memoirs, a flamboyant, imaginative, intuitive, risk-taking woman, Alex Xenophon Demirjian Gray, and the Editor of her memoirs, the aging rheumatic, stick-using, stodgy, reasonable "friend", Patrick, who is also a well-known author. The two "I's" speak directly to the third character, the reader/audience who listens to Alex and Patrick remark on each other's lives and characters. This audience member believes that Alex and Patrick of Memoirs of Many in One are in a very real sense, the "irreconcilable halves" (AS 277), the mirrored selves, the

"twins", able at last, to speak directly to each other as the self approaches his/her death. In this case, the rational editor/actor, who is Patrick White himself, edits his own play, acts as the director, prompter, ticket seller, and is also the main actress (who also has to clean the toilets and tend the bar). He/she breaks his life into the component parts which become a series of parodies of him/herself and his/her many alternate identities: writer, nun, prostitute, actress, Empress of Byzantium, kleptomaniac, mother, prodigal, and understudy to God. Alex, as woman, parodies Patrick by calling him "Mother Superior" (MNO 87), "her collaborator" (MNO 53), an "elitist" (MNO 120), a "glabrous shaman" (MNO 164) who by his own admission is a failed artist.

Patrick, as Editor, notes that "Although an Anglo-Saxon Australian on both sides, I am a sybarite and masochist; some of the dramatis personae of this Levantine script could be the offspring of my own psyche" (MMO 16). His "offspring," the "many in one," Alex, lives her last days dreaming of the past or in her own words "running through this waking dream of my life" (MMO 167). She acts out all the roles she has been, or would like to have been, or the one she is in at the moment but is always aware in her "life's play" (MMO 34) that she is acting. She is also aware of her need to "find out whether the lives I have lived amount to anything" (MMO 35), a goal which the editor/author Patrick White has shared with all his characters since his first novel, Happy Valley.

Alex begins her memoirs by saying, "I don't know where to begin what may turn out a monstrous mistake -- start at the beginning? Plunge in today? Who knows where the end will come -- and whether in a flash, or a long gnawing. In any case THEY will be watching, from inside the house, from the garden, the Park, or most disturbingly, from above" (MMO 17).

Patrick White, author, and now editor of Alex Xenophon Demirjian Gray is using his "second self" to act as his own personal mirror to underline his growing belief that "the shapes of flesh that loom up at us out of mirrors" (AS 284) must be recognized and be dealt with. Alex, for Patrick the Editor, and Patrick the Author, becomes a Holstius who is very clear that duality, fragmentation, and pain are necessary parts of existence.

The "THEY" in the first paragraph of the "Memoirs" are the reader/audience, who up to this point in White's work have been allowed a certain amount of anonymity. The mirrored presentation of Alex reflecting on her life, which is in turn edited and commented upon by Patrick, the Editor, puts us in the position of having to be a participant in the text. We become a Mrs. Poulter, who watches the two old men stagger down the road, a Joanie Golson peering through the window at the duet players, or the "watchers" who see Mme Trist on her lonely early morning walks. As Arthur stands outside watching Waldo look into the mirror, as audience we have the same peculiar sensation of being yet another watcher who is

looking down the long "hall of mirrors" (TA 400). Just as Ada understands that Eddie and Philip Thring have experienced a moment of wholeness, while at the same time accepting the differences, we understand that Alex and Patrick are dealing with the differences and the pain of fragmentation, not through searching for the destruction of duality, but through the acceptance and even the celebration of duality.

Memoirs of Many in One becomes an act of truly dealing with the twin, the second self in the mirror. White "delivers himself up to the panic of the personal" ("Glabrous Shaman or Centennial Park's Very Own Saint" 72). By turning the self into Alex White has mirrored his own life and in so doing parodies himself, or rather the possibilities of who the real Patrick White is. The whole world becomes to Alex, a continuous masquerade, a great carnival. The nun of her fantasy becomes a monk's whore. The Empress of Byzantium is a circus rider who rides into a "society" party mounted on her horse, Sieglinde, and ploughs "the Double Bay hair-dos, the bald pates, the hair-pieces and blow-waves" (MMO 72). Alex, who has never taken herself too seriously, is thrown by the horse into the remains of the luncheon and not "on a heap of horse-turd" (MMO 72).

Through the act of writing her memoirs, she becomes aware of the one role which is totally inadequate, that of writing which is "a subterfuge" (MMO 57), "an act of self-

protection" (MNO 51), and an act of masturbation (a conclusion at which Eudoxia had also arrived), but she is also aware that "Words are what matter. Even when they don't communicate. That's why I must continue writing" (MMO 86). She plays with words, unmasking and undressing the "real" until she herself is naked and "responsible for my own garbage -- my own rotten soul" (MMO 119), and thereby becomes aware of the new role "which has not yet been devised, although I feel it forming in me" (MMO 126). Alex longs for a guide, a "glabrous shaman" (MMO 164) for the "last role," but realises that "Patrick cannot guide himself, that's why he's taken to carrying a walking stick" (MMO 174). However, in the end she must resign herself to Patrick, inadequate as he is, because "Patrick will be the spirit guide at the great seance. I respect him as far as anybody, including oneself, can be respected" (MMO 164) even though she knows Patrick is "in search of the unanswerable, the unattainable" (MMO 88).

After her death, her memoirs are left to the respected author/editor who ponders that it is "Curious how others pin their expectations on those they have known all their lives without knowing. Only Alex really knew, because she might have created me, and I her" (MMO 180). The audience is never quite sure whether the memoirs which record the "actual and created" lives are "a kick in the pants, or a monstrous joke" (MMO 180). Have we been the victims of Alex's gun in the sand pit theatre, along with the professor, his student doxy, and the critic? Are we the

casualties of the "Creator," the writer who is himself afraid of what he has let loose, of what he has created (MMO 166)? Or will we "believe, or disbelieve, as much of the truth we . . . have learnt to accept" (MMO 142)? Patrick as author, vivisector and magician, is aware at last "that the key to anybody is in one's self" (MMO 64). As writer, he is aware that there are actually two "I's" who must speak to each other; as vivisector, he must explore with each word the cavities and crevices of each of the "double selves"; as magician, he must make the "play" seem real while exploring illusion; as creator he must be impartial.

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

If she had become my victim in those endless scribblings which I was faced at last with sorting out, I was hers through her authoritarian bigot of a daughter.

We were quits, oh yes, but never quits of each other. (MMO 192)

Kepler, in his extensive discussion of the double in literature, claims that "every second-self story is a story of growth in the first self" (196). Alex, as second self to the author Patrick, has served as "the hammer to beat the metal of the first into new shape. He [the second self] is not, however, an independent hammer, for if the first self were merely a passive recipient there could be no adventure at all" (201). The goal of the adventure is

"self-meeting":

If we ask why it should be sought, when the seeking is so often unpleasant and even fatal, we can only answer that there appears to be in living creatures generally the urge to do a thing which can never be justified in practical terms: to see the unseen, to sail beyond the sunset, to cross the mountains of the moon. And when the uncrossed mountains are within instead of without, or rather within as well as without . . .- when this is the case there seems to be a special urgency, arising out of a sense of incompleteness, even of self-deception and self-deprivation. For to live as only half oneself is to live a kind of lie, and to live a kind of lie is to live a kind of death.
(Keppler 201)

Patrick White has met the "self" in a very public way, in the writing of Memoirs of Many in One. In the same way that Alice stepped back through the Looking Glass to the world of her kittens and her nanny, Patrick has returned to the world of crushed toothpaste tubes and Hilda who will look after him until he dies. The fact that Patrick has allowed his Alex half to die in peace is a suggestion to the audience that Patrick himself has made his peace with the flawed glass through his understanding of the Alex within himself. After Alex's death, there is a kind of serenity, or benevolence, which is not characteristic of White's writing. It is a known fact that people who are approaching the end of their lives go through a process of renunciation of the things which hitherto have seemed important. White, a man who has spent his life writing, finally expresses his disappointment with literature and

"with the expectations it imposes of life, and language itself, with its power of self-dismissal and annulment" ("Glabrous Shaman" 77).

Alex has said, and Patrick now accepts her words, "Literature, as they call it, is a millstone round his neck" (MMO 177). Memoirs of Many in One can be seen to be an un naming of the self, a letting go, a renunciation of the need to look into the mirror. He accepts the vision in the mirror, accepts the "pain" and the fragmentation, and knows there is no need to continue the act of looking into the mirror.

The journey into the self has been completed, and the reflection in the glass is understood, therefore, the mediation of the mirror is no longer needed. The "I" has met the "I." The dualities have not disappeared but have been accepted. The fact that Patrick has allowed his mirrored self to die peacefully suggests that Patrick White has made his peace with his looking glass. This audience member and reader can think of no better way for a pilgrimage to end.

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