

Psycho-Narrative:  
An Interdisciplinary Generic Approach

by

Sue Matheson

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies

in Partial Fulfillment of

the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Department of English

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**A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of the University of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of**

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For my mother and father

Mary and Sam Matheson

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## *Introduction*

Today radical discourse is, for the most part, associated with power politics expressed in terms of sex, race, and class. With its emphasis on the individual's rights and liberties, this sort of discourse has not only become socially acceptable, but also academically respectable. Universities, in particular, have adopted—some would say co-opted—these voices once located on the peripheries of power, and made them their own. Women's Studies, Native Studies, Afro-American Studies, and Labour Studies are now all part of the enlightened liberal arts curriculum. Although one might conclude that there are no margins left, a large body of literature still exists outside the limits deemed academically acceptable. Often grotesque and perverse, and even at times daemonic, these texts have been excluded from both the traditional and post-modern canons. Written by academically respected and acclaimed authors like William Golding, John Fowles, Doris Lessing, Anne Hebert, Margaret Atwood, Robert Kroetsch, William Faulkner, Sylvia Plath, Ursula K. Le Guin, and William Styron, as well as counter-culture figures like Jack Kerouac, W. S. Burroughs, Tom Robbins, Tom Wolfe, William Gibson, and Hunter S. Thompson, these works are inherently and violently at odds with current tenets of political correctness and theories about the social construction of the self. Intimately and primarily concerned with the workings of the human psyche, they portray states of consciousness produced by drugs, madness, dreams, and mystical experiences.

Constituting a genre that I will call psycho-narrative, such works attempt to depict a different—essentially a *non-rational*—way of knowing. Written by acclaimed authors and immensely popular, psycho-narratives, however, cannot be considered a part of the mainstream. Concerned with the imagination, the numinous, and altered states of consciousness, psycho-narrative illuminates what is the self-regulating feature of our cultural psyche. According to Carl Jung in *The Spirit in Man, Art, and Literature*, every period has its bias, its particular prejudices, and its psychic malaise; thus, whenever conscious life becomes too “one-sided or adopts a false attitude,” archetypes express themselves in art and literature with the purpose of bringing that “one-sided, unadapted or dangerous state of consciousness into equilibrium” (104).

In the twentieth century, this “one-sided, unadapted or dangerous state of consciousness” is clearly Western thinking’s emphasis on the individual and ego-consciousness: our culture’s heavy bias towards rational empirical thought. As Stanley Romaine Hopper points out in “Myth, Dream and Literature,” in this “most unlikely time . . . in this, the most positivistic and ‘scientific’ time, we are consumed with an interest in the meaning and content of *dreams*; in this, the most widely advertised ‘empirical’ and ‘rationalistic’ age, we are increasingly concerned with the *imagination*; and in this era of the Nietzschean and theological ‘death of God,’ we are experiencing a rebirth of the *numinous*” (119).

Judging by the proliferation as well as the popularity of the psycho-narrative today, a major adjustment in the psyche of our culture appears to be in the process of being made. The nature of this adjustment is often astonishing, confusing,

bewildering, and even deliberately repelling. Because the psycho-narrative derives its material from what Jung labels the hinterlands of our psyche, its products range from the "ineffably sublime to the perversely grotesque" (197). Devoted to the psyche's impersonal and collective contents, the psycho-narrative explores states of consciousness in which the ego is discovered to be only a smaller part of a larger and incredibly complex personality. Embodying such states, psycho-narratives not only challenge the Cartesian notion that our rational intellect is in control of the psyche, but they also explore areas of the psyche which have remained, until recently, largely uncharted in modern literature. As a result, these texts offer their readers three related problems: 1) they constitute a challenge to the Judaeo-Christian, Newtonian, Darwinian, and Freudian models of ourselves and our universe which continue to inform current "institutionalized" thinking; 2) they are not concerned with the power politics that make other marginalized works acceptable; 3) their very popularity makes them suspect to those who wish to see literature as the "property of professionals."

Taking up the challenge to institutionalized thinking that the psycho-narrative presents, some critics have attempted to "domesticate" individual works. Because of the genre's concern with the individual's experience of the collective, however, these attempts have lacked the critical terminology to deal with the psycho-narrative, on the one hand, and a context in which to situate such works, on the other. Critical treatments of William Styron's *Sophie's Choice* and Charles Williams's *All Hallows' Eve* are good examples of the psycho-narrative's current critical climate which tends to rationalize experience from either a Freudian or a sociological or a Christian

orientation. Of the 23 articles published on *Sophie's Choice*, twelve are essentially socio-biographical readings which attempt to discuss the novel's treatment of race relations and the Holocaust and four are neo-Freudian interpretations of the text. Charles Williams's *All Hallows' Eve*, on the other hand, is often read from a Christian perspective. Unequipped to convey understandings of the genre's archetypal nature or its cultural orientation, these readings are unable for the following reasons to address the fundamental questions which these texts pose: 1) Freudian thought regards the de-centering of the Self and discourse as an individual experience rather than an individual's experience of the collective; 2) politically and historically-oriented, the sociological approach is unable to accommodate works whose concerns are not specifically related to the politics of race or gender; 3) due to the decline of Western religion in the twentieth century, Christian terminology proves to be inadequate when applied to the archetypes contained within this literature.

This lack of a terminology with which to discuss psycho-narratives and the absence of a context has led to the tendency to read psycho-narratives in isolation. Critics have attempted New Critical readings of psycho-narratives or have approached them as works of fantasy. These approaches, however, have also proven to be unsatisfactory, because they too are not designed to discuss the genre's archetypal nature or its cultural orientation. When discussed from a New Critical point of view, for example, *Sophie's Choice* becomes merely an interesting exercise in leitmotifs and *All Hallows' Eve* a re-visioning of either T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* or Dante's *The Divine Comedy*.<sup>1</sup> As a work of fantasy, *All Hallows' Eve* can be regarded merely as a supernatural thriller.<sup>2</sup>

Another factor contributing to the problematic critical climate surrounding psycho-narration is, significantly, the nature of the psyche itself. As Ean Begg remarks in *Myth and Today's Consciousness*, psychoanalysts find it extremely difficult to define the term "consciousness." When they have done so it is only to discover that they had to relegate many varieties of psychic experience to the realm of the unconscious and then face questions about what should be included in the concept of the ego itself (47). As psycho-narratives themselves demonstrate, moreover, the psyche is constantly involved in the process of self-generation, and is continually changing: as a result, it inherently resists rigorous, rigid, and reductive definitions of itself.

At first, the general critical climate dealing specifically with literature which embodies the workings of the psyche also seems to mirror the critical situation surrounding psycho-narratives.<sup>3</sup> Wayne Shumaker's *Literature and the Irrational*, however, puts forward the idea that an interdisciplinary approach which combines the insights of psychology and anthropology would accommodate the archetypal nature of literature concerned with the irrational by offering its reader both a critical terminology and a context in which to situate such works. According to Shumaker, in order to gain entry to psychological literature concerned with the collective psyche, anthropology is "a better course" to follow than psychology, because "non-rational psychic activities" found in this literature are "continuous with psychic patterns studied in primitive minds" (20).

With Shumaker's work in mind, therefore, this thesis will identify and then discuss psycho-narration as a body of compensatory literature, specifically concerned

with the individual's experiences of the collective, which has risen in response to the Western thinking's emphasis on the individual during the twentieth century. As a pioneering work, this study attempts to map out the general boundaries and configurations of the psycho-narrative since 1900. Thus the primary texts examined here were chosen, because they best illustrate the general features of the genre today. Written by academically respected authors and counterculture figures, these texts were also chosen, because they represent the range of the authors engaged in writing psycho-narration. It should be noted that due to its inherent constraints of space and time, this study does not attempt to be the definitive work on psycho-narrative. Indeed, valuable texts like William S. Burroughs' *The Naked Lunch* and *The Tropic of Capricorn*, Margaret Atwood's *Lady Oracle*, Doris Lessing's *Briefing for a Descent into Hell*, William Golding's *Darkness Visible*, and Mervyn Peake's *Gormenghast* (to name only a few) are not examined here. There is a great deal more work that could be—and should be—done in this area.

Methodologically, this study also breaks new ground for the texts which it discusses. To date, no critic has attempted a Jungian reading of these works even though their archetypal nature invites this psychological approach, and even though Jung's terminology and insights are specifically designed to discuss the psychic phenomena which irrupt from the pages of every psycho-narrative. Also, to date, critics have not turned to the insights of cultural anthropologists like Mircea Eliade and Jane Ellen Harrison to understand the ritualistic function of plot action in psycho-narrative. By combining Jungian insights with the ideas of anthropologists and classical anthropologists, this study will provide readers with a critical terminology

which the genre invites and a context in which to read it. In doing so, this study opens an unexplored avenue to the texts discussed herein, offers its reader a means by which the "deep structures" or phylogenic impulses of these texts may be charted, and explores the activity of psychic reconstruction which underpins the deconstruction of our modern, rational ego-consciousness that characterizes the psycho-narrative. In order to avoid the danger of engaging in what could be deemed a gratuitous and distracting dialogue with the critics, this study is designed to be a "clean" text. Thus, brief synopses of the current critical climate surrounding the psycho-narrative(s) discussed supplement each chapter in its endnotes. An annotated bibliography of secondary source material regarding these psycho-narratives has also been made available for the reader's convenience.

Chapter I of this study will discuss the literary traditions of the medieval dream vision and the Gothic from which the psycho-narrative draws many of its conventions, establish the psycho-narrative's debt to the psychic patterns studied in primitive minds, and identify the archetypes that are familiar features in this genre. Further defining and illustrating the features of the psycho-narrative, this study will then identify and provide close readings of the psychological and anthropological constructs that inform key texts.

Chapters II to V will discuss the four characteristic speakers of psycho-narrative: Chapter II will identify the psycho-narrative's shamanistic narrator, the strategies by which his or her altered consciousness is depicted, and the shamanistic techniques by which this speaker dispels the collective shadow; Chapter III will define the "innocent" narrator, the elements of the medieval dream vision which

contribute to the making of this speaker, and the individual's participation in a cultural shadow; Chapter IV will discuss the "possessed" speaker which often appears in psycho-narratives, by identifying the characteristics of archetypal possession and examining the effects that these characteristics have on the telling of the tale; Chapter V will examine the strategies employed by the disembodied voice of the third-person narrator in psycho-narration and discuss this speaker's similarities to the psychopomp or guardian spirit.

Chapters VI to VIII will then identify the initiatory models on which psycho-narrative action is based: Chapter VI will study one type of ritual initiation in the psycho-narrative in terms of its epic underpinnings; Chapter VII will offer a reading of the scapegoat figure in psycho-narrative in terms of the initiation which underlies classical tragedy; Chapter VIII will demonstrate the lyric mode on which the action of psycho-narration also rests. The last two chapters will study psycho-narrative's symbolic modes and figures. Chapter IX will discuss the significance of symbol and metaphor in the psycho-narrative; and Chapter X will examine one of the many representatives of the collective unconscious which frequently appear in the psychomachia format of psycho-narration—the anima. These chapters are followed by a conclusion which suggests how these psycho-narratives, and the archetypes and rituals contained therein, function culturally. Because its approach is generic, this study does not concern itself with addressing specific studies of various novels. Instead, an annotated bibliography of the criticism surrounding these works is provided at the end of this study.

## Endnotes

1. For close readings of *Sophie's Choice* see the following annotated bibliographic entries: "God's Averted Face, Styron's *Sophie's Choice*" by John Lang; "Illusion and Identity in *Sophie's Choice*" by Owen L. Nagel; "The Psychopath as Moral Agent in William Styron's *Sophie's Choice*" by Allen Shepherd; "Bach vs Brooklyn's Clamorous Yawp: Sound in *Sophie's Choice*" by Frederick N. Smith; for close readings of *All Hallows' Eve* see the following annotated bibliographic entries: "Spectres of T. S. Eliot's City in the Novels of Charles Williams" by Donald G. Keese; "Dante and Williams: Pilgrims in Purgatory" by George Reynolds.
2. See T. S. Eliot's discussion of the supernatural thriller in his introduction to *All Hallows' Eve* on page xiv.
3. Simon O. Lesser's *Fiction and The Unconscious* and David J. Gordon's *Literary Art and the Unconscious* employ Freudian approaches to literature which embodies the workings of the psyche, and therefore pay attention to the workings of the subconscious, not the collective unconscious.

Articles by D. L. MacDonald, Chanita Goodblatt and Joseph Glicksohn, Katharine Wallingford, and Ralph Yarrow in *Mosaic's* 1986 fall issue, *Literature and Altered States of Consciousness*, a full-length text, also employ psychological approaches to literature depicting states of consciousness altered by mystical experiences, meditation, and substance abuse. Because these studies point to the importance of the topic, more work needs to be done in this area.

Lillian Feder's *Madness in Literature*, a socio-historic study which identifies madness as a symbol for alienation, lays the groundwork for Shoshona Felman's

*Writing and Madness*, which suggests that due to the increased number of literary texts that are concerned with madness in this century, madness itself has become commonplace and, as such, occupies a position of inclusion within the culture. Thomas B. Gilmore's *Equivocal Spirits: Alcoholism and Dreaming in Twentieth Century Literature* is the first socio-literary critical text devoted to the examination of alcoholism as a state of consciousness.

Alan A. Stone's *The Abnormal Personality Throughout Literature* is useful as an introduction to literary depictions of madness ranging from neuroses to psychoses. Dorrit Cohn's *Transparent Minds: Narrative Modes for Presenting Consciousness in Fiction* is a more important New Critical work than Stone's, since Cohn identifies the first person as a technique commonly used to depict states of consciousness.

*Chapter One**The Psycho-narrative: Literary Influences and Narrative Strategies*

Literature which attempts to express the workings of the psyche faces a number of interesting problems. Not the least of these problems is determining the nature of the psyche itself. As Marie-Louise von Franz points out, the concept of the unconscious is a stumbling block for those who seek exact definitions (*Jung* 8). This is, of course, due to the fact that an Archimedean point from which to examine the psyche simply does not exist. Likewise, in *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, Carl Jung remarks that all comprehension and all that is comprehended is in itself psychic, and to that extent we are “helplessly cooped up in an exclusively psychic world” (351f, 323).

However impossible it may be to define the psyche, it is possible nonetheless to envision it. Von Franz offers the possibility of visual art as a means by which the unconscious may be regarded a visible “field.” In verbal art, myths, fairy tales, and mythopoeic fiction contain other approximations. Within this group, psycho-narration is a type of fiction which is specifically concerned with attempting to portray the “conscious-unconscious whole” that constitutes the psyche (von Franz, *Jung*, 124). Indeed, one may even go so far as to say that each psycho-narrative is a model of a psyche —be it individual or collective—at work.

Like the psyche, the psycho-narrative has its own inborn structure, and just as the psyche expresses itself in archetypes that are Janus-faced, psycho-narratives also take two different forms. The state of consciousness which such works contain is often expressed as a nightmare: as a glamorous, daemonic, and grotesque experience which destroys our human standards of value and aesthetic form—"a terrifying tangle of eternal chaos"; conversely, the state of consciousness may also be transmitted as a revelation of beauty beyond our fathoming, an epiphany which we can express only in metaphors (Jung, *Spirit* 90). Epiphany or nightmare, the state of consciousness expressed in such contemporary literature reflects phylogenic principles. Although appearing in modern dress, the mythic motifs of these works retain traces of the earlier stages of the evolution through which the psyche has passed (Jung, *Spirit* 97).

In the same way, psycho-narratives have their roots in older literary traditions. Texts which embody states of contemporary epiphanic rapture trace their literary lineage back to the medieval dream vision and the mysticism of the Middle Ages, while the shocking nightmares of the twentieth century, produced by drugs and madness, are related to the Gothic fiction of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Common to both traditions and in turn to psycho-narration is the use of frame narration or the frame story, a preliminary narrative within which one or more characters proceeds to tell a story. During the Middle Ages, frame narration was a popular literary device. Boccaccio, for example, uses the frame story to structure his prose *Decameron* (1353); Chaucer developed the form in *The Canterbury Tales* to a very sophisticated degree. Frame narration became the accepted structuring device

for authors of the medieval dream vision: from Dante in *The Inferno* to William Langland in *Piers Plowman* to the *Pearl* Poet to Chaucer in *The Book of the Duchess*.

In these works and other medieval dream visions, the dream functions as the story within the frame of its narrator's recollections—enabling the narrator to travel from his or her perceptions of the waking world to his or her experience of the collective unconscious. The narrator falls asleep and dreams about the events which he relates; often he is accompanied by a guide, human or animal, which leads him through a spring landscape, and the events that take place there are at least in part allegorical. Throughout, the protagonist's encounter with the "non-rational" is presented or considered by the protagonist to be unnatural; after all, the underlying premise of these stories-within-stories is that anything may happen in a dream. The importance of the framing technique itself should not be overlooked, because it serves to produce the dramatic irony on which the dream vision format turns. For example, the *Pearl* narrator's consciousness functions logically during the dream. Ironically, his logical questions are not at all enlightening in a place where synchronicity, not causality, governs. Thus after displaying his ignorance and naivete, the *Pearl* narrator awakens: and although he himself has learned little because of his experiences, his audience has learned a great deal. Unlike the *Pearl* dreamer, they recognize that they embody the same complex integration of the profane and the sacred within themselves as the *Pearl* maiden, who is both a daughter of Man and a Bride of Christ.

Frame narration in the Gothic differs sharply from that of the medieval dream vision. Emphasizing the alienated consciousness of the individual and concerned with

its attendant psychological monstrosities, the Gothic often lures its reader into the unbalanced mind of another. Unlike the medieval dreamer, who is often confused, the Gothic speaker contained within the frame story is invariably mad. In the Gothic, it is the narrator's consciousness, not the objective reality of the world around it, which is expressed synchronistically. In such a state of consciousness, the "real" world becomes a waking nightmare, expressed as a series of projected images of the self (MacAndrew 25).

By the nineteenth century, the use of frame narration in the Gothic to chart the transition from the rational world to the "non-rational" had become standard practice. A stable, ordering, and socially-respected personality regularly introduces the reader to a second unstable speaker who then relates his or her experiences. The exaggerated perceptions of this second speaker range from the hysterical to paranoid and often reach the proportions of schizophrenia and even megalomania. Significantly, he or she expresses reservations about the unusual nature of his or her experience at the beginning of the tale but seems unaware of the unusual nature of his or her own psyche. The Gothic prototype of the twisted scientist, for example, Victor Frankenstein, is unaware of his own megalomania, and Henry James's governess in *The Turn of the Screw* does not diagnose herself as a hysteric, although she is undoubtedly a textbook case.

In twentieth-century psycho-narratives, frame narration also functions as a device which allows authors to present and experiment with "non-rational" states of consciousness. Similarly, psychonarratives frequently combine the literary signatures of both the medieval dream vision and the traditional Gothic frameworks. In *Sophie's*

*Choice*, Stingo, a speaker who could have stepped out of the pages of *Piers Plowman*, introduces Sophie's tragic tale in much the same way that James's narrator introduces the governess's tale in *The Turn of the Screw*. In *The Bell Jar*, Esther Greenwood's rational persona introduces her "non-rational" alter ego of the past, whose Gothic undertones direct the reader to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, in the same way that the speaker in the medieval dream vision introduces his or her dream.

Not all psycho-narratives, however, use the frame story as a device by which to structure their tales. Some authors have experimented with form to such a degree that, in some instances, the convention of the narrative frame has disappeared altogether. Some psycho-narratives are presented simply as altered states of consciousness themselves. Even without the conventional narrative frame, however, the influence which the medieval dream vision and the Gothic novel have had on the psycho-narrative is unmistakable: for example, the synchronistic journey in Beagle's *The Last Unicorn* clearly signals the dream state of the medieval dreamer—and the paranoid sensibility of Thompson's Dr. Gonzo in *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* has unmistakable Gothic overtones.

In addition to reflecting the psyches of the medieval dreamer and the Gothic narrator, modern psycho-narratives also reflect other conventions from the worlds of their literary ancestors. Like the enclosed garden of the medieval dream vision, the landscapes of *The Last Unicorn*, *Lincoln's Dreams*, *Alibi*, and *The Once and Future King* reflect the condition of the psyche itself. Close parallels can also be drawn between the settings of the Gothic and those found in psycho-narratives set in urban locations. The terrain of *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, for example, resembles the

closed world of the Gothic, and the experience of the drug addict also expresses itself in terms of the grotesque and is peopled by the monstrous. Thus, what would have been the castles and cathedrals of the Gothic are, in Thompson's terms, casinos on the Strip; what were once dangerous dukes, perverted priests, and mad monks are now the middle-class of the American Mid-West. Likewise, Flatbush, the district of New York City in which Styron's narrator resides, is a closed world, peopled by the grotesque products of Stingo's over-heated imagination: and like Poe's crumbling House of Usher, Yetta Zimmerman's sordid boardinghouse conceals equally unpleasant family secrets which also destroy those who keep them.

Yet, despite its resemblances, the contemporary psycho-narrative is neither a contemporary version of the medieval dream vision nor a modern twist on the Gothic nightmare nor merely a conflation of these genres. Like Proteus, the psycho-narrative takes on the characteristics of the medieval dream vision and the Gothic when these devices enable it to illustrate a psychic condition and sheds them when they do not. Also, unlike the medieval dream vision, psycho-narratives insist that epiphanic experiences are the results of psychic experiences, not divine intervention. And unlike the Gothic speaker, the deranged or addled psycho-narrator is not shut off from the world—although, at times, the reader may wish him or her to be. More important, the experience of the psycho-narrative cannot be understood as a purely personal or societal experience, as it is in the Gothic. It is the experience of psychic commonality, not individuality.

A feature which is common to psycho-narratives and the medieval dream vision, however, is the emphasis on psychic expansion as a means of bridging two

worlds. In the medieval dream vision, the dreamer's consciousness expands only when he alters his state of consciousness in dreaming. In the dream, the dreamer is able to encounter inhabitants of that other world. In Dante's *Inferno*, Chaucer's *The Book of the Duchess*, and *The Pearl*, these inhabitants reveal the secrets of death. In these medieval dream visions, the dream is the bridge which connects the world of the living and the dead, and the act of dreaming itself is an act of psychic expansion. In the contemporary psycho-narrative, the experience of an altered state of consciousness is also an experience of psychic expansion. Like medieval dream vision narrators, psycho-narrators undergo a transforming process, and having entered an altered state of consciousness, they find themselves experiencing either the sublime or the daemonic. In the deeply religious atmosphere of the Middle Ages, these sorts of excursions were not considered outrageous. In medieval dream visions, it is commonplace—even conventional—for narrators to speak with the dead, befriend animals, and encounter the sublime in Nature. Like Julian of Norwich and St. John of the Cross, medieval dream vision narrators, among them Piers and the *Pearl* narrator, restore the connection between Heaven and Earth.

Since the Nietzschean and "theological death of God," however, the designation of the sacred and the profane have changed. As a result, psycho-narrators encounter archetypes, not angels. Nonetheless, psycho-narratives still seek to restore such a connection in the form of experiences in which the conscious and unconscious realms of the psyche are re-united.

In the medieval dream vision, contact with the unconscious is achieved either voluntarily through meditation or prayer before the dreamer sleeps, as in *The Book of*

*the Duchess* and *The Pearl*, or involuntarily in dreams, as in *Piers Plowman* and *The Hous of Fame*. In the Gothic, the narrators come in contact with their unconscious voluntarily by taking drugs to unbalance their psyches, as in *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, or involuntarily by experiencing madness as in *Frankenstein*. In the modern psycho-narrative, attempts to re-unite the conscious and unconscious realms of the psyche are expressed in terms of mystical experience, as in *All Hallows' Eve*, *The Last Unicorn*, and *The Bridge*; in terms of dreams, as in *Sophie's Choice*, *Lincoln's Dreams* and *The Once and Future King*; in terms of substance abuse as in *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* and *Neuromancer*; and in terms of madness, as in *The Bell Jar*, *Alibi*, and *Mantissa*. Judging by the large numbers of deranged narrators in this body of literature, madness appears to be a preferred strategy by which narrators attempt to escape the overwhelmingly rational component of our culture's psyche.

Another distinguishing feature common to the medieval dream vision, the Gothic, and the psycho-narrative is that the bridging between the conscious and unconscious realms of the psyche is typically depicted as a journey or a quest. In the psycho-narrative, this journey does not simply chart the transition between two states of consciousness. Indeed, contact with the contents of the collective unconscious is only the first stage of the protagonist's journey in psycho-narration, for the journey entails the integration of the conscious and unconscious components of the psyche. As these components are integrated, the protagonist discovers his or her psychic commonality. With this in mind, these components are best understood in terms of anthropological constructs.

When engaged in a journey or a quest, psycho-narrators function shamanistically—particularly those whose states of consciousness have been altered by drugs or madness. As Mircea Eliade points out in *Myths, Dreams and Mysteries*, the shaman alters his or her consciousness “to abolish this human condition” and to “enter again into the condition of primordial Man” (98, 99). As “primordial Man,” the shaman seeks to restore a great deal of the condition which existed before the Fall: “he renews man’s original friendship with the animals; he reconciles Earth with Heaven; and in Heaven he meets the god that resides there and speaks directly to him” (66). In psycho-narratives, the presentation of the protagonist as a shaman who undertakes such a journey underpins the impulse of these texts towards re-discovering the whole human condition via the experience of the psyche itself.

Other types of psycho-narrators also serve to unearth the deeper layers of the human psyche. One of these is the innocent psycho-narrator. Modelled after the dream vision narrator, this narrator finds himself or herself wandering in a world which has become illogical. His or her adventures are educations in the irrational nature of humanity. Another type is the narrator who is possessed by an archetype which is modelled after the highly unstable personality of the Gothic speaker; ironically, however, the insanity exhibited by this psycho-narrator serves to connect the individual with humanity, not alienate him or her from it. A third type, the disembodied or supernatural speaker found in psycho-narratives that are told in the third person also is in touch with what Jung deems “the night-side of life” (*Spirit* 94); a repository of collective wisdom, like the shamanistic psycho-narrator, he or she also enables the reader to catch sight of the figures that populate the night-world:

spirits, daemons and gods. Indeed, like the shaman, all these psycho-narrators afford their readers glimpses of the psychic world that Jung believes terrifies the primitive and is, at the same time, his greatest hope (*Spirit* 95-96).

More often than not, the psycho-narrative journey is an experience of the underlying cosmology of the twentieth century in hellish detail. Significantly, narrators whose consciousnesses have been altered by madness and/or drugs typically experience the psychic realities which underlie the rational components of their minds as nightmares. Some psycho-narratives evoke terror because of their total "otherness" or "strangeness" (*Spirit* 90). As Rudolf Otto points out, the blood-chilling experiences of religious terror or awe which the individual undergoes in the presence of the *mysterium tremendum* is proof of the divine and his or her alienation from it (10, 17). Expressed in apocalyptic and daemonic imagery, this alienation from the divine is the major preoccupation of the psycho-narrative nightmare, and takes the form of mirroring our spiritual malaise.

While undertaking their journeys into the "non-rational" recesses of the psyche, narrators of the psycho-narrative nightmare, like the shaman, dramatize their experiences, thereby performing the integrative function of drama. In doing so, they become what Erich Neumann terms mouthpieces of the transpersonal—they convey to the group what it needs: the contents of the collective unconscious (*Origins* 425). Unlike the secular therapy of the nightmare in the Gothic which is designed to expell or repress these psychic contents from the consciousness of the individual, the psycho-narrative is designed to integrate them into the individual's consciousness. Narrative action in these texts therefore has a ritual function: for example, whether it takes the

form of the epic quest in T. H. White's *The Once and Future King* or the tragic action illustrated in the re-creation of the American Civil War in *Lincoln's Dreams*, the psycho-narrator's journey attempts to re-connect him or her with the numinal—the dead and the daemons that inhabit the uncanny recesses of the psyche. The numinosity of these manifestations of the collective unconscious is easily identifiable by the quality of terror which the narrator experiences during these encounters.

Not every transpersonal revelation or experience of the Divine is experienced as terrifying. The psycho-narrative journey itself may be a return to the memory of the paradisaical condition of *illud tempore* that is still embedded in our psyches. Psycho-narratives which contain these journeys evoke a response which is a positive sensation, the experience of religious awe-fulness: what Corbin Scott Carnell describes as delight evoked by the feeling that the individual is becoming one with the universe and desires an even "closer union" (20). Narrators, like Iain Banks' Orr, and protagonists like Charles Williams' Lester whose consciousnesses have been altered by encounters with death, experience the psychic realities which underlie the rational components of their minds as manifestations of the ideal: these states of consciousness are, in a word, paradisaical. Ecstatic rather than mimetic—that is reflecting possibility rather than mirroring the present—their journeys also are concerned with the process of transformation, but the experience, which is contained in these works, expresses itself as a "paradigm of new being . . . a prophetic, lyrical, and eschatological (or ultimate) vision" (Miller 35).

Psycho-narrators themselves experience the delight which accompanies their new state of being as a form of ecstasy. As in the medieval dream vision, this state

of consciousness is often achieved after the individual has fallen in love. To a greater or lesser degree, psycho-narrators all find themselves infatuated with a member of the opposite sex. It is evident from the nature of their infatuations that the love that they experience is a kind of collective experience: what the ancients considered a divine madness—what Jung recognizes as anima possession. Ecstasy, however can also take other forms of transport. T. H. White, for example, depicts the recovery of the primordial bliss of childhood: in the first book of *The Once and Future King*, the Wart, transformed into a number of animals, experiences the state of psychic wholeness because of his participation in Nature while growing up in the Merrie Olde England of the popular imagination.

As Jung would point out, it does not matter whether the primordial experience is located in a popularized version of Arthur's Britain or the New Jerusalem of post-war England, for related mythological imagery gives this experience its form. It is important to note, however, that it is this specific localizing convention of the genre, the signature of the Archetype, that distinguishes the psycho-narrative from mystical writings. Indeed, it is this grounding which identifies the psycho-narrative as a form of apocalyptic literature. As Eleanor Wilner notes in her study of western culture and visionary texts, the apocalyptic imagination is equally impatient with positivism *and* mysticism—neither drowning in actuality without significant form nor losing itself in pure light; in the apocalyptic vision, she says, there is neither a vague pantheism nor a mysticism which uses the image as a way to get to the "imageless"; apocalyptic vision, she states, celebrates "not mystery so much as created order, a living structure in which Man quite simply feels at home" (181).

The readers of psycho-narratives feel at home in the “living structure” of these texts, because their structure, expressed through imagery, is that of the psyche itself. Thus, unlike the blood-chilling alienation experienced when one encounters the alien miasma of the other’s “*unheimlich*,” the deeper “*heimlich*” of the collective is immediately recognisable. The dark, twisting and often strange terrain of the Las Vegas Strip in *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* is as familiar to the reader—although not necessarily as pleasant—as the sweetly nostalgic order found in Sir Ector’s castle and its environs in *The Once and Future King*. Because psycho-narratives express the psyche, they create for their readers the experience of psychic commonality. In reading psycho-narration, we rediscover our common source. However changed the intellect of the modern individual may be from that of our medieval forbearer or the citizen of the eighteenth century, the deeper layers of the psyche have remained unaltered; within psycho-narratives, we find new visions “in harmony with the memories of the old far-off, far-off experiences that lie within us” (Lawrence 301).

This recognition of psychic commonality, of course, does not take place in the rational component of the reader’s consciousness. The reader’s recognition of the collective contents of the psyche—the universal cultural patterns expressed in archetypes and myths—occurs instead in the visceral, irrational sphere of consciousness. In reading the psycho-narrative, one has the sense of having been *in this place before*. Whether pleasant or unpleasant, the *déjà vu* quality of this experience is due to the inborn phylogenic structure of the psyche, expressed as a specific geography which unites apocalyptic literature from the dream vision of the Middle Ages to the psycho-narratives of the twentieth century. However localized

these psychic terrains may appear to be, invariably they express one of two psychic conditions: Creation or Chaos.

These psychic terrains not only mirror collective and individual psyches within the psycho-narrative, they also comment on their condition. As Jung says, whenever conscious life becomes one-sided or adopts a false attitude, archetypal images “instinctively” rise to the surface in dreams and in the visions of artists and seems to restore the psychic balance, whether of the individual or the epoch (*Spirit* 104). What Leslie Fiedler would term these archetypes’ Signatures, the individuating factors of these images which express the contents of the collective unconscious, reveal the conditions of our cultural psyches. Arguably, revealing these conditions and thereby restoring our psychic balance is the *raison d’être* of psycho-narration.

Another important distinguishing feature of the psycho-narrative is its use of symbolic modes of expression. In psycho-narration, symbols supplement structural modes as a means of evoking psychic realities and revealing archetypes at work. In particular, symbols in third-person psycho-narratives lead what appear to be nearly autonomous lives of their own, revealing the workings of the psyche without the distracting influence of the conscious mind of a first-person narrator. Using “the power of the symbol to arouse the deep emotional self” (Lawrence 296), language itself underpins psycho-narrative’s structural modes which express collective experience. Thus the irrational element of language itself serves a metaphysical function and in doing so challenges the popular Lacanian notion that Language separates the signifier from the signified.

Finally, the format of the psychomachia is another feature often used to illustrate unbalanced psyches in the psycho-narrative. During the Middle Ages, psychomachias were written as extended allegories, battles between vices and virtues for the soul of the human being. In psycho-narratives, however, the psychomachean format does not function didactically. Showcasing archetypes rather than personified ideas or states of mind, these modern psychomachias function in accordance with the a-logical and synchronistic action of the dream vision. Like the dream vision, these works purposely distance their readers. The corrective which they offer depends therefore on the emotional impact generated by the figures which inhabit their pages: their heroes and scapegoats, their projections of positive and negative animas, and their daemonic manifestations of the shadow—golems, dybbuks, and monsters. Jung's mythological motifs in modern dress, these figures embody the psychic residue of the archetypal experience in which they reside, reveal what has been repressed, and indicate what needs to be further developed.

*Chapter Two*

*The Shamanistic Narrator: Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas and The Bell Jar*

By bringing their narrators into touch with the deeper layers of the psyche, a large number of psycho-narratives function shamanistically. As Mircea Eliade points out, shamanism in the strict sense is pre-eminently a religious phenomenon of Siberia and Central Asia. The great master of ecstasy, the shaman specializes in a trance during which his spirit is believed to leave his body and ascend to the sky or descend to the underworld (*Shamanism* 4-5). Like the shaman, who alters his consciousness in order to experience the sense of wholeness which existed before the fall into History and Time, some of the protagonists of these psycho-narratives often deliberately attempt to escape ego-consciousness through the use of mood-altering drugs. Others find themselves undergoing an involuntary shamanistic experience or what Eliade terms "spontaneous vocation" (*Shamanism* 13). In psycho-narration, this experience is expressed in terms of madness. Whether the experience is voluntary or involuntary, however, what prompts it is an imbalance in the psyche of the narrator's culture.

According to Carl Jung, the psyche of our culture is so severely imbalanced that it is dissociated like that of a neurotic. This dissociation expresses itself in a

communal shadow, the dark side of its nature. In primitive cultures, the shaman responds to an imbalance in the spirit world by falling into a trance. Having spoken with the spirits, he then corrects the problem by revealing the problem on his return. Whereas the shaman proper specializes in a trance, in the psycho-narrative, the shamanistic narrator responds to the psychic imbalance of his or her community by experiencing an altered state of consciousness. In this altered state, he or she encounters the contents of the collective unconscious.

Like the shaman, these narrators experience what Jung terms the "night-side" of life during their psychic descents into the collective unconscious. While wandering in this "night-side," they encounter archetypes that, like the inhabitants of the spirit world which the shaman visits, are often nightmarish. Often expressed as ordeals of torture, dismemberment, and death, these experiences initiate those who endure them into their culture's mysteries. Finally, like the resurrected shaman, these narrators return to ego-consciousness and recount their experiences in retrospective narratives. Told in the historical present, these accounts use grotesque metaphors and exaggerated prose to re-create their protagonists' psychic descents, whereby the reader too is able to experience the underside of consciousness.

Two prime examples of narrators who function shamanistically may be found in Hunter S. Thompson's *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* and Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar*.<sup>1</sup> The story of a drug-crazed reporter let loose in the casinos of the Las Vegas Strip, *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* documents Raoul Duke's adventures in the American West. *The Bell Jar*, set on the East Coast, is the tale of Esther

Greenwood, a young woman who experiences a psychotic collapse. The contrast between Duke's slobbering, drug-induced, paranoid schizophrenia and Greenwood's depressive, anal retentive self-hatred could not be more extreme. Yet, the shamanistic underpinnings of Duke's and Greenwood's experiences are very similar.

In *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, Duke travels with his attorney from Los Angeles, through the wasteland of the California and Nevada desert, to Las Vegas. The bizarre events and frightening perceptions which he experiences are the result of a deliberate psychedelic investigation into the nature of the American Dream. In *The Bell Jar*, Esther Greenwood also finds herself involved in a nightmarish journey. Unlike Duke, Esther does not deliberately alter her consciousness with drugs; instead her consciousness is changed involuntarily as a result of the pressures of her culture. The initiation which this upwardly mobile woman experiences is, however, similar to that of Duke's and involves torture, dismemberment, and death.

In *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* and *The Bell Jar*, the pursuit of the American Dream is presented as a profane initiation rite which Americans must experience in order to learn what their culture has repressed. Both Duke and Greenwood participate in the Dream that underpins American society, and they explicitly invoke its conventional interpretations as their stories begin. "A gross physical salute to the fantastic possibilities of life in this country," Duke's search for the source of the Dream begins as "a classic affirmation of everything right, true and decent in the national character" (11). In *The Bell Jar*, Esther Greenwood also introduces her experience as a Horatio Alger story: commenting on her rise from rags to riches, she

remarks that others would say, "Look at what can happen in this country . . . a girl lives in some out of the way town for nineteen years and she gets a scholarship and wins a prize here and there and ends up steering New York like her private car" (2).

In order to experience the underside of the American Dream, these narrators, like shamans, experience an altered state of consciousness. Thompson's narrator adjusts his perceptions with a trunk-load of drugs. On the way to Las Vegas, Duke and his attorney ingest the better part of "two bags of grass, seventy-five pellets of mescaline, five sheets of high-powered blotter acid, a salt shaker half full of cocaine . . . a whole galaxy of multi-coloured uppers, downers, screamers, laughers . . . and also a quart of tequila, a quart of rum, a case of Budweiser, a pint of raw ether, and two dozen amyls" (4).

All categories of shamans have their helping or tutelary spirits which often manifest themselves as animals (Eliade, *Shamanism* 91). Functioning as just such a companion, Duke's attorney is a "degenerate pig" (110). After locating "a convertible with adequate horsepower and adequate coloring" (12), Dr. Gonzo helps Duke alter his consciousness and deteriorates with him to "the level of dumb beasts" (8). In Vegas, the attorney, in his tutelary capacity as Duke's companion, reveals the secrets of the casino world, among them, "the Fear" at the Circus-Circus (47). He talks Duke through a particularly hellish altered state, saying, "Don't try to fight it, or you'll start getting brain bubbles . . . strokes, aneurisms" (134). Dr. Gonzo also generously initiates a DA from Georgia into the ways of Dope Fiends: he informs

the man that "they work in pairs. Sometimes in gangs. They'll climb into your bedroom and sit on your chest, with big Bowie knives" (145).

Unlike Duke, Greenwood does not require either such a companion or such stimulants. What leads to her altered state is her excessive ambition; she is led to perceive the true nature of her culture simply because she embodies its essence in an extreme form. A perfectionist, she is unable to feel "excited the way most of the other girls [do]": instead of excitement, she feels "the way the eye of a tornado must feel moving dully along in the middle of the surrounding hullabaloo" (2). The center of the storm, Esther knows what her friends cannot: their experience of the high life in New York is a "death" (28).

Esther's experience is comparable to that of the shaman in a trance or dream-state, during which he or she participates in what Eliade terms the condition of "the spirits" while still continuing to exist in the flesh (*Myths* 70). Although Esther is aware of her body, she is dissociated from it; her body ferries her from Jay Cee's office to her hotel room like a "numb trolleybus" (2). After she returns to her home, this shamanistic split between mind and body is even more pronounced. Complaining that her body refuses to co-operate whenever she attempts to commit suicide, Esther describes her ego's dissociation from her physical self in the third person: "I saw my body had all sorts of little tricks, such as making my hands go limp at the crucial second, which would save it time and again, whereas if I had the whole say, I would be dead in a flash" (130).

While on an ether high, Duke experiences the same sense of ego-dissociation from his body. He attributes this sensation to the drug which he has ingested: as he remarks, when a person takes “devil ether”—“a total body drug”—he behaves “like the village drunkard in some early Irish novel,” because “the mind is unable to communicate with the spinal column”; in spite of this lack of communication, “the brain continues to function more or less normally.” Like Esther, Duke finds himself detached, watching his body behaving in a “terrible way,” but unable to “control it” (45-46).

Having achieved the state of ego-dissociation which allows them access to the collective psyche, Duke and Esther are shocked by the horrific nature of the American Dream’s contents. Both narrators encounter the dark side of the American Dream. In *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, for example, Duke discovers a debased version of the Dream which is expressed in terms of material appetite. The underside of Las Vegas reveals itself as a primordial food chain in a very literal sense. Duke finds himself surrounded by metaphorical prehistoric brutes in the blood-soaked lobby of the Mint Hotel. On the Strip, the nightmarish reality that underlies the vision of the Big Winner is a brutish material Darwinism. Reduced to reptiles living in primordial ooze, the employees of the Mint Hotel appear as a bewildering array of cold-hearted, cold-blooded, dangerous, poisonous creatures. Duke whispers to his attorney, “Order some golf shoes . . . otherwise we’ll never get out of this place alive. You notice these lizards [the hotel employees] don’t have any trouble moving around in this muck—it’s because they have claws on their feet” (24).

Duke learns, much to his dismay, that in this system the appropriate place of the gambler is at the bottom of the food chain. At Circus-Circus, doing what “the whole hep world would be . . . on Saturday night if the Nazis had won the war,” Duke is nothing more than “fresh meat” (46). In the parking lot of the Mint, he finally realises that this is what his role really is. In a world composed of the hunters and the hunted, he is one of the hunted. “The weasels were closing in,” he says, “I could smell the ugly brutes” (78). Although he attempts to imagine how Horatio Alger would have handled this situation, it appears that even Alger is no match for the Strip’s carnivores.

In *The Bell Jar*, Plath associates psychic imbalance with the value American culture places on ego-consciousness and intellectual achievement; the result is reality reduced “to mere numbers and letters” (29). Whether it occurs in Mr. Manzi’s chemistry class or in Jay Cee’s office, this activity sickens Esther. It not only affects her physically, it also weakens her mentally. “At college,” she declares, “if I had to strain my brain with any more of that stuff I would go mad. I would fail outright. It was only by a horrible effort of will that I dragged myself through the first half of the year” (29). It soon becomes obvious, however, that Esther’s fifteen years of rigorous training in abstract thought and Aristotelian classification have driven her mad anyway. Unable to empathize with her mother or sympathize with Doreen, Esther has forgotten how to feel: she has become nothing more than intellect itself—her own ego-consciousness.

As in *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, the underside of the American dream in *The Bell Jar* is expressed in terms of the shadow: instincts and drives which individuals deny having themselves but can plainly see in others. Like Thompson's Las Vegas, Plath's New York is a psychic desert inhabited by creatures as self-interested as the denizens of the Mint Hotel. On an average day in the Big Apple, the hot city streets waver in the morning sun "mirage-grey at the bottom of granite canyons"; the car tops "sizzle and glitter," and "dry cindery dust" blows into Esther's eyes and down her throat (1). In these arid conditions, only the cold-blooded flourish. Of all New York's inhabitants, the most cold-bloodedly ambitious is Esther herself, who unsympathetically leaves Doreen lying outside her hotel room door in a puddle of vomit. The product of an intellectual Darwinism, Esther's self-interest has previously assured her survival in the dog-eat-dog world of scholarships and prizes. Ironically, her participation in the underside of the Dream leads her not to rebirth but to self-destruction.

As Plath presents it, this intellectual Darwinism rests on a debased version of the male initiation rite. Esther's emotional apathy during her stay in New York is comparable to the shaman's period of seclusion during which he experiences a physical and emotional withdrawal. This state of withdrawal is expressed mythologically as a descent or journey into the belly of a giant or a monster "to learn science or wisdom" (*Myths* 225). Throughout her stay in New York, Esther undergoes the initiation rites found in male secret societies and used by shamans. During this period of initiatory madness, she makes contact with and reactivates what

Eliade terms the “secrets of the tribe,” in order to convey them to the reader. Like the Neophyte who is buried or newly laid out in an open grave (*Myths* 198), she experiences ritual purification in the form of a hot bath. Lying in one of the modern “coffin-shaped tubs” of the Amazon Hotel, Esther feels “about a hot bath the way religious people feel about holy water.” Thus she thinks that she emerges from her bath “pure and sweet as a new baby” (17).

In Thompson’s novel, male initiation rites are also corrupted versions of their primitive model. As in Plath’s narrative, bathing also carries with it the experience of death and rebirth. Returning to his hotel room in the Mint, Duke finds his fellow initiate immersed in bath water. Lying in the tub, Dr. Gonzo wants to die. “I dig my own graves,” he informs Duke. “Green water and White Rabbit” are the necessary elements of Gonzo’s “suicide trip,” and at the peak of “White Rabbit,” Duke is supposed to throw the tape recorder into the tub (58-60). Although Duke throws a grapefruit into the water instead, the results of the ritual appear to be satisfying: thrashing about wildly, Gonzo experiences what appears to have been “some awful psychic orgasm” (60). He then enters the next phase of his initiation—“one of those hellishly intense introspection nightmares. Four hours or so of catatonic despair” (62).

Death and rebirth is the central experience for both shaman and the initiate, and according to Eliade, in initiation rituals, candidates of male secret societies are made to look like and imitate the behaviour of ghosts (*Myths* 198). In *The Bell Jar*, however, dying, not being reborn, is the central experience of Esther’s ritual

behaviour. Indeed, Esther often resembles the walking dead; on the train home from New York, the skin of her face is an unnatural yellow and her cheeks are scarred with diagonal lines of dried blood. After attempting suicide, she even more closely resembles the dead: like Buddy Willard's cadavers, one bulging side of her bruised face is purple. Crowned by "bristly, chicken-feather tufts of hair," Esther's face looks as if she has had her head shaved before being electrocuted like the Rosenbergs (142).

Esther not only resembles the walking dead, she also behaves like them. Like the dead of Virgil's *Aeneid*, she has a voracious appetite. She loves food "more than just about anything else" (20). Nowhere is her ravenous appetite more apparent than at the *Ladies' Day* luncheon where she eats a gargantuan meal. Esther makes a point of eating so quickly that her friends, who are always dieting, are not kept waiting. Also like the dead, in spite of her gluttonous habits, she does not gain weight.

Torture is also one of the neophyte's experiences of initiatory death during his or her descent into the underworld. Poisoned by her Ladies' Day luncheon, when Esther finds herself back in a bathroom of her hotel, appropriately named the Amazon, she thinks that she is about to die. Surrounded by "glittering white torture chamber tiles" (36), she undergoes a severe ordeal of physical suffering. As Doreen explains to Esther, she did almost die. After vomiting, the form which her ritual purification takes, Esther awakens to feel "purged and holy and ready for a new life" (39). Esther's ordeal, however, has not prepared her for a new life. Still an initiate, Esther begins eating voraciously as soon as her stomach will accept food.

In fact, as a male initiate, Esther experiences every facet of the initiate's process of experiencing death except that of rebirth. Like the neophyte, who having passed through the initial stage of his initiation, takes a new name, Esther poses as Elly Higgenbottom, the orphan. She discovers, however, that she is not content with Elly's "sweet quiet nature" and Elly's fate to "marry a tender garage mechanic and have a big cowy family like Dodo Conway" (108). Adhering to the male rituals of torture, she tries to enter the next initiatory stage by scarifying herself: "the two flesh-colored Band-Aids forming a cross on the leg" (120) represent her attempt to make "a start" in dying like "some old Roman philosopher" (121).

To the initiate of patriarchal mysteries, access to the spiritual involves the experience of metaphoric Death: this experience not only includes that of self-sacrifice, but also the death of another. According to Eliade, those initiated into the patriarchal mysteries are not only the slayers of dragons and monsters, but also the killers of men (*Myths* 200). This experience is illustrated when Dr. Gonzo attempts to murder Duke in his hotel room after the "White Rabbit" experience. Confronted with the possibility of being dragged off to jail, however, the would-be Warrior Hero changes his mind and attempts to persuade Duke to undergo the less extreme expression of the patriarchal passage to which Esther resorts in *The Bell Jar*. When Duke accuses Gonzo of trying to kill him, the attorney mumbles, "Who said anything about slicing you up? I just wanted to carve a little Z on your forehead—nothing serious" (61).

Unlike Dr. Gonzo, however, Esther is not satisfied with metaphoric Death. She believes that she herself must die. Ironically, Esther is unable to do this precisely because her ego is dissociated from her body. Firmly in control of itself, her body refuses to commit suicide. Unable to stand the sight of blood, Esther cannot bring herself to slit her wrists. Because her hands will not cooperate, she cannot hang herself. And every time she attempts to drown, her body pops up like "a cork" (131). The version of the male initiation rite in which she is involved not only is debased, but is also defective.

Esther's suicide attempts reveal the defective nature of the initiation which she undergoes; they also indicate the nature and severity of her psychic imbalance. According to Esther, women who are successfully initiated into the mysteries of the American Dream become female replicas of their male counterparts. As Esther notes, a woman's appearance reflects the condition of her psyche. She even goes so far as to offer the appearance of her editor as evidence. According to Esther, Jay Cee, an ironic Christ figure, sacrifices her femininity as the editor of *Ladies' Day* magazine. Unemotional and ruthlessly logical, Jay Cee has so successfully divested herself of her femininity that her protégé tries "hard to imagine [her] out of her strict office suit and luncheon-duty hat and in bed with her fat husband" but is unable to do so (5).

For Esther, Jay Cee epitomizes what happens to the individual when one's intellect is separated from one's emotional life. Buddy Willard, however, diagnoses Esther's desire to engage in two mutually exclusive activities "as the perfect set-up of

a true neurotic" (120). In the context of American society, Buddy's diagnosis is absolutely correct. Esther's desire is symptomatic of the dissociated emotional and intellectual lives of Plath's female characters. Esther's psychic imbalance, however, is much more serious than a simple neurosis.

In *The Bell Jar*, intertextual evocations of the Gothic are used to highlight the serious nature of Esther's illness. Suggestive of Gothic overtones in *The Bell Jar* are Esther's fearful fascination with electricity—the Rosenbergs' execution or electroshock therapy's promise of a new life—and the manic Mr. Manzi's spiky, Gothic lettering, which reduces reality to numbers and symbols on the chemistry laboratory's blackboard. Throughout *The Bell Jar*, moreover, Gothic metaphors become increasingly grotesque. Esther's appearance closely resembles Mary Shelley's monster. Not only does her skin acquire a yellowish pallor, but her features become more hideous as the narrative progresses, until she is unable to look at her own reflection. Yet, although she resembles Shelley's monster, Esther does not experience the alienation that Frankenstein's creature does: a gifted scholar with a promising future, Esther is not a social outcast. Ironically, because of her mental illness, Esther could not be closer to her fellow human beings. In *The Bell Jar*, Esther's psychic imbalance is the norm.

In *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, an imbalanced psyche is also proof that one is pursuing the American Dream. In fact, in Las Vegas, it would be abnormal not to be mentally deranged. As Raoul Duke points out, "in a town full of bedrock crazies, nobody even *notices* an acid freak" (24).

In the Gothic, the grotesque is pre-supposed to be aberrant. When the narrator functions shamanistically in psycho-narration, however, the grotesque becomes the norm. Towards the conclusion of *Fear and Loathing In Las Vegas*, Duke and his attorney attend the Third National Institute on Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs at the Flamingo Hilton. Rubbing shoulders with the “cop-cream from Middle America,” Dr. Gonzo is deeply shocked when he discovers that those who enforce society’s norms behave as outrageously as he does. He complains to Duke that “nice people” are looking and talking “like a gang of drunken pig farmers.” Dr. Gonzo groans, “I saw those bastards in *Easy Rider*, but I didn’t believe they were real. Not like this. Not hundreds of them” (140). Recognising the grotesque to be a signature of the American Mid-West, he says, “This is a fucking nightmare” (141).

In both works, how the story is told is also an important indicator of the psychic imbalance being experienced. Gonzo journalism’s flamboyant, spontaneous, retrospective “do it *now*” style is the perfect vehicle for Thompson’s addled persona engaged in his descent (12). Functioning on the level of his instincts, Duke begins to experience information instead of processing it rationally. The result is a collage of impressions. As Duke’s ability to create causal and chronological relationships disappears (a phenomenon well-known to anyone who has gambled in Las Vegas), the narrative sequence of the story falls apart. Anecdotes, paragraphs, and even sentences are left unfinished. The reader encounters fragmented jottings, material ripped from newspapers, and bits of press releases. Even the visual aids to the text, Ralph Steadman’s graphics, are out of the narrative’s control: they splatter

themselves over the text, often dripping blobs of ink which partly obscure words on the following page. Finally, when the text and Duke's intellect break down completely, the reader experiences the actual breakdown itself which is presented as a transcript of the muddled conversations that occurred during the narrator's frenzied search for Paradise Boulevard.

Sylvia Plath's severely restrained prose in *The Bell Jar* stands in direct contrast to Hunter S. Thompson's exuberant iconoclasm. Again, however, the narrative style not only reflects the imbalanced condition of the narrator's psyche, but it also allows the reader to experience the narrator's psychic imbalance. Esther tells her story in carefully constructed chapters and meticulously crafted sentences while dutifully noting causal and chronological relationships. There seem to be no untidy fragments in this text, and the narrator seems to have the uncanny ability to think in complete sentences. Because of the rigid, spare prose, Esther draws the reader's attention to her obsessive attention to correct form and her compulsive need to explain all her thoughts, interpret magazine articles, and understand other people's comments.

Rendered in the terms of the historical present, Esther's retrospective style reveals the repressed condition that characterizes her madness. Esther is extremely thorough as she analyses the world about her, but the result is not a shared intimacy. Illustrating her dissociated state, her narrative is like her emotional state, dull and flat. One might even suspect the narrator of *The Bell Jar* of having had a lobotomy instead of shock treatment at the city hospital. It is unlikely that Esther's shock treatments, designed to re-connect her with her emotions and the world around her,

could have produced such flat, emotionless prose. In fact, Esther's emotionlessness is so startling that her narrative voice parodies that of the empirical scientist—the detached observer recording the results of an interesting experiment. If spontaneity characterizes Raoul Duke's account of his adventures in Las Vegas, restraint is Esther Greenwood's trademark. Ironically, in *The Bell Jar*, this quality of restraint, Freud's guarantee of man's civilised behaviour, is Plath's expression of cultural insanity.

Ironically, when Esther abandons the rites of male initiation and in her mother's basement truly does experience what it is like to die, she does so in terms of metaphoric Rebirth. As Mircea Eliade notes, the secret behind all women's mysteries is the revelation of the sacredness of the feminine; allied with the sources of life and fecundity, the mystery of giving birth amounts to a religious experience which is untranslatable in masculine terms (*Myths* 213). Thus, her death experience is like that of birth. The gentleness of this ordeal contrasts sharply with the violence that accompanies the male tradition of mutilation and dismemberment. Esther does not descend into the belly of a mythic monster to be ripped to shreds, but into the oldest representation of the Great Mother's womb: a hole in the ground. In the Earth's womb, Esther experiences her own rebirth: like a child being born, she sees a slit of light in the "thick furry warm dark" like a "wound or mouth," and her emergence into this light is heralded by a voice crying, "Mother!" (139).

Reborn, Esther finds herself being further initiated into women's mysteries. Separated from the world in a private hospital in the country and placed in the company of women, she is mothered rather than fathered. Under Dr. Nolan's

matriarchal care, rather than the psychological and physical torture of Dr. Gordon's shock therapy, she undergoes a false pregnancy created by her insulin treatment. Peering down at her "plump stomach and . . . broad hips," Esther realises that she looks as if she "were going to have a baby" (157). After recognising herself as the source of life, she then begins to acquire the secrets of her sexuality. The first step of this initiation is obtaining her diaphragm, which guarantees her the freedom to experiment sexually. The second step is, as she herself says, finding "the proper sort of man" (182).

Because Esther is seeking a vestal union rather than a social contract, Irwin, who has had "lots and lots of affairs in Cambridge" (186), is precisely the sort of man she needs—a modern day temple priest. A full professor at twenty six, Irwin is "somebody [she] [does not] know and would not go on knowing, a kind of impersonal official, as in the tales of tribal rites" (186). During her first sexual encounter, Esther loses her personal identity and discovers her collective one: no longer a virgin, she feels "part of a great tradition" (187). Because Esther has passed from Maidenhood into Womanhood, her blood, which stains the bedsheets, represents not only Death but also Life. No longer a neophyte of the American Dream, Esther has ceased to seek meaning in the intellect. Thus, Irwin's professorial voice means "nothing" to her (198).

Esther's sexual initiation is tantamount to a religious one. "Perfectly free" (198), the old brag of her heart has become a statement of psychic wholeness: "I am, I am, I am" (199). Having discovered the regenerative force which underpins the

sexual act, Esther now knows what every shaman understands and every successful initiate discovers—the archetypal reality that underpins her existence.

According to Eliade, the shaman is a healer and director of souls as well as a visionary and a mystic (*Myths* 61). At the end of *The Bell Jar*, Esther performs this function when she observes that “there ought . . . to be a ritual for being born twice,” even if she is unable “to think of an appropriate one” (199). Having diagnosed her own problem, she is also able to state that marriage in itself is no longer an appropriate rite of passage for women today. Moreover, although the initiation process which she experiences seems to be a personal affair, it is not. Telling her story from the perspective of a woman who has given birth, Esther is capable not only of re-integrating the components of her own psyche, but also of revealing that a ritual for being born twice does exist. In short, she does function shamanistically. Dramatising her psychic re-integration in *The Bell Jar* as a female initiation rite, she not only allows her past to be re-lived, but she also invites her audience to experience her psychic condition via her “flat” prose. By allowing others to see the underside of the Dream as well as the archetypal reality which underpins her own existence, Esther acts a mediator between the collective and the community, thereby fulfilling the essential role of the shaman as a healer.

In *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, Raoul Duke also fulfills the function of the mediator and the healer. By the end of this text, it is clear that drugs do not provide Americans with a way of transcending the condition of their culture, although they do provide the user with a way of encountering or making contact with the

collective. Considering the negative nature of the collective in this text, however, a mediator between it and the general public is undoubtedly a good thing; and Thompson's protagonist is just the man for the job. After two big hits of amy1, Dr. Duke, "a certified Minister of the New Truth," again becomes "a monster reincarnation of Horatio Alger . . . a Man on the Move, and just sick enough to be totally confident" (204).

In the psycho-narrative, shamanistic narrators seem to protect what Eliade terms the community's psychic integrity (*Shamanism* 509). Responding to the psychic imbalance of their community, these characters act in a compensatory fashion by encountering and revealing the communal shadow. By revealing this shadow, their journeys become acts of healing, if not for themselves, then certainly for their audiences. As Jung points out, recognising the shadow provides the onlooker with "psychic immunity . . . to any moral and mental infection and insinuation" ("Unconscious" 73).

## Endnotes

1. To date, three articles have been written about Hunter S. Thompson's *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*. Two New Critical readings discuss Thompson's debt to American folklore and the fable. The other article uses the biographical approach to discuss male initiation rites in the text. In the annotated bibliography at the back of this study, see James E. Caron's "Hunter S. Thompson's 'Gonzo Journalism and Tall Tale Tradition in America,'" John Hellmann's "Fables of Fact: The New Journalism as New Fiction," and James N. Stull's "Hunter S. Thompson: A Ritual Reenactment of Deviant Behaviour."

In contrast, Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar* has generated a good deal of critical writing from the following three schools: the New Critical, the biographical, and the feminist. For New Critical interpretations of *The Bell Jar* see Vance Bourjoily's "Victoria Lucas and Elly Higginbottom" and Gordon LaMeyer's "The Double in Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar*." For biographical readings of *The Bell Jar* see Linda Huf's "A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Woman: The Writer as Heroine in American Literature," David Wood's "Everything You Wanted to Know About Suicide: *The Bell Jar* by Sylvia Plath," and Marilyn Yalom's "Sylvia Plath, *The Bell Jar*, and Related Poems." Other representative readings of *The Bell Jar* by these critical schools are also listed in the annotated bibliography at the back of this study.

*Chapter Three**The Innocent Narrator: Sophie's Choice*

In the medieval dream vision, the protagonists are usually presented as innocents, and a similar type of narrator may be found in modern psycho-narratives. Portrayed as naive and bumbling, these narrators are idealists at a loss in a world that has suddenly become inexplicable. Not surprisingly, their stories at first appear to be haphazard or chaotic accounts. They are, however, like the medieval dream vision, carefully organised narratives. In part, this organisation is due to the limited—but not limiting—perceptions of the speakers. Like the medieval dreamer, the innocent psycho-narrator is a naive spokesman whose simplicity or obtuseness leads him or her to persist in putting an interpretation on affairs which the reader, who shares the implicit point of view of the author, is called on to correct. Also like the medieval dreamer, these psycho-narrators are neither foolish nor demented. Rather, their distorted perceptions lie in the belief that humans are rational creatures.

Due to the naivete of their point of view, these psycho-narratives turn on a complex integration of verbal and structural ironies created by the use of frame narration, by their speaker's insistence that one's ego controls one's psyche, and by the appearance of archetypes. Due to the emphasis which these speakers place on ego-consciousness, insistence on perfection is a common characteristic of the innocent

narrator. As a result, in these psycho-narratives repression is a central theme, and encounters with the irrational are often expressed in terms of the shadow and psychic projection.

Because of the highly irrational behaviour of the other characters whom they encounter, these speakers often experience the sensation of being involved in a waking dream—that is being the only sane or moral individual in a world which seems to have gone mad. Unlike its medieval antecedent, however, the psycho-narrative does not provide a moral lesson. This is due to both the problem of the speaker's fallibility and the fact that the dream-like state of the psyche itself cannot be precisely defined or fully explained. The psycho-narrator's sense of dissociation is often substantiated by other speakers who recount similar experiences. Thus reading this type of psycho-narration involves the process of discovering a group of consciousnesses which nest within each other like a set of chinese boxes: rather than moving from the conscious to the unconscious realm of the psyche as one does in the medieval dream vision, the reader of these psycho-narratives moves from one state of consciousness to another in a series of digressions.

A coming-of-age story, which charts Stingo's artistic and sexual awakening in New York City, William Styron's *Sophie's Choice* is an excellent example of this type of psycho-narrative.<sup>1</sup> A liberal Southern innocent, Stingo comes to New York to become a writer. While staying in a boarding house in Flatbush, he meets Sophie, an Auschwitz survivor who is also living there. Stingo falls in love with Sophie at first sight and becomes the unwilling witness of her abusive relationship with Nathan, her psychotic boyfriend. Stingo's attempt to save Sophie from self-destruction fails,

but while doing so he learns her story about her incarceration in Auschwitz and the choice which she made that sent her daughter to the gas chamber. Unable to rationalize Sophie's life and death, Stingo announces, in cadences which Styron identifies as unmistakably "cocksure, priggish and disastrous" (5), that his experiences have helped him demonstrate how *absolute evil* is never extinguished from the world" (623; italics mine).

To the secular post-modernist mind, the notion of absolute evil may seem not only moralistic but also contradictory: the concept of *absolute evil* introduces at once the archetypal idea of recurrence and the idea of evil as something unqualified. As Stingo's diction indicates, however, his psyche still has a great deal in common with the medieval mind. This is not to suggest that *Sophie's Choice* is a form of pseudomedievalia or that Stingo is designed as a modern version of the mad monk—although, at times, he behaves like one. Rather, Styron uses Stingo's medieval outlook to demonstrate that the problem in dealing with the unconscious has changed very little from the Middle Ages. In the case of both Stingo and the Pearl narrator, it is rationality which prevents them from recognising the truth of their situations. Polarizing the body and the spirit, life and death, earth and heaven, the *Pearl* speaker, for example, fails to recognise that his daughter's nature, a complex integration of the sacred and the profane, is also his own. Likewise, in *Sophie's Choice*, Stingo's tendency to idealize the other and understand the world about him in terms of polarities blinds him to his own irrational behaviour as well as that of others. In *Sophie's Choice*, however, it is important to note that what Stingo identifies as absolute evil does not exist as a material phenomenon per se; rather Styron presents

it as an archetypal reality—as a permanent feature of the psyche, the shadow—which announces its presence in the behaviour of Stingo's friends and, most importantly, in his own.

In "The Process of Individuation," Marie-Louise von Franz remarks that the problem of the shadow plays a great role in all political conflicts (179). To Stingo, the slave-society of the South was and remains, in the memory of Southerners like his grandmother, an experience which they would like to forget. Surviving on an inheritance created by the proceeds of the sale of a young Negro while writing his first novel, Stingo himself is inextricably enmeshed in the racial tragedy of Southern culture. His diction reflects the psychic paradox of the modern South. Introducing the ever-present reality of his cultural underpinnings while simultaneously dismissing them, Stingo says, "What the hell, once a racist exploiter always a racist exploiter" (37).

Dismissing the memory of the shadow, however, does not get rid of it, for the shadow itself is created by the repression of tendencies one would rather forget. As Jung remarks, the shadow is a moral problem that challenges the whole ego personality (*Psyche* 7). In order to free oneself from the guilt which invariably attends it, one must integrate the shadow into one's personality. In *Sophie's Choice*, Stingo knows that claiming moral responsibility for his guilt would have freed him from his cultural shadow: he says, "If I had *tithed* a good part of my proceeds [of the sale] for Artiste's sake, I might have *shriven* myself of my own guilt" (37). Stingo did not donate a part of the proceeds of his inheritance to the N.A.A.C.P., because, having had nothing to do with the decision to sell Artiste, he could not

logically be considered a racist exploiter. By profiting from Artiste's sale and not acknowledging his part in it, however, he became a slave-owner by association. In doing so, he has activated the shadow in his psyche and visited his ancestor's sins upon himself. In a Greek tragedy, Stingo would have been haunted by the Furies. In the modern psycho-narrative, he is visited by their modern counterpart: he falls into "a kind of masochistic resignation" (37).

Stingo is dimly aware of the cultural conditioning at work in his psyche, but fails to recognize its implications. Like the *Pearl* narrator, Piers Plowman, and Chaucer's dreamers, he is unaware of the ironies of the situation in which he finds himself. The son of a gentleman, a libertarian, and a Jacksonian Democrat, he is nevertheless the product of the slave-system which he professes to abhor. As a result, his perceptions of his own motives and those of others around him are faulty. These perceptions are further complicated by the ways in which the shadow manifests itself.

In *Sophie's Choice*, every major character, including Stingo, is involved to a greater or lesser degree in a self-reflexive process of psychic projection and shadow possession. Nathan is the most extreme example. Throughout the novel, there are numerous references to his physical condition which suggest that Nathan's mind is dangerously disturbed. Although Stingo chooses to ignore Nathan's "manic tone of voice . . . hectic oratory . . . sweat, the wall-eyed expression, [and] . . . frenzied tension," Larry rightly perceives the state of Nathan's mind: "the truth," he tells Stingo, "is that my brother's quite mad" (518). Again, although Stingo consciously rejects this idea, unconsciously he does sense the nature of Nathan's madness. As Stingo points out, in bullying and abusing Sophie and himself, Nathan behaves like "a

*colossal prick*" (247; italics mine). Like a *Colossus*, in short, Nathan's behaviour is that of a megalomaniac.

Stingo, however, is so involved in projecting his own ideals on Nathan that he does not heed his fellow boarder, Morris Fink's warning that Nathan "needs psychiatric consultation" (49). Acquainted with the "genteel and well behaved," not the "crazy Gothic side" of a Southern upbringing, Stingo regards Nathan's outburst at the Maple Court bar merely as "a shocking failure of character, a lapse of decency, rather than the product of some aberration of mind" (247). Dismissing the behaviour of Nathan's Dr. Hyde persona as a "drug-induced derangement," Stingo remains devoted to his perception of Sophie's lover as the "supportive-brother-figure, mentor, constructive critic, and all-purpose cherished older friend" (510). Acquainted with madness only through hearing about "poor *devils* raving in remote padded cells," Stingo had thought the problem safely beyond his concern (521; italics mine). As he puts it, after the Maple Court bar incident Nathan appears to have "shed his entourage of *demons*" (508).

Although one's shadow cannot be shed, it can be repressed. When repressed, the tendencies of the shadow possess their individual's personality (Jung, "Unconscious" 83). A rabid anti-Nazi, Nathan is the most extreme example of shadow possession in *Sophie's Choice*. Possessed by his shadow, Nathan cannot control his actions and becomes abusive. After one particularly brutal episode, Fink finds Nathan whispering to Sophie, "Oh God how could I do it to you? How could I hurt you?" (72). As Morris Fink remarks, Nathan acts like a "fuckin' golem" (72).

In Jewish folklore, the golem is a puppet, often made of flesh, and is wholly responsive to the wishes of the sorcerer who animated it. As such, the golem is the perfect slave. Animated by his shadow, Nathan is completely responsive to its wishes, although at time he appears to be trying to prevent "his big frame from . . . crumpling like a marionette on strings" (245).

According to Marie-Louise Von Franz, the shadow represents qualities of the ego which the individual denies in him or herself; repression of these qualities, however, results in their projection: the individual can plainly see his own shameful tendencies in others. Impelled by an overwhelming rage, Nathan observes his own negative attributes in others: for example, what he regards as Sophie's "wretched" and "degrading" promiscuity is actually an accurate reflection of his sexual appetites and behaviour (247). More importantly, Nathan's shadow is not generated merely by his own personality. Like Stingo's, it also derives from cultural factors that stem from a source outside his personal life. Earlier, Nathan had tried to absorb "everything available on campus on Nuremberg, on the war, on anti-Semitism and the slaughter of the European Jews" (393); now, these expressions of the sadistic tendencies of the power and sex drives which he attempts to repress in his own psyche take control of his personality. In the Connecticut woods which resemble the Black Forest, Nathan becomes a caricature of the brutish S.S.—beating and sexually degrading the woman whom he is about to marry.

Ironically, Nathan's powerful intellect, which one would have expected to control his shadow, seems to make matters worse. While arguing with Larry, for example, Stingo points to Nathan's "Harvard education" as proof of Nathan's sanity

(269). But in this novel, rigorous training in rational thought is the problem rather than the corrective.

As Stingo's own experience demonstrates, an insistence on the perfectibility of human nature serves only to encourage unbalance in one's psyche. At the outset of the story, for example, Stingo, immured in the University Residence Club, does his very best to escape his poverty and loneliness by plunging into "make-believe": either into the poetry of John Donne or the prose of Malcolm Lowry or his own erotic fantasies about Mavis Hunnicutt's body. Having absented himself from actual "human passion and human flesh" in his "smug and airless self-deprivation," Stingo desperately needs what he himself terms his "voyages of discovery" (28, 29).

In the Western tradition, epic adventure has always been man's rite of initiation—his coming to terms with his psychic nucleus or Self. In *Sophie's Choice*, however, Western culture's emphasis on egocentric thought has rendered Stingo unable to participate in this rite. By the time he leaves Duke University, Stingo has become so egocentric that even the Second World War has not had much of an effect on his psyche: although he "had travelled great distances for one so young, [his] spirit had remained landlocked, unacquainted with love and all but a stranger to death" (28). Ironically, instead of epic adventure, a-rational events in "a place as strange as Brooklyn" trigger his initiation (29).

In medieval dream poetry, the Dreamer carries into the supernatural world of his dreams the values and expectations of his waking life on earth; the result is often a sharp contrast between the Dreamer's materialism and the spiritual nature of the world in which he finds himself (Spearing 119). In Styron's psycho-narrative,

however, there is a sharp contrast between Stingo's intellectual ego-centrism, his "landlocked" spirit, and the earthy materialism of the neighbourhood in which he finds himself. A stranger to profane passion and pleasures, Styron's "lean and lonesome Southerner wandering amid the Kingdom of the Jews" is completely overwhelmed by the sexual candour that he encounters there (1). "Accustomed to wincing when a female said 'damn'" (147) and completely unprepared for Leslie Lapidus's vulgarity on the beach at Coney Island, Stingo finds it impossible to "exaggerate his shock in which fright, disbelief, and tingling delight were torrentially mingled" (148). When Leslie comments, "I'll bet you could give a girl a fantastic fucking" (213-14), Stingo believes that "only the fact that he was too young for a coronary occlusion saved his heart which stopped beating for critical seconds" (148).

In Judaeo-Christian society, extra-marital sex has long been considered something shameful. For this reason, the forties were "a particularly ghastly period for Eros, shakily bridging as they did the time between the puritanism of our forefathers and the arrival of public pornography" (145). A product of his culture, Stingo turns his sexual tendencies into a shadow. Thus he vacillates between the extreme positions of pornography and puritanism when courting a woman; repressing his shadow results in projecting his shameful tendencies as well as his social values onto the objects of his affections. The nature of his projection onto Leslie, for example, is "largely primal in nature, lacking the poetic and idealistic dimension of [his] buried passion for Sophie" (145). Lying on his bed and thinking of Leslie, Stingo becomes "a recumbent six-foot-long erogenous zone" (194). With Sophie, however, Stingo's infatuation is characterized by an "archly chaste

detachment" which appears so disinterested that Nathan is never reluctant to leave him alone with its object and even encourages Stingo's and Sophie's "companionship" when he is away (136).

Although it may appear to be chaste, Stingo's attraction to Sophie, however, is also a manifestation of his shadow. As with Leslie Lapidus, Stingo's infatuation with Sophie is a matter of his sexual appetite—emanating in the Renaissance fashion "not from the heart's region but amazingly from that of the stomach" (58). His yearning is as pornographic as it is puritanical. Dorsally fixated, he watches Sophie slowly climb Yetta's stairs and finds himself mentally pledging to "the Presbyterian orphanages of Virginia a quarter of [his] future earnings as a writer for that bare ass's brief lodging—thirty seconds would do—within the company of [his] cupped, suppliant palms" (61).

In this way, Stingo is the converse of the dreamer in many medieval dream poems: whereas the medieval dreamer does not have the spiritual capacity to experience the realm of eternal values in his daily life, Stingo finds that he does not have the physical capacity to experience the realm of profane values offered to him in Brooklyn (145). Unable to persuade Leslie (who, it turns out, is nothing like he projects her to be) to give up her virginity, he immerses himself monkishly in his writing. When Sophie attempts to seduce him on Jones Beach, Stingo discovers that his frustrated sex drive is not entirely due to a lack of opportunity. Having repressed his sex drive for years, Stingo finds his ego-consciousness continuing to do so even when he does not want to: "in the grip of a nameless and diabolical paralysis" on Jones Beach, Stingo becomes impotent; unable to respond to Sophie's advances, "it

is as if ten thousand Presbyterian Sunday School teachers had massed above Long Island in a numatory cloud, their presence disabling [his] fingers" (438).

According to Spearing, the problem which sexual love poses in the medieval dream vision should be considered in a broad philosophical context: in *De Planctu Naturae*, for example, de Insulis's treatment of sexual perversion makes explicit the imperfect nature of man's fallen consciousness (20). In *Sophie's Choice*, Styron's treatment of sexual love appears at first to be remarkably similar to that of de Insulis. In case after case, love becomes an enslaving obsession, and those enslaved by their lovers become golems: objects which are wholly responsive to their lovers' will. Stingo's abortive amour with Leslie Lapidus is indeed "a nice counterpoint to the narrative." As he himself remarks, "God knows what might have happened had she really been the wanton and experienced playgirl she had impersonated; she was so ripely desirable that I don't see how I could have failed to become her *slave*" (217; italics mine).

Unlike de Insulis, however, Styron is concerned not merely with demonstrating the less-than-ideal nature of human consciousness depicted in the perverse nature of the sexual relationships but mainly with using these relationships to demonstrate what happens when an individual tries to perfect his or her consciousness by repressing his or her shadow. Throughout, Styron illustrates the consequences of an individual repressing the drives of power and sex in the various master-slave relationships that pervade the novel. In these relationships, the leitmotif of the golem lover is particularly instructive. In particular, the relationship between Höss and Sophie is a prime example of what happens when these drives are repressed. In

charge of the slave camp at Auschwitz, Höss is a revealing example of the paradoxical situation of the slave-owner. Auschwitz's Jewish inmates, wholly responsive to his will, are complete golems—lying down in the graves which they themselves have dug in order to be shot. Ironically, Höss's repressed racial intolerance, which has elevated him to his position, causes him to fall in love with Sophie, whose features correspond to those of the Nordic Ideal. Unable to accept his sexual attraction to "a piece of Polish Dreck" (348), Höss becomes enslaved by his shadow, behaving "like some soul-eaten Tristan" in Sophie's presence. Repressing his sexual appetites, Höss attempts to elevate the nature of his infatuation by explaining it as an attraction "of intensity beyond anything so crude as mere sex"; this attraction, he claims, belongs to "a grander scheme of procreation," because it would be "an exalted thing" to "deposit [his] seed within such a beautiful vessel" (343). Appropriately, the flow of Höss's "weird Nazi grammar . . . with its outlandishly overheated images and succulent Teutonic wordbloat" resembles Stingo's own lurid language when he projects his pornographic imaginings on Leslie and even Sophie. Procreation, however one depicts it, is in the end merely an expression of one's sexual appetite—nothing more and nothing less.

In *Sophie's Choice*, the more one represses one's shadow, the more grotesquely powerful its expression becomes. Perhaps the most deliberately unappealing depiction of the master-slave relationship in this novel lies in Wilhelmine's Sapphic amour. A lesbian, Wilhelmine must repress her sexual desires in Nazi Germany or she will herself become an inmate of a place like Auschwitz. Like that of Höss's, Wilhelmine's "thwarted venerary" is also a grotesque parody of the

act of love. Once again, Styron depicts the sexual act in a pornographic fashion rather than in an erotic way, to emphasize the perversion that results when the shadow is repressed. As before, Sophie finds herself the object of another's desire—"a beautiful thing . . . a Swedish kitty-cat" and "as helpless as a crippled moth" (321). Sophie herself leaves no doubt in Stingo's mind as to the perverted nature of Wilhelmine's passion: "If you ever write about this," she says to Stingo, "just say that Wilhelmine was the only beautiful woman I ever saw . . . the only good-looking woman that the evil inside her had caused this absolute ugliness" (318). Indeed, because of this blood-chilling ugliness, Sophie considers Wilhelmine to be barely human: she is closely identified by Stingo with an *unheimlich* creature from Nordic legends: a creature that is "half Valkyrie, half gutter-troll" (320).

In *Sophie's Choice*, master-slave relationships are not merely a matter of race, but also of gender. Sophie's relationship with Nathan can, and indeed should, be read as an ironic reversal of the relationship between Aryan and Jew during the Second World War. But it is also—and I believe more importantly—an examination of the hetero-sexual relationship in which repressed drives of power and sex erupt as shadow tendencies on the part of both partners. Stingo is often baffled by Sophie's unflagging devotion to Nathan. With Nathan, Sophie behaves like a golem. Moreover, she is perfectly aware of her own collaboration with his emotional and physical abuse. Wholly responsive to Nathan's will, she allows him to break her ribs and urinate into her mouth. Significantly, she knows that her behaviour, like her lover's, is "sick." Sophie even equates Nathan's behaviour with Wilhelmine's: he too regards her as "a little *kitten* for him to fondle" (428; italics mine).

Finally, the most horrific expression of shadow repression at work is the result of Sophie's decision to send her daughter to the gas ovens after disembarking at Auschwitz. By sending her little Eva to "the waiting legion of the damned," Sophie, a devout Catholic, commits "a totally unpardonable sin" (590). This unspeakable and unforgivable act simply cannot be integrated into her personality. In effect, at Auschwitz, Sophie plays the part of the slave-owner. Like Stingo's grandmother, she sacrifices a child in order to save her family. And like Stingo's grandmother, she cannot justify her action. Ironically, her salvation of her son, Jan, is also his damnation. As Sophie comments, had newcomers to Auschwitz-Birkenau known what lay in store for the chosen few, they all would have prayed for "the gas" (288). Unable to expiate her guilt, Sophie's existence becomes unbearable. Her state of consciousness differs from Stingo's only in degree: her masochistic resignation drives her to committing suicide with Nathan.

As Spearing points out, the digressive form of the dream vision allows its poems a particular expansiveness; because its digressions do not function like classical ornaments, the design which they suggest is perpetually unfulfilled, inviting endless possibilities for future growth (33). The digressive nature of the psycho-narrative which is modelled after the dream vision suggests the expansiveness of the psyche itself. In *Sophie's Choice*, this form acknowledges that the human mind which is engaged in the activity of shadow repression seems to be capable of endless permutations of perversion. The psyche's permutations, however, need not always be the result of this particular activity. As Stingo points out, it is perfectly possible that Leslie Lapidus, for example, becomes in the end "an adjusted, sleek, elegantly

graying and still beautiful woman” who finds herself “warmly married, philoprogenitive, and . . . multi-orgasmic.” Given Leslie’s repressed sexual history, this possibility is, of course, highly unlikely. Nevertheless, “some intuition” tells Stingo that Leslie integrates her sex drive with her personality and “ultimately finds her full meed of happiness” (219).

As Spearing remarks, ultimately the dream vision reveals the state of the dreamer’s psyche (6). Psycho-narratives, however, even those modelled on the dream vision, reveal the states of their speakers’ consciousnesses throughout. As his conclusion to Leslie’s life demonstrates, Stingo egocentrically believes in the necessity of endings—preferably for Leslie, a happy one—because that is how he “needs to see her” (219). Unwittingly exploring the relationship between art and life, he reveals that his psychic orientation towards reality is absolutist rather than relativist. As such, it is an orientation which represses reality rather than expresses it.

The implications of such a psychic orientation are best illustrated by Sophie herself. Like Stingo, Sophie is also an absolutist. She would not agree with Jean-François Steiner that “in the presence of certain realities art is trivial or impertinent” (265). Even in Höss’s office, the music of Haydn has the ability to transport her beyond and above the grim reality of Birkenau’s chimneys. Because in re-inventing her past she sees the experience of Auschwitz as a text, she awards it art’s transcendent nature; for her, its happy resolution would be a matter of salvation: “if I could just find my little boy,” she says, “It might even save me from the guilt I have felt over Eva” (599).

Confronted with a mother's anguish, one cannot help thinking that life should become like art—that Jan should be restored to Sophie, and that in the fashion of the fairy tale, Jan and Sophie should live happily ever after. However, quoting Elie Wiesel, Styron suggests that in making use of the Holocaust, novelists have “cheapened [it], drained it of its substance” (265); these novelists have, in effect, created a golem, by making life serve the purpose of art. And, ironically, in imagining a happy ending for herself, Sophie is also doing precisely this. In the end, she admits to abandoning her search for Jan because the resolution which she seeks for her story *must* be the one which validates her past actions: she asks Stingo, “Is it best to know about a child's death . . . ? Or to know that a child lives but that you will never see him again? I don't know for sure” (600-01).

As the quote from Wiesel suggests, the ominous implications of Sophie's need for the Ideal can best be understood in terms of the general context of the Holocaust. At Auschwitz, Sophie was much more than a victim: she was an accomplice, an accessory, “however haphazard and ambiguous and uncalculating her design—to the mass slaughter whose sickening vaporous residue spiralled skyward from the chimneys of Birkenau”; a fellow conspirator, she had been “an obsessed and poisonous anti-Semite” (266). Her repressed anti-Semitism expresses itself in terms of popular art: the melodrama. As Höss points out, Sophie's grotesque tale of a fictional younger sister raped by “a diabolical debaucher with an enormous prick” is “pornographic . . . rot” (339).

Sophie's sordid little tale is much more than bad art: it is propaganda. The shadow which she projects onto the Jewish butcher and the Jewish inmates of

Auschwitz is, as she herself remarks, like the Christian viewpoint. She points out to Höss that the *Judenfiendlich*, like Christians, are a “righteous and idealistic people who are only striving for a new order in a new world” (336). For the anti-Semite, the shadow itself has taken on a religious as well as a political function in the twentieth century. It is no coincidence that Sophie’s father, a committed anti-Semite, an idealist who insisted on perfection in an imperfect world, could have been considered “a major prophet” by the Nazis: “an eccentric Slavic philosopher whose vision of a final solution antedates that of Eichmann and his confederates (even perhaps of Adolf Hitler, the dreamer and conceiver of it all)” (306).

Styron’s treatment of the Third Reich in *Sophie’s Choice* may be considered as an extensive investigation of the role that shadow repression plays in propaganda. In doing so, he calls into question the nature of Art itself, by viewing Nazi Germany as an artistic exercise: the imposition of order on nature. This order, originally conceived by Sophie’s father and brought into being by Eichmann and Himmler, does not result in the Elysian fields that Höss’s favourite composer, Franz Lehár, creates in *Das Land Des Lachlens*. Instead of improving on nature, Hitler’s dream destroys life, creating the concentration camp—“a world of the living dead” that resembles communities stranded on the banks of the Styx. As Sophie herself notes, the “terrible impression of order” which characterizes the Nazi death camps drains what Wiesel would term the “substance” of experience itself. Watching 2,100 Greek Jews disembark from their box cars and docilely file off to the resolution of their journey, Sophie sees none of the chaotic “cruelty, mayhem and madness” from the windows of Haus Höss. Instead, she witnesses only “the grainy shadow-shapes in an antique

silent newsreel”; the Jews have become nothing more than art objects, “papier-mache” human beings, reduced to “fragmentary and flickering apparitions” onstage in a “dream . . . enacted in a charitable vacuum” (317, 318).

Styron’s investigation of Art as propaganda also involves an examination of the artist as a propagandist, since all art reflects the nature of the psyche that creates it. Ironically, in *Sophie’s Choice*, in attempting to perfect Nature, the anti-Semites reveal that they have descended rather than ascended the Chain of Being in the attempt. Sophie recognises this. She knows that she is living like an animal in Höss’s basement and eating slop that is fit only for swine. Sunk to the level of an animal even in her dreams, she behaves like a dog in a degrading sexual encounter with a demonic Heldentenor from the Berlin Opera. Unlike Sophie, Höss completely fails to recognise the level to which he has descended. Ironically, his greatest pleasure and escape from the day-to-day problems posed by administering the slave society of which he is the master is his horse, Harlekin. A Polish Arabian, Harlekin is a triumph of the same process which resulted in Birkenau—genetic engineering.

Quite simply, Höss descends the Chain of Being by mistaking physical for spiritual perfection. Believing that he can transcend the human condition by becoming like Harlekin, Höss tells Sophie: “To escape the body of man yet still dwell in Nature. To *be* that horse. To live within that beast. That would be freedom” (593). Ironically, of course, Höss would choose to transcend the human condition by becoming a golem in the form of an animal which is wholly responsive to its master’s word.

In *Sophie's Choice*, in spite of the horrors of the Second World War, it is apparent that human beings have not abandoned the ego's quest for perfection: scientists continue to challenge the limitations set by nature, and writers still attempt to become the unacknowledged legislators of mankind. Waiting in the Maple Court bar for Nathan's revelation, Stingo wonders if Nathan's biological enterprise could have been the "founding of a new race of Homo sapiens finer, fairer, fleeter than the bedeviled sufferers of the present day" (235); and in spite of the decline of the Romantic notion of the artist, Stingo discovers that "immortal longings" to create perfection impel his every hyphen and semi-colon (133). In essence, the scientist and the writer in *Sophie's Choice* are very similar. Impelled to create, the scientist exploits Nature, the writer, "the tragedies of others" (132).

Styron's narrator is certainly not exempt from the activity of exploitation. As a writer, Stingo exploits life. In making life serve art's ends, he finds himself "overtaken by a fabulous sense of discovery" and falls prey to the "ghoulish opportunism" to which writers are prone (132-33). In re-ordering reality, Stingo succeeds in reducing Maria and her family to caricatures in much the same manner as Nazi propaganda reduces the Jews to stereotypes. As Nathan points out, Stingo has "a pretty snappy talent in the traditional Southern mode," but he also has "all the cliches" (253). Racial cliches, of course, are manifestations of a culture's shadow.

Although Nathan excuses his friend from being "a willing disseminator" of the racist poison produced by his pen (253), the reader knows that Stingo is quite capable of honestly enjoying "the bitchery and vengeance" which he wreaks upon manuscripts that do not conform to his impossibly high standards; at McGraw-Hill, Stingo

consigns *every* manuscript that he reads to the editorial ovens—even the “great classic of modern adventure, *Kon Tiki*” (10). Like Von Niemand, Stingo embodies the process of natural selection itself; in doing so, he becomes sub-human, treating the “forlorn offspring of a thousand strangers’ lonely and fragile desire with the magisterial, abstract loathing of an ape plucking vermin from his pelt” (4). In short, Stingo is a literary Nazi. Moreover, like Höss and Von Niemand, who after a time do not enjoy the process of racial selection at all, Stingo also experiences a form of spiritual malaise at McGraw-Hill.

It is indeed a welcome relief when Stingo abandons his immortal longings, albeit at the very last moment. Waking from a death experience during which he has literally been buried in the earth, Stingo finds that like the reader he has come to value the real over the Ideal. Released from the restraints of ego-consciousness, he finally perceives the value of the ordinary, the imperfect, the everyday world. It is not “judgment day,” he discovers, “only Morning: excellent and fair” (626).

When one considers the highly self-conscious nature of psycho-narration, it is surprising that, given Stingo’s difficulty with the nature of the artistic enterprise, *Sophie’s Choice* was written at all. The use of dream vision’s digressive narrative style, however, does allow Stingo the freedom to write about the past without the problem of having to perfect it. The chaotic, seemingly unordered, digressive format in which Styron places Stingo’s and Sophie’s memories allows the past to retain its vital authenticity. By choosing this format, I would argue that Styron is insisting on the value of experience itself. And in doing so, he leaves his modern reader in the situation of the medieval dream vision’s audience: when another’s life is experienced

as a psychic experience, the events lead the reader not to a greater knowledge of the world, but to a more complete understanding of human nature itself.

## Endnotes

1. Currently, critical writing about William Styron's *Sophie's Choice* falls into four general categories: the New Critical, the biographical, the historical, and the psychological. New Critical treatments of this text, among them Frederick N. Smith's "Bach vs Brooklyn's Clamorous Yawp: Sound in *Sophie's Choice*" and Allen Shepherd's "The Psychopath as Moral Agent in William Styron's *Sophie's Choice*," discuss Styron's themes and his use of leitmotifs. Biographical treatments of *Sophie's Choice*, among them Leslie Fiedler's "Styron's Choice," Richard Rubenstein's "The South Encounters the Holocaust: William Styron's *Sophie's Choice*," and Carolyn A. Durham's "William Styron's *Sophie's Choice*: The Structure of Oppression," castigate the text by arguing that it reveals Styron's social conditioning and personal prejudices. Historical readings, among them Robert Franciosi's "Perverse Medicine: Holocaust Doctoring in William Styron's *Sophie's Choice*," Frank Link's "Auschwitz and the Literary Imagination: William Styron's *Sophie's Choice*," and Janet M. Stanford's "The Whisper of Violins in Styron's *Sophie's Choice*," place the narrative in the the context of the Holocaust. Psychological readings of *Sophie's Choice* fall into the Freudian school of thought: among them are Michael Kreyling's "Speakable and Unspeakable in Styron's *Sophie's Choice*" and Daniel W. Ross's "A Family Romance: Dreams and the Unified Narrative of *Sophie's Choice*." For more examples of writings by these critical schools on *Sophie's Choice* see the annotated bibliography at the back of this study.

*Chapter Four**The Possessed Narrator: Lincoln's Dreams*

In psycho-narration, there is a third and very popular narrator, who might be described as the *possessed personality*. These speakers tend to present the stories of their psychic experiences as waking dreams, in which the central theme is played out over and over. Unlike the innocent speaker of the psycho-narrative, the possessed protagonist is controlled by psychic forces and makes no attempt to be rational while telling his or her tale. Psycho-narratives with possessed narrators also tend to deal with past history, presenting their speakers as victims doomed to repeat the mistakes of their culture. Unable to individuate, such speakers remain fixed at a crucial stage of their psychic development. No reason is ever given for why these individuals are possessed: they usually have no history of psychotic episodes or physical weaknesses that might predispose them to experiencing unusual states of consciousness. Nor, of course, do these narrators elect to undergo their experiences. Like the individual in a primitive culture who is chosen by the "spirits," these narrators are seized by forces beyond their volition. Their experiences, however, differ sharply from those of the psycho-narrator who functions shamanistically. Whereas the shamanistic speaker encounters archetypes, the possessed psycho-narrator becomes their instrument. Manifested as an idé-force, these archetypes take control of the individual's

personality and dictate the synchronistic nature of the events that follow his or her possession.

One of the most compelling examples of the possessed psycho-narrator is Jeff Johnston, Connie Willis's theriomorphic speaker in *Lincoln's Dreams*. *Lincoln's Dreams* is Jeff's story about his relationship with Annie, a young woman who believes that in her dreams she is experiencing Robert E. Lee's perceptions of the Civil War.<sup>1</sup> A historian, Jeff is engaged in researching the Civil War for Broun, a novelist who specializes in historical biographies. Jeff meets Annie when Richard, her psychiatrist and Jeff's college room-mate, offers Broun an interpretation of Lincoln's prodromic dreams. Because of his Civil War research, Jeff is able to do what Richard cannot: identify the nature of Annie's dreams. After realising that Richard has been drugging her to prevent the dream process, Jeff takes Annie to Fredericksburg only to return when he discovers that she has a heart condition. Throughout their journey, Annie's dreams become increasingly disturbing as they reveal frightening parallels between the battles of the Civil War and the actions of the characters in contemporary America. While re-tracing the route of the Confederate Army in her dreams, for example, Annie takes on Lee's personality; Richard behaves like Lee's nemesis, Longstreet; and Broun is awarded the personas of Lincoln and Grant. By the conclusion of the tale, Jeff's own state of consciousness has also become highly unusual: he comes to see that during his association with Annie he has been playing the part of Lee's horse, Traveller, "a faithful travelling companion from Fredericksburg to Chancellorsville and Gettysburg, and finally to Appomattox" (212).

In *Lincoln's Dreams*, archetypal possession of an individual's personality is a central leitmotif. The Civil War dead seem to take over the personalities of almost every contemporary character involved in the tale. Annie most clearly illustrates the nature of these possessions, sleep-walking and speaking in Lee's voice as she re-enacts the bloody events of Antietam and Pickett's Charge. Jeff's possession, however, is a more complicated matter. Although logically his identification with Traveller makes no sense, psychologically it is explicable. As Eliade remarks, from the most distant times, almost all animals have been conceived either as psychopomps that accompany the soul into the beyond or as the dead person's new form; whether it is the "ancestor" or the "initiatory master," the animal symbolizes a real and direct connection with the beyond (93-94). A funerary animal, the horse in particular has been awarded the powers of a psychopomp. Jeff's identification with Lee's horse therefore symbolizes his direct and very real connection with the Civil War dead and explains his role in Annie's struggle.

Essentially, the shaman's spirit guide functions theriomorphically. Like the theriomorph in a fairy tale, the shaman's spirit acts as a guardian. In fairy tales, theriomorphs advise the hero, act as his guide, and ensure the successful completion of the hero's task (Jung *Psyche* 73-75). Like the theriomorph in a fairy tale, Jeff appears in Annie's life when such intervention is badly needed. Unable to explain her dreams, her psychiatrist, Richard, does everything in his power to suppress them: from prescribing Elavil to taking advantage of his patient sexually to convincing her that she is "heading for a psychotic 'break'" (17). When Annie discovers that Richard has been drugging her with Thorazine, Jeff becomes her rescuer, taking her

with him "south, into the land of dreams" to continue and complete her obligation to Lee (73).

As a historical researcher, Jeff spends all his time "looking up obscure facts nobody cares about" (6). His knowledge of the past, however, is what makes the details of Annie's dreams understandable. Richard is unable to explain the significance of the rifle that looks like a child's toy, the cat with brown and yellow stripes, and the horse whose front legs buckle at an awkward angle. Jeff, however, knows that the Springfield rifle used during the Civil War fired "a minié ball by using a paper roll of percussion caps like those in a toy pistol"; that Lee's daughter owned "a yellow tabby" named Tom Tita; and that the front legs of D. H. Hill's horse were shot off by a cannon ball at Antietam (28,42). Having just spent six months exhaustively researching the Battle of Antietam, Jeff can say with authority that Annie is not going crazy, as her psychiatrist suggests, but that she is indeed having Lee's dreams.

Theriomorphs possess the "knowledge . . . cleverness . . . [and] insight," as well as the "good will and readiness to help" (Jung *Psyche* 77). Exhibiting these qualities, Jeff acts as Annie's guide in the South. At night, he interprets her dreams, placing them in their historical contexts. During the day, he becomes her tour guide in Fredericksburg and its surrounding countryside. Although he is unable to protect Annie from the horror of Lee's experiences, Jeff realises that he is keeping his promise to assist her in dreaming: "Well, I was helping alright . . . She'd already had more dreams since she met me than she had ever had with Richard, drugs or no drugs" (106). Annie, herself, knows Jeff's value, even though he often feels useless.

After dreaming about the aftermath of Marye's Heights, she tells Jeff that "it was easier. Because you were here to tell me what it means" (86). Jeff's ability to help Annie dream, of course, is due to his theriomorphic identity as a tutelary animal. As Jung points out, unlike man, the animal has not blundered into consciousness nor pitted a self-willed ego against the power from which it lives; on the contrary, the animal fulfils the will that actuates it in a nigh-well perfect manner" (*Psyche* 86-87).

Here it is important to note that Traveller himself won Lee's affection for these very qualities. Had the horse been able to speak, there is little doubt that Traveller would have been the ideal theriomorph. Writing to his cousin Markie Williams, Lee remarks, "If I were an artist like you, I would draw a true picture of Traveller . . . such a picture would inspire a poet, whose genius could then depict his worth and describe his endurance of toil, hunger, thirst, heat, cold, and the dangers and sufferings through which he has passed. He could dilate on his sagacity and affection, and his invariable response to every wish of his rider" (115).

Jeff's relationship with Annie is like Traveller's with Lee, for he fulfills her will in a well-nigh perfect manner as well. In spite of his own misgivings, Jeff ultimately finds himself unable to stand in the way of her dreams. Resisting his impulses to pit his will against hers "for her own good" (190), he remains her "patient follower" (63).

Clearly, Jeff's duty is to guide Annie through Lee's war: and he does so, even when this involves sending her to her death. When he asks himself if "knowing where the dreams were leading her, would [he] have been able to take her there?" (196), his question is, of course, rhetorical. Neither his willingness nor his capability

to help Annie are issues here. Jeff values duty—his and the duty of others—more than life itself. Even when he knows that Annie's heart condition is life-threatening, he cannot surrender her to Richard, because he knows that Richard would not allow her to fulfill her obligation to Lee.

As therapist, Jeff succeeds where Richard fails. His ability to interpret Annie's dreams is due to their transpersonal nature. A Freudian, Richard is unable to understand Annie's dreams because he places them in the context of her personal past: as far as he is concerned, they must be the symptoms of a severely repressed trauma suffered during her childhood. More important, however, Jeff does not attempt to use Annie's dreams to illustrate a pre-conceived idea. Unlike Richard, Jeff has no vested interest in the way in which Annie's dreams are understood. Richard's interpretation of Lincoln's dream about finding his own coffin in the East Room of the White House two weeks before his assassination reflects his Freudian approach to therapy: the coffin, he says, is "a symbol of some deep-seated trauma, probably in childhood"; Jeff's response aptly identifies the pitfall of preconception into which professionals often fall: "Well, what did you expect from a psychiatrist?" (18).

As Broun and Jeff continue to search for acceptable explanations for Lincoln's and Annie's dream activities, it becomes increasingly obvious that they could have saved themselves a good deal of time and trouble by reading Chaucer's useful synopsis of the *Commentary on the Somnium Scipionis* in *The House of Fame*. Dreams, it seems, cannot be fully explained; the best one can do is categorize them. During the Middle Ages, dreams were placed in one of two categories. Mere fantasies were the products of the mind's physical weakness: as the dreamer in *The*

*Hous of Fame* points out, "avisious," are the results of abstinence, sickness, prison, brothels, stress, sudden changes in lifestyle, too much study, and the individual's tendency towards melancholy. Prodromic dreams, however, were regarded as manifestations of our spiritual nature: Chaucer's speaker carefully identifies "relevacious" as the creations of either spirits or by the soul "of proper kynde" (l. 43). This soul, he says, is so perfect that it knows what is to come.

Currently, ideas about dreams have not changed substantially from those advanced by the ancients; dreams continue to be ascribed to physical or spiritual causes. With the advent of Freud, however, what was the physical has come to be regarded as the personal and in the light of Jung's work, what was the spiritual is now termed the transpersonal. Thus in *Lincoln's Dreams*, dreams are seen either as psychic manifestations of physical activities occurring in the stomach or the brain, or as messages from the dead, as Broun's "quacks" at Dreamtime in San Diego believe (203); dreams are either the brain's way of processing personal information and the day's events, or they are concretizations of the collective unconscious. Unfortunately, as in Chaucer's day, dreams do not lend themselves easily to interpretation. Broun's discovery that the prodromic dreams experienced by acromegaliacs and the victims of tuberculosis foretell their dreamer's deaths, for example, does not fully explain Lincoln's, Annie's, and later Jeff's dreams about their own impending deaths. In short, it seems that the nature of dream analysis depends on the intellectual or spiritual bent of the interpreter himself, and that the workings of the psyche while one is asleep cannot be explained in rational terms.

As A. C. Spearing argues in *Medieval Dream Poetry*, dream visions are ultimately about their dreamers' consciousnesses (6). The key to understanding the dream vision, therefore, lies not in relating them to either physical or supernatural events, but to the workings of the psyche itself. As Jung remarks, dreams are stories told by the unconscious mind ("Unconscious" 27). Fairy tales, too, are stories about the psyche, in which different parts of the psyche are represented by various characters. An aspect of the spirit archetype, the theriomorph appears in situations where insight, understanding, good advice, determination, and planning are needed (Jung *Psyche* 71). In *Lincoln's Dreams*, the problem of possession by the spirit archetype presents itself again and again. The key to understanding this complex pattern, created by variations of the spirit archetype, is the figure of the theriomorph itself.

In *Lincoln's Dreams*, the problem of possession by the spirit archetype presents itself again and again. Possessed by the spirit archetype, Jeff unquestionably fills the gap created by Annie's own spiritual deficiency, but he is not the only character in the text to behave in such a fashion. Robert E. Lee, for example, also performs the same duty for his men. As a Civil War general, Lee functioned like a spirit archetype: he offered his men insight, advice, determination, and courage when they themselves were unable to continue. During the Battle of Antietam, when "Rob's artillery unit came straggling past" with the only gun they had left, Lee tells his own son "to take the best horses" and, in spite of his exhaustion, to go back into battle: "You all must do what you can to help drive these people back," he says (106).

According to Jung, the archetype which the theriomorph embodies was originally understood as a daimon that came upon one from without (*Psyche* 110). As human ego consciousness expanded, this spirit was recognised as residing within the individual human psyche; the rational reduction of the spirit to that of a personal daimon is designed to place it under the control of the ego. The result, however, is that the spirit takes possession of an individual, and, while appearing to be the willing object of human intentions, binds his or her freedom, just as the physical world does, by becoming "an obsessive idée-force" (Jung, *Psyche* 68).

In *Lincoln's Dreams*, obsession is a symptom of possession. The idée-force is expressed in the problem of duty. Obsessed with the notion of honour, Jeff sacrifices his happiness to his devotion to duty. Even when he is "past believing" that he is helping Annie with his explanations "any more than Richard had helped her with this theories and his sleeping pills" (136), Jeff feels compelled to tell her what her dreams mean.

In short, Jeff experiences Lee's dilemma. Regretting his promise to help Annie dream because he knows that her dream experiences are killing her, Jeff wonders whether Lee regretted keeping the promises that he had made. "When he saw boys of sixteen cut down like stalks of corn, when he saw them barefoot and bleeding and dead on their feet, didn't he ever consider breaking his promise?" Jeff asks (136). Clearly, duty for Jeff is as problematic for him as it was for Lee, "who had died of a heart attack, the controlled man's disease . . . and had had bad dreams about the war right up to the very end" (122).

Here, duty becomes problematic, for fulfilling it becomes, in Lee's case, an obsession rather than an obligation. For Lee, the *idée-force* was honour. "I could have taken no other course of action without dishonour," Lee writes after the war, "after he had killed two hundred and fifty thousand of his own men" (73).

Honour is also the *idée-force* which motivates Jeff when he sends Annie back to her battle. For Jeff, the dishonour of surrendering Annie to Richard, a man who dishonoured himself by betraying his duty, is unthinkable. Possessed by the idea of honour, Jeff cannot surrender dishonourably, because doing so would result in his own psychic dismemberment and death. "I could have surrendered to Lincoln," Jeff says, considering the difference between Broun and Richard. "I could have surrendered to Grant. But not to Longstreet. Not to Longstreet" (193). Jeff's equation of Broun with Lincoln and Grant and Richard with Longstreet indicates that the psychic conflation of honour with life itself is not merely a Civil War phenomenon. As Annie later points out, Richard's dishonourable actions have destroyed not only his credibility, but also his ability to practice medicine. Considering him unfit to treat her, she snaps, "Don't you talk to me about duty, not when you wouldn't let me do mine" (194).

As Jeff becomes increasingly obsessed with the idea of duty, his psyche becomes increasingly unbalanced. One can argue, of course, that half a year of exhaustive research about Antietam would be enough to unbalance anyone's mind; this is certainly Broun's conclusion when Jeff, worrying about Annie in "Richard's clutches" (45), demonstrates uncharacteristic fits of bad temper and irrational outbursts. When his researcher inexplicably refuses to go to California to begin

researching the new project on Lincoln, Broun concludes that he has been working Jeff "too hard" (65). Ironically, he sends Jeff off on a holiday to Fredericksburg, the scene of one of the bloodiest battles of the Civil War, with Annie and the galleys of *Duty Bound*.

Jeff's problem, however, is due to the workings of an archetype, not to over-work. As he and Annie retreat to the South, like Lee before the Union Army, Jeff's perceptions of the events of the historical past and his personal present become synchronised. Staying awake to help Annie dream, he experiences Lee's insomnia and disrupted sleeping patterns. At Fredericksburg, Annie's dreams re-create the agonizingly slow defeat of Lee's army; and as they do, the waking and dreaming worlds also become fused: the red-haired waitress at the coffee shop and the pharmacist at the drug store, for example, appear as participants in the Civil War in Annie's dreams. The events in Broun's galleys begin to mirror the goings on in Fredericksburg. Jeff's unrequited passion for Annie closely resembles Ben's for Nelly. In short, the Civil War appears to be everywhere, permeating the present in Annie's unconscious, in Broun's fiction, and in the everyday reality of Fredericksburg itself.

This much synchronicity at one time would be enough to disorder anyone's thinking: even the fried chicken that Jeff and Annie eat for supper is not innocuous, for that night, Lee's "Little Hen" appears in Annie's dreams. About halfway through his stay at Fredericksburg, Jeff begins to experience symptoms which indicate that he is, like Annie, heading for a psychotic break with reality. At first, Jeff attempts to escape Annie's dreams by suggesting that they go and see a movie or visit the local

tourist attractions. Then, badly frightened by Annie's sleepwalking, he tries to prevent recurrences of it by proposing a side trip to Shenandoah. Jeff talks Annie into "getting away for a while. On furlough," but he knows that he is lying. He is really persuading her to desert Lee, and if he succeeds in removing her physically from the battlefields of the Civil War, he knows that he will "never let her come back" (149).

It is impossible, however, to escape a part of one's own psyche. The presence of the Civil War archetype manifests itself in a series of Freudian slips. As he and Annie begin their escape, he tells her, "We won't talk about the dreams, we won't think about the dreams, we'll go hiking and eat fried chicken and look at the Blue Ridge Mountains" (149). He is, however, unable to avoid the very subject which he wants to avoid, but with which he has become obsessed. Unable to talk about the dreams themselves, he finds himself gabbling about the Civil War: talking about Brown researching the battlefield at Antietam and lying on his back to get "the soldier's eye-view" (150).

Jeff himself realises that his present situation is, like everything else, analogous to the Civil War past. Everything becomes a re-enactment of some part of the Civil War. He finds himself parked in the middle of what was Brandy Station, a battlefield where "Lee's son Rooney was wounded"; and worse yet, he speaks to Annie what were likely Lee's thoughts as he watched his son carried off the field: "I would that I were wounded in your stead" (153).

Jeff's psychotic break with reality fully manifests itself after he and Annie return to Fredericksburg. By this time, he has become extremely paranoid: over-

reacting when he discovers that Annie has gone by herself to Marye's Heights, he seriously considers the possibility that Richard may have kidnapped her. He even goes so far as asking the front desk clerk if there has been "a man in here, about my height, dressed like a doctor" (171). This breakdown in reason is followed by an immediate confusion of past and present. Condensing the past and present like a dreamer, Jeff becomes a part of the Civil War itself. Running out the door of the inn, he says, "Lincoln pardoned the sentries who fell asleep on duty, saying that it was hard for farm boys to break their country habits. He wouldn't pardon me. I had let Annie go out to the battlefield by herself, and it was starting to snow" (171).

Having translated Annie's dreams for so long, Jeff has now begun to apply what Dr. Stone, the head of the Sleep Institute, terms "persistence of vision" to everything: he connects events into "a coherent narrative" modelled after the Civil War (51). Because he is thinking like a dreamer, Jeff's life becomes like "the storm of dreams" suffered by insomniacs when they are finally able to sleep (49). Since his mind goes on condensing the information which it receives, the process of the narrative becomes like "a film," with Jeff playing many of the principal parts (51).

During the days that follow the archetype's complete possession of his personality, Jeff acts out the role of the entire Union Army. Annie, he says, goes on reading galleys "as if we were not now cut off from everyone, the rear guard destroyed at Sayler's Creek, Sheridan already at Appomattox Station, and Meade in the rear and coming up fast, Grant already writing the terms of surrender" (185). By the time Jeff identifies himself to the reader as Traveller, his parts have been those of

Lee, Ben Freeman, Longstreet, Lincoln's sentry, and Lincoln himself. In short, the workings of his psyche have re-enacted the entire story of the Civil War.

Thus on his return to Arlington, Jeff is completely psychotic. He is thoroughly convinced that Annie will die from an attack of angina like Lee, if she continues to have Lee's dreams. Reality, for Jeff, has become a recurring nightmare indeed. He tells Annie, "Lee went to that meeting at Grace Church and sat all afternoon in the cold and then walked home in the rain and had a heart attack. I'm not going to let that happen to you" (190). Clearly Jeff has managed to condense not only the past and present into the events of the Civil War, but the future as well.

No longer able to make distinctions between reality and his fantasy, Jeff—like Lincoln, who could not cope with the finality of Willie's death—finds himself unable to accept Annie's absence. His mind has become so unbalanced that he even attempts to deny his loss by returning to the past. Jeff visits Willie's tomb at the Oak Hill Cemetery—hoping to disturb Lincoln's son "out of his sleep" and learn where Annie is (208)—even though he knows that Willie's body was disinterred from that spot over a hundred years before.

According to Jung, in myth and fairy tales, as in dreams, the story that the psyche tells is the process of individuation (*Psyche* 72). The tale told by the possessed narrator, however, does not resolve itself in terms of the initiation format which one has been taught to expect. Annie does not return to discover that her faithful companion has been a prince in disguise, and Annie and Jeff do not marry and live happily ever after. Even in *Duty Bound*, one does not find a neat conclusion: Ben's unrequited love for Nelly remains just that. The inconclusive nature of both

stories reflects the unfinished nature of the Civil War which informs them. As every American believes, the Civil War is still not over.

In terms of the American psyche itself, the workings of Jeff's consciousness seem to suggest that Americans are still thinking much as they did during the Civil War. In *Lincoln's Dreams*, Americans past and present are willing to die for honour. Thus, in Jeff's imagination, it is appropriate that the dead Union soldier lying face-down in the apple orchard beside the Appomattox Court House easily becomes Annie sleeping in her white nightgown under the apple tree at Arlington. At Arlington itself, Jeff knows that "when the snow melted a little more [he] would be able to see [Annie's] body, face-down, her arm flung out, still holding on to her Springfield rifle" (211).

Jeff's vision of Annie, lying face-down in the dirt at Arlington is particularly horrifying because he understands only part of the implications of this vision. However self-conscious he appears to be, in the end he has not learned that, like Annie, he too is doomed to continue to reconstruct the Civil War past in its present. He does know, however, that like Traveller, he has also had "the misfortune to outlive the person he loved" (209): that like Traveller, he has also waited nearly two years for that person to return. When he returns home from the Arlington Cemetery, he notices, as if for the first time, that Broun "will never look like Lincoln . . . he looks like Lee" (212). Unfortunately, Jeff does not understand that the process he has just endured is about to begin again. Transferring from Annie to Broun the allegiance he felt for Lee, he cannot imagine why he had kept the image of Broun as being "sharp and disreputable" when his employer "had been nothing but

kind" (212).

According to Jung, when the function of knowing and intuition is represented by a riding animal, this is as much to say that the spirit can be someone's property (*Psyche* 89). In *Lincoln's Dreams*, being someone else's property is precisely what Jeff is. As a historical researcher, he first belongs to Broun; as a travelling companion, he is Annie's; as a narrator, he is the vehicle of the spirit archetype; at the end of the tale, he returns to his former master with his "head down, winded, blown" (212). Possessed by the spirit archetype, like a soldier who is battle weary, he regards his own impending death as a matter of kindness rather than a process of transformation or transcendence. Like Traveller, Jeff can only wait to be put out of his misery.

Here it is important to note that as a theriomorph, Jeff can help Annie conclude her rite of initiation, but he cannot complete his. Jeff is unable to individuate, because he cannot incorporate the shadow-side of honour into his personality. Forever dutiful, the balance of his psyche cannot be corrected. Annie, for example, recognises the negative aspect of honour when Jeff betrays her "for her own good" (190), but Jeff does not; he cannot believe that he is behaving like Richard. Refusing to incorporate this part of his personality into his consciousness, he is doomed to repeat the cycle again. Thus, when he returns home, he finds Broun waiting for him, looking like Lee and pottering among the African violets like Annie was when his experience first began.

According to Eliade, individuals who experience spirit possession discover "hidden things and reveal them" (*Shamanism* 365). In psycho-narration, speakers

who are possessed by an archetype reveal a hidden aspect of their culture's psyche.

In *Lincoln's Dreams*, Jeff's and Annie's experiences demonstrate that the dutiful spirit archetype the controlling force of the American psyche and the figure of the soldier continues to be a heroic one, elevated above the ordinary by his willingness to sacrifice his life for his principles. To highlight this point, Willis uses an excerpt from Bruce Catton's *Mr. Lincoln's Army* as an epigraph for *Lincoln's Dreams*:

Catton observes that life may not be "man's most precious possession," because men can be "induced to give it away very freely at times and the terms hardly seem to make sense" (i). In *Lincoln's Dreams*, the dangers of such commitment are an object lesson. Even Lee, whose obsession with honour killed a quarter of a million of his own men, recognised this. Watching the Union Army approach Marye's Heights, he concluded, "It is well that war is so terrible, or we should grow too fond of it" (139).

In the final analysis, unlike Lee, Jeff ultimately fails to understand that the Civil War was proof of America's obsession with honour. The reader, however, cannot fail to recognise the dangers that possession by the spirit archetype poses. Like all psycho-narrators, the possessed personality functions as a mediator, thereby promoting a more complete understanding of the repressed components of the psyche. Unable "to communicate with the dead, 'demons,' and 'nature spirits,' without . . . becoming their instrument" (Eliade, *Shamanism* 6), the possessed speaker does not function according to the principles of shamanism. Nonetheless, he or she is a perfect medium by which the reader may encounter archetypes without being overwhelmed, recognise their signatures, whether they be positive or negative, and thereby balance his or her own psychic condition.

Endnotes

1. To date, no articles have been published on Connie Willis's *Lincoln's Dreams*.

*Chapter Five**The Speaker as Guardian Spirit: All Hallows' Eve*

In contrast to first-person psycho-narratives, in which the speaker is a character with problems, in psycho-narratives written in the third person, the speaker typically functions as a disembodied voice which provides information, advice, and encouragement. Although these third-person narrative voices are not foregrounded as are shamanistic, innocent, or possessed first person speakers, they also play a distinctive role in the communication process. Speaking in the historical present, these voices blur chronological and causal relationships and in doing so create the dream-like quality that characterizes psycho-narration. The function of the third-person psycho-narrator, however, is not merely to create atmosphere but to generate a specific reader-response. All these speakers comment on the paranormal experiences with which these texts are primarily concerned and explain the a-rational workings of the psychic phenomena found therein.

The paranormal experiences with which these texts are concerned include hauntings, visitations, and conversations with the dead; encounters with roaming archetypes which have escaped from the collective unconscious; and excursions into worlds governed by the forces of magic. Characters in these texts often experience levitations, trances, and ecstasies. Although such experiences may shock and thrill

the reader, their purpose is to break down the barriers between the material and the spiritual world.

Commenting on the paranormal, these third-person narrators use a magico-religious vocabulary that generally is the property of a shaman, a mystic, or a priest. This vocabulary indicates that such a speaker has been initiated into the mysteries of the spirit world and is qualified to comment on the a-rational behaviour of the psychic phenomena found therein. Because of such knowledge, this speaker escorts the uninitiated reader through the text.

Guided by a narrator who functions like a guardian, the reader is not only awarded a privileged point of view, but also experiences an altered state of consciousness wherein he or she comes to accept the paranormal as normal. In this way, such psycho-narratives are closely related to the medieval dream vision. In the dream vision, the dreamer is often accompanied by a guide who explains the phenomena of the dream and offers the dreamer a privileged point of view. Due to the dreamer's limited education, the relationship between the guide and the dreamer is often portrayed as that which exists between teacher and student. As a student, the dreamer quickly accepts the a-rational logic by which the dream operates. In *The Inferno*, for example, Virgil teaches Dante the secrets of Hell.

Acting as a teacher or guardian, this third-person narrator also functions like a shaman's helping spirit by providing insight when the reader requires it. In this way, reading these texts results in a shamanistic experience for the reader. Like the shamanistic neophyte who experiences spontaneous vocation, the reader of these psycho-narratives tends not to feel more knowledgeable than the third-person narrator

or to engage in an intimate union; rather, the narrator, like the shaman's spirits, takes the initiative and reveals the secrets of the psyche. Once this tutelary relationship between the narrator and reader has been established, mystical phenomena such as levitations, trances, ecstasies, and the appearance of the dead are easily accepted.

Because of the appearance of paranormal phenomena in such psychonarratives, they have often been categorized as fantasy. Yet in these works, what Tolkein terms the distinguishing characteristic of fantasy—its presentation of a secondary world (68)—is not a primary objective. Although psychonarratives contain elements which may be considered fantastic, the essential concern of such narratives is not to provide an alternate world but an altered state of consciousness.

The works of Charles Williams are prime examples of psychonarratives which use elements of the fantastic to illustrate altered states of consciousness. As T. S. Eliot remarks in his introduction to *All Hallows' Eve*, levitations, trances, and ecstasies are Williams's vehicles for communicating his knowledge of "states of consciousness of a mystical kind" and his belief in "the supernatural, and its operation in the natural world" (xv). One of the most daring texts of our age, *All Hallows' Eve* is a psychonarrative thriller which insists on the presence of the supernatural in the natural world. Basically, *All Hallows' Eve* is the story of Lester Furnival who, together with her friend Evelyn, is suddenly catapulted into a state of limbo by a fatal accident.<sup>1</sup> Caught between this world and the next in a netherland that Williams calls the City, Lester's state of consciousness becomes increasingly altered by her adjustment to death. Still too attached to the world of the living to be

able to descend into the Underworld, Lester returns to the world of the living to earn the forgiveness of her husband and her friends. Once there, Lester unwittingly thwarts the murderous plans of a necromancer, Simon Le Clerk and his mistress, Lady Wallingford, who are using their daughter Betty as a vehicle for accessing the world of the dead. Lester's experiences in the world of the living become rites of initiation which prepare her to return to the primordial condition to which death is merely the prelude.

At first, the novelty of Lester's altered state of consciousness appears to be the most radical aspect of *All Hallows' Eve*. Since *The Inferno*, visionary literature has not depicted the after-life at any length. Newly dead, Lester finds herself unhappily haunting Westminster Bridge. She is in a state of shock; disassociated from her body, she is unable to recall her past; trapped in an eternal present, "entirely cut off," Lester experiences a state of "life-in-death" (7, 8). In the prolonged lull of an absolute silence, she first becomes aware of "the void" which underlies the City, and then becomes conscious of a similar void within herself (10).

Lester attributes the emptiness within her to her new state of bodilessness. Her emotions, she notes, are "not in action" (7). Without a body proper, Lester discovers that she has become pure intellect. She is contained within her consciousness. One must wonder, however, if Lester's emotions were ever really engaged before she died. When alive, Lester "had not cared for people particularly except perhaps Evelyn" who was mainly a convenient companion; her husband, Richard, had been "the only thing in the world in which she had been interested" besides "the apparatus of mortal life . . . the things they used and lived in, houses,

dresses, furniture, gadgets of all kinds. That was what she had liked, and (if she wanted it now) that was what she got" (9).

In *All Hallows' Eve*, the condition of the newly dead is not only one of shock, but also a psychic condition. Yet, despite having passed into what Eliade terms "the condition of the spirits," Lester finds her preoccupations are still those of her personal consciousness. As Williams's narrator notes, had Lester been "a medieval," she would have feared "other things in such a moment—the way to the *citta dolente*, or the people of it, smooth or hairy, tusked or clawed, malicious or lustful, creeping and clambering up from the lower depths" (13). A modern and a materialist, however, Lester only fears losing the things she had in the phenomenal world.

Unlike the psycho-narratives related in the first person, *All Hallows' Eve* appears to be a straightforward story. There is no naive or fallible narrator creating subtle structural ironies for the reader to recognise. There are no insidious framing devices, no stories-within-stories in which the reader may, like the narrator, be led to wander aimlessly—hopelessly enmeshed in layer after layer of sticky subjectivity. Williams's use of omniscience in *All Hallows' Eve*, however, is not as simple as it first seems, for it involves the adaptation of the guide in the medieval dream vision. The result is a highly sophisticated treatment of an altered state of consciousness.

At the start, the objective stance of the third-person narrator immediately eliminates the possibility that Lester is a living individual who is merely wandering around the real London in a state of shock. As the narrator confirms, the City in which she finds herself *is* unnaturally quiet. There *is* an absence of people and noise. Lester appears to be confused by her inability to remember the details of her past, but

there is no question that her mind is functioning rationally. Indeed, as the narrator suggests, rationality appears to be the cornerstone of her personality: she correctly deduces the truth about her situation from the evidence provided by her solitary state, her memory lapses, her recollection of the the plane flying overhead and her perception of the crash site, the abnormal lull in which she finds herself, and Richard's phantom-like appearance.

The knowledge that she is dead does not surprise Lester, for she intuitively knows that this is her condition. More importantly, she does not panic when she makes this discovery. The impression of rationality and self-control which she conveys is further heightened when she meets Evelyn. On the park bench, Lester is extremely rational, whereas Evelyn is highly irrational, talking compulsively to fill the silence around them. Unlike Lester, Evelyn does not find herself disassociated from her emotions—indeed, one may argue that in dying Evelyn has lost all powers of reasoning. Unable to master her terror, she continues to gabble hysterically until Lester tells her to be quiet—and then she collapses, “crying and chattering” (15).

Here, as throughout the text, Williams's omniscient narrator awards his or her reader a very privileged position. As a result, the reader is fully aware of the ironies involved in Lester and Evelyn's current relationship. In analyzing their relationship, Lester realises that “she had never really liked Evelyn, but Evelyn had been a habit, almost a drug, with which she had filled the spare hours” (15). Lester herself realises that before her death, her friendship with Evelyn was a matter of convenience for both. Evelyn needed someone to complain to; Lester needed someone about—who was not demanding—for company. After their deaths, their relationship

continues in the same manner. Lester's desire to silence Evelyn proceeds from selfishness. She finds Evelyn's chatter annoying. In the presence of her friend's "insensate babble," the practical Lester discovers that the silence of "death as death is preferable to death mimicking a foolish life" (15). Evelyn's attempt to escape the undeniable fact of her own death is certainly foolish. When Lester silences Evelyn's conversation, however, her practicality becomes as unattractive as Evelyn's hysterics. Unable to tolerate or sympathize with Evelyn's misery, Lester's self-absorption becomes simple cruelty. Because of her lack of compassion, Lester finds her attitude towards Evelyn reduced to its logical extreme: Evelyn's suffering becomes merely an objective fact; as she herself notes, "There was Evelyn crying and chattering; well, there was Evelyn crying and chattering. It was not a matter that seemed relevant" (15).

In *All Hallows' Eve*, characters function like a set of carefully constructed counter-balances: in short, as one character's fortunes rise, another's falls. For example, as Lester relinquishes her attachments to the living, Evelyn clings to them all the more desperately. This juxtaposition of narrative opposites does more than create narrative tension, however; it also emphasizes the problematic nature of knowledge that is Williams's central concern here. Evelyn's misery, for example, is meaningless as far as Lester is concerned, because she herself has not experienced it. As the narrative progresses, it becomes evident that experience itself is the basis of all knowledge. Thus, because his understanding is academic rather than personal, Simon really knows very little about the dead. Since he himself has not entered the City and experienced all its "possibilities," he assumes that death, even Christ's, is "a failure"

(120). Simon wishes to be immortal. Having “set himself to decline pain and ignorance,” however, he is unable to transcend his mortality. Like Lester at the beginning of the story, he, too, is trapped within the limits of his own consciousness: he has “not any capacities but those he could himself gain” (120).

Thus, when Simon meets Lester’s ghost, which appears as two shining eyes on Lady Wallingford’s staircase, he does not recognise her spirit as being human. Because of his limited experience in these matters he believes her to be “one of the lesser creatures of that other world . . . [which] came usually in the shapes of small monstrosities—things like rats or rabbits or monkeys or snakes, or even dwarfed vultures or large spiders and beetles” (124). And, when Lester moves up the stairs to Betty, Simon errs again, assuming that Lester’s being is “dissolved” at precisely the moment that she draws “nearer to the true life of that City,” because “the processes of redemption [are] hidden from him” (124). When one considers Simon’s faulty belief that he has summoned Lester, a deeper irony is indicated. At Lady Wallingford’s House, Lester becomes Betty’s rather than Simon’s guardian spirit. According to Mircea Eliade, tutelary and helping spirits, which function to help orient the individual in the magico-religious universe in which he or she finds him or herself, are accessible to any individual who is willing to undergo certain ordeals to attain them (107-08). Simon may appear to be “a fabulous ruler of the shadows” (121), but the true shaman in this text is the sorcerer’s humble apprentice who actually undertakes the journey to the netherworld of the City. Unlike Simon, Betty *has* experienced all of death’s “possibilities”: while carrying out Simon’s commands, she leaves behind her human condition. Like the shaman, Betty exits her body and

enters "the condition of the spirits." And when she returns from that condition, she triumphs over the condition of Death itself by re-integrating her body and spirit on the doorstep of Lady Wallingford's house.

Thus Lester, in Betty's presence, recognises "at once that a greater than she was here" (128). Aware that she herself is a mere initiate in these matters, she feels that "it was no wonder that she [Lester] had been sent here for help" (128). Unlike Betty, although she has died Lester is still unable to transcend the limits of her human consciousness. Lester's self-absorption is less extreme than Evelyn's, but the narrator emphasizes that because her consciousness is ego-centric, Lester is also one of "the damned" (89).

With the exception of Betty, every character in *All Hallows' Eve* is damned by his or her ego-centricity. Indeed, one might say that the tendency towards selfish self-interest is a natural feature of our fallen consciousness. Richard, for example, needs to "attend to himself" after his wife's death. Moreover, his egotism leads him to remember the small sacrifices which he made for Lester's happiness with "distaste." Here, the connection between *All Hallows' Eve* and a classic example of the dream vision comes into clear focus. When the narrator describes Richard's solitary self-indulgences as "*luxuria*, the quiet distilled *luxuria* of his wishes and habits, the delicate sweet lechery of idleness, the tasting of unhallowed peace" (99), he is echoing what Dante—according to Williams—learned in his underworld encounter with Paulo and Francesca.

In *The Figure of Beatrice*, Williams's analysis of this famous episode of *The Divine Comedy* is based on the premise that *luxuria* is "the first, tender, passionate,

and half-excusable consent of the soul to sin.” According to Williams, Francesca’s and Paolo’s love is not just the formal sin of their illicit sex. Self-absorbed in their adolescent passion, they refuse all the other possibilities of love. In doing so, they limit themselves to their own personal knowledge of love. And as a result, trapped within the carnal, physical nature of their love, the lovers “[shrink] from the adult love demanded of them and . . . [refuse] . . . the opportunity of glory”

(*Beatrice* 118).

In *The Inferno*, Dante uses the word *lussuria* to describe the nature of the lovers’ infatuation: as Williams points out, like *lussuria*, *luxuria* is “the old name” for lechery; significantly, the connotations which the word carries in Canto V are also found in *All Hallows’ Eve*. They are connotations of inordinate pleasure: luxury, self-indulgence, and self-yielding (118). As harmless as Francesca and Paolo’s *amour* seems to be, according to Williams, their self-indulgences mark the beginning of the spiritual descent. As Williams remarks, *lussuria* cannot stop at the moment of the lover’s delight in the image of the other, for the mutual result, he says, is “a hunger . . . set up in the human organism” (119). In *The Inferno*, therefore, over-indulgence is the beginning of spiritual perversion and, appropriately, the next circle which Dante discovers in his descent is inhabited by Gluttons.

In *All Hallows’ Eve*, Richard’s lazy moments of *luxuria* also herald a descent. Immediately after he engages in “the persistent parleying with . . . the sweet prolonged laziness” of self-love (as Williams phrases it in *The Figure of Beatrice* [118]), Richard considers his errand for his friend Jonathan “with the equal distaste” which he felt for his husbandly duties; he feels “sorry that Jonathan is not doing his

own errand. Jonathan could just as well as not; after all, it was Jonathan who wanted to marry Betty" (99). Not surprisingly, this selfishness renders Richard very vulnerable to Simon's powerful charisma, which promises every individual who comes to him that he or she is "different; not under law; particular" (113).

Thus, Richard is on the brink of a spiritual descent when he follows Simon's beetle-like followers—who have already fallen to the lowest rung of the Great Chain of Being—down a narrowing corridor to the room where the seance takes place. Moreover, he nearly becomes one of them. At the last moment, however, he realises that he is "being caught in something" and rouses himself out of the trance into which he and the others are being lulled by "sounds that control not only the living but the dead" (108). Thinking of his irritated wife, Richard finds that his conception of love is no longer limited to Simon's depiction of it as a perfect understanding between two people. As a result, he is again "'a poor thing but his own' . . . or at least not in the sway of the creature on the throne" (116). Although this suggests a return to a more limited and individual consciousness, Richard realises that the entranced have lost their individuality while attempting to assert their own individual importances as Simon's Chosen Few. Seeing Evelyn's shade, which has returned from the world of the dead to become Simon's servant, Richard intuitively recognises that "something obscene" is happening and that he is witnessing "the breach of spiritual law" (116). Again, Williams uses the dream vision to emphasize Richard's psychic condition. In *The Inferno*, Dante swoons after speaking with Francesca from the pit because of the horrifying nature of his experience; in *All Hallows' Eve*, Richard nearly faints from the "vileness" of the experience that he sees.

In *All Hallows' Eve*, ego-consciousness appears to be rooted in the body.

Unlike Richard, Evelyn is easily ensnared by Simon, because she has no desire to transcend the limits of her ego-consciousness. Indeed, one might argue that her only desire is to remain within those very limits, and thus she attempts to reverse what Williams's narrator terms "the processes of redemption" by descending the Great Chain of Being and seeking to return to the profane condition of the flesh. As the narrator notes, Evelyn wants nothing more than "to get back" to the world which she has left (177).

Thus, when she returns, Evelyn's condition is the essence of the profane: she behaves like an animal. Trapped within "the semi-bestiality" of her nature, she shuttles back and forth between Simon and Lester like a hound on a scent. Following "a kind of smell," her head is "stretched out" and her eyes are "bright." This compulsive behaviour is so meaningless, however, that even "her muddled and obsessed brain" manages to convince her that to continue this exercise "would not be satisfactory" (173).

At the root of Evelyn's bestial behaviour lies an insatiable appetite. Her gluttonous hunger for the condition of the flesh, Williams's narrator tells us, is a common experience for the newly dead, who "strongly desire to be healed of their loss and [made] whole." "When the hunger comes on them," the narrator says, "the blessed ones endure it smiling and easily, having such good manners that the time is no more to them than an unexpected delay before dinner at a friend's house" (200). Undoubtedly, therefore, Evelyn is not one of the "blessed." When Simon is creating a homonculus for her to inhabit, she can barely stand the wait, "looking at [it] with

such intensity and giving what [seem] to be little squeals of pleasure” in spite of its highly unappetizing appearance (195).

As Williams notes in *The Figure of Beatrice*, the hunger that *luxuria* generates reveals itself, in the end, as a debased appetite (119). In *All Hallows' Eve*, Evelyn's self-indulgent cravings are clearly unhealthy ones. The doll which Simon creates for her is scarcely palatable; even Lester, who is also subject to the cravings of the newly dead, finds “its spongy patches and the deadness of the apparent skin . . . faintly repellant” (195).

Evelyn's powerful craving for the flesh is accompanied by an equally strong appetite for power. Her seemingly innocuous propensity to gossip, for example, expresses more than simple curiosity. It reveals, in part, her need to control and victimize others. Her acquaintances are, like Simon's followers, “living spiritual food” (109). As the narrator remarks, to Evelyn, “the dwarf-woman” seems not only her “hope, a refuge from the emptiness and threats, a shelter from enmity and cold,” but also the means by which “presently she could get Betty . . . to be victimized,” and she herself thereby could be “content” (196).

Unlike Evelyn, Lester is not possessed by an appetite for power. Instead, she recognises its debased nature. Wandering the streets of the dead, Lester finds herself wishing that Richard was with her; as her lover, she feels, he should be a “prisoner with her, to her. If only he too would die and come!” Evelyn, no doubt, would consider this sentiment a perfectly natural expression of love. Having expressed her need, however, Lester falls into a “trance of horror at herself or at hell, or both, being one” (89).

In *The Figure of Beatrice*, Williams notes that, trapped within their own consciousnesses, the dead damn themselves; their punishments in *The Inferno* are, appropriately, limitations prescribed by their own consciousnesses. In *All Hallows' Eve*, Lester, who is highly self-conscious, not only recognises her desire to dominate Richard but also realises its frightening consequences. Unlike Evelyn, Lester knows that what she wants determines what she is—in short, that her needs determine the condition of her consciousness. She is able to escape the psychic limitations prescribed by such a need, however, because there had been “something like two lives in her single life—the gracious, passionate life of beauty and delight, and the hard, angry life of bitterness and hate” (136). Thus she had never been “a slave of the false luxuria,” for her ability to love had been bonded “always to another and not to herself” (214). As a result, when Betty joyously calls out the name of her lover, Jonathan, a part of Lester is able to respond.

Lester's ability to learn to love others unselfishly is the key to her spiritual initiation—indeed, one may argue that unselfish love is the crux of her experience. Betty's generous forgiveness of Lester's self-centred behaviour at boarding school is a simple act of “love-in-paradise” (132). Likewise, Lester's subsequent act of friendship re-creates the paradisiac condition; this act of friendship is what the narrator describes as the “first movement of re-edification in the City” which begins “the raising of the true houses and streets” (159).

Lester's unselfish impulse leads to her second experience of death: the dissolution of her own ego. Unlike Simon's followers who become the Clerk's creatures in exchange for an end to their suffering, Lester puts herself totally at

“Betty’s disposal”: she exists only “in that single act” (158). In doing so, she moves outside the limits of her own consciousness, for she suffers “instead of Betty, as Betty had once suffered through her” (164). As Lester’s act of substitution illustrates, exceeding one’s ego-centric limitation is more than a matter of generosity; governed by the law of mutual exchange in *All Hallows’ Eve*, spiritual initiation demands that for every action there must be an equal and opposite reaction. This is so even in the magical arts. For example, Simon knows that in order to draw Lester from the world of the dead, he must send “one into that world” because “there must be no impropriety in numbers” (108).

This law which demands that a balance must be struck between this world and the next is reflected in the framework of the text itself. Thus, as Evelyn becomes increasingly selfish, Lester becomes increasingly generous—providing a counterbalancing action which creates the dramatic tension between these two characters. Because of Williams’s use of omniscient narration, this oscillation between Evelyn and Lester encourages readers to move among their compartmentalized consciousnesses—endowing them with the ability to escape their limited personalities. In short, Williams’s narrative technique enables the reader, unlike the characters, to know all. Unlike Simon and Lady Wallingford, for example, the reader is aware of Lester’s presence in Betty’s bedroom. Unlike Richard, the reader knows that Simon’s offer to summon Lester from the dead is not the result of altruism, but that it derives from the possibility that “Richard’s mind might hold precisely that still vital junction and communication with the dead which might offer” the sorcerer “a double magical link with infinity” (109). Throughout the text, the reader is even privileged to

information that Lester, being dead, should know but does not. Lester regards Richard as a "difficult obnoxious adorable creature" (137), but the reader knows that Richard is actually neither difficult nor obnoxious.

Although Williams's narrator thus supports and even encourages the reader's omniscience, *All Hallows' Eve* is not designed to allow the reader to roam freely about. Like Simon's, the narrative voice is extremely compelling. Unlike Simon, whose hypnotic voice seduces "the subrational components of the flesh" (108), however, Williams's narrator carefully qualifies his statements, providing the reader with useful information about the nature of the psychic phenomena encountered. The narrator also voices opinions about the characters themselves which the reader can interpret in different ways: for example, according to the narrator, Simon's followers, which are "a miserable retinue" (251). In this context, the narrator uses *miserable* to mean *pitiable*, but the word may also be read as *disgusting*. Rather than capitivating the reader, the narrator shapes the reader's perceptions of the text by interpreting and commenting on the action. In doing so, the narrator performs the same function as Virgil in *The Inferno*.

In fact, Williams's third-person narrator could arguably be a resurrected Virgil, for like Dante, the reader is guided through the text by a ghost-like presence (the narrator cannot be seen, only heard), who is not only familiar with and knowledgeable about the workings of the City and "the processes of redemption," but who is also an authority on the magical arts. Indeed, the third-person narrator has the knowledge of an adept. When Simon fails in his effort to send Betty to the world of the dead, Williams's speaker comments, "there is no rule more wise in magic than

that which bids the adept, if the operation go awry break it off at once . . . when the Clerk saw before him the two shapes, he should have made an end" (165).

As Sayers points out, during the Middle Ages, Virgil was known not only as "the Great White Magician" whose virtue gave him power over the dead, but also as an unconscious prophet of Christianity who could be used, as Dante did in *The Inferno*, to awaken the soul "to a realisation of its own sinfulness, and . . . thereafter accompany and assist it towards that state of natural perfection in which it is again open to receive the operation of Divine Grace" (67). Because of the strong resonances of *The Inferno* in *All Hallows' Eve*, it is tempting to regard Williams's narrator as such a prophet. Indeed, the narrator's biblical turn of mind—which is revealed in its increasing references to Lester's "glory" (215) and to Christian saints, martyrs, confessors, as well as to the process of spiritual rebirth immediately seem to identify the narrator as a proselyte. However, as Jonathan realises, the drama which unfolds lies outside the jurisdiction of the Church. Jonathan considers "seeking out a priest," but he realises that a priest would be ineffectual given the circumstances. In *All Hallows' Eve*, matters of the psyche go beyond religious denomination: "no priest could command Simon; nor exorcise Lester; nor enliven Betty." As the narrative progresses it becomes evident that any action that can be taken falls to the individual psyche. As the narrator remarks, "it was left to them" (145).

As the narrator's biblical phrases suggest, dramatic irony in *All Hallows' Eve* is not merely a matter of awakening the reader to a realisation of the limitations of the ego-consciousness, but more importantly to the spiritual possibilities contained within the psyche itself. Throughout the text, the reader's privileged position results in his

or her being able to see two things at once. Unlike Simon who sees imperfectly, the reader is able to view clearly both the physical bodies of the living and the visionary bodies of the dead. As a result, the reader recognises early on what most of Williams's characters do not discover until much later in the narrative: that the true nature of the psyche involves what Mircea Eliade would term the co-existence of the profane and the sacred.

Thus, throughout *All Hallows' Eve*, the narrator's use of religious diction should be seen, I believe, as a technique for encouraging the reader's "double-sightedness." On the one hand, the voice asserts the reality of the sacred, while on the other hand, its assertion can be regarded as an attempt on Williams's part to make such a magico-religious reality a part of the phenomenal world. Like Lester's transcendent vision of a London in which "the streets of today" mingle with "a village of huts and men in skins," the reader's vision of the text itself is that of an unorthodox double drama which conflates the dead and the living, the sacred and the profane, Heaven and Earth. It would therefore be appropriate to see the speaker in this text as Sayers does Virgil in *The Inferno*: like Virgil, this speaker is an unconscious prophet, not, of course, of Christianity, but of "what every religion in the world professes to believe"—the operation of the supernatural in the natural world (xv).

Throughout *All Hallows' Eve*, Williams's omniscient narrative strategy, which warns the reader against the mistake of over-valuing the profane world, identifies ego-consciousness as the normal condition of the modern individual. To a greater or lesser extent, every character in *All Hallows' Eve*—the dead and the alive—are

trapped within their own ego-consciousnesses, unable to see fully the magico-religious reality of the world. As the narrator continually points out, however, the frightening limitations of the ego-consciousness are not the only concern of this text. A specialist in "spiritual matters," the narrator knows that there also exist the limitless possibilities of the psyche which are revealed in the process of Lester's dying: possibilities of psychic renewal which the narrator identifies as the "spring of the world, spring of the heart; joy of spring-water, joy" (164). And having been initiated into the secrets of psychic renewal with Lester, the reader at the end of *All Hallows' Eve* experiences this joy as well.

## Endnotes

1. The critical climate surrounding Charles Williams's *All Hallow's Eve* is created by Christian critics and New Critical thinkers. For Christian critiques of this text see Angela Sailer Anderson's "The Nature of the City: Visions of the Kingdom and its Saints in Charles Williams' *All Hallows' Eve*," Bernadette Bosky's "Grace and Goetia: Magic and Forced Compensation in *All Hallows' Eve*," and Marlene Marie McKinley's "To Live From a New root: The Uneasy Consolation of *All Hallow's Eve*." For New Critical treatments of Williams's literary debts in *All Hallow's Eve*, see Donald G. Keesee's "Spectres of T.S. Eliot's City in the Novels of Charles Williams" and George Reynolds's "Dante and Williams: Pilgrims in Purgatory."

*Chapter Six**The Epic Mode in Psycho-narration: The Once and Future King*

Because of its phylogenic nature, the psyche harbours ancestral traditions and taboos. In psycho-narration, these traditions and taboos are expressed by the protagonists' actions, which are often fashioned after the exemplary acts of a god or mythic hero. As such, the actions of protagonists in psycho-narratives constitute what Eliade terms mythical behaviour: the attempt to re-integrate oneself with primordial time by imitating an exemplary pattern (*Myths* 31). Of course, the particular god or mythic hero on whom the individual bases his or her behaviour depends a great deal on the needs of each protagonist's psyche. Psycho-narratives which are primarily concerned with the workings of the adolescent psyche, for example, draw heavily on the conventions of the hero which are derived from primitive oral traditions associated with tribal expansion and warfare. The connection between the adolescent psyche and warfare is a long standing one which stretches back to the military initiations of the secret male societies of early Europe. In proto-historical Europe, the warrior was not only a killer of dragons and heroes, he was also the killer of men. In order to take on the responsibilities of being a man, the neophyte had to kill a man to learn the true dimensions of existence. In proto-historical Europe, Eliade points out, the heroic duel

was “a sacrifice”; war, he contends, is “a decadent ritual in which a holocaust of innumerable victims is offered up to the gods of victory” (*Myths* 200).

Since the time of Gilgamesh, the epic has been the most popular literary expression of the young male’s military initiation. According to Jung, the epic hero is a figure of great national and even cosmic importance, who undertakes a quest to vanquish “evil in the form of dragons, serpents, demons and so on” in order to liberate his people from destruction and death (“Unconscious” 68). And since the time of Gilgamesh, the epic hero has served as an exemplary model for adolescents whether he be a god, a legendary figure, or a historical personage. As Eliade notes, the heroic mythology of the European adolescent is continually enriched by characters in tales of adventure, heroes of war, or screen favourites (*Myths* 33). In North America, the hero also remains a best-seller on the bookshelves and at the box-office.

Whether they are written for the European or the North American audience, however, psycho-narratives which draw on epic conventions do much more than merely initiate the adolescent into the secrets of his or her culture; they reveal the psychic condition of adolescence. Moreover, in these texts, the figure of the culture-hero is not what the adolescent or the adolescent imagination expects it to be: a “reassuring and numinous companion,” guaranteed to resolve any cultural crisis (Wilner 33).

*The Once and Future King* by T.H. White is an interesting example of a psycho-narrative in which the protagonist is himself an epic figure. A re-visioning of Malory’s *Morte d’Arthur*, *The Once and Future King* is a tetralogy which chronicles the life and times of Arthur Pendragon.<sup>1</sup> The first book, “The Sword in The Stone”

establishes Arthur's hero-worshipping nature as Sir Ector's ward and Kay's foster-brother, the Wart, in the Forest Sauvage. The second book, "The Queen of Air and Darkness" examines the origins of Arthur's family tragedy and identifies the avenging function of the culture-hero as its central problem; despite good intentions, the young king cannot escape his fate: a series of heroic misadventures culminates in Mordred's birth. The third book, "The Ill-Made Knight," examines the problematic nature of a knight errant, tracing Sir Lancelot's career as the Best Knight in the World and his ill-fated love affair with Guenevere. And the fourth book, "The Candle in the Wind" depicts Lancelot and Guenevere's betrayal of Arthur, their trial, Mordred's attempted coup, the destruction of the Round Table, and Arthur's final realisation that the heroic rituals of Knighthood and Epic Warfare do not—and, indeed, cannot—make Might Right.

White's treatment of the Round Table in this book suggests that, given the nature of the individual human psyche, the imitation of past heroes does not help correct, but only serves to imbalance one's personality. As the third person narrator points out, Force is "the mental illness of humanity" which the conventions of warfare seem to exacerbate (626). Arthur's Table is presented in earlier books as a progressive step designed to counter the aggressiveness of human nature. At the end of his life, however, the old king realises that he has not succeeded in changing mankind for the better; instead, "as the might of the individual [seemed] to have been curbed, the Principle of Might had sprung up behind him in another shape . . . he had conquered murder . . . to be faced with war" (626-27).

Although Arthur understands at last the problem involved in using the epic hero as an exemplary model, for adolescents like Kay and the Wart the knight errant is the culture-hero of choice. A "born hero-worshipper" (12), the Wart wants nothing more than to be a hero himself. Appropriately, the story of Arthur's rise to kingship begins with a quest and with his meeting a knight who inspires him to want to become one himself. Due to White's ironic treatment of the epic journey and the culture-hero in this text, however, neither this quest nor this knight can be considered, by any stretch of the imagination, exemplary models of heroic behaviour. Even before the Wart ventures into the Forest Sauvage, his quest is emptied of its heroic significance. Unlike the Wart, the reader knows that this particular adventure ranks below the Castle's haymaking as a priority, and Sir Ector even has to tie "a knot in his handkerchief to remember to start a quest for a tutor" (10).

Thus, when the Wart embarks on his adventure, one does not expect him to slay dragons, rescue virgins, or find a fabulous treasure—especially since the Wart's motivation rests on the matter of personal responsibility rather than some abstract notion of chivalry. Unable to recover a goshawk which escapes because of improper handling, Kay, Sir Ector's heir, stomps home in a temper. The fault lies not with himself but with the hawk, he claims. The Wart, however, cannot return to the Castle, because, having lost Hob's hawk, he cannot bear "the look of reproach which would be in the falconer's eye, after all he had tried to teach them" (16).

Being lost in the Forest Sauvage is such an unheroic state of affairs that the Wart does not realise that he has been involved in any sort of a quest until Merlin points this fact out to him. In "The Sword in the Stone," being lost seems to be a condition

of the quest itself. King Pellinore, whom the Wart meets on his way to Merlyn's cottage, is also lost in the woods. Indeed, as a professional knight errant, Pellinore has been lost for a much longer period of time than the Wart: the past seventeen years have been spent chasing the Questing Beast, and all this time he has been lost.

At first, Pellinore appears to be a conventional culture-hero. When the Wart finds himself in full armour "mounted on an enormous white horse" in a moonlit glade, for example, the boy believes Pellinore to be "the most beautiful thing that he had ever seen in his short life . . . too beautiful to be described" (19-20). What promises to be a numinous experience, however, soon becomes the ridiculous. Pellinore is not at all "terrible" but terrified; when the Wart asks him which way is home, the King is so startled that he nearly falls off his horse while bleating like a "sheep"—a "muffled baaa" is emitted through "his visor" (20).

Clearly, questing is very different from the romanticised, popular image that most people have of it. According to Pellinore, who proceeds to wallow in a snuffling sea of self-pity, the adventures of the knight-errant amount to nothing more than having "nowhere to sleep, [and] never knowing where you are. Rheumatism in the winter, sunstroke in the summer." The actual experience which underlies the romantic appearance of the knight in full armour is an equally unpleasant one: "all this horrid armour takes hours to put on," Pellinore whines, "When it is on it's either frying or freezing, and it gets rusty. You have to sit up all night polishing the stuff" (23). Even the requirements of his personal quest are unattractive: Pellinore dutifully carries samples of the Questing Beast's fewmets with him, even though he knows that it is an "unsanitary habit and quite pointless"—"there is only one Beast,"

he says, "You know, so there can't be any question whether she is warrantable or not" (21). Reflecting on his miserable existence, Pellinore declares that he would trade his quest for the bourgeois pleasure of having "a nice bed with a nice pillow and a nice sheet" (23).

When the Beast appears, however, Pellinore immediately forgets the small value that he has just placed on the quest and chases after the animal. When one reflects on the nature of Pellinore's quest, one must agree with Merlin that the Norman aristocracy's fascination with heroic adventure can be attributed only to the fact that they are either "games-mad" or extremely simple-minded. Merlin appears to be correct when he complains to the Wart that "Sir Ector would have been gladder to get a by-our-lady tilting blue for your tutor that swings himself along on his knuckles like an anthropoid ape, rather than a magician of known probity and international reputation with first-class honours from every European university" (57). In the first book of *The Once and Future King*, knighthood is presented as a matter of farce. Sir Grummore and King Pellinore demonstrate this during their joust. Walloping each other on the head in turn for over half an hour, they become "like toy people who saw wood on Christmas trees" (65).

Overall, the heroic nature of epic adventure and adventurers seems to belong more to a fabulous past than to the Wart's present. As Sir Grummore Grummurson remarks over a glass of port, quests simply are not what they used to be: giants "never seem to kill nowadays." Sir Ector makes a useful distinction for the reader here: heroism is a condition which does not belong to a culture's history, but to an individual's youth: "we kill all our giants cubbin'" (9).

In "The Sword in the Stone," the desire to be a hero is one that belongs primarily to the text's adolescents, and in the adults, this desire is the trademark of an immature imagination. When the Wart tells Lyo-lyok that he likes fighting because "it is knight," she observes that the Wart is attracted to the idea of knighthood, "because [he is] a baby" (168). And in the text, knighthood does appear to be, at times, a case of arrested development rather than a rite of adulthood. During their joust, for example, Sir Grummore and King Pellinore, both middle-aged men, transform what was once an earnest act into a sort of child's play. They behave like school boys, jeering at and bullying one another. Later in the text, Arthur's knights also exhibit this juvenile quality. As White's narrator points out, "there was something childish about [the Orkney brothers] when they were together"; he immediately qualifies this statement, adding that this childishness is "attractive rather than otherwise. Perhaps there was something childish about all the paladins of Arthur's story if being simple is childish" (519).

The attractiveness to which the narrator refers lies in the knights' simple insistence that human nature is perfectible: a belief which the narrator ascribes to the young or the truly young at heart. Arthur's attempt to institute an outlet for what "Merlin calls the fox-hunting spirit" is an effort to improve the human condition by binding his knights "to strike only on the belief of what is good, to defend virgins against Sir Bruce and to restore what has been done wrong in the past and to help the oppressed and so forth" (244, 245). In short, the order of Chivalry prevents Arthur's paladins from acquiring that "seventh sense" which enables "middle-aged people" to "balance between God and breaking all the commandments without difficulty" (374).

By obeying rules which are clear cut and constant, the knight lives instead "by seeking the truth" (374). As a result, he continues to regard life as a young person would— "as a serious problem with which [he is] intimately and passionately concerned" (375).

As Eliade points out, "the copying of . . . archetypes [in this case, the archetype of the epic hero] portrays a certain discontent with one's own personal history: an obscure striving to transcend one's local time, provincial history, and recover some 'Great Time' or other" (*Myths* 33). Without exception, the Norman aristocracy of the Forest Sauvage in "The Sword in the Stone" are all infected with this sort of discontent. After Uther Pendragon's death, for example, a tournament is held to determine who will be the next king. Kay begs his father to take him to the tournament in London so that he "may bear away the prize of all, in [his] maiden fight." His request is motivated by his need to transcend his provincial condition. When Ector protests, Kay persuades him to change his mind by appealing to his father's vanity: according to Kay, people "will say that Sir Ector's family was too vulgar and knew it had no chance." Ironically, Kay's ambitions to transcend his station in life strike a familiar chord in Pellinore, who has already been crowned a King. When Kay, Sir Ector, Sir Grummore, and Pellinore jump into action "as one man," the only King among them exclaims, "Why shouldn't I be as good a man as my father?" (197).

Impelled by the impulse to improve one's condition, the youthful optimism which underpins Chivalry seems to be a good thing at first. However, as the narrator points out at the conclusion of the novel, "Chivalry and justice [become] a child's illusions,

if the stock on which [it is grafted is] the Thrasher . . . homo ferox instead of homo sapiens" (628). Had man been capable of perfection, Arthur's notion of The Round Table would surely have instituted a Golden Age in Britain. When the King looks back at his reign, however, he realizes that he had been "struggling to dam a flood, which, whenever he had checked it, had broken through at a new place, setting him his work to do again" (627).

In short, the epic action of The Round Table in the last three books of *The Once and Future King* rests on a bitter irony. While implementing his "theory that killing people, and being a tyrant over them [is] wrong," Arthur finds "himself up to his elbows in blood" (361). "In an effort to impose a world of peace," "a kind, conscientious, peace-loving fellow" becomes a benevolent tyrant—benevolent, but a tyrant nonetheless. As a result, the adventures of his paladins dramatize the psychic imbalance which they are instructed to correct: the need to dominate others. Lancelot's first quest is a prime example of this problem. The first knight whom he challenges is a member of "the old school" (351). In the case of Sir Turquine, who embodies "the conservative ethics of Force Majeure against which the king had started his crusade" (352), Might does make Right: his castle is "a sort of concentration camp" in which he "spends the time beating his [sixty-four captives] with thorns" (347). Ironically, Lancelot's chivalrous behaviour becomes no better than Turquine's, for in the end, Force Majeure decides the issue. Turquine will "not yield," so Lancelot is forced to kill him (351).

As the quest continues, it becomes evident that imposing social order on people does not change human nature. More importantly, it does not change the nature of

the individual law-enforcer. When Lancelot cannot persuade Bedivere to treat his wife mercifully, he reverts to the solution of Force. Finding "the lady sitting beside him with no head on," he says, "I shall kill you for that." In the end, however, he is compelled to spare Bedivere because of the "cruelty and cowardice" in his own "heart" (357).

Not surprisingly, Arthur finds his strategy of re-channelling Force into the activities of The Round Table unsuccessful. The Round Table does not correct its culture's psychic imbalance by its good example. It merely serves to alter the angle of the imbalance by a few degrees. Contained within the dicta of civilised behaviour, Force expresses itself as one of civilised humanity's neuroses—sportsmanship. As Arthur points out, "Merlin always said that sportsmanship was the curse of the world, and so it is. All the knights are making a fetish of [my scheme]. They are turning it into a competitive thing" (362).

Here, the old adage certainly holds true: the more things change, the more they remain the same. Arthur's scheme to put an end to the activities of baronial anarchists like Sir Bruce Sans Pitie results only in more of the same activity on another scale: the violence inherent in human nature expresses itself psychologically rather than physically. As Eleanor Wilner points out, in unbearable crisis situations, culture innovators contrive new social forms and new symbolism to keep all men in the society from going individually insane; the result of the new normality, however, is actually a monstrous pathology (23). In *The Once and Future King*, this pathology is what Merlin calls "Games-Mania"; according to Arthur, someone infected with

this mania “gossips and nags and hints and speculates about who unseated whom last, and who has rescued the most virgins, and who is the best knight of the Table” (362).

Recognising that Games-Mania is a symptom of a psychic illness, “the first sign of fester” (429), Arthur attempts to correct the situation by giving Might “a channel so it [works] for God instead of the rights of Man.” He attempts to re-define the nature of the epic quest by turning it into a spiritual adventure: “Why if all our knights—one hundred and fifty men, all specialists in questing, like detectives—if all our knights were to turn their energies to the quest for things which belonged to God—why, we might find hundreds and hundreds of things which would be of huge value . . . . We might find the spear which killed our Lord!” (431).

As an attempt to discover evidence of the supernatural functioning in the natural world, the Quest for the Spear which killed Christ is not a successful exercise. No one can verify the news of supernatural events brought back to Camelot by knights returning from the Grail Quest: stories of “ships which moved of their own power, silver tables on which strange Masses had been said, spears which flew through the air, visions of bulls and thorn trees, demons in old tombs, [and] kings and hermits who had been living for four hundred years.” Moreover, these experiences leave the knights who found them more psychically unstable than before. “All these men,” the narrator says, “looked worn and confused. Their faces were fanatical, and they babbled of dreams” (433). For some, what was a simple neurosis has become a full-blown galloping psychosis—dissociation from the world in which they live.

Only three knights, Galahad, Percivale, and Bors, complete the Grail Quest and find the Chalice; ironically, they, unlike the others, are able to do so because they alone are capable of transcending the condition of knighthood itself. Lionel remarks that the Quest for the Grail is actually an initiation process for the priesthood. As his story illustrates, Might is a form of madness which denies the more conservative quester any experience of self-transformation. Bors is allowed to find the Grail because he refuses to use Force. His weapon instead is "passive resistance" (444).

Thus, knights like Lionel, who embody the conservative ethics of Force Majeure, find nothing at all during their quests. Gawaine's case in particular illustrates the pointlessness of attempting to use Might during a spiritual adventure: as far as Gawaine is concerned "what happened was that I wasted eighteen months and mair forbye in seeking footless for adventure—and ended up half deid with what ye name concussion. May God praesairve me from the Holy Grail" (433).

Clearly, the nature of the warrior-hero is unsuited to the task which Arthur set before it, since as an upholder of Law and Order, the knight is necessarily concerned with the phenomenal world and not the psychological. Indeed, therein also lies this figure's attractiveness. As the Wart points out, the perks of knighthood are purely profane: he tells Badger, "I should have liked to go to war, if I could have been made a knight, I should have liked the banners and the trumpets, the flashing armour and the glorious charges. And, oh, I should have liked to do great deeds, and be brave, and conquer my own fear" (193). During the Grail Quest, Lancelot, the Best Knight in the World, meets a hermit who reminds him that the sacred and secular are two separate estates, and that in order to attain the former, he must leave the latter

behind: as Lancelot informs Arthur and Guenever, "it [is] not enough in the Quest for the Grail, to be continent and to refrain from killing people. All boasting and pride of the world has to be left behind, for God [does] not like such deeds in his quest" (462). Although he has been instructed to "renounce all earthly glory," even Lancelot is unable to do so during his quest and is barred from participating in the Mass which Galahad, Percivale, and Bors attend.

Arthur realises that Lancelot's story, in particular, illustrates the terrible contradiction that a spiritual adventure of this kind holds for the common man or woman; he sees Lancelot's quest for the Grail as the performance of an earthly man plodding along behind three supernatural virgins: as a form of "doomed, courageous, vain toil" (466). In the end, Arthur concludes that the Grail Quest, too, has "been a failure, because those who achieved the Quest had become perfect and had been lost to this world, while those who had failed in it had soon returned no better" (627).

In *The Once and Future King*, the average knight-errant is not only unsuited for the task of self-transformation, but he is also unable to affect social transformation. At first, war, one of the rituals prescribed by the hero myth, does seem to be the first step of a process by which society may be able to transcend its condition. As Arthur concludes, however, war is not a matter of transformation. Instead as Eleanor Wilner suggests, war is the "re-organization of what already exists—that is the old elements remain while their relationship to one another shifts" (21). Arthur realises that society needs "a new start," but he despairs of ever finding a way to make one: men "were always to rebuild such a new world as was never seen, but they had not the practical ability. They did not know the way to choose the right materials" (630).

Ironically, the crux of this problem seems to be the culture-hero himself. A culture which reveres the warrior-hero must necessarily realign itself in terms of the hero myth on which it is based. War therefore is a necessary albeit a “decadent ritual,” as Eliade suggests (*Myths* 200). Indeed, it may be argued that in such a culture the normal social condition is a state of war. Lancelot presents this to Guenever as a causal chain: “even if we gave ourselves up, Bors and Ector and the rest would carry on the feud—if we were killed. There are a hundred extra feuds on foot, for those we killed in the market-place and on the stairs, and for things through the half century of Arthur’s past. Soon I would not be able to hold them, even as it is. Hebes le Renoumes, Villiers Le Valiant, Urre of Hungary; they would begin avenging us, and everything would be worse. Urre is horribly grateful” (588-89).

Throughout this text, White’s treatment of the epic adventurer and his adventure is diagnostic rather than prescriptive: that is to say, White uses the hero figure to identify the problem rather than to offer a solution. The knight and his quest do not succeed in purging the world of its problems. Indeed, the Code of Chivalry seems only to create a series of similar disasters. As Lionel points out, “a moral man who insists on doing the right thing all the time” will inevitably create “a tangle which an angel couldn’t get out of” (439). With over two hundred men behaving in this fashion, the inevitable implications of such activities are truly frightening. Guenever aptly remarks that civilisation itself “seems to have become insane” (589).

As Sylvia Warner Townsend points out in her introduction to *The Book of Merlyn*, the Second World War was White’s primary concern while writing *The Once and Future King*. Towards the end of writing *The Once and Future King*, White

suddenly discovered that “the central theme of the *Morte d'Arthur* is to find an antidote to war” (*Merlyn* xxvi). Moreover, White believed that he had found that cure in *The Book of Merlyn*. He immediately incorporated new material into *The Once and Future King* to make his discovery “seem less sudden” before sending the four books of the tetralogy and *The Book of Merlyn* off to his publisher. When *The Once and Future King* was published in 1958, however, *The Book of Merlyn* was not included. Nevertheless, when one examines the conclusion of *The Once and Future King*, it becomes apparent that this text contains White’s antidote to war as well, for the reader is directed back to the beginning of the tetralogy. As in *The Book of Merlyn*, in which the King visits his boyhood friends, “the wheel is come full circle” (*Merlyn* 4).

When one turns from “The Candle in the Wind” to “The Sword in the Stone,” there is an alternative culture-hero waiting to be discovered: the Wart. At first, the Wart seems to be an unlikely candidate for such a role. In spite of being the son of Uther Pendragon, the Wart lacks the stature of the warrior-hero. Instead, he is “a born follower” (12). Throughout “The Sword in the Stone,” there is nothing extraordinary about him at all: he remains “stupid, fond of Kay, and interested in birds” (177). He also spends his spare time in the kennels in a very unheroic manner—licking his favourite dog’s nose.

According to Jung, when a conflict situation offers no way out, the figure of the “child” often appears as the irrational third (*Psyche* 134): in *The Once and Future King*, the Wart is such a figure. During his unusual education, the Wart becomes what Jung terms “a bringer of light” by enlarging not only his own, but also the

reader's, consciousness. He does so by personifying the elements of Nature.

According to Jung, the irrational third embodies "vital forces quite outside the limited range of our conscious minds . . . ways and possibilities of which our one-sided conscious mind knows nothing; a wholeness which embraces the very depths of Nature" (*Psyche* 135).

In a series of adventures set in the environs of Sir Ector's castle, the Wart becomes "everything in the world, animal, vegetable, protozoa or virus" (72). During these adventures, the Wart particularly befriends animals. As Eliade points out, friendship with the animals and knowledge of their language belong to the paradisaic syndrome; as the Wart's education continues, it becomes clear that the experience of this friendship takes him "out of the general condition of 'fallen' humanity and enables him to re-enter the *illud tempus* described to us by the paradisiac myths" (*Myths* 63).

While a child, the Wart lives in a medieval paradise of the Pre-Raphaelite variety: the Forest Sauvage is filled with "knights walloping each other on the helm, and . . . unicorns in the silvery moonlight [stamping] their silvery feet." The greatest marvel of all, however, is the temperate English weather:

. . . in the spring, the little flowers [come] out obediently in the meads, and the dew [sparkles], and the birds [sing]. In the summer, it [is] beautifully hot for no less than four months, and, if it [does] rain just enough for agricultural purposes, they [manage] to arrange it so that it [rains] while you are in bed. In the autumn, the leaves [flame] and [rattle] before the West Winds . . . And in the

winter, which [is] confined by statute to two months, the snow [lies] evenly, three feet thick, but never turns to slush. (135)

In this Edenic England, the Wart is like the English weather. He is the ideal child: humble, shy, gentle, generous, unassuming, trusting, and very even-tempered. Appropriately, his character traits are very similar to those of Percivale, who succeeds in finding the Grail. Like the Wart, Percivale is also “fond of animals . . . and knows how to get on with them,” befriending a lion during his quest (445). According to Aglovale, Percivale is allowed to find the Grail because he is “perfectly innocent” (450). The innocence which one associates with childhood is a prerequisite for the process of self-transformation which the Grail Quest represents. As Arthur notes, there is no reason why people should not “stumble into heaven, just as well climb there” (450). In “The Sword in the Stone,” this innocence is characterized by “the joy of life” that the Wart experiences during his boyhood (128).

According to Eliade, intimacy with animals results in a bliss and spontaneity that is unattainable in profane every day situations (63). Based on the principle of *experiencing* the world of Nature, the Wart’s adventures are *ecstatic* ones. During his “dream times,” like a shaman, he incorporates into his psyche the animals which he meets. Consequently, when he attempts to remove Excalibur from its resting place, “hundreds of old friends” appear—among them badgers, owls, wild geese, fishes, dogs, and hedgehogs—“the lovers and helpers of the Wart” (203). During his adventures, the Wart speaks to his animal friends in the manner of Adam, the “Master of Animals” (191). Later, integrating what he has learned, he becomes the King of England. As an individual, he cannot pull the Sword from the stone, but

because he embodies the most outstanding qualities of the Dominion over which he is master, he draws Excalibur from the anvil "as gently as from a scabbard" (204).

In *The Once and Future King*, the Wart represents what Jung defines as "the strongest urge in every being, namely, the urge to realize itself" (*Psyche* 136). Thus his quests are necessarily different from the epic adventures of The Round Table. Unlike the knight's adventures, which enable the spirit to conquer matter by imposing Order on an unordered world, the child's journeys allow the Wart to discover the Order which already exists—and his place in it. As a result, the Wart succeeds where one hundred and forty-seven specialists in questing fail; unlike theirs, his journey integrates the sacred and the profane.

In order to express this integration, White uses a device familiar to Malory's audiences—the dream quest. In *The Once and Future King*, the Wart's journeys reveal the condition of his consciousness in terms of the natural world. The process of the Wart's psychic growth is rather like reading a bestiary, since the animals that he befriends each metaphorically represent a stage of his development. The Wart's education begins with the Pike, who professes "power" (50); the Hawks then teach him the nature of courage; the Ants sicken him with their "belligerence" (119); and the Wild Geese delight him with their wisdom. His final journey, the visit to Badger, is "just the thing to top off an education": as Badger says, "study birds and fish and animals. Then finish off with Man" (189).

As Badger points out, Man may have "the Order of Dominion" and may be "the mightiest of the animals," but he no longer retains their friendship: "even if Sir Ector was to go for a walk beside a river, not only would the birds fly from him and

the beasts run away from him, but the very fish would swim to the other side. They don't do this for each other" (192). In short, Man as Master has become a tyrant in the paradise in which he lives.

According to Badger, Man, however, remains "eternally undeveloped" (191). Thus, life for Man, unlike that of the animals, is an on-going process of development during which he acquires self-knowledge which allows for the psychic integration, the return to Paradise, which the quester seeks. As a child, the Wart succeeds in integrating the components of his psyche, achieving his potential, and experiencing the "extraordinary" (202). He finds as an adult, however, that he must do so again. As Merlin says, learning is "heartbreaking, uphill work" (218). In Arthur's case, learning is indeed heart-breaking work, because he chooses to use the epic hero as a model in his experiment of social transformation. Why does he make such an unsuitable choice? At the end of the text, White's narrator suggests that Arthur behaves as he did because no other model was available to him. In short, as an adult, he forgot the transformatory experience which he underwent as a child. When Merlin asks Arthur if he remembers "anything about the magic he had when he was small," Arthur replies that all he can remember was that he was interested in "birds and beasts" (283). This forgetfulness proves to be his undoing. Having forgotten what Paradise was like, Arthur turns to the profane world for examples to imitate. In doing so, he is condemned to imitate the hero figure and to repeat its history. In part, Merlin himself is responsible for the ensuing disaster: he has taught his pupil to believe that mimesis, "imitation (*μιμείδω*) before action will save mankind" (*Merlyn*

172); he did not impress on him the importance of the model which one chooses to mimic.

Because the Wart, as a child, achieves what Arthur, the adult, cannot, by the conclusion of "The Sword in the Stone" it is apparent that imitating the epic hero serves only to reduce the psychic tension created by a culture's disequilibrium. This is, at best, a stop-gap measure, for Arthur does not succeed in liberating his people from death and destruction. In order to effect any sort of radical social change and finally render the notion of war obsolete, one must experience self-transformation, not mere imitation.

The experience of self-transformation is the result of self-knowledge. In *The Book of Merlyn*, the Wart's tutor introduces the following poem by Confucius as a possible model for his student:

In order to propagate virtue to the world, one  
must first rule one's country.

In order to rule one's country, one must first  
rule one's family.

In order to rule one's family, one must first  
regulate one's body by moral training.

In order to regulate one's body, one must first  
regulate one's mind.

In order to regulate one's mind one must first be  
sincere in one's intentions.

In order to be sincere in one's intentions, one

must first increase one's knowledge.

(172-73)

In *The Once and Future King*, White's narrator puts the matter to the reader more simply: education, he says, is the key to self-transformation. The hope of making the world a place "without boundaries between the nations who sit to feast there" lies "in culture," he says; "if people could be persuaded to read and write, not just eat and make love, there [is] still a chance" (637). Education is the process by which one achieves self-transformation, but as White also makes clear education must be re-defined. Reading, writing, and reason have little or nothing to do with the process of the psyche's metamorphosis. In *The Once and Future King*, a different kind of education accomplishes this process: the sort which Merlin provides the Wart. In Sir Ector's moat, self-knowledge is not the result of reading, it is the result of experience.

As attractive as this idea is, White has overlooked the root of this problem: small boys, after all, do grow up and become men. Even after the horrors of the Second World War, the ritual of war remains a central feature of the masculine adolescent's initiation into manhood. *The Once and Future King*, however, reveals the debased nature of this ritual and offers its reader an alternative avenue by which to transform the psyche: the route that is illustrated during the Wart's boyhood.

Endnotes

1. Critical writing about T.H. White's *Once and Future King* falls into two general schools: the biographical and the New Critical. For a biographical interpretation of the text see "The Best Thing for Being Sad: Education and Educators in T.H. White's *Once and Future King*." For a New Critical reading of the text see E.L. Smith's "The Narrative Structure of T.H. White's *Once and Future King*."

*Chapter Seven**The Tragic Mode in Psycho-narration: Lincoln's Dreams*

In many psycho-narratives, the protagonists function as scapegoats. As scapegoats, they bear the blame for a group, and in doing so, they become figures whose expulsion from society re-establishes their community's psychic balance. As Jung would say, these figures act in a compensatory fashion, by taking on their communities' shadows. Such protagonists become scapegoats either voluntarily or involuntarily. Those who volunteer are generally portrayed as martyrs, while those who find themselves pressed into the role are often the victims of cultural obsessions. Whether they are volunteers or victims, however, both types of this protagonist are anti-social, and this behaviour is designed to express the nature of the shadows which they embody.

According to Mircea Eliade, the ancient tradition of expelling the scapegoat is rooted in primitive society's need for periodic regeneration: thus the expulsion of the scapegoat, be it an animal or a man, is performed as an act of ritual purification during which the "sins" and faults of the individual and those of the community as a whole are annulled (*Cosmos* 52-53). In the psycho-narrative, the expulsion of the scapegoat also achieves the individual's and the community's psychic renewal. More important, it brings about the psychic rebirth of the scapegoat as well.

In psycho-narration, this process can be traced back to Dionysian initiation rituals which are embedded in the Greek tragedy. According to Jane Ellen Harrison, the spirit of life which the ritual form of Greek tragedy is designed to summon is the twice-born god of the Dithyramb, Dionysos—the “Divine Young Man” (141). The sacrifice of the tragic figure as a scapegoat, “the rite of second birth,” which calls forth this god involves the passage of the adolescent into the adult world of the tribe (156). The essence of this rite, Harrison says, still remains embedded in the Greek term *telete* (τέλετε), which means “the rite of growing up, of being complete” (112).

Thus the scapegoat of the psycho-narrative is presented as a tragic figure. Appropriately, his or her initiation into adulthood is expressed as an expulsion from society that is always excruciatingly painful, and often involves torture, disfiguration, and death. Indeed, the scapegoat’s suffering may be considered the central concern of such stories, for it is the means by which the shadow that the scapegoat embodies is expiated. Rooted in primitive traditions, the suffering of the scapegoat in the psycho-narrative is not inspired by mere cruelty or sensationalism; the purpose of the protagonist’s torture is to achieve what Eliade calls “the spiritual transformation of the victim” and the psychic transformation of his or her culture (*Myths* 207).

Moreover, psycho-narratives which draw on tragic conventions do much more than merely depict the adolescent’s introduction into adulthood. They also reveal the psychic condition of the initiate itself. In the psycho-narrative underpinned by the tragic mode, the hero or protagonist who plays the part of the sacrificial victim for his society, becomes aware of his own mortality. His suffering, however, is

meaningless, because unlike its primitive model, it fails to safeguard him against what Erich Neumann terms “the annihilating power of the grave” (*Mother* 175).

One of the most poignant examples of a psycho-narrative which is informed by the rituals that underlie tragedy is Connie Willis’s *Lincoln’s Dreams*.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, as Willis presents it, the experience of the South in the Civil war has the three main components of tragedy. First, the hubristic element of tragedy is evoked by “the glorious South’s” attempt to rise above its place in the national order, which ultimately brings about the Confederacy’s suffering and defeat (70). Second, the South suffers a sharp reversal of fortune when Longstreet fails to send Lee reinforcements during the Battle of Antietam; after the failure of Antietam, the agonizingly slow fall of the South begins by “the long retreat” of Lee’s army into Virginia (138). Finally, the South’s anagnorisis occurs in the apple orchard at Appomattox, where Lee finally recognises the inevitable downfall to which his actions have led and understands “the need for surrender before any of his generals” (192).

Furthermore, as Willis presents him, Lee himself displays the characteristics of a hero in a classical tragedy. The qualities associated with *arete* (ἀρετή), for example, are evident in the way that he fulfills his “gentleman’s duties” to his homeland (70). Throughout the war, Lee was an ideal general: he was “brave, dignified, forgiving, kind to children and animals” (30). Willis also carefully chronicles Lee’s error in judgment that leads to his personal downfall. Lee’s *hamartia* (ἁμαρτία), or character flaw, lies in his loyalty to the South. When Lincoln offers Lee “the command of the Union Army,” Lee finds that he cannot accept the offer “even though he [is] opposed to secession and [hates] the idea of war.” Explaining his decision to his sister, he

writes, "I have not been able to make up my mind to raise my hand against my relatives, my children, and my home. I know you will blame me; but you must think as kindly of me as you can, and believe that I have endeavoured to do what I thought right." After the war is over, Lee is much more specific about the nature of his tragic flaw: "I could have taken no other course of action without dishonour" (78).

Lee not only exhibits the qualities of the tragic hero; as the commander of the Confederate army, he is also the perfect scapegoat, for he voluntarily assumes the blame for the Confederate army's failures. Although he knows that the decision not to reinforce the troops was Longstreet's, he shoulders the responsibility for the orders which caused the South's failure at Antietam and his army's slow subsequent defeat. It is Lee who represents the Confederacy when the South surrenders to Grant. Aware of his role as the Confederate Army's representative, Lee makes sure that before the surrender, he is "dressed in his best because . . . he [is] likely to be taken prisoner." The suffering which Lee experiences surrendering to Grant is excruciating: he tells his officers, "there is nothing left for me to do but go and see General Grant, and I would rather die a thousand deaths'" (190). In *Lincoln's Dreams*, even after his death, Lee continues to function as a scapegoat. Annie tells Jeff that she has "to see Lee's dreams through to the end," because she "can't stand to see him suffer so" (166).

The suffering which the Civil War continues to cause Americans should not be overlooked here, for they, too, are functioning as scapegoats by taking responsibility for the mistakes of history. As Willis remarks in her "Foreword" to the text, "the Civil War isn't over"; she points out that "its images dreamlike stay with us . . .

young boys lying face-down in cornfields and orchards, and Robert E. Lee on Traveller. And Lincoln, dead in the White House, and the sound of crying" (ii). Like most Americans, Willis explains that she herself also suffers from "the long-term effects of the Civil War" (ii).

Significantly, in this text, the Civil War functions in much the same way that the ancient Spring dromenon did during the introduction of drama into ancient Greece. Like the dromenon, the Civil War acts as a ritual mould into which the life stories of Willis's modern characters are poured. In short, the characters in *Lincoln's Dreams* behave mythologically—re-enacting the events of the Civil War. The Civil War haunts and shadows the lives of Willis's characters, as it does the lives of average Americans, like an ancient traditional ghost; as Harrison says of the dromenon underlying the Greek drama, it sways "the movement and the speeches like some compelling rhythm" (138-39).

Thus, the action of *Lincoln's Dreams* consists of a number of re-enactments of the events of the Civil War. Most obviously, Annie re-enacts the events of the Battles of Antietam, Fredericksburg, and Marye's Heights as she dreams and sleepwalks. Richard betrays Annie's trust and his own duty as a doctor in much the same way that Longstreet betrayed Lee at Antietam. Jeff echoes Lee's sentiments about Stonewall Jackson to Annie; in Fredericksburg, when Annie's nightmares become too much for her to bear, he tells her, "I would that I were wounded in your stead" (166). Jeff even re-enacts Lincoln's visits to Willie's tomb. By re-enacting these events of the Civil War, these characters (as well as others) take on the identities of men and women who are long dead. In effect, a historical present is

created, as the dead are brought back to life. Cast in the role of Longstreet throughout the story, Richard plays the part of the traitor to the drama's end. Annie, however, plays not only the part of the heroic Lee, but also the supporting parts of Lee's daughter and Stonewall Jackson. Broun is at times Lincoln, at times Grant, and at times Lee. Jeff simply becomes everyone: even Lee's horse. As the characters' personalities conflate, the effect is often confusing. Throughout, however, the events of the Civil War provide Willis's readers with a touchstone which creates the text's coherence. In short, the Civil War is presented as an archetypal event which informs the American experience.

Throughout, the tragic model of the Civil War hero is defined in terms of the scapegoat. Annie, for example, takes on the function of the scapegoat by serving as Lee's surrogate; when Jeff worries that she is destroying her health while re-enacting Lee's dreams, she tells him, "I think he's trying to atone . . . I'm helping him sleep somehow. Even though he's dead" (159). Like Annie, Jeff also defines the heroic model in terms of the scapegoat: he says to Annie, "If I could, I'd have the dreams for you. Which is what you're trying to do . . . Have the dreams for Lee, so he won't suffer" (166). Throughout the text, there is evidence that Lee did suffer terribly for the part that he played during the Civil War. A week after the Battle of Antietam, he wrote to his wife: "I fear I shall not sleep for thinking of the poor men" (114).

In *Lincoln's Dreams*, scapegoats carry the guilt of other individuals, as Annie does for Lee. This guilt, however, is expressed not only in the suffering of the individual, but also in the suffering felt by an entire nation for "all those yellow-

haired boys" (172). As such, this burden is so great that it is overwhelming. Jeff asks, "How many dreams would it take to bury all those boys at Gettysburg who staggered back from Pickett's Charge to collapse at Lee's feet, how many dreams to bury all the boys in the bloody angles and sunken roads of Lee's mind. Two hundred and fifty-eight thousand? A hundred years worth?" (159).

In order to understand why the nature of the Civil War is still so problematic for Americans, one must examine the implications of Willis's use of the tragic format. Willis presents the Civil War as a national tragedy; as such, it is an event which results in the social and cultural realignment of the nation, but not necessarily of the individual. In this novel, heroic self-sacrifice does not confer immortality upon the individual, although the hero is remembered. In the Civil War, however, war dead often were not. As Annie says, trying to get at the meaning of the dreams, "It has something to do with the soldier with his name pinned to his sleeve" (150). Because the soldier's name is "too blurred to read," he cannot achieve the immortality that history, the epic, and the tragedy award heroes (150).

In short, the disturbing nature of the Civil War lies in the fact that the deaths of the soldiers who fought in it were final and futile. As Eliade remarks, people can tolerate any sufferings if they are endowed with "an archetype that gives them both reality and normality" (*Cosmos* 100). This is the purpose of evoking a prototype which reminds men that "suffering is never final; that death is always followed by resurrection, that every defeat is annulled and transcended by the final victory" (*Cosmos* 101). Without the possibility of personal resurrection, be it in terms of history or religion, the sufferings endured by the Civil War soldiers cannot be deemed

tolerable. Thus, while re-enacting Lee's nightmare of Gettysburg, Annie repeatedly asks Jeff about the dead: "What happened to them?" she asks; and Jeff repeatedly replies, "I'll find out" (172-73). Even at the conclusion of *Lincoln's Dreams*, Jeff is concerned with the probability of resurrection. Visiting the Oak Hill Cemetery in Georgetown, he, like Lincoln, goes to Willie's tomb and admits that he cannot accept the finality of death: "I had thought that finding his grave would tell me what happened . . . but I already knew that, didn't I? It was the same thing that had happened to all of them . . . they had died in the war" (224).

With the hopeless nature of the individual's sacrifice in mind, a consideration of Annie's willingness to suffer for Lee and Jeff's willingness to suffer for Annie, regardless of the consequences, becomes central to an understanding of *Lincoln's Dreams*. In Greek tragedy, only the unlucky heroic few re-enact the archetype of the scapegoat. In *Lincoln's Dreams*, however, everyone seems to play this role. As soon as one scapegoat disappears, another steps forward to take his or her place. Some of these replacements emerge from what could be regarded as the chorus in this text. Annie, for example, is a very "ordinary" character. Unlike Lee, she is not a Southern aristocrat.

In Greek tragedy, the chorus originally functioned as a counter-balance for the heroic imbalance displayed by the tragic hero. Ordinary folk, the chorus reflected and commented on the hero's actions, serving as a bridge between the actors and the audience, effectively shaping and directing the onlookers' reactions and responses to the action. In *Lincoln's Dreams*, however, Jeff, the choral character whom one

would expect to provide the reader with a stabilizing viewpoint, is, at times, even more psychically unstable than the woman whose dreams he interprets.

At first, it is tempting to conclude that the psychic imbalance that Jeff demonstrates is an aberration—and that this condition may be safely limited to characters who have sleep disorders or are historical researchers. Other characters in *Lincoln's Dreams*, however, also demonstrate psychic imbalances: even Broun becomes involved in the action at the end of the text, cast as the next Lee. With a seemingly endless supply of characters willing to play the part of the scapegoat, there appears to be no end to the tragic re-enactment of the Civil War. Indeed, this predisposition towards a psychic imbalance seems to be a property of those who take on the role of the scapegoat. As Broun remarks, "People do things like that in a war, sacrifice themselves, fall in love" (226).

People in love often behave irrationally. In *Lincoln's Dreams*, however, love is an integral part of the scapegoat's initiation process. Here, the elements of self-sacrifice, love and death are inextricably connected. Jeff, for example, offers to take on the task of re-enacting Lee's dreams because he loves Annie. Annie continues to dream Lee's dreams because she, like Lee, loves honour: when Jeff tries to talk her into seeing a doctor, she refuses, because she "promised" to experience Lee's dreams (204). The soldiers of the Civil War also sacrificed themselves, as Ben does, for love. All these cases involve the act of self-sacrifice, whether it be for one's country, one's lover, or one's general. Broun recognises that however different the sacrifice may appear, it is the same act: in *Duty Bound*, he presents Ben's decision to enlist in the Confederate Army as the result of his losing a fight with his brother over a girl.

And after Jeff enlists in Lee's war to save Annie from Richard, Broun asks him, "I wonder how many soldiers did that, enlisted because of some girl?" (21).

In order to understand this connection between love and death, the element of atonement in the context of scapegoating bears close examination. Generally atonement is considered to be the work of love. Etymologically, the verb "atone" comes from the adverbial phrase "at one," which means to reconcile or make "at one"; later the word came to denote the action by which reconciliation is made by one who gives offense or causes an injury to another. Thus, in Catholic theology, the Atonement is Christ's suffering whereby God and the world are made to be at one. In short, the Passion of Christ, his act of love for others, reconciles the sacred with the profane: Christ's suffering is the result of his love is mankind's chance to be "reborn."

In classical tragedy, however, the act of atonement is a very different matter: the sacred condition of the world is restored by the repulsion of the profane in the form of the suffering individual. An eliminatory rite, the suffering and expulsion of the scapegoat in tragedy triggers not the response of pity and love, but the audience's reaction of pity and fear. Jeff makes this distinction for the reader when he wishes that "this atonement of his [Lee's] didn't mean dragging Annie through the Civil War till both their hearts were broken" (179). Jeff remarks that he should have asked Annie "how" Lee was attempting to atone for the Civil War. As Willis suggests in *Lincoln's Dreams*, this act of atonement is achieved by not forgetting and by therefore continually suffering.

Annie's and Jeff's willingness to suffer and finally die for love indicates just how serious is their desire to reconcile the past with the present. The history of the Civil War, however, is not a situation that the contemporary American can redeem—however much he or she may want to. Re-enacting the events of the historical past does not dispel its demons; rather, it serves to bring them back to life in, if you will, a historical present.

In *Lincoln's Dreams*, when the dead possess the mind of a living person, the result is a horrible sort of a half-life. Annie, for example, appears to be possessed by Lee's spirit as she sleepwalks through the Battle of Gettysburg. And after her experience, she appears to be one of the walking dead. Even when awake, drained of her vitality, her face is "pale" and there are "dark bruised-looking shadows around her eyes" (177). Living in Annie's night-time persona, Lee is unmistakably the daemon of this tragedy. As the dreams progress, his existence becomes almost tangible. Annie declares to Jeff that she cannot leave Lee because "he's dying." At this point, Jeff finally explodes, reminding her and the reader that Lee is a historical figure, not Annie's contemporary: "He's not dying, he's dead. He's been dead for over a hundred years. You're holding on to the hand of a corpse. You can't do anything for him! Can't you see that?" (204).

This, however, is precisely what Annie cannot see, for initially in attempting to atone she is involved in what Eliade terms "the idolatry of history" (*Myths* 242). Believing in the ontological reality of the Civil War, Annie mistakes an expression of the archetype for the archetype itself. Her error is not surprising when one considers how quickly the popular imagination enshrined the Civil War as a cultural archetype.

At this point in the text, the condition of a psyche which is haunted by the past is clearly an unbalanced one; Lincoln's disturbing dreams which appear after Willie's death are excellent examples of how unbalanced this mental state is. Haunted by the image of his son, as Annie is by Lee, Lincoln, like Annie, travels "to the cemetery" to convince himself that Willie is dead. And as with Annie, as Jeff points out, even the sight of the grave itself "hadn't helped and he [Lincoln] couldn't sleep and his grief nearly drove him insane" (225).

In idolizing the memory of his son, Lincoln makes what the Hindus call "the wrong action"—that is to say, he believes that nothing exists outside of Time. Believing in the reality of the past, Lincoln becomes trapped in the historical present. Annie finds herself in the same predicament for the same reason. Ironically, it is Jeff, a historian, who points this out to the reader. He realises that the solution to Annie's problem lies not in discovering what the dreams mean, but in recognising that the act of dreaming is an effort to re-enact the past.

By re-enacting an archetypal event, one returns to the paradisiacal condition—what Eliade terms *ab origine* (*Cosmos* 35). By re-enacting a historical event, however, one dooms oneself to repeating its mistakes. For the United States in general—and the South in particular—this would be a frightening prospect indeed. Lee alone sacrificed over a quarter of a million of his own men during the Civil War. Throughout *Lincoln's Dreams*, the image of the apple orchard recurs, informing Annie's nightmares and suggesting that the bloody events of the Civil War constitute America's expulsion from the idyllic ante-bellum world created by the American Revolution. Appropriately, after the Civil War, Lee himself could not return to the

gardens of Arlington: the post-bellum South had become a different type of planting ground—a national cemetery.

In short, unable to forget the Civil War, Willis's characters are doomed to suffer continually. And ironically, while attempting to expiate the past in order to regain Paradise, they are unable to forget the Civil War, thereby keeping alive the traumatic memory of all those yellow-haired boys. In tragedy, shortly before his or her destruction, the tragic figure experiences anagnorisis: a moment of insight in which he or she recognises the pattern of events which created his or her downfall. For Annie, the anagnorisis is educational. At the end of the narrative, she recognises that the independence of Lee's cat, Tom Tita, indicates how one can escape becoming a scapegoat. To expiate the past, she must simply forget it. After all, her first duty is to herself. As a historian, however, Jeff is unable to abandon the past. Thus, he steps into the role of the protagonist when Annie leaves, and his psychic situation worsens instead of improves even when he realises the part that he has been playing all along. Like the reader, who knows that the outcome of the Civil War was fatal for the South, Jeff realises that Annie, like Lee, will not return; after two years of waiting, he knows that the time has come for him, like Traveller, to be destroyed. Truly, his is what Eliade terms "the paradoxical condition of the man who becomes aware of his temporality," with his anguish stemming from "his tragic discovery that man is a being destined to death" (*Cosmos* 239). Paralysed before the irreversibility that he awards death, he loses his ability to narrate. Unable to speak, he develops verbal lockjaw: echoing the situation which led to Traveller's death, his last words are "I have picked up a nail" (228).

The pity and fear which one feels for Jeff at this moment are almost overwhelming: here, Willis's vision could not be bleaker, for Jeff now becomes the tragic protagonist instead of a choral character. As such, in the end, he is little more than a dumb animal. His anagnorisis reveals his impending and irrevocable destruction.

Awareness of human frailty and mortality is, of course, what tragic action is designed to convey. In the final analysis, the tragic mode in psycho-narration fails to protect its initiate from annihilation. In the end, it is impossible for Jeff to escape the knowledge of Annie's and his own impending death. In *Lincoln's Dreams*, the individual's psyche which is obsessed with the past is not only what Eliade terms to be "conditioned, and in the end, created by History," but is also aware of mortality (*Myths* 233). Thus Death itself, no longer considered a process of transformation, can offer no escape from annihilation. Ironically, it is revealed to be precisely that which the initiate seeks to avoid. Thus, at the end of *Lincoln's Dreams*, the act of heroic self-sacrifice becomes a meaningless activity, for resurrection is no longer a possibility; as Bruce Catton notes in *Mr. Lincoln's Army*, lives during wars "are simply wasted outright, with nobody gaining anything at all" (iii).

#### Endnotes

1. To date, no critical writing has been published on Connie Willis's *Lincoln's Dreams*.

*Chapter Eight**The Lyric Mode in Psycho-narration: The Bridge and Neuromancer*

Although states of consciousness of a nightmarish kind tend to predominate in psycho-narration, frequently one finds expressions of an ecstatic vision of the psyche. Invariably this vision evokes a feeling of euphoria: what Corbin Scott Carnell terms as the sensation of delight which arises when one discovers oneself becoming one with the universe and desiring a closer union (20). In order to express such highly personal experiences, these psycho-narratives draw heavily on the conventions of the lyric. In these psycho-narratives, the speaker presents an extended observation of his or her thoughts, feelings, and memories in solitude. In some ways, this type of psycho-narrative may be regarded as a prose poem told by the private self.

As in the shamanistic experience, the euphoria in these works is associated with the primordial vision. Indeed, it is probable that the primitive shaman's pre-ecstatic euphoria constituted one of the universal sources of lyric poetry. As Mircea Eliade points out, every poetic language begins by being a secret language, that is the creation of a personal universe, of a completely closed world. The purest poetic act seems to re-create language from an inner experience that, like the ecstasy or the religious inspiration of "primitives," reveals the essence of things. Eliade even goes so far as to suggest that the shaman's secret language is the basis of the lyric itself.

He observes that while speaking a *secret* or *animal language*, the shaman enters a psychic state that provides the impetus for linguistic creation and the rhythms of lyric poetry (*Shamanism* 510).

In the psycho-narrative, the psychic state expressed by the lyric speaker reveals the conjunction of personal and collective components of the psyche. In fact, the action of such texts is generated by the tension that arises between these personal and transpersonal elements. Here, it should be noted that the psychic integration that takes place in this state is one which is couched in metaphors rather than dramatized. The speaker's psychic metamorphosis which creates the narrative tension is revealed by degrees in leitmotifs. At the conclusion of these texts, these leitmotifs culminate in a unifying metaphor which signifies the nature of the speaker's experience.

Iain Banks's *The Bridge* and William Gibson's *Neuromancer* are two texts in which the lyric mode is clearly the dominant dynamic. *The Bridge* charts the progress of Orr, a trauma victim, who returns to the world of the living from the world of the dead. Before waking in a hospital bed, Orr re-experiences haphazard events from his past and explores the constantly shifting levels, the apartments, and the inhabitants of the bridge from which he finds himself unable to escape.<sup>1</sup> *Neuromancer* also seems to be a collection of the memories and experiences of the narrator Case, a computer cowboy in the matrix of cyberspace, who seeks that which Orr attempts to escape—the bodiless condition of death. As the narrative progresses, however, it becomes apparent that when Case is “jacked” into the matrix, he is merely re-enacting a cyberspace program created by Neuromancer.<sup>2</sup> *The Bridge* opens *in medias res*, just after Orr's accident on the bridge; *Neuromancer* begins at

the outset of Case's adventures in the Chatsubo bar. At the start of both these narratives, however, both Banks's and Gibson's protagonists are carefully and explicitly imprisoned in the condition of their own consciousnesses: Orr's coma isolates him from the day-to-day reality of life in Edinburgh; Case's neural overload was needed from "the consensual hallucination that [is] the matrix" (5).

In these texts, despite dissociation from the real world, setting continues to be highly significant and to denote the condition of the psyche itself. Alienated from the worlds in which they usually live, Case's and Orr's consciousnesses closely resemble Lester's in Charles Williams's *All Hallows' Eve*. As in *All Hallows' Eve*, landscape in these texts is a matter of mindscape. A collage of memories, dreams, sensations, and hallucinations, *The Bridge* reflects the unorganised condition of Orr's psyche. In *Neuromancer*, Case's first-person narrative continually reminds the reader that reality is shaped in terms of the beholder's perceptions.

In *Neuromancer*, reality is a product of one's psyche. One character is nothing more than another's psychic projection. For example, when Molly finally meets Case, she remarks, "I think you screwed up . . . . I showed up and you just fit me into your reality picture" (24). As her remark indicates, reality in Ninsei's *Sprawl* is a highly personal affair: the result of an individual's necessarily limited perceptions. Nevertheless, an individual's perceptions of the world, however limited they may be, are not the only factors one must take into account when considering how one's reality is organised. How Case or Molly processes their information in *Neuromancer* reveals the breaking down of a system, a powerful set of assumptions regarding what the world is and how it works.

Gibson's reader is also continually reminded that the world of *Everyman* is a human construct—resting on inherited and learned ideas of reality. These ideas consist of the belief that reality functions in terms of chronological, causal, and logical sequences. As the microchip embedded in Molly's optic nerve suggests, for example, information is generally processed in terms of chronological sequence. For Case, who operates in the matrix, however, this organising principle does not exist. Absorbed in "the patterns of the Sense/Net ice," Case lives only in the present (59). In this state, his consciousness becomes the maze itself. In fact, the maze expresses the structure of Case's psyche, for its patterns are "his being": in this maze, past-present-and-future become unimportant. Because chronological sequencing is not a part of the program which operates in Case's psyche while he is absorbed in the Sense/Net, he cannot function in the world outside the matrix: he loses track of the days, forgets to eat and dress, resents having to leave the deck even to go to the toilet, and forgets who Linda Lee was.

In *The Bridge*, the constraints of chronological sequencing and the body's needs are not issues for Orr, whose coma cuts him off from the cycles of night and day, as well as from his bodily functions. Since the organising principles which the environment imposes on his mind do not apply, his psyche is free to organise information according to its own constraints. At first, how his psyche organises information is not readily apparent. On the bridge, events seem to be inexplicable. Orr is re-allocated to a sub-level apartment without explanation; Doctor Joyce's office is moved without warning; and barrage balloons inexplicably appear, moored to the bridge's girders.

Because chronological and cause and effect relationships have broken down, Orr finds himself always functioning in the present. His life therefore takes on the unpredictable quality of a nightmare. In his coma, space, like time, functions in an exasperatingly relative fashion. Places on the bridge appear and then suddenly vanish. Searching for the Third City Records and Historical Materials Library so that he may understand what is going on, Orr finally finds the floor on which the archives are located; when the elevator doors open, however, he walks into "the scene of a terrible disaster." Inexplicably told to "fuck off" by a man wearing "a bright yellow uniform" and waving "a megaphone" (56, 57), Orr retreats, although he has done nothing wrong. Later, he is unable to find this floor again, even though he retraces his steps carefully. The elevator has vanished, and his enquiries about it "meet with blank looks" (170). Ironically, the library's elevator has also vanished from the memories of the bridge's other inhabitants who exist only within Orr's mind.

In *Neuromancer*, cause and effect also function in a haphazard manner. This is due, in part, to the protagonist's limited intellectual resources: Case lacks some of the data necessary fully to understand the situation in which he finds himself. It is also evident, however, that in the matrix itself, the conventional constraints of cause and effect have vanished. What should be impossible is not. For example, Case discovers Linda Lee stranded in a bunker after his conversation with 3Jane. Unaware that she should be dead, Linda tells Case, "Next thing I was on the beach" (239). At first, Case refuses to accept the possibility of Linda's existence: he insists that she "[isn't] anything . . . [and that] none of this is real" (236, 244). Nonetheless, Case finds himself talking to Linda, eating with her, and, in the end, making love with her.

In the matrix, the “dead” Linda retains the “strength” that initially attracted Case to her in the first place in “Night City” (239). Death, it seems, has had no effect on her. Nor will Death affect Case in the matrix. As Neuromancer remarks, “If your woman is a ghost, she doesn’t know it. Neither will you” (244).

The nature of the bunker, buried in the dark sand near the beach, suggests the way that settings in *Neuromancer* reflect the condition of one’s consciousness. It could be argued that this bunker is only an idea, the product of an Übermind. Making love in the light of the fireplace, Case and Linda have become mere representations of someone’s Platonic ideal, reproducing “a coded model of some stranger’s memory” (240).

In *The Bridge*, characters too are figments of someone else’s imagination, and, like Gibson, Banks leaves his reader in no doubt that an Übermind is operating. In his dissociated state of consciousness, Orr’s psyche is itself this Übermind. To emphasize that reality is clearly a subjective matter, Banks blatantly presents the text as the product of its narrator’s memory and imagination. Every bit of the narrative occurs, as Orr’s persona notes, “here in my mind in my brain in my skull” (99), whether it be on the Forth Bridge, in the City of ghosts, or in the Field Marshall’s train. As Orr’s persona wryly remarks, “if yer mind isnae in yer fuking skull wherethefuk is it, eh?” (99). The power of the mind to influence how one perceives one’s environment is clearly illustrated in Orr’s memory of Edinburgh as “another country . . . a new and wonderful place; Eden ascendant, Eden before the fall. Eden before his own long-desired escape from the technicalities of innocence” (103). The contrast between Orr’s university memories of Edinburgh and his subsequent

perceptions of this city lead the reader to recognise the subjective nature of perception itself.

Because both *The Bridge* and *Neuromancer* are intimately concerned with an evolving, impressionistic vision of the workings of the psyche, they disregard the traditional Aristotelian unities of time and space in narrative. Extended impressions of complex evolutions of the mind involving the processes of observation, thought, memory, and feeling, these texts violate their reader's expectations of chronological sequencing and fixed locations. Because the primary force at work in them is the process of psychic growth, this impulse is expressed in lyrical terms. In the lyric, observations, memories, and emotions are organised as an artistic whole to reflect the speaker's often changing state of mind. As a result, the form of the lyric is a fluid one. One lyric device which is particularly well-suited to express this fluidity is transumption: the process in which metaphors reveal by degrees the matter at hand.

Both Banks and Gibson use transumption to express the workings of their protagonists' psyches. Since settings reflect psychic conditions, changes in it are of paramount importance in these texts. At times, the technique involved resembles the use of pathetic fallacy in the Gothic tradition. For example, the damage suffered by the man-made environments of *Neuromancer* and *The Bridge* resembles the damage suffered by the psyches of the protagonists. In *Neuromancer*, Gibson's polluted cities *do* resemble Case's nervous system, burnt-out by his employer's mycotoxins. In *The Bridge*, the disappearance of the Third City's archives *can* be read as Orr's memory loss during his coma. It is equally important to note, however, that environments

which are deliberately created by the protagonist are not always reliable signatures of archetypal configurations.

Banks makes this distinction early in *The Bridge*. As Dr. Joyce points out in exasperation, Orr's dream of the dark station, with its ponderous Gothic overtones, does little to help solve the puzzle of Orr's condition. Indeed, that dream's predictably rocky wasteland, sealed luggage, and mysterious coachman parody Gothic conventions rather than offer an accurate reflection of the condition of Orr's psyche. Orr eventually admits to having invented this dream just to give his doctor "something to sink his yellow-gray teeth into" (28): this dream, he says, is "all a pack of lies" (26). Dr. Joyce clearly suspects that this is the case, for he directs Orr's attention to the narrative's unifying metaphor: the issue at hand is the nature of the bridge itself. He reminds Orr that what he has to ask himself is "what this sort of dream means in relation to the bridge" (29).

Recognising one's true nature is usually the solution to the individual's problem in the Gothic, and at first this seems to be the case in Banks's narrative. When Orr is moved to a sub-level apartment, his agony over this class demotion echoes the agony which he experienced because of his working class roots as a young university student. Also, Orr's open relationship with Aberlaine Aaroll, a woman who lives on the bridge, is very similar to his university affair with Andrea Cramond, the daughter of wealthy parents. In fact, Aberlaine Aaroll, wealthy, intelligent, and sexy, closely resembles Andrea Cramond. Equally, the rooms, hallways, and apartments of *The Bridge* represent the events of Orr's life. In *The Bridge*, however, self-awareness is

not such a simple matter, for the nature of the bridge becomes increasingly complicated as Orr maps its terrain.

Until Orr understands his own personal history, his psyche does not begin to heal itself. Because he needs to understand that he himself is responsible for his personal history, his dream about a rusting iron bridge is far more instructional than his story about the dark station. As Orr observes to his best friend, Stewart Mackie, "things [have] a certain pattern" (195). That pattern is revealed in the structure of the bridge itself. Living in a reality created solely by his psyche, Orr discovers that he cannot escape the constraints of the bridge which are created by his own consciousness. Indeed, he may as well try to escape his own psyche. As Orr himself notes, one is contained within one's mind. It is impossible to leave it. Thus he remarks, "this is not a long bridge but it goes on forever" (143). When Orr attempts to walk off the bridge, he discovers much to his dismay that he does not actually move from the spot on which he is standing. When he attempts to run, the result is like that of a rat racing in a wheel in its cage: Orr goes nowhere quickly. In fact, the bridge resembles a gigantic rat's treadmill: it is "part of a circle, perhaps the upper quarter in terms of height. Its whole forms a great hollow wheel which encases the river" (143). Unable to reach a group of alluring ladies who live along the river-bank in a "variety of pavillions" (147), Orr suffers like Odysseus with the Sirens and Tantalus in Hades. Incapable of satisfying his sexual appetites, he is condemned to run "for ever" in the futile attempt to do so.

Significantly, Orr is not alone in this situation. His condition is that of all humanity. Upstream, he sees "another bridge, just like [his] . . . beyond [it], another

bridge and another man, and so on and so on, until the line of distant bridges become an iron tunnel, vanishing to nothing." Like Orr, the men in these bridges are also caged, "gripping the bars" (147). These men, it seems, have also created their own prisons.

Throughout *The Bridge*, the imprisoning nature of consciousness is revealed in degrees. For example, the image of the bridge as a cage reappears later in Orr's sub-level apartment. When Aberlaine Aaroll holds her lover "like a cage" (176), Orr realises that Aaroll's body is equally caged. Imprisoned, Aaroll herself becomes an architectural structure: "the zig-zagging lace of her cami-knickers, the criss-crossing ribbon holding the silk across her body; those straps and lines, the sheathed arms like stocking legs themselves" that take the place of "cantilevers and tubes, suspension ties . . . caissons [and] structural tubing." Lying beneath Aaroll and supporting her weight, Orr suddenly becomes the foundation of the bridge. As earlier in his dream, he and the bridge "are one . . . part of the same great steady mechanism" (147). His awareness of the Forth Bridge, "towering into the grey evening with its own patterns and criss-crossings and massed Xs, its own feet and legs and balanced stresses . . . [its] own character and presence and life" (175), suggests the beginning of self-awareness. Here, it is important to remember that as the metaphor of the bridge develops, the nature of the superstructure which reveals Orr's evolving psyche in terms of his personal history itself constantly changes. Thus the bridge is "a quality bridge, an ever-lasting bridge, a never-quite-the-same bridge, its vast and ruddy frame forever sloughing off and being replaced like a snake, constantly shedding, a metamorphosing insect which is its own cocoon and always changing" (283).

The bridge's metamorphosis is a prime example of metaphoric transumption. Constantly transforming, Orr's psyche reveals itself in the changing metaphor of the bridge. Orr describes degrees by which this process is accomplished as he lies inside "the bridge within its hollow bones"; as the ceiling of his room changes, the functioning of his psyche becomes apparent: object and subject gradually fuse as Orr notes that the ceiling "sometimes looks like white plaster, sometimes like grey metal, sometimes like red brick, sometimes like riveted sheets of steel, painted the colour of blood" (274). Moving by degrees from the exterior to the interior world, this description of Orr's ceiling has the reader regarding the sutures of the protagonist's cranium.

Transumption, however, is not always a process which reveals the limits of one's consciousness. When Orr transforms his consciousness with "a chemical that alter[s] reality," for example, the metamorphosing process of his psyche is reversed. At Valtos, no longer trapped within the confines of his skull, Orr remarks that "the whole beach seemed to heave and grow, like something living" (284). Escaping the limitations of his personal consciousness, Orr's psyche unites itself with the natural world; the result is what Orr describes as "a wide escape": a revelation expressed as an epiphany. In his "delight," Orr says, "I thought I saw it all then; the way the brain flowers at the end of its articulated stalk; the way, our roots in the soil, we grow and become. It meant everything and nothing, at the time and still" (285).

In short, the natural world is revealed to be a product of the psyche. Whether Orr becomes the ceiling of his room or the isle "bared to the sweep of the sea and weather by the cutting edge of the drug" (285), his psyche produces his reality in the

same way. As Orr himself realises, the choice that he must make "is not between dream and reality; it is between two different dreams" (283). Reality may be the dream of either the individual psyche or the collective unconscious. Throughout *The Bridge*, Banks demonstrates Shakespeare's idea in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*—another early work dealing with altered states of consciousness—that reality really is nothing more than psychic projections. Acknowledging his debt to Shakespeare—"thanx bill"—Orr ends his "revels" when he chooses to leave his life on the bridge, his "own" dream, and return to the life of the collective which may be recognised as a constructed reality distinguished by its cultural signatures: "our corporate imagery . . . the dream that we call American . . . Western . . . Northern" (286, 283).

Unlike Orr, in *Neuromancer* Case does not have to make such a choice. Here, reality is not constructed by the protagonist's personal consciousness, but by the collective dream of his culture. As in *The Bridge*, however, *Neuromancer* immediately begins by introducing the reader to its unifying metaphor, which expresses the fusion of consciousness and the unconscious—the individual and the collective. To emphasize the way that technology has shaped modern consciousness, Gibson uses the television monitor as his basic metaphor. As the narrative progresses, it quickly becomes apparent that it is not only the sky above Ninsei that functions like a television screen, but also the characters themselves. For example, Linda Lee's individuality disappears while she immerses herself in the popular culture of the video arcade. Subsumed in the video game that she plays, her face becomes a monitor itself. "Bathed in restless laser light," her features are "reduced to a code"

of psychedelic colours which create in turn settings that reflect the labyrinthean nature of the collective psyche. "Her cheekbones flaring scarlet as Wizard's Castle burned, forehead drenched with azure when Munich fell to the Tank War, mouth touched with hot gold as a gliding cursor struck sparks from the wall of a sky scraper canyon," Linda is "lost in the game she play[s]" (8). In this labyrinth of colour, one loses one's individuality, because the data which makes up the individual is itself organised in terms of a larger informing model. This model—the matrix—is expressed in the images of intricate electrical circuitry traced on Linda Lee's silk headband. The individual's connection to the collective is evident throughout the narrative. As Wintermute points out, man is always "building models" which reflect what Jane describes as "something else as well" (171, 173): "stone circles. Cathedrals. Pipe-organs. Adding machines" (171). Due to the limitations of an individual's consciousness, however, the nature of the collective remains a mystery. Recognised but not understood, the collective is found in the "neon Molecules" crawling beneath the skin of Case's hands, "ordered by an unknowable code" (241), and in the body's "sea of information coded in spiral and pheromone" (239).

Based on an exemplary model, reality for characters like Case, Molly, and Linda Lee is what Eliade terms a function of the imitation of an archetype (*Cosmos* 5). Their very bodies, as well as the things around them, reflect the prototype of the matrix; an unbreakable, unknowable code, the matrix is clearly what Eliade terms "the zone of the sacred, the zone of absolute reality" (*Cosmos* 17). Whenever Case jacks into cyberspace, he repeats the "gestures of another" (*Cosmos* 34); engulfed in running the mazes of data, he can only repeat activities that have already been

programmed. While making love to Linda Lee, for example, Case knows that he is repeating an archetypal act. In effect, he is "effecting the transmission . . . of a coded memory of some stranger's memory" (240).

Moreover, like Orr in *The Bridge*, Case participates in what Eliade would term "a spiritual condition" (*Myths* 70). He is a "disembodied consciousness" (5). As such, Case functions shamanistically in the matrix. Like the shaman, his "business is to learn the names of programs, the long formal names, names the owners seek to conceal . . . the true names" and pass these secrets on to mankind (243).

As in *The Bridge*, transumption is the process by which the limitations of consciousness are revealed. Throughout, the television monitor is the metaphor which reveals by degrees the condition of Case's consciousness. "A gray place, an impression of fine screens shifting, moire, degrees of half tone generated by a very simple graphics program" (244), the television monitor in *Neuromancer* represents Case's psyche itself. The place where the sacred and the profane meet—the place through which Case enters the collective consciousness of the matrix—the television is a modern form of what Eliade terms "an axis along which the passage from one cosmic region to another is effected" (*Cosmos* 12).

Two programs are being run on this screen: one is Wintermute's, which is based on the pattern of its programmer's memory; and the other is Neuromancer's, whose medium is "personality" (259). After running both these programs, Case's consciousness becomes the entire program itself: his vision becomes "spherical as though a single retina line[s] the interior surface of a globe that contain[s] all things, if all things could be counted." In fact, in the matrix, Case's new awareness does

include all things, be they concretizations, constructions, or abstractions: from the “number of sands in the construct of the beach” to the “number of brass teeth in the left half of the salt-crusted leather jacket that Linda Lee” wears, to even the “length of her stride in measurements that would have satisfied the most exacting standards of geophysics” (258).

Having finally broken the code, Case succeeds in his shamanistic enterprise. He finally finds “the word” which enables him to name the unnameable (260).

Ironically, this “true name . . . three notes, high and pure” merely serves to reconnect him with Ninsei, with what he has been seeking to escape all along: a “neon forest, rain sizzling across hot pavement. The smell of frying food. A girl’s hands locked across the small of his back, in the sweating darkness of a portside coffin” (262). By re-establishing the paradisaical condition, Case discovers that he has been in it all the time. What he had previously considered “the Fall” had actually been an ascent. In “his relaxed contempt for the flesh” (6), he had overlooked the body’s immortality, expressed in its regenerative powers.

Ultimately, however, Case rejects the corrected balance that the generative world of the collective consciousness offers. He returns to the Sprawl to repeat the pattern lived by cyberspace cowboys. Instead of generating his own program, Case prefers to imitate a prototype. In the Sprawl, he finds “work” and a girl whose name, Michelle, evokes the angel with the flaming sword who bars man from ever re-entering Paradise. Ironically—in view of his counter-culture stance—Case is shaped by the literature of the past and conforms to an Adamic model which every

suburbanite immediately recognises: his daily routine is prescribed by his wife and his work.

When a ritual activity ceases to cause the individual to transcend his mundane condition, it becomes merely a debased habit. Having settled into the routine of a nine-to-five job, Case's consciousness focuses on his limitations rather than his possibilities. "Punching himself past the scarlet tiers of the Eastern Seaboard Fission Authority," he sees a tiny image of himself trapped "at the very edge of one of the vast steps of data" (270). Like the Villa Straylight, his consciousness has "grown in on itself." In effect, he has committed "the Gothic folly" (172) that Orr successfully avoids in *The Bridge*. He has chosen the dream of the individual over that of the collective.

In spite of their different endings, however, both *Neuromancer* and *The Bridge* express the fluid workings of the individual's psyche through transumptive metaphor—be it the changing face of a flickering television screen or a metamorphosing bridge. Indeed, both works suggest that the psyche can be known only through this process: through metaphors which express psychic reality in concrete terms. Because one's consciousness is never static, the literary means which depicts it is also always engaged in the process of renewing itself.

## Endnotes

1. Currently, only one New Critical article has been published about Iain Banks's *The Bridge*: Ronald Binns's "Castles, Books and Bridges: Mervyn Peake and Iain Banks."
2. Extreme is the best term to describe the critical climate surrounding William Gibson's *Neuromancer*. Articles about this text fall into either the New Critical school or the postmodern category. For New Critical Treatments of this text see Russell Blackford's "Mirrors of the Future City: William Gibson's *Neuromancer*," Istran Csicsery-Ronay's "The Sentimental Futurist: Cybernetics and Art in William Gibson's *Neuromancer*," and David G. Mead's "Technical Transformation in William Gibson's Sprawl Novels: *Neuromancer*, *Count Zero*, and *Mona Lisa Overdrive*." For postmodern readings of this text see Veronica Hollinger's "Cybernetic Deconstructions: Cyberpunk and Postmodernism" and Lance Olsen's "The Shadow of Spirit in William Gibson's Matrix Trilogy."

*Chapter Nine**Symbolic Language: The Last Unicorn*

In psycho-narration, symbols supplement structural modes as a means of evoking psychic realities. According to Jung, symbols are metaphysical events, because they reveal the workings of something which is not limited to our consciousness and its contents ("Unconscious" 6). Overall, symbols reveal the nature of the archetypes at work and the in-born structures of the psyche. For these reasons, the seminal symbols in psycho-narrative continue to reflect the images of primitive man's cosmologies that mirror archetypal realities. Thus these symbols represent one of two archetypal situations: Creation or Chaos. The situation of Creation is often expressed in images of verdant landscapes, well-tended gardens, and orderly cities. In contrast, Chaos manifests itself in images of mazes and labyrinths created out of natural and urban wastelands.

Because symbols occur spontaneously, for the most part, they can not be governed by the conscious mind. As Jung points out, individuals can not invent symbols ("Unconscious" 42). Thus, psycho-narratives concerned with the self-governing nature of symbols tend to take the form of third-person narration. In these psycho-narratives, symbols freed from the organising consciousness of a first-person narrator appear to lead nearly autonomous lives. Indeed, one may argue that in these

texts the complex system of symbols reveals the workings of the psyche without the distracting influence of the conscious mind—be it the consciousness of an individual or a collective consciousness. The result of reading such a text is similar to that experienced when reading the fairy tale, which also liberates archetypes that dwell in the collective unconscious. When we read a good fairy tale, C.S Lewis notes, “we are obeying the old precept ‘Know Thyself’” (36). When we read these psycho-narratives, we are obeying the same precept.

In the complex systems of symbols which reveal the workings of the psyche, archetypal figures carry specific symbolic and intellectual overtones or meaning. As such, they are like the figures of medieval allegories and visionary dialogues. The knowledge which we acquire reading these texts, however, is emotional as well as intellectual. The response to these archetypal figures, is also non-intellectual. As D. H. Lawrence remarks, symbols “arouse the deep emotional self and the dynamic self, beyond comprehension. Many ages of accumulated experience still throb within a symbol, and we throb in response” (296).

Moreover, the emotional response which these figures elicit is further developed through the use of spatial metaphors. In psycho-narratives, symbolic settings constitute an essential dimension of archetypal figures. More than realistic details, landscapes are mindscapes, portraits of the psyche itself. Thus, like the settings in medieval allegories, settings in psycho-narratives reinforce the meanings of the archetypal figures which they contain; unlike the settings in medieval allegories, settings in psycho-narratives also function symbolically, expressing the labyrinthine terrain of the psyche itself. In the mundane world of *The Last Unicorn*, three seminal

settings which inform psycho-narration appear: the forest, the wilderness, and the maze.

In short, the metaphysical function of the symbol in these psycho-narratives serves to join the signifier with the signified. Moreover, its ability to generate emotion makes language in these texts a meaningful activity. By generating understanding, symbols in psycho-narratives challenge Lacan's theory that the symbolic order has a traumatic element, the separation of the signifier from the signified, at its very heart. Fantasy, according to Lacan, is conceived as a construction which allows the subject to come to terms with the modern rupture between signifier and signified (Sarup 58). Psycho-narratives, which contain elements of the fantastic and are concerned with the autonomy of symbols, however, prove the exception to this rule.

Peter S. Beagle's *The Last Unicorn* is a third-person psycho-narrative which illustrates very well the function of symbols and language in psycho-narration. At first, *The Last Unicorn* appears to be a simple tale about a legendary creature.<sup>1</sup> After discovering that she is the only unicorn living in the world, Beagle's mythical animal sets out to search for her own kind. During her quest, she is befriended by a magician and a cook, is transformed into a human being, falls in love, and is finally restored to her original form. Although the story ends satisfactorily—that is, the missing unicorns are found and restored to the world—from the perspective of the human characters the end would seem to be unsatisfactory. The Prince does not finally marry the Princess, as would be the case in the usual fairy tale. Lir loses the Lady Amalthea and returns to become the king of Haggard's land only under duress.

The land itself, however, is transformed: it, not the people in it, becomes improved. *The Last Unicorn* is thus not specifically a story about the transformation of any one individual but about the transformation of the psyche itself.

In *The Last Unicorn*, symbols have an autonomous quality. Indeed, they are roaming about loose in an often frightening fashion. Celano the Harpy, Robin Hood, and, of course, the Unicorn herself are only three of the mythological figures which appear in this text. Evidence of their archetypal quality may be found in the emotional responses which they evoke in their readers, thereby establishing *The Last Unicorn* as one of the most "beloved" fantasies of all time. The nature of this response may also be seen in the reactions of the other characters in the text who encounter them.

During her stint in Mommy Fortuna's Travelling Circus, for example, the Unicorn hears "hearts bounce, tears brewing and breath going backward" when Ruhk brings the crowd to her cage. "By the sorrow and loss and sweetness in their faces," she knows that the crowd has "recognised her" (27). Even Prince Lir's jaded and cynical father, King Haggard, reacts in the same manner when seeing unicorns. Looking at the sea where he has imprisoned them, "delight" changes his face "beyond believing": "they fill me with joy," he says, "I am sure it is joy. The first time I felt it, I thought I was going to die" (186).

Like the Unicorn, Celano the Harpy also evokes an emotional response from those who encounter her. This response, however, is not delight, but bone-chilling terror. Even the Unicorn trembles at the "horror of the harpy" (26). Looking at the Harpy, the Unicorn feels the "breath in her body turning to cold iron." A creature

which inhabits the nether lands of the psyche, Celano is a numinous creature from the nightmare. Resembling a "great bronze bird," her unnatural appearance evokes terror: on top of "her scaly shoulders" sits "a hag's face," complete with "the shaggy round ears of a bear" (25). The Unicorn remarks that to look at Celano is "to feel the light going out of the sky" (26).

Despite their obvious differences, the Unicorn and the Harpy's fundamental natures are basically the same. They are different expressions of the same thing. As Jung points out, an archetype which manifests itself in "the extrahuman sphere . . . on a plane beyond human consciousness is expressed on the one hand in the daemonically superhuman and on the other as bestially subhuman" (86). The Unicorn acknowledges this when she frees the Harpy from her cage. Recognising her kinship with the monster, she cries "in wonder, 'Oh, you are like me!'" Beagle further emphasises the likeness between the Harpy and the Unicorn by using the devices of the mirror and the double. The Unicorn sees "herself reflected in the harpy's bronze breast" and feels "the monster shining from her own body." As they circle "one another like a double star . . . under the shrunken sky there [is] nothing real but the two of them" (45).

Culture-heroes are also part of Beagle's metaphysics, and like the Unicorn and the Harpy, the presence of Robin Hood also contributes to the complex system of affirmations about the reality of things. When Schmendrick conjures up Robin Hood, the response of Cully's outlaws suggests the numinosity of the folk hero. Filled with awe, Willie Gentle's voice is "as naked as a baby bird" (75). In this particular instance, the archetype manifests itself as a delightful experience—one which recalls

the human condition before the Fall: "effortlessly proud, graceful as giraffes," Robin and his Merry Men move across the clearing. Robin and Marian make up the band's rear-guard, "their faces [are] beautiful, as though they [have] never known fear" (75).

Not surprisingly, Cully's men prefer the reality that these archetypal figures posit to their own seedy and sordid existence in the forest. It is, after all, a far more attractive reality. More importantly, however, as Molly Grue points out to Cully, in the presence of these archetypes "there is no such person as you, or me, or any of us. Robin and Marian are real, and we are the legend" (76).

Here, the problem which Molly presents the reader is a metaphysical one. Beagle's treatment of what is real is highly unorthodox, and involves an inversion of the Platonic scheme. One finds the principal character, the Unicorn, involved in a descent rather than an ascent of the ladder of being. As she travels through the mundane world searching for her fellows, she becomes a Platonic manifestation of the Ideal that is visiting the world of shadows. As such, the Unicorn (and the Harpy and Robin Hood) functions as an archetype which has emerged from the collective unconscious. The realistic setting through which she travels, however, is in itself symbolic as is the forest which she leaves behind when she moves into this world.

According to J. E. Cirlot, forest symbolism is complex and connected at all levels with nature and the great Mother. The forest is a place where vegetable life thrives and luxuriates, free from any control or cultivation, and since its foliage obscures the light of the sun, the forest is regarded as being opposed to the sun's power and is recognised as a symbol of the earth (Cirlot 112). At the outset of the story, the "lilac wood" which the unicorn inhabits symbolizes the regenerative

archetype which the Unicorn herself embodies. Like the Unicorn's horn, which has the power to heal wounds and restore life to the dead, the wood is a place in which decay and death are unknown. It is a place that is unaffected by the changing seasons—"the leaves never fall" in the Unicorn's forest and winter never arrives. As one hunter remarks, in the Unicorn's forest "there won't be a hunter who takes home so much as a titmouse at his saddle" (3).

In short, this forest is a locus in which the feminine principle which the Unicorn embodies thrives: "it [is] always spring in the forest, because she [lives] there, and she [wanders] all day among the great beech trees, keeping watch over the animals that [live] in the ground, in nests and caves, earths and treetops" (2).

As this passage suggests, the Unicorn's forest is a pre-lapsarian place. And indeed, when the Unicorn steps away from the trees, which are themselves symbols of "inexhaustible life" and "immortality" (Cirlot 347), she experiences a "fall" into Time. As Beagle's narrator notes, "time had always passed her by in her forest, but now it was she who passed through time as she travelled" (7).

The lapsarian world into which the Unicorn has stepped is presented in terms of diametric contrast to her forest. The landscape is made up of "flat country and mountains, stony barrens and meadows springing out of stones" (7). Unlike the forest, the terrain of Time is infertile. Every place that the Unicorn visits reflects this problem to some degree: the prime example, however, is the "place where Haggard is King." Here, "all the hills are lean as knives, / And nothing grows, not leaves nor trees" (49). As Haggard's hostile knife-like hills suggest, his is a kingdom in which things die rather than live.

While the Unicorn's forest is allied with the feminine, the barren fields and unhappy, hostile villages of Haggard's kingdom are associated with the masculine. In *The Visionary Landscape*, Paul Piehler notes that in ancient literature, the hostility of the wilderness is what the founders of cities traditionally must overcome—after all, heroic literature is frequently concerned with the recording of the victories by which the frontiers of the rational intellect have been extended (73-74). In psycho-narratives, the wilderness functions in a similar fashion but with one important difference: it has become the signature of civilisation. Ironically, the wilderness embodies the terrain of the rational intellect. Having conquered Nature, Haggard has clearly imposed his own ordering principles upon it. Thus, in the fashion of the ancient Greeks, the land reflects the nature of its king. Like Haggard, the land and its people are hostile. As the narrator remarks, “toads would have been more hospitable than the sullen folk of Haggard's country. Their villages lay bald as bones between knifelike hills where nothing grew, and they themselves had hearts unmistakably as sour as boiled beer” (1).

Haggard and his kingdom are devoid of the nurturing fecundity of the feminine which one finds in the Unicorn's forest: “the rind of the country [is] cracked, he says, and the flesh of it [is] peeled back into gullies or ravines or shrivelled into scabby hills” (91). Not only is Haggard's kingdom a “barren land by the sea” (49), he himself is unable to produce a son for the kingdom. Lir is a foundling.

In *The Last Unicorn*, if infertility is the result of an excessive patriarchal order, it is also the end-product of rational thought generally associated with the masculine. Beagle leaves little doubt that rational thinking, when carried to an extreme, manifests

itself as a kind of insanity. Behaving rationally, the Hagsgateans, for example, have abstained from sex for over twenty years. Because they refused to depose King Haggard who would not pay her, the witch who built Haggard's castle cursed them with the prospect of one of their own children destroying the town. As Drinn points out, abstinence was "the most obvious way of foiling the witch" who cursed them (104).

In psycho-narration, landscapes are mindscapes, portraits of the psyche itself. In *The Last Unicorn*, the effect of excessive masculinity unbalances the order of the collective psyche, and this imbalance is reflected in an imbalance in the natural order. For example, Schmendrick tells Molly that "some say the land was 'green and soft' before Haggard conquered it" and that when Haggard touched the land, it "withered" (49). Schmendrick supports this observation by adding that "there is a saying among farmers when they look on a field lost of fire or locusts or the wind: as 'blighted as Haggard's heart'" (49).

Beagle also uses natural images further to delineate the condition of individual psyches. Under the Unicorn's influence, Molly's psyche connotes the archetype of Creation. She is transformed: she becomes like "a softer country, full of pools and caves, where old flowers [come] burning out of the ground . . . her rough hair [blooms], her skin [quickens] . . . the eyes . . . [have] wakened in the earth" (90). Schmendrick, in contrast, whom the Unicorn cannot help, is not renewed by the rain that renews Molly. In terms of natural images, his consciousness expresses the archetype of Chaos. He seems "ever more parched and deserted, like the land itself" (91).

Another seminal image which informs the nature of the psyche is not one directly related to Nature. Appropriately, its inspiration belongs to the city, not the country. Haggard's castle is an example of the use of the symbolic architectonic tradition that uses buildings to reflect the nature of the owner's mind. Resting uneasily on its shifting foundations, the ever-changing stone maze, which houses Haggard and his retinue, reflects the uncertain, chilly, logical labyrinth that is the King's inward-turning consciousness. The dank dungeon which houses the Red Bull expresses the murky depths of Haggard's psyche in which the archetype lurks. Caught between his extreme greed and his overwhelming need, Haggard himself does not know whether he is the slave of the Bull or whether the Bull is his servant. One may argue that the Red Bull which inhabits the castle is the archetype which possesses Haggard's psyche, for the Bull is "no shape at all, but a swirling darkness, the red darkness you see when you close your eyes in pain." As the turrets of Haggard's castle also suggest, however, the King himself exists between the horns of his dilemma. The Bull's horns actually become "the two towers of . . . [the] crazy castle" in which Haggard lives (121).

Once inside the castle, Molly and Schmendrick find themselves lost in a stone labyrinth: "after the great hall, there came another door and then a thin stair. There were few windows and no lights. The stair coiled tighter and tighter as it ascended, until it seemed that every step turned round on itself, and that the tower was closing in on them like a sweaty fist" (134-35). If read allegorically, this passage suggests that Haggard's consciousness has turned in on itself in the Gothic manner. The

tower's coiling claustrophobia reflects Haggard's ego-centric, miserly, and anal retentive existence. Read symbolically, however, this passage illuminates the text quite differently.

According to Cirlot, the image of a maze or a labyrinth alludes to "the Fall" in the neoplatonic sense; it signifies the loss of the spirit in the process of creation and the subsequent need to seek the way out through the "Center" back to the spirit. Throughout her quest, the Unicorn finds herself in the fallen world. One might even say that this fallen world represents fallen consciousness itself—for surely no character is closer to the lowest rung in the ladder of transcendence than Haggard, who is a murderer, a baby-snatcher, and an abusive parent. Like Haggard's psyche, the castle exists merely to house the Red Bull. Ironically, it is in the Bull's lair that the "Center" exists.

As Mircea Eliade points out, the "Center" is preeminently the zone of the sacred, the zone of absolute reality. The road leading to this "Center" is difficult; its difficulties are verified at every level of reality: in the "convolutions of a temple; in pilgrimages to sacred places; in danger-ridden voyages; and in wanderings in labyrinths" (*Cosmos* 18). When the Unicorn steps out of her wood onto the road that leads her to Haggard's castle, she "[feels] how hard it is and how long" (6).

What is being depicted here is a metaphysical version of a rite of passage which involves the movement of an archetype from a Platonic realm into the profane. Ultimately, the archetype's descent to the profane is a humanizing process, and appropriately, towards the end of her quest, the Unicorn becomes a human being in order to "unravel her own riddle." Indeed, it seems that in order to satisfy the

requirements of such a quest one must after all be a human being; ultimately, the sacred centre is found in the human psyche itself. As Schmendrick remarks, young girls, not rhinoceri, are "questing beasts" (126).

A series of psychic events, the quest is designed to enable the quester to individuate. In doing so, the quester attains the "Center" and learns the answer to his or her riddle. Eliade argues that the function of the maze is to defend the "Center." Thus, a journey through a labyrinth is, on one level, an initiatory process (*Cosmos* 18). Haggard's castle certainly does not yield the king's secrets easily. As the skull of Haggard's henchman "set to guard the way to the bull" remarks, one must understand the secrets of the sacred before one can find the center of the labyrinth. Traditionally, these secrets are the property of the dead. Thus the skull tells Schmendrick, "When I was alive, I believed—as you do—that time was at least as real and solid as myself. . . . Now I know that I could have walked through walls" (199).

Learning the secrets of the dead always involves a descent to the underworld. Having learned, like the shaman, the secrets of the dead, Molly, Schmendrick and the Unicorn find themselves underground at the "Center" of the castle: in a dark cavern whose walls burn "gullet-red" (217). Attaining the "Center," even a hellish one like the Bull's, is equivalent to the initiation itself. According to Eliade, when the "Center" is attained, "yesterday's profane and illusory existence gives way to a new, to a life that is real, enduring and effective" (*Cosmos* 101). Thus it is not surprising that in the cavern, the Lady Amalthea (the Unicorn's alter-ego) again becomes the Unicorn or that the castle itself dissolves into thin air once Haggard dies. Re-

discovering the reality that the Unicorn represents is a psychic event. When the imprisoned creatures burst from the sea, they can be described only in terms generally reserved for epiphanies. They are “a light leaping toward [Molly] and a cry that [dazzles Molly’s] eyes” (326). All around Molly, the narrator says, “there flowed and flowered a light as impossible as snow set afire, while thousands of cloven hoofs sang by like cymbals”: as the unicorns engulf her, Molly experiences delight so intense that she cannot express it. She stands “very still, neither weeping nor laughing, for her joy [is] too great for her body to understand” (227).

At the end of the work, not only are the characters’ psyches transformed—Schmendrick is the most obvious example—but the nature of the land itself has changed. The “sign of unicorns” is everywhere. In Nature, this renewal is signified by the arrival of spring. Molly notices that “the withered earth [is] brightening with a greenness as shy as smoke . . . squat, shaggy trees [are] putting forth flowers . . . long dry streams [are] beginning to rustle in their beds . . . and even the afternoon sunlight [has] a tender sneezy scent that [she] would have known anywhere.” The renewal of the land also involves the renewal of its inhabitants—even “small creatures [are] calling to one another.” As before, Beagle carefully underlines the symbolic meaning of a natural event. Molly realises that “spring” has also come to her, “late but lasting” (235).

Another manifestation of psychic renewal occurs when characters fall in love. Ironically, the “fall” which this entails involves the transcendence of the limitations of the individual’s condition. The individual in love takes on an identity awarded such a

collective experience. As Lir, his father's "sport and shame" (150), says to Molly, falling in love enables him to become a hero.

In Beagle's text, psychic renewal is not a straightforward process, for it rests on the symbol's ability to evoke powerful and contradictory emotional responses. Thus, when one encounters archetypal figures like the Red Bull, it soon becomes apparent that one is reading what Lawrence terms "a compound work." The Red Bull is certainly not limited to one meaning; it has what Lawrence would call "meanings. No meaning within meaning: but rather meaning against meaning" (295).

Traditionally, the figure of the bull represents the masculine principle, heaven and the father. A lunar and a solar animal, however, the bull is linked not only with death, sacrifice, self-denial, and chastity, but also with rebirth and fecundity. In all palaeo-oriented cultures, it is the bull which expresses the idea of power (Cirlot 33-36). In *The Last Unicorn*, the Red Bull embodies all these things: living beneath Haggard's castle, the Bull evokes the legend of the monster in the labyrinth of Knossos; leaving the castle, his humped shoulders and sloping back in the ocean evoke the image of Zeus's rape of Europa.

Evoking contradictory responses, texts which contain archetypal figures and settings express the constantly changing structure of the psyche itself. In *The Last Unicorn*, this structure is expressed in the changing landscapes that the Unicorn inhabits. Perhaps one of the most powerful depictions of the changing structure of the psyche is found in the metamorphosing witch-castle itself whose turning corridors and toppling turrets shift their shapes and locations. Thus, when one reads *The Last Unicorn*, one enters—as Lawrence does when reading *The Dragon of the*

*Apocalypse*—"another world, measured by another dimension" (293). An archetypal figure, the Red Bull is merely one of this psyche's inhabitants.

Because it expresses the shifting nature of the psyche, the psycho-narrative is usually constructed like a labyrinth—one may even say that *The Last Unicorn*, concerned with the autonomy of symbols, is a labyrinth of language when one considers its juxtapositions of meaning against meaning. Beagle places a great deal of importance on the nature of language at the outset of his text. In *The Last Unicorn*, the Unicorn pre-supposes language to be meaningful. That is to say that the Unicorn believes that the function of language is to join signifier and signified. At the outset of the narrative, this function of language, however, appears to have broken down. As the Unicorn searches for "her people . . . she [finds] no trace of them" and "in all the tongues she [hears] spoken . . . there [is] not even a word for them any more" (7). Because words link the natural world and that which transcends that world, the Unicorn knows "beyond both hope and vanity that men [have] changed and the world with them, because the unicorns [are] gone" (9).

When the sacred cannot be expressed directly, metaphors become the means by which such an experience is made meaningful. By their very nature, metaphors join signifier with signified, thereby concretizing the abstract. Thus the Unicorn finds herself mistaken for a white mare, when it is clear that she does not resemble one at all. Such a description, however, while not accurate, succeeds in conveying her essence. She is "beautiful" (7).

Since what is "perceptible to the senses is the reflection of what is intelligible to the mind" (Cirlot xvi), the Unicorn wonders what it must be like to look at something

and not see it at all. As the narrative continues, it becomes evident that in order to understand a thing, one must experience it. Humanity no longer understands what it is to be a unicorn. Likewise, the Unicorn herself does not understand what it is to be a man or a woman. In order to know what it is to become human, she must live like one. Thus the Unicorn feels no sympathy for Schmendrick until she experiences "the first spidery touch of sorrow on the inside of her skin" (52), because only then can she understand the limitations of Schmendrick's psychic condition. Finally understanding the nature of Schmendrick's psychic condition, because she herself has experienced it, the Unicorn is able at last to express sorrow and regret.

In this text, language is not only metaphoric, it is also metonymic. Metonymic language substitutes the name of one thing for that of another. Beagle's introduction of metonymic nonsense acts as a foil to his psycho-narrative's use of metaphor. In *The Last Unicorn*, the fragmented, transitory nature of the profane is best illustrated in the speech of the butterfly which the Unicorn meets early in her travels. His conversation consists of bits of old songs and scraps of popular culture. Recognising the limited condition of the butterfly's consciousness, the Unicorn remarks to herself, "You know better than to expect a butterfly to know your name . . . . They mean well, but they can't keep things straight. And why should they? They die so soon" (11).

Substituting the name of one thing for that of another, the butterfly's disjointed metonymic conversation separates signifier from the signified. He sings, "I have nightmares about crawling around on the ground. The little dogs, Tray, Blanche, Sue, they bark at me, the little snakes, they hiss at me, the beggars are coming to

town. Then at last come the clams" (13). When signifier and signified do coalesce in a metaphor, the result is a meaningful statement. Beagle underlines this by inserting dictionary definitions into the butterfly's speech when he finally correctly names her: "Unicorn. Old French, *unicorne*. Latin, *unicornis*. Literally one-horned: unus, one and cornu, a horn. A fabulous animal resembling a horse with one horn." At this point, his speech becomes meaningful—as the Unicorn exclaims, "Oh you do know me!" (12).

Throughout the text, the attempt to join the signifier with the signified is repeated over and over again. Magic is the medium by which the importance of metaphor is best illustrated. Schmendrick, who cannot create even the slightest work of magic, is unable to do precisely this. Rather than concretizing the abstract, he substitutes one thing for another. As a result, his acts of magic are exercises in nonsense. He turns "a sermon into a stone, a glass of water into a handful of water, a five of spades into a twelve of spades, and a rabbit into a goldfish that drowned" (36). Mommy Fortuna, in contrast, seems to be able to concretize the abstract by creating manticores and satyrs, mythological creatures, out of lions and apes, mundane animals. As the Unicorn points out, however, Mommy Fortuna's spells are "spells of seeming . . . she cannot make things" (23). Ultimately, the reality which the Unicorn embodies can only be recognised only when it is presented concretely in a form which the carnival-goer can understand. Mommy Fortuna points out, "these days, it takes a cheap carnival witch to make folk recognize a real unicorn" (32). As an illusionist, she understand the necessity of using the concrete to express the abstract.

While Mommy Fortuna's death at the claws of an actual Harpy may be read as Beagle's wry examination of the Lacanian notion that human beings are seized by the image rather than vice versa, one should note that throughout *The Last Unicorn*, the archetypal quest which the Unicorn and her companions undertake is Saussurean. Just as Saussure argues that language does result from the union of signifier and signified, so the purpose of the Unicorn's journey is to connect language and experience. This is accomplished at the end of the text. Again metaphor is the means by which Beagle describes the unicorns' return to dry land. They are described as "a light as impossible as snow set afire" and their hooves sing "like cymbals" (227).

Plot structure also serves to reinforce the notion that language reflects reality. At first, the Unicorn's journey seems to be a random process. Since she does not know where she is going, the text itself wanders. Events are controlled by chance: Mommy Fortuna happens to find the Unicorn asleep; the butterfly happens to travel with her; Schmendrick happens to be her companion. One may read the Unicorn's journey into the profane as a haphazard associative process. When Schmendrick learns of Prince Lir, he comments, "It's a great relief . . . I've been waiting for this tale to turn up a leading man" (109). As Schmendrick points out, the Unicorn's quest does not become meaningful until its nature can be identified.

The Unicorn's journey may also be read as an action which serves to change reality by joining the signified (the sacred) with the signifier (the profane). The plot of Beagle's text does not involve merely the discovery of the sacred in the form of the Unicorn. Rather, as the Unicorn travels throughout the world, the reader

rediscovers the sacred nature of the world itself. As Eliade remarks, the world itself is sacred, but paradoxically, one cannot see the sacredness of the world until one discovers that the world is a divine *play* (*Myths* 242). One needs to see that the profane is a metaphor of the sacred. In order to discover the archetype for which the profane is a signature, however, one must give up fixed notions about the nature of the world. Haggard's henchman's skull points this out to Schmendrick when they discuss the nature of Time: "the important thing is for you to understand that it doesn't matter whether the clock strikes ten next, or seven or fifteen o'clock. You can strike your own time and start the count anywhere," he says (199).

Beagle also persuades us to abandon fixed notions about the nature of reality by undermining our intellectual responses to the text. In *The Last Unicorn*, neither logic nor cause and effect control the action of the plot. Unable to rely on the intellect, the reader learns to depend on his or her emotional reactions in order to understand the text's coherence. These reactions are supported by characters in the text who take on choral functions. Thus it is natural that one falls in love with the Unicorn and is horrified by the Harpy. The symbolic language of the text, which demands that one functions on a visceral level while reading it, supports these reactions.

Thus, despite their multiplicity of meanings, the effect of these symbols is not ambiguity, chaos, and meaninglessness. If one relies on one's emotional responses when reading *The Last Unicorn*, understanding this story becomes a relatively straightforward affair. In psycho-narration, recognising the shadow is one means by which psychic imbalance may be corrected. Recognising the sacred is another. In

*The Last Unicorn*, Beagle presents us with both possibilities couched in the language of symbol and metaphor.

#### Endnote

1. Only a few New Critical articles have been published about Peter S. Beagle's *The Last Unicorn*. Among them are John Pennington's "Innocence and Experience and the Imagination in the World of Peter Beagle," Roger C. Schlobin's "The Survival of the Fool in Modern Heroic Fantasy," and Jean Tobin's "A Myth, a Memory, a Will-'o-the-Wish" and "Werewolves and Unicorns: Fabulous Beasts in Peter Beagle's Fiction."

*Chapter Ten**Psychomachean Narratives: Alibi and Mantissa*

As illustrations of an unbalanced psyche, psycho-narratives often take the form of a psychomachia. During the Middle Ages, many psychomachias were written as extended allegories in which personified ideas or states of mind exemplified a doctrine or thesis. Modern psychomachias, however, dramatize the contents of the psyche at work, rather than a battle between vices and virtues for the soul of the human being. Because the workings of the psyche are a-logical, the effect of these psychomachias, especially those told in the first-person, is very similar to that of the dream vision. Events often proceed in an illogical, synchronistic fashion, which serves to distance the reader from the action of the narrative. At times, even the characters themselves experience the sensation of functioning in a waking dream. This sensation is heightened by the appearance of archetypes, projections of the unconscious mind, which are presented as concrete or realistic figures. Of these archetypal projections, the anima is the one which appears most frequently.

“Inner” figures, animas are projections of the feminine psychological tendencies of the psyche. As Marie-Louise von Franz points out in “The Process of Individuation,” animas personify vague feelings and moods, prophetic hunches, a receptiveness to the irrational, the capacity for personal love, the feeling for nature,

and a sense of connection to the unconscious. From very early times, the irrational—and hence the feminine—was also allied with the Divine; priestesses—like the Greek Sibyl—were used to fathom the divine will and make the connection with the gods (von Franz “Process” 186). Thus anima figures also serve as bridges to the sacred.

Because the anima is in tune with the irrational, it at first may seem somewhat confusing and is often frightening. Once defined, however, its function is easily recognisable. Whenever our logical minds are incapable of discerning facts that are hidden in the unconscious, it is the anima’s duty to unearth them. Even more importantly, the anima plays the role of the guide or mediator to the world within and to the Self. Consequently, the form that the anima takes depends upon which aspect of the individual’s psyche needs to be developed. The anima may appear as an Eve figure, suggesting that purely instinctual and biological relations need to be developed; it may appear as the legendary Helen, suggesting the need to conjoin the sensual with the romantic and aesthetic; it may appear as the Virgin Mary—pointing towards the individual’s need to raise eros to the level of religious devotion and to develop his or her spirituality; or it may appear as Sapientia, as wisdom transcending what von Franz terms even the most holy and the most pure and suggesting the individual psyche’s need to experience the numinal (von Franz “Process” 195).

Among the earlier well-known Eve figures are Shakespeare’s Miranda in *The Tempest*, Desdemona in *Othello*, and Keats’s Madeline in *St. Agnes’s Eve*. Whereas in these cases the anima has an innocent quality, the anima figure which personifies a romantic and aesthetic level is often portrayed negatively. In addition to Faust’s Helen—the lamia or siren who lures men into dangerous situations with her

charms—other counterparts are Malory's Iseulte, Shakespeare's "Dark Lady" of the Sonnet Cycle, and Keats's "La Belle Dame sans merci."

In earlier literature, a typical example of the anima as the Virgin Mary—an inversion of Eve and as the mother-of-all-souls—is the *Pearl* maiden. Often presented as the Bride of Christ, Milton's "late espous'd saint" belongs in this category, just as Wordsworth's Lucy is another good example of the ability of the feminine to inspire spiritual rather than physical devotion.

Finally, the anima as Sapiientia may be found in *Piers Plowman*, wherein the inspiring feminine principle is presented as Holy Mother Church. Perhaps the best-known example of a Wisdom figure is Dante's Beatrice in *The Divine Comedy*. As von Franz points out, in the psychic development of modern men and women, this fourth and final manifestation of the anima as the Wisdom figure is rarely evident. The Wisdom figure's absence may be due to the emphasis our culture has placed on the intellectual component of the psyche. Its absence certainly calls attention to the spirituality that is missing in our culture today. Beagle's Unicorn in *The Last Unicorn* and Williams's Betty in *All Hallows' Eve* can qualify as Wisdom figures, but in psycho-narration, anima figures of this type are the exception rather than the rule. In general, one finds either composites of either the Eve or Helen type: Styron's Sophie, White's Guenever, Gibson's Molly, and Banks's Abberlaine Aaroll. The products of erotic fantasy, these feminine characters display what von Franz terms "the crude and primitive aspect of the anima" which arises when we do not sufficiently cultivate our emotional relationships because our "feeling attitude towards

life" has remained "infantile" (191). Their appearance constitutes what may be considered a necessary first stage in correcting psychic imbalances.

In psycho-narratives concerned with anima figures, the narrator's under-developed emotional capacity is reflected in the relationship between the sexes: hence, the flight or entrapment structure of their plots. Often these plots contain a psychic situation or projections which is represented in parodic terms. It should be noted, however, that the parodic nature does not reduce the impact of the projection but rather identifies it as a defense mechanism. Equally, although the parody functions as the equivalent of earlier allegorical methods—in that it allows the plot to be advanced as a sustained argument—the archetypal nature of the anima projection undermines the intellectual didacticism.

Among the funniest and therefore most challenging examples of psychomachean narratives concerned with the anima are Robert Kroetsch's *Alibi* and John Fowles's *Mantissa*.<sup>1</sup> *Alibi* is the story of William Dorfen Dorf's travels throughout North America and Europe in search of a spa for Jack Deemer. *Alibi*, however, does not document Dorf's travels as much as it charts his flight from women. Having recently experienced an unpleasant divorce, Dorf re-enacts the past, involving himself with women who are not only frightening but also emasculating. His flight ends in the Canadian bush where, unable to develop his emotional capacity for love, he becomes celibate. *Mantissa* also explores its narrator's under-developed emotional capacity during a battle of the sexes. A more obvious psychomachia, the action of *Mantissa* occurs within the psyche of the protagonist, Miles Green. A writer, Green begins the story with a standard male fantasy. His pornographic imaginings, however, are

interrupted by an enraged Erato, the muse of love poetry. The lovers' quarrel which follows explores the nature of the male/female relationship as Green and Erato attempt to dominate one another by taking on different psychic identities. At the end of the fight, Miles becomes a satyr, whose behaviour illustrates Green's undeveloped emotional capacity.

Both Kroetsch and Fowles begin their tales by deliberately—and blatantly—parodying psychological paradigms, and these parodies specifically focus on the negative aspects of the Feminine. In both texts, there is punning on names, and those which pertain to the female characters have the quality of low burlesque. In *Alibi*, “Karen Strike,” for example, is the opposite of a “carin’” individual. At the Banff Springs Hotel, when Dorf castrates himself (in essence) while taking a shower, he finds himself in the presence of a negative aspect of the Mother. Instead of kissing Dorf's scalded private parts “better,” as he requests, Strike laughs uproariously. “You're useless to me now,” she tells him (21-22). The sarcasm of Big Julie Magnasson is also a form of intellectual castration. Another negative aspect of the feminine, Magnasson is truly a *magna mater*: a terrifying figure to Dorf, who believes her to be engaged in plotting his murder.

In *Mantissa*, the puns which Green's pornographic imagination uses to name both Doctor Delphie and Nurse Cory are so obvious that Erato, the muse of erotic poetry, remarks, “That's not a pun . . . that's a dog turd . . . I s'pose you think the whole soddin' world still speaks Greek” (52). Dr. A. Delphie's name, of course, evokes the oracle who was the final authority in religious matters for the ancient

Greeks; the nurse's name, Cory, is a synonym for the queen of the ancient Greeks' Underworld and the central figure of the Eleusinian mysteries.

However playful these puns may appear to be, it is important to recognise how similar and serious their implications are. In both texts, such parody points ironically to what is most needed and desired. Abusing language, Dorf and Green indicate that the need to connect words to psychic realities is what is required in their situations. In *Alibi*, this need for meaning is expressed in terms of the Feminine's power of regeneration, in *Mantissa*, in terms of the Feminine's inspirational power.

Although both works begin by reducing the power of the feminine to the crude physical matters of sexual attraction, the personas of both authors become caught up in the psychic process which is being ridiculed. As *Alibi* and *Mantissa* unfold, their male protagonists, because of their condescending attitudes toward psychic figures and experiences, appear to be increasingly silly rather than increasingly sophisticated. In short, the feminine may be a matter for low burlesque in the beginning, but this form of parody is soon dissolved and high burlesque takes its place: Dorf and Green become caricatures of the logocentric behaviour which they promote. In the end, both novels reveal that the debasement of the Feminine and the materialisation of the psyche is the flip-side of intellectual thought.

One reason that the initial low burlesque does not continue is that the archetypal aspects of the Feminine which these works attempt to parody inherently resist such stereotyping and didacticism. In spite of the narrators' attempts, the Feminine manifests itself as a multi-dimension matter, and—being multi-faceted—the Feminine can not be limited to a single, fixed expression of itself.

In *Alibi*, Kroetsch's increasingly erotic treatment of the things associated with the Feminine is a prime example of the anima at work. Although Dorf's concern is to investigate spas for his sponsor, his responses clearly reflect encounters with the anima. Places of healing, these spas are presented in terms of womb imagery: pools of water and mud, caves, and rooms. Symbolic places of gestation and transformation, these are locations essentially connected with the vessel symbolism that signifies the primordial womb of life in which the Feminine and the act of healing are inextricably linked. Indeed, one could hardly find a more primordial evocation of the feminine than the pool of mud at Lapsi, in which Kroetsch's protagonist, Dorf, immerses himself. A warm mixture of earth and water, the mud is "the mud of being": for the first time in his life, Dorf finds himself "in touch with the world" (167).

To Dorf, however, such experiences become merely auto-erotic moments in a long series of sexual encounters. In short, Dorf is a narcissist. In the mud, experiencing the "greatest orgasm" of his life, he becomes his "own fountain" (180).

Dorf's auto-eroticism signifies the split condition of his psyche. Throughout the narrative, remaining obdurately rational, Dorf represses the irrational component of his consciousness by continually projecting its negative aspect onto his lovers or by ascribing its healing power to the physical arena. In keeping with his logocentricity, the site of his "epiphanic orgasm" is Greece—after all, Greece is the birthplace of Western rationalism as well as the home of the Delphic Oracle. At any rate, it is significant that at Lapsi the divided halves of his psyche remain as sharply separated in the mud as they were out of it. When Dorf joins his fellow men in the mud-bath,

he, too, becomes “a floating head . . . cut off from his torso while his ‘whole body’ [becomes] a heart, a heart beating in the mud world” (167). Although the other men shamanistically inscribe the tops of their scalps with the emblem of a “cunt,” as if they are “to be born out of [their] own head[s]” (166), in the mud Dorf wears “a dunce cap” on top of his head (167). Unlike the others, for Dorf there is no possibility of a psychic rebirth: as the dunce cap on his head indicates, his consciousness remains phallogentric.

This division between Dorf’s emotions and his intellect is the result of his emotional immaturity. He is totally unable to maintain a mature relationship with a woman—be it with his ex-wife, his lovers, or his daughters. Emotionally, he functions at the level of an infant—happy only when gratified. At Lapsi, although he experiences the transpersonal power of the feminine while being “stroked and seized and caressed and admired and reviled and jerked and twisted and encouraged and skinned alive by a dozen [anonymous] mud-bespattered and playful women” (170), the result is an irresponsible attitude toward the adult world. In effect, he returns to the “womb” and experiences complete gratification encased in the most primitive expression of the Great Mother: *mater materia*. Instead of initiating him into maturity his relationship with the feminine is basically incestuous.

According to Eric Neumann, uroboric incest is a form of entry into the mother, of union with her, which stands in sharp contrast to other and later, sexual forms of incest because the desire for pleasure and love is in no sense active; rather, it is more a desire to be dissolved and absorbed: “passively, one lets oneself be taken,

sinks into a pleroma, melts away in the ocean of pleasure—a *Liebestod*—while the Great Mother takes the little child back into herself” (*Origins* 17).

Throughout *Alibi*, images of death are associated with Dorf’s incestuous regression into the feminine. At Deadman Spring, for example, the cave in which the spa is located is a dolmen, a place in which ancestral spirits reside and are visited by the living. Dorf finds Julie’s spirit in what is revealed as a place of self-dissolution. In the womb-like, tomb-like darkness, the cave’s inhabitants orgiastically trade “shoulders and arms and mouths . . . buttocks and thighs” (227). As usual, Dorf is reduced to the state of infancy: in the darkness he finds “a sharp nipple” before eventually losing it.

Generally speaking, such contact with the numinous enables the individual to transcend the limitations of his nature. Dorf, however, does not undergo the transcendent experience of a psychic rebirth. Indeed, his experience is quite the opposite, for he moves not up, but down the Chain of Being. At Deadman Spring, he becomes an animal: “I was a hippopotamus. Gone in far, gone deep this time. Darkly deep in the black of that cave” (227). This experience of becoming an animal—and a ridiculous one at that—is precisely what Dorf’s previous sexual encounters seem to have been designed to provide. After all, he has been participating all along in what he himself terms “the attendant rut” (129). As Neumann points out, the male who serves the Great Mother does so as an animal and no more: the male votaries of the Great Goddess who prostituted themselves in her name were appropriately called *kelebim*, or “dogs,” because the Goddess rules the animal world of the instincts (*Mother* 61). During his adventures, Dorf does little

else but respond to the promptings of instinct and in the process he appears to have lost his sanity. Guided by his animal instincts, Dorf's emotions seem to have run wild; he is obsessed with Julie, while also convinced that she is attempting to murder him. By the time he comes to Lapsi, his paranoia has become so extreme that the act of coating himself in warm mud seems, comparatively, to be rational behaviour. In his own words, Dorf is "a wreck" (216). In Neumann's terms, his paranoia indicates his response to the danger of dissolution which the uroboros promises the ego.

Read in terms of Jungian psychology, one could also describe Dorf's behaviour as a form of anima projection. As von Franz points out, men involved in anima projection become obsessed with women who are "fantastically vague"—around whom they can proceed to weave fantasies ("Process" 191). Dorf does exactly this. Knowing very little about Julie Magnasson, he spins fantasies of murder and revenge around her. Considering the unpleasant nature of his divorce, it is hardly surprising that his projections are negative. Remembering Fish's gossip, Dorf believes that "Julie Magnasson would slit your throat just for the pleasure of watching the blood coagulate. She's not simply dangerous, she's a terror" (82).

A negative anima figure, Julie embodies what Dorf has kept buried in his unconscious since the failure of his marriage. Appropriately, his relationship with her involves a staggering array of "human triangles." As von Franz points out, the "human triangle, with its accompanying difficulties" serves to force a man to develop and to bring his *own* being to maturity by integrating more of his unconscious personality and bringing it into his own life ("Process" 191). During his relationship with Julie, Dorf unhappily shares her with Fish or Deemer or Karen or Dorf's

daughter or Dr. de Medeiros. At the end of his experiences, however, Dorf has matured somewhat. His relationship with Julie has enabled him to say that, like most men, he was “secretly pleased to learn his wife had taken lovers” (7).

Dorf’s negative anima projection allows him to realise that he needed to dislike his wife by reminding him of the aspects of the Feminine which he fears. In *The Great Mother*, Neumann remarks that, just as the world, life, nature, and the soul have been experienced as a generative, nourishing, protecting, and warming Femininity, their opposites are also perceived in the image of the Feminine: thus, the womb of the earth becomes a deadly, devouring maw of the underworld, and “beside the fecundated womb and the protecting cave of earth and mountain there gapes the abyss of hell, the dark hole of the depths, the devouring womb of the grave and of death, of darkness without light, of nothingness” (144). Like Neumann’s Terrible Mother and Dorf’s ex-wife who remains nameless, Julie expresses “man’s experience of life as a female exacting blood” (149). It is significant that at Deadman Spring, when Dorf calls Julie’s name in the cave, he involuntarily adds, “Don’t kill me” (228).

With the blood-thirsty nature of the Feminine in mind, it is hardly surprising that at the conclusion of the text, Dorf retreats to the Canadian wilderness—a place which neatly represents the disordered state of his own psyche—and proclaims that he no longer needs women: “I am by nature a hermit,” he says. This proclamation, however, is not evidence of his return to a primal condition and psychic wholeness: it is essentially an attempt to escape the maw of the Mother which ironically the wilderness, traditionally a symbol of Nature red in tooth and claw, represents. In

doing so, Dorf becomes a caricature of patriarchal consciousness. Attempting to repress even the projections of the repressed components of his psyche, he will have nothing more to do with the Feminine. In a fit of monkishness, he tells Bill to tell Karen Strike that he "shall either return soon to Greece, and go to Mount Athos, where women are not allowed to set foot on that peninsula of sacred ground . . . or stay here for the rest of his life, repenting the world's acquisitions" (234).

Dorf is behaving like this because he is afraid of dying—and it is this fear which arrests his individuation process. In the wilderness, his anxiety about death has grown so great that the sight of a pair of young ospreys preparing to leave the nest fills him with "terror . . . which becomes unbearable" (230). Usually the flight of birds is a sign of freedom. To Dorf, however, the flight of the young ospreys from their nest signals their maturity: the irrevocable nature of aging and the inevitable prospect of death.

Dorf's terror is a modern phenomenon. In the eyes of a primitive, the rituals associated with entering adulthood may be terrible, but they are not necessarily terrifying. Rather, they are an initiatory experience which is indispensable to the birth of a new man, for no initiation is possible without the ritual of an agony, a death, and a resurrection which entails a new mode of being, that of maturity and responsibility (Eliade *Myths* 237). As Dorf's guide and mediator, the Feminine in *Alibi* is the initiator of this process. As von Franz points out, the Feminine traditionally plays this part in the drama of the psyche: among the Eskimos and the Arctic tribes, for example, medicine men and shamans wear women's clothing or

have breasts depicted on their garments in order to manifest their inner Feminine side which enables them to connect with what we call the unconscious ("Process" 186).

One's sexual initiation is an important part of entering adulthood. Entering adulthood, however, is precisely what Dorf would like to avoid. As a result, his anima projections are frightening indeed. As Neumann states, a male who is immature in his development experiences himself only as male and phallic and perceives the Feminine as a castrator. At the Banff Springs Hotel, it is no coincidence that Dorf's encounter with Karen Strike—another anima projection, who spends most of her time in the bathroom "as usual brushing her teeth" and refuses to kiss him because she would "be tempted to bite" (32)—ends in a "scalded prick" (30).

In short, Dorf's behaviour illustrates what Neumann would consider a classic example of masculine desire. On a still deeper psychological level, Dorf's own trend toward uroboric incest and toward voluptuous self-dissolution in the primordial Feminine intensifies his perceptions of the Feminine's terrible nature; as Neumann states, love and death are aspects of the one and the same goddess, and in *Alibi* love and death are aspects of the Feminine. It is Julie's simple and confusing remark, "I'll have to kill you," that tips Dorf over the edge into the self-dissolution of his orgasm at Sulpher Spring. During this *petit mort*, he becomes "aware of everything and nothing too" (15).

Of course, one could also argue that Dorf is actually engaged in a patriarchal struggle against the Feminine, in a male initiation rite which aims to safeguard the individual against the annihilating power of the grave or the devouring Feminine, and

which defends the masculine consciousness and intellect against the Feminine unconscious. This initiation rite involves the individual, during his journey, in an encounter with the devouring monster and the discovery of whether or not he can stand up to it (175). In this type of initiation, death is seen not as a necessary part of the passage from one state to another, but as something to be resisted because it entails the extinction of the individual. In this framework, survival consists in proving that one belongs not to the darkness associated with the Mother, but to the world of light that belongs to the patriarchal mysteries of initiation.

Whether one argues that Dorf struggles against, or regresses into, the Feminine, the aspects of the anima which he encounters are negative—and necessarily so. Read as an initiation process, Dorf's adventures must be counted failures, for time and again he proves unable to stand up to the devouring monsters created by his psyche. Even his daughter's innocent remark, "what would mom say?" sends him scampering off to a safe place—the mud pool at Lapsi. Ironically, he flees back into the incestuous embrace of the very thing he most wants to avoid: Mother. Unlike the ospreys at the end of the text, Dorf is unable to leave the nest and grow up. Aware of his mortality, he is a prime example of the problem which Eliade identifies as modern man's peculiar condition: Dorf is paralysed before the idea of death, precisely because death has lost its transformatory character (*Myths* 236-37). As a result, only one aspect of the Feminine—in this context, the negative one—is possible.

At the outset, John Fowles's treatment of the Feminine in *Mantissa* is very similar to Kroetsch's in *Alibi*. Fowles's male protagonist also finds himself unable to

resist the advances of the anima figures which seduce him. The text itself teeters on the verge of parody—adhering to the most hackneyed conventions of male erotic fantasy. Strapped into a hospital bed, Miles Green envisions himself “raped” by a woman doctor and her coloured nurse. Interrupted by the outraged Muse of erotic poetry herself, Green’s pornographic imaginings do not last long. The aspect of Erato that barges into the room is terrible and terrifying. Looking like a “satanic Doppelganger” in safety pins, leather, and black make-up, this negative anima figure announces herself in an “indescribable [sic] clang of tortured arpeggio” on her “merciless guitar”; she immediately eradicates “poor defenceless Dr. Delfie” and Nurse Cory before informing the cowering Green, her votary, that she has better things to do with her time than to “piss around rubbin’ out porn” (50, 52).

Unlike Kroetsch’s Julie and Karen, Fowles’s Erato gets right to the point. Green, Erato says, is “the original pig. Numero Uno,” and she insists that his degradation of the feminine (turning women into “one-dimensional sex-objects” in his writing) has to stop (55, 56). He needs, she says, to be taught a lesson—and the rest of the narrative is devoted precisely to that. Correcting Green’s chauvinism—a psychic imbalance if there ever was one—takes the form of an extremely unconventional act of psychic healing. When her appeal to Green’s empathy does not convince him to apologise properly—“What you forget is I’m not something in a book”—she proceeds to demonstrate that she “will not be turned into a brainless female body at [his] beck and call and every perverted whim” (57, 59).

First, she imprisons him in his own psyche. Green correctly deduces that the “grey quilted walls” of the room in which he finds himself represent the grey matter

of the brain. He incorrectly assumes, however, that the psyche is his, that the ego is "in charge" here (22). Even though he senses that the quilted walls closely resemble Diana of Ephesus's breasts, he believes that the intellect can control the irrational component of the psyche—the emotions and the instincts. Equating the irrational with the feminine when he attempts to leave the chamber, Green patronizingly tells Erato when she attempts to leave the chamber, "Be a woman and enjoy it. But don't try to think in addition. Just accept that's the way the biological cards have fallen. You can't have a male brain and intellect as well as a mania for being the universal girlfriend" (122).

When Erato disposes of the door to the chamber, Green discovers how mistaken his assumption is. Locked in the psyche, he finds himself engaged in a battle of the sexes. This battle reveals itself to be the result of his own galloping neurosis. A specialist in "the mental illness" that he calls "literature," Green is "simply someone obliged to act out a primal scene trauma" (143). Erato diagnoses his treatment of her as "the usual pathology." According to Erato, Green's behaviour is a classic illustration of the Oedipal complex. She tells Green, "I am inevitably cast as surrogate for your mother—in other words, as a chief target for your repressed feelings of Oedipal rejection, transmuted into Rachsucht or need for revenge" (143, 144).

Green needs, Erato says, to reread Freud in order to understand his reduction of the Feminine to sex and physical matters. Green, however, does not do this; instead, he responds to the negative, "castrating" aspect of the Feminine by rejecting it. "The sooner you piss off to your bloody boring mountain, the happier I shall be!"

he shouts (143). Thus, like Dorf in *Alibi*, Green confronts the Feminine but is unable to conquer it. In her protest against Green's refusal to see women as human beings, Erato refuses to be dismissed "to occupy a role and function that escapes all normal biological laws . . . misunderstood, travestied, degraded" (93). Unlike Dorf, however, Green puts up more of a struggle.

The battle of the sexes on which *Mantissa's* plot revolves may be read as a conflict of ideologies. Throughout, Green's "masculine" thinking defines human nature in terms of Freud's biological determinism, while Erato promotes Jung's insights about the workings of the psyche. The clash that occurs between instinct and archetype creates the narrative's dramatic tension but due to their illogical and surprising developments, Erato and Green's disagreements should not be seen as didactic exercises. Equally, Erato and Green are far too complex to function merely as allegorical characters.

Depth psychology provides the reader with some insight into the nature of the lovers' spats, for what at first appears to be an argument is actually a process by which the psyche corrects its own imbalance. As Neumann states, the anima "may seem to follow the masculine ego . . . but in reality the anima is the directing force that the masculine ego obeys" (304). At first, Erato's attempts to guide Green appear to be fruitless. He regards her appeals to his intellect as illogical. When she calls on his sense of professionalism as a writer, he gets the sulks, even though it is obvious that she is responsible for the works of Homer, Ovid, Virgil, and Shakespeare. When she introduces a minor brain aneurysm into their power struggle

to frighten him into better behaviour, he does not respond. Even her efforts to engage his empathy fail: Green “can see but cannot feel” (185).

In the end, Erato is left with no choice but to beguile Green by literalising, as he does, psychic metaphors. Thus when Green surfaces from his musings about the ideal “subservient” female (189)—Erato, “*à la japonaise*,” “the infinitely compliant woman, true wax at last, dutiful and respectful, uncomplaining, admiring, and above all peerlessly dumb” (190)—he finds himself turned into the form of his psychic condition: horribly hairy, horned, and cloven-hoofed. Erato tells him that he has become “the real you . . . a severe case of satyriasis” (192).

Ironically, Green, who continually demonstrates an obsession about sex throughout the text, finds his ithyphallic self “revolting” (192). Unable to control his instincts and driven mad by his own sex-drive, he careens about the breast-studded room, until “his horned head strikes with a sickening thud against the wall just above the bed and he falls unconscious to the pillow” (195). In short, Green has become pure instinct: he is reduced to being the masculine counterpart of his earlier pornographic imaginings of Erato as a geisha.

As Neumann states, every transformation that the male undergoes while possessed by his anima, whether he is transformed into an animal, castrated, or dressed as a woman to fulfill the function of the Feminine, are experienced as dominations, invasions or violations (*Mother* 304). At the beginning of *Mantissa*, Green’s rape fantasy ends when he sexually dominates Dr. Delphie, whom he patronisingly pats on the back to acknowledge that she “had done her best, even though she had lost” (43). At the end of the narrative, Green is not so complacent

about the fantasy which he is experiencing. He undergoes his own anagnorisis in a “terrifying blend of shock and anger” (191). Finally, the tables have truly been turned and he learns, much to his dismay, that “side by side with sublimation stands abasement” (*Mother* 305).

What the anima unearths in this text is the central problem facing the modern psyche. As Erato demonstrates again and again, love in the twentieth century has become a situation in which the instincts control the intellect. As such, the irrational nature of love has been reduced to humanity’s biological imperative since the spiritual plane with which the Feminine was traditionally allied has been destroyed by thinkers like Freud and Darwin. Interestingly, this negation of the spiritual not only limits the form of the anima to the aspects of Eve and Helen; it also necessarily limits the nature of the human psyche. When the biological cards finally fall (to adapt Green’s expression), the condition of a man in love must be that of a rutting billy goat. With Green’s goatish nature in mind, it is not surprising that the appearances of animas such as the Virgin Mary or Sapientia to correct this condition are impossible.

Whether it takes the form of shock or beguilement, the effect of the anima is to help the individual experience an Other. As Erato says to Green, “I thought you’d like to see what it was like to be me” (192). Both *Alibi* and *Mantissa* suggest that the problem which their anima figures seek to correct lies not with the unconscious but with the conscious mind. Like Dorf, Green needs to develop his capacity for emotional relationships. Like Dorf’s, Green’s behaviour is infantile, because he fears losing his individuality while being in love. And finally, like Dorf, as the clock in *Mantissa* suggests, Green, in repressing his emotions, has been all along, at the very

least, "cuckoo" (196). Of course, at the end of these works, whether the narrators will change because the corrective that the anima figures supply is effective is left open to question. This question, however, is not really imperative, for as in the dream tradition in which both these works are embedded, these narratives use the problems of their characters as a means of revealing the readers' need to develop their own emotional capacities.

## Endnotes

1. The prevailing critical climate for both Robert Kroetsch's *Alibi* and John Fowles's *Mantissa* is postmodern. For postmodern readings of *Alibi* see Brian Edwards's "Textual Erotics, the Meta-Perspective and Reading Instruction in Robert Kroetsch's Later Fiction," S. Fogel's "'I See England, I See France . . .': Robert Kroetsch's Alibi," and Robert R. Wilson's "The Discourse of Museums: Exhibiting Postmodernism." For postmodern readings of *Mantissa* see Ian Gotts's "Fowles' Mantissa: Funfair in Another Village," John Haegert's "Memoirs of a Deconstructive Angel: The Heroine as Mantissa in the Fiction of John Fowles," and Raymond J. Wilson's "Fowles' Allegory of Literary Invention: Mantissa and Contemporary Theory." Some New Critical and psychological articles about *Mantissa* have also been published. See Rudiger Imbrof's "Chinese Box: Flann O'Brien in the Metafiction of Alasdair Gray, John Fowles, and Robert Coover" and H.W. Fawkner's "The Neurocognitive Significance of John Fowles' *Mantissa*."

*Conclusion*

As Jung points out, the condition of the twentieth century has been and is currently one of crisis. Since all literature reflects the times which produce it, it is not surprising that modern and postmodern narratives thematically and stylistically reflect this crisis. Psycho-narratives, however, do much more than mirror the social and political conditions of the twentieth century. Modelled after shamanistic experiences, they not only portray the psychic condition of our culture—its “alarming degree of dissociation and psychological confusion” (Jung “Unconscious” 72)—but they also address and correct this situation by putting their readers back in touch with the roots of their cultural traditions. As a result, reading psycho-narratives involves the discovery of what may be termed the secrets of our culture.

To the shaman, the secrets of the tribe are usually positive ones. In the psycho-narrative, however, these secrets reveal themselves to be cultural shadows—shameful tendencies which we would rather not recognise and repress. As Marie Louise von Franz points out, whatever form the shadow takes, its function is to represent the opposite side of the ego and embody qualities that are disliked and even feared (182). In the empirical climate of the twentieth century, what appears to have been repressed most energetically and feared the most is the irrational component of the human psyche. It is not surprising, therefore, that psycho-narrative literature, which is

specifically concerned with this situation, is pre-occupied with producing signatures of the shadow.

Judging by these signatures, it seems that modern culture's emphasis on rational thought has produced a literature which reveals its worst nightmares. These cultural nightmares are often manifested in psycho-narratives as its generally accepted ideologies. One encounters the material and intellectually elitist undersides of the American Dream, for example, in Hunter S. Thompson's *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* and Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar*, and America's own Aryan belief in a master race which parallels that of Nazi Germany in *Sophie's Choice*. Also, because the intellect exaggerates the irrational forces that it fears, it is not uncommon to encounter the repressed irrational in the form of grotesque figures. In Robert Kroetsch's *Alibi* and John Fowles' *Mantissa*, for example, the characters who represent the irrational are depicted as magnified caricatures: Dorf's imagination depicts Big Julie Magnasson as a murderess; Green's Erato appears as a punk-dominatrix clad in black leather and safety pins. However they are expressed, cultural shadows in psycho-narrative indicate that what the modern psyche of the West fears most is the annihilation of the individual. Moreover, in psycho-narrative the importance that we place on individuality is shown to be the result of excessive rational control. Excessive rationality is, in the final analysis, a symptom of psychic imbalance. In *The Last Unicorn*, for example, the Hagsgateans' choice of celibacy reveals the madness that can occur when rational thinking is carried to its logical extreme.

In *Beyond Psychology*, Otto Rank points out that modern culture's emphasis on individuality is the result of repression which ultimately "perverts the life-force into

its own denial" (48-49). In the psycho-narrative nightmare, what Rank would term the perverted life-force expresses itself first in negative aspects of nature and the feminine, then as chaos, and finally as death. T.H. White carefully illustrates this in *The Once and Future King*. Living by the code of chivalry, the young King denies and thereby perverts his own irrational nature which ultimately expresses itself in his incest with Morgause, the disintegration of his kingdom, and finally his illogical and suicidal decision to place Logres in Mordred's safe-keeping.

As Rank remarks, the individual's denial of the irrational is a symptom of a severe psychic split that is often expressed as an extreme ego-centricity which does not allow any kind of difference to the individual to exist, either within or without (48-49). In the psycho-narratives studied, this ego-centric craving for likeness is also a characteristic of megalomania. In these texts, the megalomaniac ranges from Charles Williams's Simon Le Clerk who attempts to dominate the world's nations to Robert Kroetsch's Dorf who, unable to tolerate the company of women, retreats to the Canadian wilderness. In *All Hallows' Eve* and *Alibi*, this type of megalomania ultimately expresses the madman's attempt to counteract the final and most dangerous threat to the individual, death. Attempting to perpetuate himself in another, Simon attempts to escape death in cloning. Unlike Simon, Dorf tries to solve the problem of Death by forbidding the presence of difference itself. In the final analysis, both men want to live forever, because they are terrified of dying.

Because of its pre-occupations with the fear of difference and the terror of dying, psycho-narrative raises fundamental questions about the nature of Death itself. According to Mircea Eliade, Western culture's anxiety about Death is a specifically

modern phenomenon. In all the other, non-European cultures, Eliade says, Death is never felt as an absolute end or as Nothingness: it is regarded rather as a rite of passage to another being; and for that reason it is always referred to in the symbolisms and rituals of initiation as rebirth or resurrection (*Myths* 235). In Western culture, however, these rites of passage have become debased or degraded. As Ean Begg notes in *Myth and Today's Consciousness*, the traditional rituals of Western culture's manhood have largely disappeared (97). As a result, Death is viewed by moderns as the end of the individual rather than an act of transformation and the beginning of a new life.

The psycho-narrative specifically addresses this problem. Throughout this genre, initiation rituals for men and women are repeatedly revealed to be inadequate; their neophytes never graduate to the next level of being. Thus, arrested development is a trademark of many characters in psycho-narratives. In Connie Willis's *Lincoln's Dreams*, the yellow-haired soldiers do not become heroes; they remain *boys*. In *The Once and Future King*, the middle-aged knights of Arthur's Round Table never lose their *boyishness*. In *The Last Unicorn*, Schmendrick is doomed to remain young forever until he learns what transformation truly entails.

As the psycho-narrative also indicates, the absence of adequate rituals has not only arrested our psychic development, but it has also precluded the possibility of resurrection. Thus, the modern anxiety about Death often manifests itself as a brutal Darwinism. Unable to transcend the mortality found in the natural world, humanity too becomes red in tooth and claw. This anxiety also emerges in the caricatures of Freud's domineering, castrating women that are found in many of these texts. In Iain

Banks's *The Bridge* and William Gibson's *Neuromancer*, neither marriage nor procreation illustrates the processes of psychic regeneration and resurrection. Sex, to Orr, is merely a matter of convenience and pleasure. Marriage traps Case in the condition from which he earlier had attempted to escape.

Freudian thinkers would argue that the nightmarish contents of psycho-narrative reflect what is essentially a morbid and moribund civilisation. Jungian analysts, however, know that the collective cannot be evaluated in terms of the individual's ego-consciousness. Oddly enough, the cultural shadows of the psycho-narratives perform a healing function. Having irrupted from the underside of consciousness itself, the monsters and lamias, debased ritual tortures, megalomaniacs and madmen, and demented dream states herald the beginning of our psychological well-being. Confronting our cultural shadows, the reader discovers that what he or she fears the most, the loss of individuality, psychic dismemberment, and death, are actually rites of passage and acts of transformation. More important, the shadow in these works allows the reader to pinpoint the nature of our culture's psychic imbalance.

As Ean Begg points out, modern culture is unbalanced, but it is neither morbid nor moribund. Involved in the process of compensation, the twentieth century is a time of the Kairos, a period during which a metamorphosis of fundamental principles and symbols is taking place (1). Showcasing the response of our culture's psyche to the modern emphasis on the individual, the psycho-narrative reveals this metamorphosis. Its importance therefore lies in the ability of this genre to express what has been repressed. Throughout psycho-narrative, old signatures, like the hero,

are in the process re-irrupting. In some instances, new signatures, like the child, are seen to be emerging. In short, when read as a cultural document, the psycho-narrative reveals the process of our own psychic regeneration.

What form will this regeneration finally take? Because this genre is protean rather than promethean, it is impossible to answer this question with any certainty. Perhaps the figure of the child as *the irrational third* which appears in *The Once and Future King* will come to be the agent by which our cultural psyche is balanced. Perhaps the signature of the child will come to express what Begg terms "the unconscious man within us who is changing" (1). Perhaps Beagle's Unicorn will embody the regenerative principle of the irrational for future generations. Perhaps the corrective to our cultural neurosis does lie in Lester Furnival's act of psychic substitution in *All Hallows' Eve*. In any psycho-narrative, it is impossible merely *to know* these things. One must read these texts and experience the cultural shadows that they embody. Only then is it possible to encounter the changes that are taking place in our culture and to glimpse what the future may hold in store for us all.

Nevertheless, whatever the future may hold, it is clear that literature of this kind is needed today. In our time, collective resistances to difference has had horrifying results. Nazi Germany's Final Solution during the Second World War and Iran's recent Holy War in the Gulf are only two examples of the pogroms produced by racial and religious intolerance. Throughout the twentieth century, dictators like Hitler and Saddam Hussein, Stalin, Franco, Mussolini, Idi Amin, Khadaffi, Peron, and Marcos—to name only a few—have used the psychic imbalance of our culture, its egocentricity and attending shadows, in their political campaigns and during times of

war. As a corrective to this sort of propaganda, the psycho-narrative may well prove to be the most valuable body of literature produced during the twentieth century.

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*Annotated Criticism of Psycho-narratives*

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Noland, Richard N. "Psychohistorical Themes in *Sophie's Choice*." *Delta: Revue du*

*Centre d'Etudes et de Recherche sur les Ecrivains du Sud aux Etats-Unis* 23 (1986): 91-110. Discusses the text as an interplay between Styron's autobiographical self and historical actuality.

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- Perloff, Marjorie. "Breaking the Bell Jar." *Washington Post* (4 April 1976): H1-H2. This is an autobiographical treatment which de-romanticises Plath as The Poet Who Died.
- Reynolds, George. "Dante and Williams: Pilgrims in Purgatory." *Mythlore: A Journal of J. R. R. Tolkien, C. S. Lewis, Charles Williams, General Fantasy and Mythic Studies* 13 (1986): 3-7. Identifies Williams's debt in *All Hallow's Eve* to Dante's *Purgatorio*.
- Rosenthal, Regine. "Defying Taboos: The Sense of Place in Styron's *Sophie's Choice*." *The Dolphin: Publications of the English Department, University of Aarhus* 20 (1991): 76-88. Discusses the text as a Bildungsroman and notes the importance of its Holocaust settings and Styron's Southern experiences.
- Ross, Daniel W. "A Family Romance: Dreams and the Unified Narrative of *Sophie's Choice*." *Mississippi Quarterly: The Journal of Southern Culture* 42 (1989): 129-145. A neo-Freudian approach to the text via the characters' dreams.
- Rubenstein, Richard. "The South Encounters the Holocaust: William Styron's *Sophie's Choice*." *Michigan Quarterly Review* 20 (1981): 425-442. A biographical reading of the theme of slavery as this text's central concern.

- Schlobin, Roger C. "The Survival of the Fool in Modern Heroic Fantasy." In *Aspects of Fantasy: Selected Essays from the Second International Conference on the Fantastic in Literature and Film*. Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1986. 123-130. A New Critical reading which discusses the compensatory function of the fool in several heroic fantasies and argues that Schmendrick in *The Last Unicorn* is a prime example of this figure.
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- Shepherd, Allen. "The Psychopath as Moral Agent in William Styron's *Sophie's Choice*." *Modern Fiction Studies* 28 (1982-83): 604-611. A close reading of Nathan's psychosis.
- Smith, E. L. "The Narrative Structure of T. H. White's *Once and Future King*." *Quondam et Futurus: A Journal of Arthurian Interpretations* 1 (1991): 39-52. Discusses the text by providing a précis of the plots of each book.
- Smith, Frederick N. "Bach vs Brooklyn's Clamorous Yawp: Sound in *Sophie's Choice*." *Papers on Language and Literature: A Journal for Scholars and Critics of Language and Literature* 23 (Fall 1987): 523-530. A New Critical treatment of aurality in the text that examines Styron's use of sound and musical metaphor.
- Stanford, Janet M. "The Whisper of Violins in Styron's *Sophie's Choice*." *Southern Literary Journal* 25 (1992): 106-117. A historical approach that examines

Styron's treatment of the Holocaust in terms of German Romantic music and philosophy.

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Discusses the use of Gothic elements in *The Bell Jar*, among other texts, from a feminist perspective.

Stern, Frederick C. "Styron's Choice." *South Atlantic Quarterly* 82 (1983): 19-27.

Reads the novel in terms of Styron's life and the southern experience.

Stull, James N. "Hunter S. Thompson: A Ritual Reenactment of Deviant

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bonding rituals in *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* are based on Thompson's personal experiences.

Telpaz, Gideon. "An Interview with William Styron." *Partisan Review* 52 (1985):

252-263. Discusses critical reactions to the text and the author's reactions to his critics.

Tobin, Jean. "'A Myth, a Memory, a Will-'o-the-Wish': Peter Beagle's Funny

Fantasy." In *Reflections on the Fantastic*. New York: Greenwood, 1986.

19-24. Discusses Beagle's ironic treatments of traditional fairy tale types in *The Last Unicorn*.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Werewolves and Unicorns: Fabulous Beasts in Peter Beagle's Fiction."

In *Forms of the Fantastic*. Eds. Jan Hokenson and Howard D. Pearce. New

York: Greenwood, 1986. 181-189. Discusses two of the legendary creatures of Beagle's fiction from the mythic perspective.

- Trouard, Dawn. "Styron's Historical Pre-texts: Nat Turner, Sophie and the Beginnings of a Postmodern Career." *Papers on Language and Literature: A Journal for Scholars and Critics of Language and Literature*, 23 (1987): 489-497. A postmodern reading of the text based on Styron's biographical données.
- Tutt, Ralph. "Stingo's Complaint: Styron and the Politics of Self-Parody." *Modern Fiction Studies* 34 (1988): 575-586. An autobiographical reading of Stingo's treatment of race issues in the text.
- Wagner, Linda W. "Plath's *The Bell Jar* as Female Bildungsroman." *Women's Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 12 (1986): 55-68. A New Critical reading of the text as a bildungsroman.
- Werner, Craig H. *Paradoxical Resolutions: American Fiction Since James Joyce*. Urbana: Illinois UP, 1982: 50-56. A New Critical reading of Plath's debt to James Joyce.
- Whittier, Gayle. "The Divided Woman and Generic Doubleness in *The Bell Jar*." *Women's Studies* 3 (1976): 127-146. Discusses critical schools which have appropriated this text as their own.
- Wilson, Raymond J., III. "Fowles' Allegory of Literary Invention: *Mantissa* and Contemporary Theory." *Twentieth Century Literature: A Scholarly and Critical Journal* 36 (1990): 61-72. Argues that this text deconstructs post-structuralist theories of sexual/textual politics by adhering to them.
- Wilson, Robert R. "The Discourse of Museums: Exhibiting Postmodernism." *Open Letter* 7 (1988): 93-109. Discusses postmodernism's transnationality by

comparing the similarities between Australian and Canadian metafiction—

Murray Bail's *Homesickness* and Robert Kroetsch's *Alibi*.

Wood, David. "Everything You Wanted to Know About Suicide: *The Bell Jar* By Sylvia Plath." *Kyushu American Literature* 25 (1984): 7-17. Discusses the text in light of Plath's personal life.

Yalom, Marilyn. "Sylvia Plath, *The Bell Jar*, and Related Poems." In *Coming to Light: American Women Poets in the Twentieth Century*. Eds. Diane Wood Middlebrook and Marilyn Yalom. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1985. 167-181. Discusses the context of the text in terms of Plath's mental breakdown.