

AN OUTSIDER'S ODYSSEY
A STUDY OF PATRICK WHITE'S
"THE AUNT'S STORY"

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CHAPTER ONE

AN INTRODUCTORY NOTE

Although biographical detail plays a relatively minor role in literary criticism, there are aspects of Patrick White's life which provide "reference points for seeing his work in the context of modern literature" (Kierman, 1974, p.81).

Patrick White's great-grandparents were James and Sarah White. They settled in New South Wales in 1826. The White family once owned property about Scone in the Upper Hunter Valley. The famous Belltrees was bought by James White's sons in 1853. Patrick White's father sold his interest in this property in 1932.

Dr John Beston (1973, p.5) in writing about Patrick White's family, mentions that his mother was Ruth Withycombe (1877-1958). Her father, James Withycombe, went to Australia from England in 1856. Victor White, Patrick's father, and Ruth Withycombe lived on neighbouring farms, Edinglassie and Piercefield. They were married in 1910 in St Phillip's Church in York Street, Sydney.

The reader of White's novels soon becomes aware of the influence of this agrarian background, coupled in some novels with a pioneering spirit, as for example in The Tree of Man.

Patrick Victor Martindale White (some biographers suggest that he dislikes many names) was born in London on 28 May, 1912. His sister Suzanne was born in 1915 and died in 1969 during a visit to England. It is somewhat strange that so little has been written

about her as she must have had some influence on him, as one gathers from the prominent part the sister figure plays in some of the novels. In The Aunt's Story we have the tenuous Sokolnikov-Ludmilla relationship which is important to an understanding of the novel as it reveals, in part, Theodora's need for love and understanding.

Patrick White's parents returned to Australia when he was about six months old. He grew up in Sydney, in Rushcutter's Bay, in a house enclosed by laurels. (The descriptions of family homes "barricaded with laurels" crop up repeatedly and in The Aunt's Story such trees dominate Huntly Clarkson's house.) His early education took place at Moss Vale. At the age of thirteen Patrick White went to England to continue his schooling at Cheltenham College.

Geoffrey Dutton (1961, p.3), in order to illustrate Patrick White's attitude to life at that early age offers a quotation from White's article "The Prodigal Son" (Australian Letters, 1958, pp.37-40). In this article White writes:

"Brought up to believe in the maxim :Only the British can be right, I did accept this during the early part of my life. Ironed out in an English public school, and finished off at King's, Cambridge, it was not until 1939, after wandering by myself through most of Western Europe, and finally most of the United States, that I began to grow up and think my own thoughts. The war did the rest."

The influence of White's wide-ranging travels and his English background is evident in much of his work. In The Aunt's Story Theodora spends some time in a small hotel on the French Riviera

and her sister Fanny, representing many Australians at the beginning of the century, regards England as "home" and the continent as the only place to spend a holiday. On her way home from Europe Theodora journeys across America, much as White himself must have done. White's early education is reflected in George Goodman's classical background, comparatively useless in the Australian situation where people were "certainly not interested in intellectual pursuits of any kind. They just want to muck around outside. To acquire larger motor-cars and make money" (Patrick White to Patricia Brent, 1973, p.545).

From Cheltenham College White returned to Australia where he went to work as a jackaroo among shepherds, "first on a bleak station near Adaminaby and then on a hot one near Walgett" (Dutton, 1961, p.3). During this period he attempted to write, but by his own admission he failed miserably. Ian Moffit (1957, p. 18) states that Patrick White wrote "two unpublished novels by kerosene lamp at night". He revealed his retiring nature and did not associate with the other shepherds who dismissed him as a harmless crackpot. "He probably knew even then that he was destined never to go along with the herd" (Hetherington, 1962, p.17). The reader is tempted to find in this characteristic the key to White's alien characters and also his sympathetic understanding of their problems.

After the years White spent as a jackaroo he once again left Australia for England to study at King's College, Cambridge, where he read modern languages and graduated in 1935.

Brian Kiernan has traced the effect of White's English education and European travels on his prose. He believes it has affinities

with European literature, "especially ... the Romantic-Symbolist tradition of the later nineteenth century as well as with the 'modernism' that was so much a part of the cultural ambience in England in the thirties (and was itself so influenced by French Symbolism)" (1974, p.81). In contrast to what Kiernan believes, Adrian Mitchell (1974, p.6) says that White has stated that his novels are basically nineteenth century. Kiernan's view, in contrast to White's statement, illustrates the critical divergence that surrounds much of White's work.

During World War II White served in the R.A.F. as an Intelligence Officer. He saw service in Africa, the Middle-East and the Western Desert. He also spent some time in Greece.

John Hetherington (1962, p.17) tells that during White's service in the desert "he began thinking of a novel built around a central character who was, like Hitler, a megalomaniac". This germinal idea finally developed into the novel Voss with the significant difference that it ends on a note of hope.

When White was demobilized after the War he had the choice of "remaining in England, 'in what I then felt to be an actual and spiritual graveyard' or of 'returning home, to the stimulus of time remembered' " (Wilkes and Reid, 1970, p.111). The cultural and spiritual decay of an England on the verge of war is reflected in White's novel The Living and the Dead, and because it "had to be written hurriedly on account of his war service, [it is] his least successful novel" (Beston, 1973, p.5). Wilkes and Reid believe that the "stimulus of time remembered is felt especially in Part One of The Aunt's Story, in the passages recalling Theodora's girlhood at Meroë, the station property that to her comes

almost to represent the earth in its golden age" (1970, p.111).

It was while White was writing The Aunt's Story (1948) that he seriously considered returning to live in Australia. Dr John Beston (1973, p.5) says that the novel was written "as White travelled back and forth between England and Australia". After the publication of this novel White settled in Australia permanently.

White's attitude to Australia at that time is evident from his reply to a question of what he found when he returned to Australia:

"In all directions stretched the Great Australian Emptiness, in which the mind is the least of possessions, in which the rich man is the important man, in which the schoolmaster and the journalist rule what intellectual roost there is, in which beautiful youths and girls stare at life, through blind blue eyes, in which human teeth fall like autumn leaves, the buttocks of cars grow hourly glassier, food means cake and steak, muscles prevail, and the march of material ugliness does not raise a quiver from the average nerves. It was the exaltation of the average which made me panic most" (Maurice Dunlevy, 1973, p.2).

Many years later White admitted to Patricia Brent (1973, p.545) that "it's not as bad as it was. But it is, to a certain extent, true". In spite of this rather critical attitude White told Ian Moffitt that Australia was the only country he was happy writing about. "I know it in my bones" (Ian Moffitt, 1957, p.18). In yet another interview White told John Hetherington: "I am interested in seeing Australia become civilized, and I want to contribute

something to that process" (1962, p.17).

Intent on making Australia his home, White and a Greek friend he met in Egypt, Manoly Lascaris, bought a property near Castle Hill, forty kilometers from Sydney. Kylie Tennant (1973, p.8) describes Lascaris as "cosmopolitan, gentle and good-humoured". Since Castle Hill they have moved to a house overlooking Centennial Park, Sydney. White's awareness of encroaching suburbia, symptomatic of settlement and material progress, is reflected in his epic novel The Tree of Man.

White has described his awareness while writing: "I can write only the way it comes out. Or rather, it half comes out. The rest is dragged out by forceps. I don't write for pleasure. I am not a dilettante" (Elizabeth Riddell, 1970, p.15). William Walsh writes that in his opinion White "refuses to dissipate his creative energy by truckling to the reader, accommodation is not part of his habit. He indulges in very little small talk, of which, indeed, he appears to possess a slighter fund than any contemporary writer of comparable significance. He insists on treating the subject invariably at the level which appeals to him, namely at its most serious, though not necessarily ... at its unfunniest" (1976, p.8).

Geoffrey Sawyer (1973, p.2) regards White's novels as aristocratic, and of a kind "that rejects commercialism, not the sort that seeks an easy income in company directorships". As an example of White's integrity Kenneth Tooth (1973, p.14) writes in a newspaper article, that in 1958 White won the Lenin Prize, but that, true to his nature, this honour did not mitigate his vehement attack on the negative Soviet attitude when Solzhenitsyn was awarded the Nobel

Prize for literature in 1970.

After having twice been runner-up to Nobel Prize winners, Samuel Beckett in 1969 and Solzhenitsyn in 1970, Patrick White was awarded the Prize in 1973, ahead of Graham Greene and Norman Mailer (John Yeomans, 1973, p.2). South Africans may find it interesting that Nadine Gordimer's name appeared on the final list for honours in 1973. A.L. McLeod (1974, p.439) states that Patrick White was awarded the Nobel Prize for "epic and psychological narrative art".

It is important to an evaluation of Patrick White's prose work to understand that as a novelist he is "fascinated by the attraction of evil, that is to say, ugliness". Pain and suffering form the ethic abstracted from his novels (Kiernan, 1974, p.96). The suffering that his characters endure is, "like all other profound human experiences ... something private, personal and incommunicable" (Brissenden, 1959, p.416). Professor William Walsh, on the other hand, writes that Patrick White's work reveals "that sense of the nastiness of human life of which Patrick White seems to have more than his normal share, and which produces in a good deal of his work a flinching distaste towards the common and the raw in human life" (1976, p.48).

Marjorie Barnard (1956, p.170) regards this sombreness as the essence of White's writing: "All of his books are sombre. He writes of the frustrated and the inarticulate, of the mad and the lost ones. There is always the burden of pain." The quotation from Ghandi which Barnard uses to explain the theme of Happy Valley is equally valid in an evaluation of most of White's other work. The quotation reads: "It is impossible to do away with the

law of suffering, which is one of the indispensable conditions of our being. Progress is to be measured by the amount of suffering undergone ... The purer the suffering, the greater is the progress." The loneliness that White's protagonists endure, says Barnard, is the ultimate loneliness.

Music is one of the most important external influences on White's work. He has said to Ian Moffitt: "Music seems to help me with the structure of a novel. It helps me to shape a book" (1957, p.18). Dr Patricia Morley adds her view that "White frequently draws upon music, drama, painting and poetry in order to illumine his own art, the novel" (1972, p.25). In a more recent interview than the one accorded Moffitt, White has enlarged on the effect of music on his art. "I think I have been influenced a lot more by music and by painting than by writing. They have helped me to express myself, I feel. I remember once when I was stuck: I couldn't get the death of Voss right and I was in bed with bronchitis feeling like death. I suddenly got up and put on the Bartok Violin Concerto, and everything began to come right. I suppose there was not much connection between that scene and the concerto, but it liberated me" (Patricia Brent, 1973, p.545).

During White's interview with Moffitt he was asked the inevitable question of how he developed his themes. White's answer, I believe, to some extent explains the nature of his novels. "I usually start with the characters. I don't think of plots. My books contain a series of encounters between characters rather than a story. You see, I am interested in people more than in events" (1957, p.18). William Walsh describes the development of White's novels as: "Growth from a cell or centre, an organic 'biographical' line of movement - rather than plot or a more

formal arrangement" (1970, p.87). A.D. Hope (1966, p.8) also comments on this aspect of White's approach and writes that the themes of the novels are "centred in the exceptional and individual character". This is the description of the outsider in White's novels.

In much the same vein as Hope, Rodney Mather mentions that because White is less bound to actual experience than D.H. Lawrence, he can offer a wider variety from novel to novel. Mather writes that White is "more willing to face the barren, intractable areas of life; and his experience is, characteristically, less heightened purely as actual experience than Lawrence's". White's ability to write about the apparently ordinary things gives him a "kind of 'negative capability' - an ability to face unmeaning or semi-meaning in life" (Mather, 1970, p.36). In his evaluation of White's prose Mather writes that White "tries as far as possible to make actual experience itself aesthetic" (1970, p.41).

This everyday reality clashes with what Hilary Heltay calls "transcendent spiritual experience" (1973, p.92). This is true of Theodora Goodman who becomes more and more of an outsider as her spiritual awareness comes increasingly in conflict with secular values.

White has, when taxed about his unusual characters, explained their creation: "I can never reproduce actual people. I have tried once or twice, but they come out most unconvincingly with the fictional people. I am an inventor, not a reporter" (Riddell, 1970, p.5). William Walsh (1976, p.8) explains White's characters and their milieu by saying that they are characterized by "an endless burrowing inquisitiveness, an incessant interrogation of many forms of existence, human and non-human".

White's partial explanation of his technique also brings to the fore his characters' dilemma: "I try to write, too, on two planes, the immediate detailed one and the universal" (Moffitt, 1957, p. 18). Dr Patricia Morley (1972, p.28) comments on this approach and says that in order to add to these two planes White makes use of "dramatic situations where the characters may be drunk, delirious with fever, or dreaming". The reason for this, states Dr Morley, is to allow the characters to reveal what they would otherwise not have, or for that matter not have been able to. In The Aunt's Story White uses a drunken soldier, Bert Kelly, to explain Theodora's predicament to her - "You are walkin', sis, as if you didn't expect no end" (p.94. All page references are to the 1974 Penguin edition of The Aunt's Story).

In his work White uses society to mirror what he regards as a worthless way of life. Alvarez maintains that in White's novels "it is manners and social behaviour which are dream-like, reality is all inward. He seems to see his artistic function as a matter of penetrating the hard shell of social habit until he exposes that peculiar vibration which makes each person what he is. He would draw, in short, a firm line between life and society" (1961, p.653). John Barnes has enlarged on what Alvarez has said about "reality [being] inward". He maintains that White's "metaphysical concerns are directly related to his sense of horror at the emptiness and futility of the society to which he belongs" (1966, p.155). "White's metaphysical insights ... are not set within a context of common experience: his vision of truth seems to be based upon a negation rather than a comprehension of the experience of contemporary society" (Barnes, 1961, p.15).

Some critics have accused Patrick White of being one-sided in the portrayal of his protagonist and the milieu in which this man or woman lives. Hilary Heltay believes that this attitude arises from White's siding with his protagonists against the society which has rejected them. These men and women, writes Heltay, "are the seeing, 'the living', in contrast to the blind, 'the arch enemies ... the stultifying, the living dead'" (1973, p.93).

White regards society as being in a state of spiritual paralysis (A.P. Riemer, 1967, p.16). It is then, says Jack Barnes, that White writes "out of 'the desire of raising other men into a perception of the infinite'" (1966, p.155). Like so many other strongly committed novelists "White's intention is surely to provoke rather than to entertain" (Aurrousseau, 1962, p.29). Brissenden believes that White, in his writing, has an urge to work out the problems of the living and that he wants to communicate the solution to all. In The Aunt's Story the solution to the problem of living lies in apparent madness and this is not acceptable to those who are comfortably ensconced in their material wealth. It also implies that there can be no happiness or self-realization in what is accepted by society as normal behaviour.

Sheila Roberts believes that even though White has compassion for his protagonist's quest for meaning - "insight into this man from the mouse-hole" - he cannot "approve of his incapacity to 'lose' himself in a search for redemption" (1974, p.39). The character (as committed) retains a longing for ties with society and this causes a conflict which in Theodora Goodman's case leads to apparent madness.

Vincent Buckley believes that because of his unusual approach to life and his portrayal of it in his work, White has added a new dimension to his characters' existence. Buckley writes that White acts out "the dramas of his characters in an imaginative world with one more dimension than our novelists have generally accepted as existing. It is a dimension within the individual, and also within the universe he inhabits. It is mythopoeic, metaphysical, even religious. Its specific myth is that of search, journey, pilgrimage only dimly apprehended by those who make it" (1961, p.144). It is such a journey that Theodora Goodman undertakes. Buckley affirms that this journey is not "really clear sighted, it is motivated by a dream, a self-projection which the facts of the journeying are seen to qualify while they complete it" (1961, p.144). White has described the world of his protagonists in the epigraph to The Solid Mandala: - "There is another world, but it is in this one."

Sheila Roberts, one of the few South Africans to have published an article on Patrick White, adds philosophy to Buckley's idea of a journey based on a dream. She writes about chance, free will and necessity in the lives of Patrick White's protagonists and maintains that White accepts the idea that these factors are incompatible; "moreover that man's freedom and responsibility do not preclude the existence of an omnipotent God. In fact, references to a divine teleology form a consistent motif in each of White's novels" (1974, p.39). Roberts writes that "White remains a Christian writer with the implication that although man may be self-determined, free, integrated, and capable of inner greatness, he still retains his humility in the face of God. Voss, the Übermensch, may discard his humility for a time, but he will need to grope for it again" (1974, p.39). Although White has, to my

knowledge, never admitted to a belief in the Christian ethic, there is a "religious pattern that underlies his [White's] universe" (Beatson, 1976, p.2). His Christianity is not orthodox. White has "clothed his religious sensibility in garments borrowed from many cultures, chosen according to the needs of his art and message" (Beatson, 1976, p.2).

White has an intensely personal vision of morality which is basically religious in the "sense of something accepted not constructed, something present not invented. Morality exists on the plane of action. It is a matter of things done or undone, of intentions realized or thwarted or forgotten, of act and realization. But it depends on, and is only alive when it issues from, a quality of being, or something comparable to what a religious person might call a state of grace" (William Walsh, 1970, p.88).

Dr Morley and Sheila Roberts both agree that White is a religious writer, one who has accepted the Christian ethic. Dr Morley, in her book on White, states her belief that his view of man and his world is basically religious. She maintains that in his novels White examines the meaning of suffering together with the possibilities of salvation and atonement for evil. White's basic concerns in his writing are theological, but existential rather than dogmatic. The novels reveal that there is a "vast Design or plan" behind the deeds that men do (1972, p.4). Theodora's version is that "there was some great intolerable pressure from which it is not possible to escape" (p.269).

The characters in White's novels do not merely attempt to exist, but try to come to an understanding of themselves and existence. Each of the novels contains a character who may be described as

the afflicted of God whose growth is toward Him (Thompson, 1966, p.21). This character originates in White's concern with "the basis of living [and] going back into the beginnings of the human soul, into individual pre-history" (Alexander, 1962, p.335). Alexander quotes from St Thomas to explain his view that we should go back to our beginning to understand our end. "In the non-Biblical gospel of St Thomas, the disciples say to Jesus: 'Tell us what our end will be', and He replies, 'Have you then deciphered the beginning, that you ask about the end? For where the beginning is, there shall be the end.'"

Patrick White's published works are:-

Happy Valley, novel, (1939)

The Living and the Dead, novel, (1941)

The Aunt's Story, novel, (1948)

The Tree of Man, novel, (1955)

Voss, novel, (1957)

The Burnt Ones, short stories, (1964)

Four Plays:- The Ham Funeral

The Season at Sarsaparilla

A Cheery Soul

Night on Bald Mountain - published collectively (1965)

Riders in the Chariot, novel, (1961)

The Vivisector, novel, (1970)

The Cockatoos, short stories, (1972)

The Eye of the Storm, novel, (1973)

A Fringe of Leaves, novel, (1976).

CHAPTER TWO

THE OUTSIDER

"Historically, 'alienation' was used to describe fallen man's sense of separation from God; later social thinkers employed it to describe modern man's separation from his essence as a communal creature" (Kiernan, 1974, p.91). From a sociological point of view Hobbs and Blank define alienation as "a feeling of non-involvement in and an estrangement from society and from culture. Alienation can be characterized by feelings of anxiety, apathy, loneliness, powerlessness, meaninglessness, and despair" (1975, p.383).

Jack Lindsay (1963, p.48), a critic of White's prose work, believes that the term outsider has its origin in the works of Karl Marx (the 1844 Paris Mss). Lindsay supplies a useful description by Hegel of the alien or outsider: "Hegel saw alienation as simply a necessary phase of the spirit's process of objectifying and realizing itself: the moment of separation and division when the spirit confronts the objective world as otherness, before it proceeds to overcome the antagonism by grasping the essential unity of opposites and thus discovers the alien thing as an aspect of itself." This definition is applicable to Theodora Goodman's conflict (see page 72 of this study) and to the advice she receives from Holstius as the key to happiness and fulfilment: "I expect you to accept the two irreconcilable halves ... You cannot reconcile joy and sorrow ... Or flesh and marble, or illusion and reality, or life and death. For this reason, Theodora Goodman, you must accept" (pp.288-289).

The outsider in literature, as protagonist and social phenomenon,

is not new. Lately, however, with the renewed interest in the links between the study of sociology and of literature the focus of attention has been fixed anew on the outsider as individual and even as the conscience of society.

Dr J.P. Smuts defines the outsider as follows: "The outsider is a sensitive person who looks deeper and sees more than the ordinary person, and what he sees is essentially chaos and not the fundamentally organized world of society which finds its norms in collectiveness and in solidarity. Emotions of alienism and unreality are typical of the outsider. He cannot accept life and existence in society" (1975, p.16).

Camus's The Outsider is a valuable point of departure for a discussion of the outsider in literature. In this novel, Meursault, protagonist, anti-hero, shows no remorse after having committed a homicide. He persists in this attitude despite the presiding magistrate's attempts to make him show socially acceptable and proper feelings of remorse. The point that the reader has to note is that Meursault refuses to conform to the behavioural laws laid down by society. This attitude is typical of the outsider.

Professor Maxwell-Mahon (1967, p.37) points out that because the magistrate is religious and because Meursault says that he does not believe in God, he is branded an outsider - "all men believe in God, even those who reject him" (The Outsider, translated by S. Gilbert, Penguin Books, 1964, p.73).

Meursault is transformed into something he is not by the men and women who say they believe in God, love and all the other proper

societal norms. Meursault is simply negative in his approach to life. He tells Marie, the woman with whom he has an affair, that love does not matter. By analogy, because his stance is neutral, he is believed to be against everything. The only place where Meursault is not passive, is in bed with a woman. This is in answer to his urges and requires no thought or a decision of whether he believes or not. Again a passive attitude.

Colin Wilson (1974, p.16) explains Meursault's behaviour by saying that it is a non-acceptance of life, of human life lived by human beings in a human society. Meursault is honest, lives in the present and believes everything is unreal. All these values contradict societal behaviour which prefers to ignore the present and live only in the future and the past, at the same time depending on norms, if any, guaranteed to soothe any twinges of conscience. Brian Masters writes much the same: Meursault "is an 'outsider' because he acts in accordance with his sentiments in a society where it is expected that other considerations should govern one's behaviour" (1974, p.23).

Camus reveals Meursault as an outsider by describing how he views the people he comes in contact with and how they react to him. The reaction is unsympathetic and even hostile because "society expects each member to share its myths, respect its idols and treat its religion with suitable awe. People like to believe in causal connections, it is important that they should think that their actions are purposive, that they do something because they have been motivated by a desire to do it, or because they hope thereby to achieve something else" (Masters, 1974, p.36).

Wilson does not attempt to give a definition of an outsider. His

description is, however, graphic and effective. He quotes from Henri Barbusse's novel L'Enfer in which the outsider is a man in a hotel-room peering through a small hole in the wall into the room next door and in this way witnessing the passing scene, but being in no way part of it. The wall, apparently, is that nameless thing symbolic of something in his psyche that makes him different from other men and women. Wilson believes that all men and women have unnameable impulses, but that these are somehow kept in check - "they keep up a pretence ... to gloss over, to make look civilised and rational something that is savage, unorganized, irrational. He is an Outsider because he stands for Truth" (1974, p.12). Thus once again the outsider is what he is because he does not conform.

Towards the end of his study of the outsider Wilson summarises his conclusions. Firstly the outsider wants to enjoy human solidarity and be one with the "herd". Secondly he wants to be "balanced" and thirdly the outsider wants a vividness of sense perception. In the fourth place he would like to understand the human soul and its workings. Fifthly the outsider wants to surrender to some Will, to a power, and in the last instance, he craves the ability to express himself and his unknown and unrealised capabilities.

The outsider has a conflict within himself, quite apart from any external conflict. It is between "man's assertive demand to shape life according to his own vision, and his desire to lose himself in the rhythms of life itself" (John Mc Laren, 1972, p. 50).

Wilson makes an interesting point when he writes that the out-

sider's miseries are the prophet's teething pains. Theodora's unhappiness makes her withdraw from those around her and she becomes sibylline. "She began to feel old and oracular listening to Frank Parrott's voice, as if she didn't belong" (p.84). The religious leader Fox believes that the outsider is primarily a critic and if a critic feels deeply enough about what he is criticising, he becomes a prophet (Wilson, 1974, p.224). Wilson is close to the mark in his evaluation of this aspect of the outsider's nature when he writes that the outsider is "basically a religious man, or imaginative man, who refuses to develop those qualities of practical mindedness and eye-to-business that seem to be the requisites for survival in our complex civilization" (1974, p.285).

White's attitude to society (discussed in more detail in Chapter One) reflects Wilson's belief that human triviality is the outsider's greatest enemy. This is because he sees too deeply and because he is basically honest. The active outsider rejects triviality and goes in search of reality. Wilson describes reality in the words of Krebs, Hemingway's protagonist in Soldier's Home:

"Krebs: The moment you do 'the one thing, the only thing', when you know you are merely a trivial, superficial counter on the social chessboard.

"Stroude: Ineffable. Unlivable. The man who has seen it is spoilt for everyday life."

Wilson believes that "metaphysics (i.e. the complete answer to the Outsider's problem) should be no more than glorified common sense" and that the outsider's final problem is one of identity - "Who am I?" (1974, p.148). Should one ask the outsider what he wants from life he will most likely answer that he does not know.

The reason is that he wants it instinctively and it is not always possible to tell what his instincts are.

Patrick White's Protagonists as Outsiders

The characters of White's literary world fall into two classes: "the elect and the damned" (Kiernan, 1974, p.96). Kiernan adds that White has given his sympathy and understanding to these alienated men and women only and withheld it from the members of society.

Theodora Goodman in The Aunt's Story is an isolated figure, the so-called outsider in a "hostile and apparently meaningless universe ... [which] leaves the individual no escape but to contemplate his own ambivalent and enigmatic nature" (Roberts, 1974, p.39). Sheila Roberts regards Theodora Goodman as one of White's "elect" and believes that her problem is her own redemption. It is not only a question of redemption, but also a search for identity and self-realization. Some critics place Theodora with the "illuminati", those men and women who have supernatural knowledge and insight, and whose life-struggle is the perfecting of these abilities and at the same time a sloughing off of all physical desires which bar the way to a supra-physical existence.

Jack Lindsay, writing about White's outsiders, mentions the "factors of dislocation" as being symptomatic of the outsider's physical and mental state. He says that "real life was less and less the life one lived" (1964, p.373). Alienation, or the state of being an outsider, is diagnosed as "the opposition of clocktime (habit, the workaday world, the abstracting intellect, all that divides, oppresses, and reflects the fragmentation of man in a

mechanistic world) to inner time, the intention of the timeless moment of concrete experience" (Lindsay, 1964, p.373). Lindsay declares that White is aware that something has gone wrong with people and it is because of this awareness that his interest and sympathy lie with the aliens or outsiders who seek and sometimes find or seem to find a solution to the problems of life and at the same time happiness and tranquillity.

The world in which White's characters find their way is described in the epigraph to The Solid Mandala: "There is another world, but it is in this one." The outsiders find themselves strongly aware of, but unable to enter this fourth dimension of "illumination and union with the infinite" (Heltay, 1973, p.92). Once they have achieved this "union with the infinite" they have crossed the dividing line between the two worlds - the finite and the infinite - and having done so they cannot meaningfully communicate with the people they know. It is because of this condition that Miss Spofforth cannot communicate with Theodora in spite of her prophetic knowledge of Theodora's future and Theodora in turn cannot help the young Lou Parrott on the road to self-realization. The mystical awareness that White's outsiders experience has its "foundations in love, nature, art, and faith, in utmost simplicity and madness" (Heltay, 1973, p.92). One may well add to Heltay's list, a dissociation of the intellect from any binding social contact. The outsiders' withdrawal from the world implies a conflict in which they explore "different ways of engaging the world, of attempting to bridge the gulf between individual consciousness and the reality of the world beyond" (Kiernan, 1974, p.97). This attempt at bridging then includes what Sylvia Gzell calls the theme of understanding.

The attempt at a communication between two worlds is difficult if not impossible because the people concerned are "isolated, sensitive individuals who are very often out of contact with others and communities except through telepathic communication or reminiscence or self-projection or through symbolic vision" (Rodney Mather, 1970, p.35). It is true that White is concerned with the "impossibility of building a bridge from one life to another" (Wilkes and Reid, 1970, p.109) and this is because the outsiders "fail to bridge the gulf between the world within and the world beyond the self" (Kiernan, 1974, p.103). The chasm between the outsider and the "herd" becomes progressively wider as the outsider becomes more aware of the other world and the possibility of attaining fulfilment. The separation is, in the case of Theodora Goodman, undesired and is like cutting herself off from life, in this instance the known world. Her departure for Europe after the death of her mother illustrates this concept and also betrays her uncertainty about her new life. "There is no lifeline to other lives. I shall go ... I have already gone" (p.137). The importance Theodora attaches to human solidarity is revealed in her calling it a "lifeline" and that she wants to remain with the "herd" rather than accept the role she intuitively knows has been assigned to her.

Much of the similarity in White's novels lies in the clash between the everyday world and the transcendent spiritual experience. Hilary Heltay describes the conflict between the outsider and society, the familiar dimension, as a "sharply drawn opposition between philistine and outsider" (1973, p.92). The philistines form the opposition to White's "elect". This state of conflict, says Heltay, is "an expression of his [White's] ambivalence to his homeland Australia" (1973, p.94). In con =

trast to the hypocritical attitude of some men and women, the so-called philistines, the outsiders "achieve a spiritual awareness denied those who are cushioned by social forms from the shocks of reality" (Walters, 1963, p.38). Sylvia Gzell (1964, p.181) believes that the ability to endure the world (bearing in mind Ghandi's maxim, see p.7 of this study) is what the outsider strives for. Reality can also be the equivalent of permanence, which, says Morley, (1972, p.1), White's protagonists look for beneath "the illusory flux, the true freedom which is valid even beyond physical death".

Hilary Heltay finds the reason for the harsh and unsympathetic attitude of society in its relationship to outsiders in fear. The outsiders threaten "the ordered world of those who have set up the boundaries of their reality according to the image of their limited selves and who react with hostility and resentment to any suggestion of another way of life" (1973, p.93). There is, however, a spiritual paralysis everywhere in society and the solution to this state, according to A.P. Riemer is to be found in the outsider's behaviour: "Man ... must be destroyed materially before he is able to ascend to a visionary height of achievement which liberates his soul, which allows him that intuition of infinity that is the clue to life" (1967, p.16).

There are critics who have reproached White for what they consider to be a preoccupation with the alienation of individual men and women. McLeod (1974, p.440) says that all humans are lonely, not only White's protagonists. "White shows the loneliness of existence, the basic alienation of us all, our subservience to the suzerainty of a Hardy-esque 'purblind doomster' and the irresponsible desire to supersede mortality." The

novelist as artist cannot change his nature or his stance. Just so White cannot change his approach to life. "The solitary, alienated figure is, however, central to White's imagination, and the truth of what is experienced in isolation is, in his novels, set against the falsity of shared social experience" (John Barnes, 1966, p.156). Barnes believes that in The Aunt's Story White has asserted the positive values of solitariness, but on the other hand the reader must also assume the anguish endured to achieve these attributes, or this insight.

The question which arises is whether the outsider has any real ability to decide what is to become of him. Geoffrey Dutton asserts that White's philosophy allows that each individual carries within him salvation and damnation - "the capacity for personal damnation or delight" (1963, p.8). One must, however, remember that very few men and women are aware of this capacity and that if they ever do have moments of insight they refuse to react to any twinges of their conscience. Theodora is fully aware of yet another world and life, but Frank Parrott prefers not to think about any extra-sensory intuitions: "If guilt stirred, and impinged on Frank Parrott's conscience, it quickly congealed" (p.267).

Marjorie Barnard's view of White's protagonists is less sympathetic than that of many other critics. She regards them as "frustrated and inarticulate ... the mad and the lost ones" (1956, p.170). This may well be society's point of view. It is Barnard's view that the inability of men and women ever to know one another is the ultimate loneliness. Barnard's view could well be that of White himself: "Poetry, music, religion are the paths that the soul, imprisoned in flesh may take, 'the paths out of sleep'.

Love is an illusion, pain a certainty but the capacity to feel pain is the mark of the human being. And pain is its own reward" (1956, p.179).

CHAPTER THREE

SOME ASPECTS OF PATRICK WHITE'S TECHNIQUE IN "THE AUNT'S STORY"

The Aunt's Story has to do with events which form pertinent transitional stages in Theodora Goodman's life. These events which lead to eventual fulfilment ironically commence with the death of others and finally in the dissolution of her physical and material interests. Only then is Theodora able to love the world with an objective and unearthly love.

The Aunt's Story begins in an unusual way, viz. on a note of relief at the death of Julia Goodman - "But old Mrs Goodman did die at last". William Walsh states that the unexpected opening sentence of the novel "establishes something of the awkward tension which precedes Mrs Goodman's death" (1974, p.201). At the time of her mother's death Theodora is middle-aged and unmarried. She has wasted the best years of her life caring for her cantankerous parent.

In Chapter Two White goes back in time to Theodora's early childhood and describes her life at Meroë with her parents and sister. There is the brief period of her schooling at Spofforths' where she has a schoolgirl friendship with an almost equally alien girl, Violet Adams. (Whereas Theodora is, because of her quest and her nature, an alien, Violet Adams is simply ignored because she is objectionable.) This stage is followed by her young girlhood strongly influenced by her love for Meroë and Frank Parrott. At this time Theodora begins to reveal her alien nature by her strange behaviour. This relatively carefree and happy stage in her life is terminated by the death of her father, the only one

at Meroë she had been on fairly intimate terms with. She and her mother then move to Sydney where they live until Julia Goodman's death.

From here White continues the history of the middle-aged Theodora, commencing with her new-found freedom after the death of her mother. The reversion to Theodora's childhood is an interlude to motivate her subsequent behaviour. Theodora leaves on an extended European tour during which she stays at the Hotel du Midi (Part Two) and indulges in flights of fancy in order to come to some kind of understanding of the problems of her youth, her future and the fulfilment of her longing to be loved.

In Part Three Theodora travels by train across the United States on her way home to Australia. She impulsively leaves the train at a desolate station, spends a few hours with a local family, the Johnsons, and then finally takes up residence in an abandoned house. Judged insane, she is removed to an asylum.

Although the structure of the novel seems simple and straightforward, each stage of her life is crowded with personal problems, sublimations and identifications, all made increasingly problematic by her alien nature. The effect of White's style is an increasing degree of participation in the progressive disorientation of Theodora Goodman. William Walsh writes about White's use of dislocated syntax and says that "sometimes it is simply bowled disconcertingly off the wrong foot" (1974, p.200).

To Buckley the increasing disorientation of Theodora presents a major technical problem. The problem, as Buckley sees it, is that White has no "set of devices by which her madness can be

placed in the perspectives of sanity" (1964, p.416). This indicates the need for an objective correlative which White finds in the use of colour, metaphor and symbolism. The idea of a journey, or an odyssey, also suggests the drift away from the rational world. Buckley believes that in the end White cannot cope and that his "creative method succumbs to her alienated consciousness ... compassion is recurrently thwarted by grotesquerie" (1964, p.416). According to Buckley, White has in The Aunt's Story not attempted to create and control more than one consciousness as he did in The Living and the Dead. White has concerned himself with "one consciousness, one destiny. He defines that consciousness, and he defines the world by means of it" (1964, p.416). The prose does not, however, patronize Theodora. Even if it is "less fluid than that of the earlier books ... [it is] more precise; it records with greater authority the tension of her consciousness between the desire for freedom and the fact of imprisonment" (Buckley, 1964, p.416). Kiernan says much the same in his statement that the structure of The Aunt's Story is freer and has a "genuinely experimental form that expresses the alienation of the individual in the modern world through a central consciousness" (1974, p.86).

Imagery and Colours

It is essential to understand the use White makes of geometrical figures and recurring images "which by repetition, juxtaposition and contrast acquire symbolic value" (Herring, 1965, p.18). Theodora's alienism or outsidership is graphically illustrated in her angularity, often contrasted to the roundedness or paddedness of the other characters.

When we meet Theodora for the first time she is in a detached manner arranging the few things in the room in which her mother's coffin is. Her hand which rests on the yellow coffin is as "rigid as protesting wood" (p.11). This comparison immediately introduces Theodora's essential nature and indicates that in the first place she lacks the physical and mental suppleness to conform to what is accepted by the majority as correct (Mrs Rapallo calls it "mental whalebone" p.253), and secondly White reveals his view of Theodora. She is like wood and associates herself with articles of furniture. (This aspect of Theodora's nature is discussed in more detail later in this chapter.)

In her youth Fanny Parrott, Theodora's sister and her antithesis, was smooth, plump and rounded. (She becomes bloated in her middle age.) Fanny's attitude to life - "I shall have a house with twenty rooms. In one room there will be ivory, and in another gold, and another amethyst" (p.32) - and her prim behaviour exemplify the significance White attaches to roundedness as symbolic of a materialistic and selfish approach to life.

Theodora's physical and mental angularity dismay not only the people she comes into contact with, but also affect the music she plays on the piano. "The music had lost its meaning, even the meaning that lay in the stiff up and down, the agonizing angularity that Chopin had never meant to be, but which was part of some inner intention of her own" (p.29). The music does, however, have real meaning for Theodora which it does not have for Fanny. The music Fanny played "was a whole bright, tight bunch of artificial flowers surrounded by a paper frill" (p.30).

In line with Theodora's angularity White makes effective use of

stick imagery. When Theodora is alone and realises her loneliness she compares herself to a stick, a sterile object easily discarded. When she has sensed the passion in Pearl Brawne's voluptuous body, Theodora lies down in a stream to forget herself and imagines that she is a stick. "And soon her thin brown body was the shallower, browner water. She would not think. She would drift. As still as a stick. And as thin. But on the water circles widen and cut. If Pearl Brawne took off her clothes, Theodora said, and lay in the water, the hills would move, she is fine as a big white rose, and I am a stick. If it is good to be a stick, said Theodora, it is better to be a big white rose" (p.40). Later in her life when she has come to understand that the beauty of a rose, like Pearl Brawne's prettiness, does not last, she says: "It's good sometimes to be a stick" (p.80).

It is important to realise the significance and the effect of the stick in the water: "But on the water circles widen and cut". This once again illustrates the contrary effect she has on the apparently smooth and harmonious flow of daily domestic life. As an outsider she disturbs the complacency of men and women like Frank and Fanny. A stick holds no growth and promises no future seed. Theodora's comparing herself to a stick suggests that she understands this and that it intensifies her alienation. However, the roundedness of Fanny and Pearl, which seems to indicate fertility, also turns out to be an illusion. Pearl Brawne's child dies and she is glad of it. Fanny bears children with a sense of duty and then discards all thoughts of love. In reaction a mature Theodora believes that it is sometimes good to be a stick.

George Goodman mentally released himself from the unhappiness of his married life by, in his imagination, becoming like Ulysses

and having similar adventures. With the help of her father, Theodora in the same way changes from a humble stick to the more romantic role of Nausicaä, a name "as smooth and straight and tough as an arrow" (p.70). Even though she may change the symbol she associates herself with, the angularity of the arrow remains and the delusion is only temporary.

Miss Spofforth, the headmistress of the school Theodora attends, is an outsider like Theodora and one who has progressed far on the road to an unfortunately inarticulate understanding of people and life. She and Theodora have a similar angularity. "Miss Spofforth was an opaque square. Her hair was dark grey, and her skin was thick and brown" (p.52). Somewhat later White writes about "the dark square of her face [which] struggled to open. She very much wanted to communicate" (p.65). She reveals the same loneliness Theodora experiences later in her life.

Lou Parrott, Theodora's niece and shadow outsider, has a thinness which is her angularity. The characteristic angularity these two females have in common is well illustrated by the stone imagery White uses to describe Theodora with the infant Lou in her arms. "So Theodora loved the child. Theodora became beautiful as stone, in her stone arms the gothic child" (p.119). The hardness serves to illustrate Theodora's alien female nature, very evident when her holding the child is compared to Fanny's nursing the baby: "But the child swelled round and pink on the mother's pink breast, and had all the banality of wax" (p.119).

When Theodora goes to the Agricultural Show with Huntly Clarkson, Elsa Boileau, and Marion and Ralph Neville, she once again by her appearance reveals herself as an outsider. White achieves a marked

effect by his use of geometrical shapes: "Theodora wore a long, an oblong dress of striped silk. Her attitudes were those of carved wood, while the powdered, silky, instinctively insinuating bodies of Elsa Boileau and Marion Neville flowed" (p.122). Elsa Boileau is like Pearl Brawne even if not of the same social class. Elsa is the type of woman Theodora imagines to be socially acceptable and the type Theodora herself would have liked to have been had she had any choice.

Roundedness then, in contrast to Theodora's angularity, represents a shallower and more sensual approach to life and suggests that there is no quest or desire beyond that of self-gratification and the selfish protection of interests. "At the concert, as at all concerts, everyone was rounded and well fed. Music filled out the lines and emphasized banality" (p.114). Yet another example of "padded life" is White's description of Elsie van Tuyl's home and relatives. "Everything else in the house was sure, substantial, silver. The buttons strained and kept the upholstery down. Elsie van Tuyl looked a million dollars, in white satin, by Sargent over the dining-room mantelpiece" (p.165). The men and women are as stuffed as the upholstery and are held together by the power of their money. Theodora's angularity and Lou's thinness offer no protection against the blows of life and therefore they seek other places and means of refuge. When Theodora looks at Huntly Clarkson she "looked at the rich, shining, well-covered body of Huntly Clarkson and wondered if he would exist without his padding" (p.106).

On a less grandiose scale than the van Tuyls and Huntly Clarkson, and in a more sympathetic light, we have the roundness of the Johnson family. They form a unit - "Their sphere was round

and firm" (p.281) - but still Theodora cannot be a part of it, "however often it was offered, in friendliness or even in love, she could not hold it in her hand" (p.281). The reason for the wholeness of the Johnsons is found in their lack of money. They cannot afford the "paddedness" of Huntly Clarkson and the van Tuyls. Theodora is an outsider to the Johnson family, in spite of her communicating with Zack, because she has at this stage of her odyssey come to the last obstacle to her "lucidity". She cannot turn about or have anything more to do with the world she has symbolically cast off by destroying her transport tickets and changing her name.

In The Aunt's Story bone imagery in contrast to the roundedness and the paddedness of society, reveals reality and an awareness of the harshness of life. "Death, said Father, lasts for a long time. Like the bones of the sheep that would lie, and dry, and whiten, and clatter under horses" (p.35).

The bony arm Lou Parrott thrusts into Theodora's side - "Lou did not speak, but she [Theodora] could feel very positively the thin bone of an arm pressed close against her waist" (p.15) - and of which Theodora is intensely aware, reveals communication and a sensitivity to a desire for love and companionship. This awareness is only between these two outsiders.

When Theodora rode about Meroë on horseback she felt peace in her bones. The plump Fanny, on the other hand, is insensitive to the land and its message. Theodora can "read" the land and in this way communicate with her surroundings as she cannot with a living being. When thus alone in the barrenness of Meroë she becomes aware of her own bones, "which is to come a little closer

to the truth" (p.63). It is Theodora's awareness of the reality of the bones and stones of Meroë that breaks her friendship with Violet Adams. "She [Violet] could not endure the bones and stones" (p.63).

In her role of the outsider, honest and filled with a sense of her quest, Theodora has the instinctive ability to see even beyond the bone and so come to understand the true meaning of life. "You will see clearly, beyond the bone" (p.66) says Miss Spoforth, headmistress and seer. The soul and the true nature of man are hidden by bone. When Julia Goodman looks at Theodora her hate overwhelms any maternal feelings she may have. "Watching her girls, Fanny who was pretty and the disappointing Theodora, her eyes were bright inside the bone, they could still shiver glass" (p.69).

Theodora's craving for a meaningful communication and companionship is illustrated when she wants to come to grips with the "real" Frank Parrott. "If she had touched him, touched his hands, the bones of her fingers would have wrestled with the bones in the palm of his hand" (p.85). To Theodora hands are an indication of character and her habit of inspecting hands and assigning attributes to them is an integral part of her quest for a better understanding of people. Tom Wilcocks, when discovered making love to Pearl Brawne, betrays his inner turmoil by not knowing what to do with his hands. His hands, however, are also his redeeming feature because he can make beautiful carvings. Theodora is attracted to his hands. Huntly Clarkson has large, clean and "giving" hands. The hands of Moraītis are "thinking hands" (p. 112). Theodora's own hands merge with whatever she touches. "She looked at her hands, that were never moved to do the things that

Fanny did. But her hands touched, her hands became the shape of a rose, she knew it in its utmost intimacy" (p.32). The "thick and muscular, but quiet and soothing hands" of Holstius are by choice the most important hands to Theodora. His "hands touched the bones of her head under the damp hair. They soothed the wounds" (p.289).

Moraītis, the Greek 'cellist, and Theodora achieve a state of real communication because they both come from a country of bones: "I shall remember we are compatriots in the country of the bones" (p.113). Both Meroë and Greece are arid. There is nothing to hide the true nature of the countryside. This comparison is in agreement with Theodora's angularity, just as the luxury of Audley reflects the natures of Frank and Fanny Parrott. The spiritual communication between Theodora and Moraītis is expressed in their uniting their respective geographic regions into one spiritual country: "I shall remember we are compatriots in the country of the bones" (p.113, my emphasis). Moraītis's baldness portrays his "barren" heritage and is suggestive of his lack of defence against men and women like those he encounters at Huntly Clarkson's party. His music and isolation are, however, his defence, "an armour, which would protect him in some moments that were too delicate to expose" (p.115). Moraītis's music is his balm but also his scourge because it strips him of any defence he may have had. At the concert Theodora attended "there were moments of laceration, which made you dig your nails in your hands. The 'cello's voice was one long barely subjugated cry under the savage lashes of the violins. But Moraītis walked slowly into the open. He wore the expression of sleep and solitary mirrors. The sun was in his eyes, the sky had passed between his bones" (p.116). In its revealing honesty the music he plays is as much a country of the bones as Greece is.

Not only does the appearance of bones reveal the true self, but the bones also act as a prison cage to the self or the psyche which attempts to escape from the physical demands of the body. White uses a bird image to describe the psyche which attempts this escape. This comparison is in line with Theodora associating herself with the hawk to escape from her imprisonment: "But the act of the hawk, which she watched, hawk-like, was a moment of shrill beauty that rose above the endlessness of bones" (p. 35). Wetherby is as bound to the demands of his body as he is to Muriel Leese-Leese who has "bought" him as a sop to her vanity: "Now Wetherby began to cough as if he could not breathe the air of the garden, and Theodora could hear his bones. She realised that he was all bones, and his breath was spiked. Somewhere inside him fluttered his sick self, trying to break free from the cage of bones" (p.172). When he threatens to murder Lieselotte he is actually venting his anger and frustration on her as a symbol of his weakness. Just as Morattis can experience catharsis through his music and escape from the banality of his surroundings, so Theodora can forget herself in water. Wetherby's poetry is that which binds him and allows him no escape. (Fanny's music was regarded as an accomplishment, but offered no release from her self.)

Patrick White makes effective use of colour as an aid to reveal character, character development and mood.

When we meet Theodora for the first time she is wearing black as a sign of mourning, but also because it has become the colour she associates with herself and her spiritual and physical state. In immediate contrast to the black colour of her dress which indicates imprisonment we have the white boats bobbing on Moreton

Bay. Because of the connotations attached to black it is not a popular colour. It is avoided by women like Fanny who prefer pink and white, suggestive of life. Black is thus a collateral to Theodora as an outsider. She also adopts this colour as her own because she loves and is part of the black volcanic hills of Meroë. "It was both desolate and soothing to sit on the black hill. There are certain landscapes in which you can see the bones of the earth. And this was one. You could touch your own bones, which is to come a little closer to truth" (p.63).

Black was not always the only colour in the life of Theodora Goodman. There were also other colours which indicate aspects of her nature before she finally accepted her role of outsider and became aware of her quest. These colours are seen in the dress she wore to the Parrotts' party: "She was dark and upright in her bright striped dress, the red, the yellow, and the black" (p.77).

Yellow is associated with death and unpleasantness. It is first used to describe Mrs Goodman's coffin and the boots Frank Parrott wears to the funeral. Even the afternoon of the funeral is yellow. Meroë with which Theodora identifies herself - "Meroë was eternity, and she was the keeper of it" (p.82) - is yellow and this too comes to an end and is associated with the second Meroë, "a dead place, in the black country of Ethiopia" (p.25). The decay and mismanagement of Meroë are illustrated by the fences "grey with age and yellow with lichen, that tumbled down and lay around Meroë" (p.26). Yellow is also the colour of shame. Theodora does not blush when she hears her father severely criticised, she "was thin and yellow with shame" (p.27). When Theodora wears a yellow dress, most likely chosen by her mother,

her mother decides that it turns her sallow, which hints at illness and decay.

When Frank has proposed to Fanny, Theodora feels that she has burnt herself out. The dullness she feels and the summer drought are once again linked to the colour yellow.

"'Theodora,' Mrs Goodman said, 'has grown thin and yellow.'

"'Yes,' said Theodora, 'it has been a trying summer.'

"The hills were burnt yellow. Thin yellow scurf lay on the black skin of the hills, which had worn into black pockmarks. ... And now the trees were more than ever like white bones" (p.87).

After all that Theodora has associated with yellow it is not strange that she should reject Huntly Clarkson's house, "the yellow facade and the laurel blaze of his great stone house" (p.122).

Even as a child Lou Parrott has come to associate yellow with harmful and awesome forces. In a letter she writes to Theodora she mentions that she has drawn a "yellow thunderstorm", promising turmoil. She too has a sallow colour (p.226) and has remained thin. Unfortunately at this stage Theodora finds herself in a similar position to that of Miss Spofforth. She can imagine Lou's future, but she cannot spell it out for her nor can she be of any assistance.

Red indicates virility in men and in women a regression from pink. The behaviour of Ralph Neville at the Agricultural Show is an example of red being equated with masculine virility. "Ralph began to jingle the coins in his pocket, and gather his audience excitedly, for what febrile exhibition he could not quite suggest, but it had to take place, some primitive, dimly apprehended tail-

spreading by the red cock" (p.123). Part of Theodora's attraction to Frank Parrott and Tom Wilcocks lies in her being attracted to their arched necks, in this context a phallic symbol.

"Now, now that she could watch him with calm eyes, she did so with pleasure, but sceptically, the red, arched neck of the young bull that she would have loved to touch, to put her hand on his poll. Frank made her feel experienced, but when he cantered off, her smile dropped. She was not quite sure" (p.71). When this masculinity is much in evidence and desired it gets the added quality and lustre of gold. When Frank and Fanny are together while they are still courting "her face bloomed in the frost beside Frank's red gold" (p.71). On the night Frank comes to propose to Fanny, Theodora's passion is reflected in the redness and the fullness of the moon. "She had begun to suffocate. She could feel the pressure of the red moon" (p.84).

In her youth the sensual pink and white beauty of Pearl Brawne has the added beauty of gold, i.e. before her seduction by Tom Wilcocks and her subsequent dismissal. "In spite of her age Pearl Brawne looked down a lot, because she was still shy, and you looked up through Pearl, and it was like looking through a golden forest in which the sun shone. Pearl was beautiful. Pearl was big and gold. Her hair was thick heavy stuff, as coarse as a mare's plaited tail. It hung and swung, golden and heavy, when she let it down" (p.36). When Pearl faints while serving dinner and her shame becomes known White writes, "never was such a harvest, such a falling gold" (p.41). Having once lost its purity the gold in Pearl Brawne is eroded by time and loose living. When she and Theodora meet again after many years, Theodora kisses "the big white face from which the wind was blowing the powder" (p.133). The reddish-gold colour of Frank Parrott, the "molten gold" (p.79)

of his passion and his union with Theodora during their dance degenerates with time and loses the attractiveness of gold. Even the red palls: "The mature Frank Parrott often reminded Theodora of a stuffed ram, once functional within his limits, now fixed and glassy for the rest of time. He was what they call a practical man, a success, but he had not survived" (p.16).

The red of masculinity is not the same as the purple of passion, sexuality and Pearl Brawne's purple world of forgetfulness. Both sexuality and winey forgetfulness - "a powerful purple stream" (p.132) - lead to disillusion and the desolation of a Pearl Brawne not knowing where she is going. At the end of her life Mrs Rapallo's passion is only a purple shadow across her face caused by her umbrella's shade. As young, inexperienced girls at Spofforths', Theodora and Violet Adams read Belle Spofforth's purple book of love poems, the "wadded covers" (p.57) suggesting the paddedness and the sensual banality mentioned earlier in this chapter. Violet Adams is avid in her desire to read the poems, but Theodora senses "some reason for distaste, as she looks at the bursting, wadded covers" (p.57). She cannot delude herself with false sentiment.

St George, patron saint and dominant figure in the glass window of the church at Spofforths', overcomes the evils of lust and sexual passion, symbolized by the bunches of purple grapes which burst out of the dragon's belly. Theodora's washing her hands in the purple light reflected from the window parodies Pilate washing his hands in water to clear himself of any blame for the death of Christ. Instead of cleansing herself of passion Theodora taints her hands. The memory of the purple colour remains in her subconscious mind and is eventually carried over to the

hands of Katina Pavlou, the young girl Theodora creates in her own image. The poems the young Katina writes are written in purple ink and the purple stains on her hands reveal her passion for Wetherby, a man compounded, in contrast to Holstius, of all the obnoxious qualities Theodora has found in men and associated with the sex act. Wetherby is not a person. He is an instrument, unpleasant and created to perform an unpleasant act, namely to destroy flesh, hence his squamous hands. "She watched him take Katina Pavlou's fingers and read his own mind into the purple stains" (p.237).

In the same way as the purple world of Pearl Brawne offers an avenue of escape from reality, so George Goodman escapes from reality by sailing over the purple water of the sea to imaginary shores. "More actual even than the dream of actuality was the perpetual odyssey on which George Goodman was embarked, on which the purple water swelled beneath the keel, rising and falling like the wind in pines on the blue shore of Ithaca" (p.69). The blue of Ithaca should be seen in the same light as Theodora's finally becoming conscious "of her own possessions, her blaze of blue" (p.293).

Whereas Fanny and Pearl are associated with pink and white, the outsiders in The Aunt's Story have an opaqueness about them, which explains their solitary, introversive and uncommunicative natures. Miss Spofforth was an "opaque square" and this is her limitation. In the jardin exotique there is no place to hide. Opaqueness as a protective covering is removed and the individual is revealed for what he is. "Only in the jardin exotique because silence had been intensified, and extraneous objects considerably reduced, thoughts would fall more loudly, and the

soul, left with little to hide behind, must forsake its queer opaque manner of life and come out into the open" (p.146). The opaqueness may be equated with a desire to hide as when, for example, Theodora "lay face down, so that she would find a thicker darkness, and lose all expression in the pillow" (p.62). At Meroë Theodora loses herself among the black hills. When she and Zack Johnson seal the compact of their understanding, the darkness of the washhouse glows.

Grey and zinc colours establish an atmosphere of death. When Theodora for a moment thinks of using the kitchen knife to murder her mother because of her unbending dominance, she lets the knife fall on the kitchen zinc. It is, somewhat ironically, on a morning the colour of zinc that Julia Goodman dies. Her death by natural causes is linked, by the same colour as wish fulfilment to Theodora's original intention. Wetherby calls the jardin exotique their "zinc surroundings" (p.241) indicating that nothing "living" can come of Theodora's fantasy. The creations arising out of such surroundings can have no hope of any future. A good example of grey suggesting death is White's description of Theodora on the morning of George Goodman's demise: "She was thin as grey light, as if she had just died. She would not wake the others. It was still too terrible to tell, too private an experience. As if she were to go into the room and say: Mother, I am dead, I am dead, Meroë has crumbled. So she went outside where the grey light was as thin as water and Meroë had, in fact, dissolved. Cocks were crowing the legend of day, but only the legend. Meroë was grey water, grey ash. Then Theodora Goodman cried" (p.89).

George Goodman's dream-world Ithaca finds its equivalent in

Theodora's roselight and rose symbolism. White attaches much importance to these symbols. Because the roses are imported from elsewhere they seem to Theodora to suggest release from the problems of Meroë and open the door to a never-never land. Roselight becomes the same as the "no-time" of her life when she was still carried in her mother's womb. This is illustrated by her foetal position when asleep. "Altogether this was an epoch of roselight. Morning was bigger than afternoon, and round, and veined like the skin inside an unhatched egg, in which she curled safe still, but smiling for them to wake her, to touch her cheek with a finger and say: I believe Theodora is asleep. Then she would scream: I am not, I am not, and throw open her eyes to see who. Usually it was Father" (p.23). When Theodora attended a dinner at Huntly Clarkson's house the table "was smouldering with red roses, the roselight that Theodora remembered now, of Meroë. She swam through the sea of roses towards that other Ithaca. On that side there were the pines, and on this side Moraītis" (p.111). Just as Julia refused to satisfy George Goodman's longing to visit Greece so she refuses Theodora permission to satisfy her longing to touch the roses. Julia Goodman is the "grub" in the roses, the spoiler of beauty and happiness. On looking in fascination at the grub in the rose Theodora understands that beauty and happiness are illusory and doomed. Even the beauty of people, compared to the roses, quickly fades and becomes "blown". Pearl Brawne, in her golden youth a rose, becomes "the big white flower, glittering and quivering with pollen, grow[ing] slowly from the pavement, ... offering its thick arum skin" (p.130).

Roselight is Theodora's domain and no one except a fellow outsider can enter or understand. The "country of the bones" to which Theodora and Moraītis belong has the same quality as the

roselight. It is a place of refuge and solitude. Huntly Clarkson cannot share this nirvana: "He stood in the reflected roselight" (p.111). Mrs Goodman, because she is the mother, is closer to the roselight than Huntly Clarkson, but even so she still sat "at the end of the passage of roselight" (p.127), in turn an outsider to her daughter's very private world. The roselight stands in the same relation to the opaque world of the lonely outsider as day to night.

The rose eventually becomes Theodora's symbol. She develops the habit of wearing a shapeless hat with a black rose attached to it. This black rose is Theodora's symbol, indicating her physical and mental state. Whereas she can shed her possessions (tickets and purse) and change her identity by assuming the name of Miss Pilkington, she cannot get rid of the hat with the rose. She leaves it with the Johnsons to complete her new identity, but it is returned to her. Although the rose on the hat is to all appearances an ornament, a sop to convention, to Theodora it stands as a contrast to the pink and white of Fanny and Pearl Brawne, and betrays her alien nature and her sterility. When she is taken away to the asylum the hat is put on her head, but it no longer has any meaning because Theodora has achieved fulfilment, having learnt to love and understand: "The hat sat straight, but the doubtful rose trembled and glittered, leading a life of its own" (p.299).

Whereas Theodora initially associates a rose with the beautiful and desirable, nettles and nasturtiums are given a sexual connotation. On the afternoon when Theodora and Fanny discover Tom Wilcocks and Pearl Brawne making love "there was not so much a smell of cows as of nettles and crushed earth" (p.38). Pearl's

partial nakedness terrifies Theodora because she recognises its power and significance as a part of "a great spreading shadow, which grew and grew" (p.39). Pearl's feeling of shame and the taunting of the Goodman girls make her hate them. Theodora associates the girl's shame and hate with the smell of nettles: "Hate was in the upstanding heads of the nettles, and the wet, black, crushed earth" (p.39). When Theodora, as Ludmilla, is preparing for flight with Sokolnikov (p.211) she experiences an awareness that she is "about to attempt to cross the mysteriously open space which separates beginning from end" (p.211) - thus reaching her final destination. It is significant that her immediate recollections after the realization that she is to die, should be "of childhood, nettles, rain, and the slow smell of dung, so that the act of turning was as much avoidance as exasperation" (p.211, my emphasis).

These recollections once again reveal the impression the scene behind the cowbail (p.38) made on Theodora and the problems she has come to attach to the sexual act which her body craves, but her mind rejects. To fill this void during her stay at the Hotel du Midi she imagines the seduction of Katina Pavlou (herself) by Wetherby. The expectation of sexual fulfilment fills the youthful, but ignorant Katina with a sense of perfection. "She felt Katina Pavlou, who was heavy and warm with some inner perfection of her own. But perfection, alas, is breakable, whether it is marble, or terracotta, or the more fragile groups of human statuary" (p.239). The anticipation of perfection has always been Theodora's illusion. When she hurries after Katina and Wetherby she wonders if the tower to which they have gone contains "in addition to damp, the smell of nettles" (p.248). The warmth of anticipation becomes as cold as stone. On their way back to the

hotel (Wetherby has disappeared having fulfilled his function) Katina asks Theodora if she has ever been inside the tower. Theodora fears "the scream of nettles" - the scorn and disparagement directed at her - when she has to deny any such physical experience. Katina's assertion that there is nothing inside the tower is Theodora trying to persuade herself. Theodora notes that the coldness of Katina's hand gives way to warmth and that her eyelids are "still and golden" (p.249) indicating satisfaction because "it is better finally to know" (p.249). Theodora never really knows and that is why her imagination is destroyed by her passion, the "rivers of fire" in her.

On the morning after the Moraïtis concert Theodora becomes intensely aware of the smell of nasturtiums which were crushed by the bodies of men and women who made love among these flowers. Significant in her association is that "the music which Moraïtis had played was more tactile than the hot words of lovers spoken on a wild nasturtium bed" (p.117). In this way she reveals her preference for a spiritual consummation with Moraïtis to a "sterile" affair like the one between Pearl Brawne and Tom Wilcocks.

Water with its flowing movement is the medium Theodora uses to escape from her surroundings. The water imagery suggests an escape from what she hates and fears and a dissolution of her mortal body. The death of Julia Goodman allows Theodora a freedom she does not know what to do with. After the death of the old woman the "arrested black" of Theodora's clothing begins to flow suggesting not only freedom, but disembodiment. "She swam down the passage, out of her mother's room, away from the influence of the coffin" (p.13). Theodora willingly unites herself with the water which not only carries her away, but releases her from her

body: "She took off her clothes. She would lie in the water. And soon her thin brown body was the shallower, browner water. She would not think. She would drift" (p.40).

To Theodora mirrors are like seas in that they open ways to a new self and a new world. It is important that the escape entails a complete dissolution of her human body: "She went and stood in the mirror at the end of the passage, near the sewing room which was full of threads and the old mirror was like a green sea in which she swam" (p.29).

At the Parrotts' party the music is described in terms of water images: "So Charlie King, who was a wizard on the keys, began to play smooth mad music, which Fanny Goodman caught in her skirt, the water falling through the outspread tulle, she had to, dancing by herself outside the sound of glasses, in the middle of the empty floor. Fanny Goodman flowed through the blue water, because, of course, by this time it was 'The Blue Danube' that Charlie King always played" (p.78). The state of euphoria the dancers, especially Theodora and Frank, enjoy is compared to being carried away by a current of water. "He [Ben McKechnie] swam out to her, after her. She floated away, but he swam and touched her laughter, the bright glistening of Fanny Goodman" (p.78).

Frank and Theodora surrender to the "dictatorial stream" (p.79) and in the new sphere "were pressed into a dependence on each other that was important" (p.79). Theodora finds the release from her body and the surroundings in the dissolution initially provided by the water. "Her face was thin with music, down to the bone. She was both released from her own body and imprisoned

in the molten gold of Frank Parrott" (p.79). Theodora's rising passion overwhelms the temporary release suggested by the water images and at the same time nullifies her attempts to escape from the physical demands of her body as, for example, when she lay down in the stream after having witnessed the incident between Pearl Brawne and Tom Wilcocks.

Tying up well with Theodora's angularity is White's use of articles of furniture as images associated with his characters. Furniture is important as an objective correlative. It is White's view that there is "perhaps no more complete a reality than a chair and a table" (p.141). When Sokolnikov asks Theodora whether she believes in God she replies: "I believe in this table" (p. 159). It has the reality of God. Her answer accuses the unreality and temporality of people. The reason why Theodora associates herself with articles of furniture, as for example at the Parrotts' party - "She stood upright and alone amongst the furniture that had been pushed back along the edges or into corners of the room, abandoning its normal functions" (p.75) - becomes clear in her conviction that "only chairs and tables ... are sane" (p.175). This is the ultimate alienation.

The conflict between the spiritual and the material world comes to a climax when Theodora is faced by Holstius and she has to make her final break with the secular world. When he speaks to her and her absolute withdrawal begins she at first clings to a table, digging her nails into its surface. The table which "screams" because of her nails reveals the intensity of her conflict. At Kilvert's house she arranges a table and a chair as the basis of living. Even these humble symbols of domesticity have to be rejected to achieve the spiritual fulfilment Holstius gives her.

The filigree ball (p.16) was originally intended to be filled with fire and rolled downhill in some religious ceremony. It had been bought by the Goodmans on one of their many tours and gradually became a plaything of children. In its original use it symbolizes not only Theodora herself, but also "her core of evil" (p.126) and the "rivers of fire" (p.56) which both indicate her passionate nature and the obstacles she has to overcome in her quest for honesty and self-realization. The present condition of the ball, "distorted and its metal green" (p.16), suggests the middle-aged spinster Theodora Goodman, as much out of place in society as the ball is alien to Australia. The easy relationship between the aunt and the children is paralleled in the pleasure they derive from playing with the ball.

One of the most important images in The Aunt's Story, and one which helps to give continuity to and at the same time reveal the progress of Theodora's odyssey, is that of the pine trees. The pine trees are mentioned for the first time when Patrick White describes the surroundings of Meroë. "On the north side of the house there were also live trees. There was a solid majority of soughing pines, which poured into the rooms the remnants of dark green light" (p.22). The memory of the pine trees under which Theodora and her father often walked - "for many years Theodora connected the hush of dead needles and the sound of living pines with the smooth, clean, oily smell of her little rifle" (p.34) - and Theodora's connecting the trees with her father and his study, converge to build in Theodora's mind an image of an odyssey to a better country, less harsh and more understanding than Meroë. "The straw from the packing cases still twitched at her skirt. The sea of pines swelled, hinting at some odyssey from which there was no return" (p.93). At the dinner

given in honour of Moraītis (p.111) Theodora's odyssey and her ability to escape from her immediate surroundings show progress in that the roses on the table conjure memories of roselight and forgetfulness and by an effort of will Theodora finds herself swimming "through the sea of roses towards that other Ithaca. On that side there were the pines, and on this side Moraītis" (p.111).

Pine trees also appear, but in changed form, in Theodora's fantasy world in the jardin exotique. The earthquake she experiences with Katina Pavlou destroys the single pine tree, indicating the barrenness and weirdness of the black island. The wind "hung, a dead thing, from the twigs of the ragged pine" (p.149). At the picnic the residents of the Hotel du Midi attend (p.231) the single pine tree has a red trunk and Mrs Rapallo sniffs at it like some dog. The single pine in both instances gives the impression of a stage prop which in turn bears out the idea of the jardin exotique being a stage and Theodora the puppet master. The face of Katina Pavlou among the serious pines "waiting to give some token of love, or even to receive hurt" (p.237) is that of the youthful Theodora at Meroë, waiting on the threshold of life. Patrick White carries Theodora's odyssey to its logical conclusion by having it end in Kilvert's house situated among the stunted pines (p.284).

Sexual imagery, direct and by implication, pervades the novel and is associated with Theodora's quest for self-realization. It is evident that there is a relationship between Theodora's regarding herself as a stick and her masculine characteristics. A stick may be hard, unattractive or regarded as a phallic symbol, and is in direct contrast to the feminine voluptuousness

of Pearl Brawne or the "insinuating bodies of Elsa Boileau and Marion Neville" (p.122). Theodora's describing herself as a stick (the male element) and her first thoughts upon seeing Pearl's exposed breasts, viz. that "it is better to be a big white rose" (p.40), suggest a lesbian tendency. Only when she comes to believe that normal sexual relations do not bring happiness does she know that "it's good sometimes to be a stick" (p.80). Even though Theodora is biologically a female and on two occasions, during the dance and the Moraītis concert, reaches what may be regarded as a consummation - "now existence justified itself" (p.117) - her characteristics are predominantly male. Her name is corrupted to Theo, she has a moustache, she prefers hunting with her father to feminine chatter, and is more at home in the company of men like the Syrian peddler, the Man who was Given his Dinner, and Moraītis than with the women in her circle. Later, in her fantasies, she plays the part of Ludmilla who "sat with her legs apart, like a man, on equal terms with the saints" (p. 158). Because Part Two of The Aunt's Story may be regarded in some respects to be psycho-therapeutic, Sokolnikov's analysis of Ludmilla's nature reveals once again Theodora's realization of her uncertain sexuality. He says to her: "Ludmilla, I love you ... Even when you are a sour, yellow, reasonable woman, who rumbles after camomile tea. Even when you are yourself. But when you are your two selves among the saints, then Ludmilla, I love you best" (p.159, my emphasis). Theodora's cry, "Why, God, am I this?" (p.72), is not only an exclamation against her ugliness, but also her being a sexually misplaced person. This is the price she pays for "the pure abstract pleasure of knowing" (p.114) without having to undergo the experience.

Theodora's emotional reaction to the men she meets illuminates the depths of her feelings and her conflicts. She loves her father, longs for his company, shares his dream of a nirvana, kneels in adoration at his feet and feels that she has been destroyed by his death. These actions and emotions suggest a very intense relationship. The faceless body she clasps during her nightmare may in this context be regarded as that of her father, but it is faceless because of the impropriety of her feelings. Harry Shaw (p.262) in explaining Oedipal love writes that it is the desire for sexual gratification through the parent and "involves identification with, and later hatred of, the parent of the same sex, who is considered by the child as a rival" (p.262). The rivalry in The Aunt's Story arises from Theodora's longing for her mother's approval. George Goodman's masculinity, never forceful, diminishes and Theodora becomes the dominating male factor. "Instead, and perhaps as a compensation for the secret which had been postponed, he took you by the hand, about to lead you somewhere, only in the end you could feel, inside the hand, that you were guiding Father" (p.23).

During her stay at the Hotel du Midi Theodora in her imagination creates a fantastic world peopled with reappraised individuals from her past. George Goodman is recast in the role of Sokolnikov whose rubbery appearance suggests a phallus. This sustains the argument that the love Theodora had for her father was at some time Oedipal.

Theodora's contact with the Syrian brings her release from her physical self: "She walked outside a distinct world, on which the grass quivered with a clear moisture, and the earth rang. In this state, in which rocks might at any moment open, or words

convey meaning, she stood and watched the Syrian go. His silence slipped past. The hills settled into shapelessness. She was left with the trembling of her knees" (p.31).

Theodora experiences the implications and benefits of true friendship when the Man who was Given his Dinner comes to Meroë and she takes her father's place in the friendship that had once been. The encircling arms of the two men (p.46) indicate a perfect friendship. In contrast Theodora's friendship with Violet Adams palls.

The release afforded by her contact with the Syrian and the friendship of the Man who was Given his Dinner are superseded in intensity by the Moraītis concert when an older Theodora comes as close as is possible for her to a spiritual consummation. The intensity of her experiences with these men serves to stress the banality of her association with Frank Parrott, her expectations of a meaningful and satisfying relationship with him having been awakened, together with her sexuality, by her seeing Pearl and Tom Wilcocks making love.

CHAPTER FOUR

1 THE SCOPE OF THEODORA GOODMAN'S ODYSSEY

Part One

Basing its definition of the term "odyssey" on the mythic journey undertaken by the Greek war hero Ulysses, The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, explains this concept as a long wandering or series of travels. Although as a middle-aged spinster, Theodora Goodman does undertake a solitary journey to Europe, her odyssey already starts when she is a young girl and imagines herself living in roselight and far removed from the tensions of her home. Following her father's example she could will herself out of company and on a journey to an Ithaca which existed only in her fantasy.

Hilary Heltay mentions what she regards to be a major characteristic of White's work and one which helps to explain the scope of Theodora Goodman's odyssey. She writes (1973, p.92) that White "portrays the progress of the individual away from the path marked out by society towards the turning-point of spiritual insight or to illumination at the moment of death". Thus, "the life of the individual takes on the character of a dynamic 'journey into truth' while society remains in the end untouched by him" (Heltay, 1973, p.92). Not only does society remain untouched, it becomes increasingly hostile to what it regards as a threat.

Professor William Walsh describes The Aunt's Story as the "rendering in terms of art of the process of mental collapse, and

one is conscious from the first, in the tone, in the nuance of word and image, of some disturbing irregularity in the material of Theodora's experience" (1974, p.201). Walsh believes the novel has to do with the "nature of the self and more particularly with the release from the self and indeed with the obliteration of the self" (1974, p.201).

"Theodora's odyssey, in Part One of The Aunt's Story, traces the process by which Theodora resists the conformity other lives would impose upon her, avoiding marriage with Frank Parrott and Huntly Clarkson because it would be an impairment of her integrity" (Wilkes and Reid, 1970, p.112). Like Professor Walsh, Wilkes and Reid maintain that Theodora's ultimate goal "is the extinction of self, the achievement of 'that desirable state ... which resembles, one would imagine, nothing more than air or water'" (p.134) (1970, p.112). Tracing the development of the narrative, Wilkes and Reid say that Part Two "continues the process of purgation, re-enacting episodes of the past by a surrealist method and teaching Theodora to reconcile opposing aspects of her experience as she participates in other lives" (1970, p.112).

It is not until after the death of her mother that Theodora purposefully begins her odyssey in search of a meaningful existence and self-realization. At this stage of her odyssey she is so overawed by the prospect of freedom from filial obligations and maternal domination that she is at a loss. She is, however, like the boats in the Bay of Moreton: "in the sauve silence she saw across the bay the pepper trees tossed into green balls by a wind starting, that raked the sea until the little white boats jumped and fretted and pulled at their moorings to be away"(p.13).

The imagery is appropriate to a sense of freedom and to the start of an odyssey. Even as a child Theodora revealed her longing to be free in every way. However, she does not yet grasp the meaning of freedom. It is still an undefined longing, pigeon-holed as freedom. When, as a child she went hunting with her father, she told him that at Meroë she would be free. "Free ... Free from what? Handing it back on a plate of air. Father's beard smiled and said that she had a lot to learn" (p.63).

Dr Patricia Morley (1972, p.64) sounds a somewhat ominous note when she writes that the freedom Theodora gets after her mother's death must be seen in the light of the coffin to which she moves. According to Dr Morley the same may be said of Jack Frost - his freedom through death leads to death. The implication is that complete freedom is to be found only after the "odyssey" of life. Geoffrey Dutton, probably having in mind the final observations of Holstius, says that the freedom Theodora attains sets her at liberty to lead "more than one of 'her several lives' amongst these refugees from 'the Gothic shell of Europe' [p.143] in the Hotel du Midi" (1963, p.10).

After the death of Julia, Theodora still regards her freedom as a blunt weapon. As a weapon it will cut her free from the hypocrisy of her fellows, but more important is that it hints at a world of fantasy which she will, to an increasing degree, create for herself and in which she will deploy and reveal her acquaintances in new roles in an endeavour to adjust her understanding of them and to come to terms with life and with them. In this world she will no longer be a victim of "family approval and her upper lip" (p.18).

Barry Argyle believes that "Theodora Goodman fulfils the acceptable allegory of her name" (1967, p.27). Even as a child Theodora did not behave like nor have the same ideals as other girls of her age. This quirk influences her relationships with all people. As Argyle points out, her unusual attitude is revealed in her conversation with Una Russell with whom she attended boarding-school.

"'I don't want to marry,' said Theodora.

"'Why ever not? There is nothing else to do.'

"'I want to do nothing yet. I want to see'" (p.54).

This extracts reveals on the one hand the sterility of Una Russell's life and her passive acceptance of circumstances and on the other that which Theodora wants to avoid. Theodora knows that her quest for meaning involves a search for intangibles. At a youthful age, while still at school, she expresses the urge in herself: "If I could give expression to something that is in me, but which I have not yet hunted down" (p.53). The questions Theodora asks of the mirror in the passage of her home have answers only in the world of her fantasy which becomes dominant for a period in her later life: "She went and stood in the mirror at the end of the passage, near the sewing room which was full of threads, and the old mirror was like a green sea in which she swam, patched and spotted with gold light" (p.29).

This trait, that of wanting to see and know all, even the metaphysical, comes to the fore early in Theodora's life when in a conversation with Gertie Stepper, a household servant, she says: "I would like to know ... I would like to know everything" (p.41). This ambition, sharpened and spurred by her honesty, determines the nature of her odyssey and her reserved attitude to all people. It explains her exploring the realm of fantasy when she is rebuf=

fed by the people she meets and when she is rejected by her mother.

Manfred Mackenzie (1963, p.294) says that Theodora, like many of White's characters "must leave Happy Valley and submit to the destructive pressures of 'Egypt' but each needs to resolve upon a choice of eternity whereby a 'return to Abyssinia' or rather an apprehension of a New Abyssinia, is made possible". Mackenzie bases much of his argument on Johnson's Rasselas which deals with an unsuccessful quest for happiness and a longing to return to a former state when happiness is not realized.

After the death of George Goodman and the settlement of his hazardous affairs, Theodora and her mother move to Sydney. At first she is dismayed by the monotony of their way of life and life in Sydney, but she gains in spiritual stature when she realises that any place is habitable as long as one regards life as unimportant. This realization is the result of her having already embarked on the first stages of her fantastic odyssey: "The straw from the packing cases still twitched at her skirt. The sea of pines swelled, hinting at some odyssey from which there was no return" (p.93). Her dream-world odyssey which becomes more attractive and necessary to her explains her abstracted behaviour. White explains Theodora's awareness of her lot when he writes: "Life is full of alternatives, but no choice" (p.132). Another example of her approach to life is Theodora's knowledge that "there was some great intolerable pressure from which it is not possible to escape" (p.269).

Theodora experiences the World War physically as a coffee dispenser at a canteen for soldiers and mentally in the "general

shapelessness that was taking possession" (p.94). Her involvement "touched her in theory. She knew what expression to wear on her face. But it was for something that would remain outside her experience" (p.94). She is an outsider even to a war which involves her physically. For a time the war replaces the rose-light of her youth because she can avoid her mother by working in the canteen.

In the course of her odyssey Theodora attempts to escape from the nebulous spiritual void of which men and women like Frank and Fanny are not even aware, and if they at any time are, they choose not to care, being too wrapped up in their own affairs. Before Julia Goodman's death Theodora's aimlessness is described by a drunk soldier, Bert Kelly. "You are walkin', sis, as if you didn't expect no end" (p.94). Bert Kelly represents a different world, somewhat related in philosophy to that of the Man who was Given his Dinner. He advises her: "You must listen to your belly and the soles of your feet" (p.94). He also represents another facet of the "purple world" of Pearl Brawne. Kelly, like Pearl, rejects thought which Theodora has tendered as an excuse for her being absent-minded; "That is the trouble, ... if you'll excuse me missus, is it? Thinkin' leads to all this perpendicular emotion" (p.94). Whether she does or does not think of Kelly's advice Theodora finds her aching feet preferable to "the aching of darkness" (p.95). It is this darkness in which she finds herself that she wants to penetrate and so find the light of understanding. The penetration is achieved during the process of disintegration she experiences when she has gone to live in Kilvert's house after leaving the hospitality of the Johnsons.

When Theodora looks at the motley assortment of soldiers she

serves with coffee she wonders "at what point the illusion of the individual will had succumbed to the universal dream" (p.95). It is just this, the surrender of her individuality, that she is not prepared to do.

It is when Theodora Goodman's physical life is at its most limited and her life as her mother's handmaiden is almost unbearable, that her mental horizon widens. "She cultivated a vision of distance. The whole landscape became a distance, even when she walked close, under fire from scarlet salvia" (p.100). Thelma Herring (1965, p.12) says that in the concluding stages of her life with her mother Theodora makes "a great advance in self-knowledge, in recognizing the 'core of evil' in herself from which springs her hostility to her mother and the necessity of destroying 'the great monster Self'". Parts Two and Three reveal how Theodora attempts to achieve humility to "combat Self". Theodora's state prior to her mother's death illustrates White's view that there is spiritual growth through pain and suffering. The transformation of Theodora's personality and attitude already reveals itself on the night Frank Parrott proposes to Fanny Goodman. Then already Theodora feels that she does not belong and that she will suffocate from the heat and the pressure of the moon. Then time ceases to exist. When she walks in the streets of Sydney, in the reflected heat of the scarlet salvias, she is again aware of an airy disintegration of her self which leads to peace.

Part Two

Part of Theodora's odyssey is to find real communication with people. As a newcomer to the Hotel du Midi she hopes to make genuine contact with each resident, not by speech alone, but by

touching hands. Her own hands are unsure and belong to her as if by accident. Her hands reflecting her mood, also reflect her life at that time: "their wandering, ingrained, grimy, gipsy fate, which was the strangest accident of all" (p.152). Heltay believes that when Theodora arrives at the Hotel du Midi she has progressed so far on her road to freedom, physically and mentally, "that she can renounce the controls on fantasy normally imposed by the world of her fellow humans and step forward into a world of her own fantasies" (1973, p.98). The fact that she lives in two worlds indicates the beginnings of madness in her, but "it does not argue against the reality of her fantasies" (1973, p.98). In the world of fantasy "Theodora is transported from a Riviera morning to a Greek night, and is addressed in America by a suitor of a younger Mrs Rapallo, Elsie van Tuyl. Likewise, as Varvara, she makes a brief excursion to St Petersburg and visits Anna Stepanovna's estate. As Ludmilla she flees through the pine forests of Russia with Sokolnikov during the Russian Revolution" (Dr John and Rose Marie Beston, 1975, p.5).

During her stay at the Hotel du Midi Theodora's attitude continues to change and the wonder she feels at life is partly explained by her reaction when she reads from the book of Acts: "But in this book the people came and went with a directness and simplicity that amazed. People no longer come and go ... people are brought and sent" (p.206). This implies loss of freedom and will, and suppression by a superior power which people themselves do not understand. "Theodora Goodman, watching the charade move, with all the hopes and hesitations of the human mechanism, knew that because she loved and pitied, the humiliation and the pain were also necessarily hers" (p.236).

Theodora's retiring nature and the increasing gulf between herself and other people, not the products of her fantasy, are revealed in her being compared to the shy mouse hiding and chewing on memories (p.170). The lounge of the Hotel du Midi reveals the end of each day's tension and disillusion: "She saw the ash trays, which had brimmed almost over, with ash, and the exasperated gnawings of pale nails"(p.200). This is the world of those men and women who no longer have the illusions of security, solidarity and ability.

Towards the end of her stay at the Hotel du Midi many of the loose threads of Theodora's life (suggested by the threads in the sewing room where she stands before the mirror and wonders about her life, p.29) have been tied. She has like the nautilus been the object of discord between Mrs Rapallo and Sokolnikov, recalling the quarrels between her parents; she now remembers her father with affection after having come to an understanding of his nature; she has, by casting herself in the role of Katina Pavlou, unsuccessfully tried to anticipate the experience of sexual intercourse and she has almost come to terms with the core of evil inside herself. What remains is to cast off the last remnants of her mother's influence. This happens when Elsie Rapallo tells her, "It is time, Theodora Goodman, that you and I agreed that the Principessa does not exist" (p.251). It is only because she has gained insight and an understanding of life that Theodora allows Gloria (herself) to disappear.

Although she feels that the time for her departure from the hotel is at hand Theodora waits "for some act that still has to be performed" (p.240). She knows that she still has to imagine the fire

in order to destroy the figments of her imagination. This purification can be seen in the same light as her discarding the last of her personal possessions in Part Three. It is part of the therapy which leads to her even changing her body odour: "She could smell the expanding odour of her own body, which was no longer the sour, mean smell of the human body in enclosed spaces, but the unashamed flesh on which dust and sun have lain" (p.274).

Part Three

R.G. Howarth writes that in Part Three of the novel, when Theodora has started on the long journey home, she becomes "an individual, and passes beyond the need of others" (1950, p.209). Because she has become an individual she "is regarded as queer, and even a trifle mad, by the normal conventional people around her" (1950, p.209). This consideration arises from the fear other people have that she may upset a comfortable way of life.

In the course of her journey across America "she no longer feels safe against the violence of her own personality, and retreats from the ordinary world around her" (Bestons, 1972, p.37). One may well add to the Bestons' explanation White's statement that she "retreated into her own distance and did not intend to come out" (p.265).

The idea of "her own distance" is partially explained by R.F. Brissenden when he writes that "in the middle of America, she leaves the train that has been moving across the endless summer plains of yellow corn and wanders off into her own black Abyssinian world" (1958, p.22).

Kirpal Singh writes that Patrick White "seems to sympathize with pastoral landscapes" (1975, p.92). It is true that White does use setting to explain and describe states of mind and moods. The volcanic hills of Meroë reflect the core of evil in Theodora and during her lonely wanderings influence her moods and sometimes soothe the hurts she has received. Another example of White's use of nature and landscape to suggest the temporality of man is found in Part Three when he writes: "The corn could not help itself. It was. But the man scrabbled on the surface of life, working himself into a lather of importance under his laundered shirt" (p.266).

Finally, Dr Patricia Morley writes that "Theodora reaches her goal with Holstius on a mountain in the American West, above a trumpeting of yellow corn. Since the American autumn corresponds to the Australian spring, the imagery surrounding Theodora's 'return to Abyssinia' suggests that she is embracing all continents and all seasons" (1972, p.69).

Considering geographical changes, Thelma Herring (1965, p.18) says as people become interchangeable in Theodora's mind so do places. It is thus feasible that she should accept Kilvert's house and the surrounding hills as Meroë or Abyssinia, the latter being the same as home. In the letter Theodora writes to Fanny at Audley she intimates that she has achieved what she set out to do. "I am writing to say that I have seen and done, and that the time has come at last to return to Abyssinia" (p.266, my emphasis).

Towards the end of her odyssey Theodora has come to communicate to an increasing degree in abstractions of which she has always been very fond. "Because, although he [Holstius] spoke in abstractions, these answered the depths of her being" (p.288). This

penchant has alienated her from the company of others. In the light of this idiosyncrasy it is no wonder that Fanny, representing the generally accepted and practical attitudes of the community, should understand Theodora's reference to Abyssinia literally and deduce that Theodora has gone mad. Theodora's reference can be interpreted to mean either home, called Abyssinia by analogy to its Abyssinian name Meroë, or the second Meroë, her nirvana, now that she "has seen and done" (p.266).

Theodora's life-story is a "pilgrimage towards that nothingness which is her ultimate goal" (Marjorie Barnard, 1959, p.54). Barnard adds her view that the "world is arraigned, not Theodora".

II The Parallel between Theodora's Odyssey and that of Ulysses

In her evaluation of The Aunt's Story Dr Patricia Morley states that White uses Homer's Odyssey "as a mythic framework for Theodora's quest" (1972, p.68). Thelma Herring (1965, p.15) says that the odyssey of Ulysses indicates spiritual purity through hard suffering and sacrifice. She maintains that White's use of the odyssey is individual: "By allusion and image [White] uses the Odyssey as a means of indirectly defining character and theme and as a kind of shortcut to emotional intensity" (1965, p.16).

In the same article Thelma Herring mentions what might be regarded as parallels between the original Homeric Odyssey and The Aunt's Story. The resemblance is tenuous and it is doubtful whether it forms a part of White's intention. Firstly the arrival of a ragged and bereft Ulysses in Ithaca resembles Theodora at the time of the fire, when, deprived of all her possessions she decides to return home to "Abyssinia". Ulysses' dog, Argus, which

greet its master again after twenty years and then dies, resembles the Johnsons' dog, Red, which fawns on Theodora after having first torn her skirt. Finally we have a parallel in the ablution offered by Mrs Johnson and the washing of Ulysses' feet by his aged nurse. For the sake of completeness one should pay attention to Dr Morley's idea that apart from Homer's Odyssey, Patrick White uses the archetype of the four levels of experience or states of the human soul: "from the innocence of childhood, through experience, suffering and death, to redemption (variously described as Paradise Regained, the New Jerusalem, the land of Beulah, and so on)" (1972, p.68).

We have a further reference to Ulysses in a dream Theodora has while staying at the Hotel du Midi. After having read from the Acts Theodora falls asleep and dreams (p.206) that she is Epaphroditos who lands on a strange shore after wading through green water.

J.F. Burrows (1966, p.165) explains this strange dream by first giving the various sources from which the dream is drawn. They are Ulysses' actual landing, the account of his journey as told to Emmaeus, the landing in Phaeacia that results in the Nausicaä episode and lastly the Apostle Paul's landing on the island of Malta, Acts XXVII to XXVIII. In the "trouser hitching, the salt stains, and the stones underfoot there is the force of a certain actuality ... In the trousers of Theodora's mannishness ... and the moustache of her spinsterhood ... this becomes a Theodoran actuality" (1966, p.166).

The explanation Burrows gives of Theodora's choice of name, Epaphroditos, casts additional light on her behaviour and her

mental state. First he mentions that Theodora copies Ulysses' habit of giving false names. (This may also explain Sokolnikov's behaviour when he and Ludmilla are captured. It does enhance the atmosphere of unreality.) Theodora's similar behaviour takes on a finer edge: "she is forsaking Athena's patronage in favour of Aphrodite's" - thus the patroness of health, learning and wisdom for the goddess of love, Venus. Burrows explains that "the name 'Epaphroditos' was unknown in the Homeric Greek and that, even much later, the word remained an adjective meaning 'beloved of Aphrodite'" (1966, p.166).

The Bestons describe this dream episode in which Theodora acts the role of Epaphroditos as a fantasy within a dream. This is to distinguish her other flights of fantasy which are willed.

III Theodora Goodman's Quest

The quests of Patrick White's various protagonists are influenced by the quest myths in the Bible and the myths of the Middle Ages with their theme of dragon-killing. There is the conflict between the hero and the dragon or enemy and this, says Morley, makes the hero the equivalent of the Messiah or deliverer. Morley points out that in his novels White uses the St George myth, "but his hero finds his chief enemy within himself" (1972, p.24).

Theodora Goodman has to try to cope with many problems, e.g. smouldering sensual passion, the desire for a happy and financially secure life, betrayal of dependents, mercenary behaviour, parental love and anger, religious doubt and the longing for human solidarity. These obstacles to Theodora's fulfilment are embodied in one or more of the characters in Part One of the

novel. In the fantasy world she creates in Part Two these desires and conflicts are embodied in the characters she creates.

Sheila Roberts sees Theodora Goodman as resembling many of White's other characters, in that, when they seek redemption they "may suffer a breakdown of the ego, a loss of selfhood, but this is always merely a stage on the path to greater integration" (1974, p.39). Kiernan writes that the "attempt to find some correspondence between the world within (of ego, memory, aspiration) and the world without (both the social world of other selves and the natural world) involves the major characters in all his novels" (1974, p.102).

Morley writes that The Aunt's Story "asks us to consider what is actuality and what is dream" (1974, p.72). Of Theodora Goodman's quest in life she says that it is not "simply the desire 'to know everything' [p.41] but also the need to be rid of an intolerable burden of sadness which she carries unbeknown to the world" (1972, p.70). According to Dr Morley, Theodora's quest parallels the archetype of Goethe's Faust, who craves knowledge, as well as the story of Bunyan's Pilgrim. Because of her simplicity and humility Theodora's way is that of Pilgrim and not of Faust. Dr Morley also believes that White's characters, thus also Theodora Goodman, look for "true permanence or unchanging structure beneath the illusory flux, the true freedom which is valid beyond physical death" (1972, p.1). Theodora's final madness and removal to an asylum indicate that this freedom and permanence cannot be found in what is regarded as the sane world. Complementary to what Dr Morley has said Hilary Heltay adds that Theodora's quest is for truth. In the process of this quest she discovers "increasingly extreme possibilities of spiritual development, even to a complete

dissolution of her own personality" (1973, p.96).

Of the many critics who have written about Theodora's quest, few have suggested more worthwhile fields for further study than Sylvia Gzell. She has written about the quest themes in both Voss and Riders in the Chariot (1964, p.180). Her arguments are, to a considerable degree, applicable to Theodora Goodman's quest. To initiate her argument Sylvia Gzell quotes John McLaren (1963, pp. 27-8): "Patrick White's central concern is with 'the inner and individual life of man' and 'the solitary individual'". Gzell then sets about examining the themes and attendant clusters of images which develop from this concern with man and his psyche. She uses the same term as Colin Wilson to describe the problem facing misfits or outsiders, viz. that of self-realization. She breaks up this concept into three distinct elements: "the problems of integrity, fulfilment and understanding which face the misfit in his quest for self-realization" (1964, p.181). Although she uses the three aspects in her evaluation of Voss and Riders in the Chariot, it is worthwhile examining their compatibility in explaining Theodora's own quest.

The protagonists' search for integrity includes "the desire to find the real self unhampered by tradition and orthodoxy" (Gzell, 1964, p.181). The ideals in question are: "those of honesty and refusal to compromise, which lead inevitably to a reaction by the seeker against the bulk of society's members" (1964, p.181). Theodora Goodman is honest, too honest in the eyes of the people who know her. Frank Parrott says that he likes talking to Theodora, "'Because you are all right. Because, I suppose, you are honest.' His voice groped. It had great difficulty in choosing words to express what, anyway, had no shape" (p.84). Theodora's

honesty also hurts individuals. This is made evident in, for example, her inability to lie about her feelings on hearing Violet Adams tell that she is to leave school. She cannot be like the women who write lies in letters and then believe these lies.

Gzell says that the quest for personal integrity, as part of the search for integrity at all levels, is present also in antithesis. Pearl Brawne and George Goodman attempt to forget their identities by antithesis in comparison to the search for identity by others. Pearl Brawne as a whore is afraid when Theodora meets her again after many years. "Now it was not so much a plant that her voice feared, as somebody trying to open a cupboard of which she had thrown away the key" (p.130). George Goodman on the other hand goes on a mental odyssey, like some fantastic Ulysses. Gzell makes an important statement on the life of Theodora Goodman when she asserts: "I suggest that in the novels fulfilment is seen as entirely possible through love in its many forms, not the least being the mutual love of man and woman" (1964, p.187). It is just this subdued yet passionate craving for love, from her parents and from some man, that influences Theodora's life and her fantasy.

The third theme which can be considered part of Theodora's quest is that of "transcendent understanding" which Theodora, even as a child, intuitively desires, and eventually seems to find, but only in apparent insanity.

In close parallel to the arguments of Gzell we have the statement by McLeod (1974, p.441) that in The Aunt's Story "we have a deeply affecting portrayal of a lonely, unmarried woman's search for meaning, love and satisfaction". Nancy Potter (1964) looks at

the text itself to discover an explanation of the nature of Theodora's quest. The quotation she supplies - "Why then ... is this world which is so tangible in appearance so difficult to hold"? [p.283] - suggests not only the nature of Theodora's conflict, but that her odyssey is away from the world.

Only in the end, i.e. when she has achieved insight and understanding does Theodora comprehend that her quest has been for permanence, love and compassion. "Holstius laid his hands on, and she was a world of love and compassion that she had only vaguely apprehended" (p.294). Holstius, a figment of her imagination and composed of her ideals, explains permanence as "a state of multiplication and division" (p.295).

Thelma Herring (1965) believes that to achieve this state of illumination (is Theodora then one of the illuminati?) all inessentials must be removed. At the Hotel du Midi Theodora still attempts to make her identity felt - she signs the hotel register and arranges the articles in her room - but later [Part Three] after she has got off the train, she discards all her possessions. It is then that she gives herself an assumed name. This, says Thelma Herring, is part of the search for "pureness of being" (1965, pp.13-14).

On writing about the many goals Theodora sets herself, Thelma Herring mentions that Homer, St Paul and Tolstoy, in the light of the significance Patrick White gives them, each presents a spiritual quest: "They each contribute to the pattern of this section [Part Two], Homer through the Odyssey theme, St Paul through Theodora's reading of the Acts, Tolstoy because parts of it are like a parody of the Platonic Idea of a Russian novel" (1965, p.17).

The elderly Theodora's way of life, for obvious reasons, arouses a feeling of impermanence in her mind. The only way in which she can combat this fear is by thinking of her relations, the only reality she has left. "Lying on her back, in the dark, in sleeping cars, and the bedrooms of reasonable hotels, she had recalled the features of relations. These did give some indication of continuity of being" (p.145). However, when she discards her travel documents, she also discards a photograph of children standing in a row (p.274), thus also any meaning her relatives may have had.

IV Theodora's Dilemma

Vernon Young (1948, p.423) argues that Theodora's predicament, resulting from her nature and her quest, is that she just wants to be left alone, and because the world rejects her, she withdraws and finds reason in what society diagnoses as madness, her behaviour not conforming to the norms laid down by society. He appraises her problem as a "dislocation of identity" (1948, p. 424) and blames George and Julia Goodman for this aberration which, it is apparent, lies in her dark self.

Theodora's alienation from the accepted emotions of femininity is illustrated by what she feels when she bends over the carcass of the rabbit she has shot: "She had bent to touch the body of the still warm rabbit. The killing did not move her after a time, as it did at first, the blood beating in her own heart. In time, behind the rifle, she became as clear and white as air, exalted for an act of fate and beauty that would soon take place, of which her finger had very little control, it was an instrument" (pp.34-5).

Theodora begins to accept her role as an outsider when she starts "to accept both the contempt and the distances. Because there were also the moments of insight whether with Father, or the Man who was Given his Dinner, or even with the Syrian" (p.54). Theodora "can see the world best through other people who live on the edges: the Man who was Given his Dinner, the Syrian peddler, the Greek musician and the collection of exotics at the Hotel du Midi" (Nancy Potter, 1964, p.10).

When at school and feeling herself confronted by an uncomprehending world of deceit, Theodora buries her face in her pillow "so that she would find a thicker darkness, and lose all expression in the pillow" (p.62). It is characteristic that her desire for isolation and comfort requires blackness, or at least darkness as mirrored by the black clothing she wears later in her life. During the time she spends at home and at school she looks for freedom and the expression of her inner turmoil by walking "up the black hill, that winter had blackened further, the black cone of Ethiopia that had once flowed fire" (p.63). This blackness must be examined in conjunction with the opaqueness discussed in Chapter Three.

After having gained some experience of life at school Theodora feels that some of the pieces of the puzzle that is life have fallen into place. However, she does not understand "the unaccountability of human nature" (p.69). These thoughts turn to the relationship between her father and mother. She cannot understand why they ever married as "They sat in their own bedrooms, and there was more than the house between them" (p.69). There was no communication between them whatsoever, only "shiny silences". Theodora senses inevitability in that a marriage, once set in

motion cannot stop. "All this continued because it had begun" (p.69). She too, as a result of this marriage, is the outcome of what had begun many years before.

Marjorie Barnard (1959, p.53), writing about Theodora being an outcast, says: "Life turned her away, she was the rejected stone. On that rejection she built her life." Theodora's only claim to being something in the eyes of the world is that she is an aunt and, as Barnard points out, it is her only contact with reality, and then to a child who mirrors her own youthful loneliness (1956, p.164). When in the 1959 article Barnard discusses Theodora's ugliness she writes: "It was not something that mattered to her of itself. It was a portent and a direction. She accepted it" (1959, p.53). She uses her plainness as a means of discouraging Huntly Clarkson from proposing to her (p.121).

Marjorie Barnard says of Theodora's honesty: "She would have nothing because she was unwilling and unable to pass the counterfeit coin that would buy her even her share of roselight, and, with a creative spirit, she lacked the means of creation, the outlet of the artist" (1959, p.53). This inability to express her innermost feelings is solved in the artistic talent of Lieselotte. "She is nonetheless complex, artistic, and yet unable to create; loving yet unable to love or be loved; so honest that she alienates, being averse to saying 'the things they want to hear, flattering their vanity and their strength'" (McLeod, 1974, p.441).

White's treatment of Theodora is done with sympathy and understanding and "with such insight into the quality of solitary experience that Theodora's rejections seem inevitable rather than cantankerous" (Dutton, 1963, p.10). Dutton points out that

Theodora does have her exalted moments, e.g. when she meets the Man who was Given his Dinner and MoraTtis. One of the major differences between Theodora and the other characters is that she knows that she lacks humility. Considering Theodora's alienism Dutton says: "The fact that there are no comfortable ordinary people to fall back on makes her loneliness all the more acute" (1961, p.18). What Dutton does not say is that Theodora cannot fall back on any human ties because she has rejected them all, even her new name has cut her off from all the family ties which once linked her to "sanity".

Kirpal Singh writes about the unpredictability of what Theodora does and says that her behaviour upsets people and makes them avoid her. As examples of her unpredictability one can quote her remark that there would be another war unless God is kinder to ants (p.280) and her refusal to let Frank Parrott shoot the hawk which she then shoots herself a few moments later (p.73).

Dr Patricia Morley believes that a study of the Tiresias /Teire=sias/ motif is important for an understanding of The Aunt's Story and also Patrick White's vision. From such a study it becomes clear that sex is of secondary importance to love and hate, good and evil. Secondly the bi-sexuality of Tiresias gives a much wider vision, being unlimited or hampered by male or female prejudices. As regards fertility, Theodora has only her soul's contentment - no child (Lou may be regarded as her spiritual child) or personally produced object of art. Dr Morley sees a similarity between Theodora and the prophet Tiresias: "The chief characteristics of the mythic Tiresias are spiritual wisdom and spiritual fertility or creativity, despite physical blindness and sterility" (1972, p.76).

V The Core of the Matter

Geoffrey Dutton says that Theodora has a harder task than any of the other characters to destroy "the great monster Self". She has nothing to destroy it with and she will not allow art or knowledge to become a means of trying to. Her awareness of this cancer in her psyche and barrier to absolute freedom marks yet another difference between Theodora and the other characters who are unaware.

The Bestons find the reason for Theodora's core of evil in the natural surroundings she associates herself with: "Theodora is herself a black volcano, dead yet living, capable of erupting with destructive power. The volcanic quality is what she has in common with the hawk she comes to identify with herself" (Bestons, 1972, p.35).

On the south side of the house at Meroë there is a rose garden, one of Julia Goodman's many whims. Theodora spends much of her time here "where she could hear a golden murmur of roses". Some of the roses die because of grubs. Although Fanny shows typical feminine alarm at the grub they find in the one rose, Theodora "could not condemn her pale and touching grub" (p.23 my emphasis) and in this manner reveals the uncertainty and destructive forces at work inside herself (Morley, 1972, p.69). This identification with the grub is closely related to her admission: "I have a core of evil in me that is altogether hateful" (p.126). This grub in the rose is "the sum total of the garden" (p.23).

Dr John and Rose Marie Beston diagnose Theodora's interest in the grub as a fascination. "She could not look too long at the

grub-thing stirring as she opened the petals to the light" (p.237). The two writers explain the symbolism of the rose by saying that "the rose stands for both Mrs Goodman who ordained the garden, and for Theodora" (1972, p.38). It stands for Theodora in that she "identifies with her mother in such actions as wearing her mother's garnet ring and drinking camomile tea" (Bestons, 1972, p.38). Dr Morley, in more religious vein, regards the grub as the "serpent in Eden" (1972, p.69). Julia Goodman and Fanny do not accept the significance of the grub in the rose because they are frivolous. Dr Morley believes that the worm is suggestive of a self-destructive element which people have inside themselves. This is not an original opinion and has been aptly expressed by William Blake:

O rose, thou art sick!
The invisible worm
That flies in the night,
In the howling storm,

Has found out thy bed
Of crimson joy,
And his dark secret love
Does thy life destroy.

In the life of Theodora her "grub" is the "core of evil" which she discovers in herself later in her life. Julia Goodman also has this self-destructive element as is revealed by her murderous and spiteful nature. Theodora says of her mother: "I believe you were born with an axe in your hand" (p.126). "It was the great tragedy of Mrs Goodman's life that she had never done a murder" (p.100).

CHAPTER FIVE

THEODORA GOODMAN - OUTSIDER

"Sometimes, Theo ... you behave as if you are quite mad" (p.74).

I At Home

Even as a young girl Theodora reveals an alien nature, her contrary behaviour highlighted by the socially acceptable behaviour of Fanny who experiences no difficulty in conforming to the norms laid down by society.

As a child Theodora has many conversations with the elderly and somewhat staid Gertie Stepper. During one such a conversation the young and naive girl mentions her desire one day to know everything. Stepper's reaction to this unusual desire is disapproving: "There's a lot that isn't for little girls" (p.41).

Marjorie Barnard (1956, p.163) points out that it is during this early stage of her childhood, before she goes to school at Spof=forths', that the seeds of moral frustration are sown. Most of her frustration is caused by the disharmony between her parents and the fact that she is not unequivocally accepted by either one as, for example, Fanny is accepted by her mother.

Dr Patricia Morley (1972, p.69) says that although Theodora's early life may have been unhappy, it was nevertheless interspersed with roselight, indicative of dreamy forgetfulness of a Utopian nature. Theodora finds much happiness in the rose garden, even though it is forbidden her, and roses come to mean happiness and

escape from the reality of, for example, practising her scales which she could never master. There is also evidence in the rose imagery that Theodora may have, unconsciously, desired the security of the womb. Although this aspect has been discussed in more detail in Chapter Three it is as well to repeat the following quotation: "Altogether this was an epoch of roselight. Morning was bigger than afternoon, and round, and veined like the skin inside an unhatched egg, in which she curled safe still, but smiling for them to wake her, to touch her cheek with a finger and say: I believe Theodora is asleep. Then she would scream: I am not, I am not and throw open her eyes to see who. Usually it was father" (p.23).

It is "when the roselight [*hardens*] and [*blackens*]" (p.29) that Theodora is really miserable. She becomes aware of this hardening when she has already taken the first steps on her "journey to nothingness" (Barnard, 1956, p.164) and for the first time in her life becomes aware of the "detached eye" (p.26). This awareness is born when Theodora hears her father and his affairs being discussed by men who pretend to be his friends. Their hypocrisy hurts and bewilders Theodora who has yet to learn not to accept people and promises at face value. The hurt is, however, deep because her father is the only one she loves. "She was oppressed by a weight of sadness, that nobody would lift, because nobody would ever know that she was shouldering it" (p.27). It is when this burden becomes too much for Theodora that she retreats from the social and domestic world to the black volcanic hills which surround Meroë, there to seek communion with nature: "She knew the extinct hills and the life they had once lived" (p.32). The damage done by the so-called friends to Theodora's esteem of her father is reflected in her initial wariness of Sokolnikov whom

she has, in her fantasy, cast in the role of her father.

II Fanny

Fanny is different from Theodora because she easily conforms to the norms of society and represents what Holstius calls "the reasonable life" (p.295). Her function in this novel is to be first a representative of society and second to act as a foil to Theodora, thereby highlighting the latter's alienation. Like Frank Parrott she prefers sensual attributes. There is no real depth to her emotions and the sadness she feels at her mother's death is spurious. Theodora's memory of her mother and her tyr=anny is close. "She [Fanny] also remembered vaguely a piece of pink coconut ice offered by her mother's hand. So Fanny cried" (p.14).

As children the two girls' interests differ. Fanny's games and foibles are common for a child of her age and reveal an ambitious nature. To Theodora she says: "Let us play houses, ... I shall have a house with twenty rooms" (p.32).

Fanny has what is popularly known as musical talent and is much in demand at social functions and at parties. The music she plays is evidence of an accomplishment, but reveals no involvement at all. This non-involvement is one of the outstanding differences between the sisters. "She remembered as a consolation that Fanny had been the musical one, whereas Theodora had often played an angular music that did not exist. Her thin, dark, struggling arms had filled Mrs Goodman with distaste" (p.114). Fanny fulfils her mother's expectations of parenthood. Her obedience and compliancy allow Julia Goodman to act the part of a complacent mother. This

satisfactory kinship is offset by the strained and even antagonistic relations which exist between Theodora and her mother.

There are moments when Theodora, confronted by Fanny's perfections, becomes desperate. On one occasion, when Julia has once again belittled Theodora by drawing her attention to Fanny's perfections, she cries out: "Oh, leave me alone, ...I am all right" (p.32). This cry echoes Theodora's longing for freedom, not just from the encompassment of the house, but from the tyranny of her mother and from being different and therefore unacceptable to those near her. At such moments of emotional turmoil Theodora escapes from the house and its inhabitants by leaving from a side-door which "opened on to the pines, and for many years Theodora connected the hush of dead needles and the sound of living pines with the smooth, clean, oily smell of her little rifle" (p.34). There is a degree of communication with this landscape into which she escapes: "the landscape was more communicative than people talking. It was close, as close as your own thought, which was sometimes as heavy and painful as stone, sometimes ran lighter than a wagtail, or spurted like a peewit into the air" (p.34).

When Theodora, Fanny and Frank go hunting rabbits, Fanny looks particularly attractive, even out of place in the hunting-grounds among the black hills. As male and female Frank and Fanny are attracted to each other by a physical awareness and a youthful vitality: "Fanny's face bloomed in the frost beside Frank's red-gold" (p.71). Although Fanny does not consciously realise it and would never admit it, she is busy with the same mating-game Pearl Brawne played and which she scorned when she saw it brought to its natural culmination. Fanny's reaction to Frank's masculinity is normal. She does not suffer the same anguish her sister does.

Theodora has, for example, become physically aware of and attracted to Pearl Brawne. This realization comes to Theodora when she sees Pearl's naked breasts after having previously been attracted by their prominence. "Pearl swelled inside her blouse, and was white and big. She rose and overflowed. There was no containing Pearl in common bounds" (p.36).

When Theodora looks at the physical beauty of Frank and Fanny she experiences a sense of rebellion against what she then regards as an injustice. She calls upon God with a cry of despair at her being not only ugly but sexually different: "Why, God, am I this? Theodora asked knowing that expectation and the temperature had turned her skin a deeper yellow" (p.72).

Never having like Theodora been interested in her natural surroundings, Fanny is interested only in her house "and not the land, because land is just land" (p.97). In the pride she takes in furnishing and decorating her home, Fanny is unlike Theodora who after she has left Meroë does not really care where she stays.

During the World War, far removed from Australia, Fanny complains that she cannot obtain velvet and is disappointed that she cannot tour Europe. Her behaviour is honest and normal in one who does not understand the issues involved or feel herself threatened in any way. Theodora on the other hand seems to participate in the war effort by serving coffee in a canteen, but it is only a token gesture, the real motive being to escape from any form of commitment and caring for her mother. Her withdrawal is revealed in her lack of communication with the soldiers. "She stood under the girders, amongst the urns, and sometimes a face searched her for more than change" (p.95).

When Fanny falls pregnant she is filled with a sense of magnanimity and invites Theodora to come to Audley to be her handmaiden in the wonder of her incipient motherhood. Frank and Fanny, who have not seen Theodora for some time, having moved conveniently far away from their in-laws, comment on the change in Theodora. Frank believes that she has become even more ugly than she was and is probably bewildered by the intense and intimate moments he experienced in her company. Frank's inability to understand his being attracted to Theodora is the same as Huntly Clarkson's surprise at the hold she has over him.

Fanny's appraisal of Theodora after the many years of separation, during which Fanny herself has changed, is selfish and thoughtless. She believes Theodora has become more alien and withdrawn: "she sometimes wondered why she had sent for Theodora, she was less than human, she was no advantage at all" (p.118). Frank and Fanny are, even after many years, still unaware of Theodora's nature and remain unable to see beyond what Jack Woodburn calls "the layers of atrophy" (1948, p.28).

Theodora is sometimes allowed to care for the baby, Marie Louise - "sounds fancy" (p.118) - and she then removes the infant from the pink facade of its nursery to "where the landscape was less pink and the baby learned to stare at her with solemn eyes" (p. 119). With the passing of time "Theodora loved the child. Theodora became as beautiful as stone, in her arms the gothic child" (p.119). When the child is taken away from her Theodora, by contrast, becomes as ugly as stone, the difference having been brought about by her contact with the living child which received her love unquestioningly, just like the dog she petted at the Parrotts'(p.77). Theodora's being described in terms of stone

reveals the result of her having had to live a loveless life. The change the baby brings about suggests the power of love and the effect it would have had on Theodora. It is, however, too late to bring about any change in her loneliness which has become as permanent as stone. "Before she had finished, Fanny Parrott had three children. They were her husband's also, but his achievement was secondary ... Fanny was safe now, she had children and possessions, she could dispense with love" (p.119). This stage concludes Fanny's ambition in life, viz. possessions and children, in that order. Fanny becomes involved in herself never having had to look for spiritual values to sustain her when material possessions no longer give comfort or pleasure.

Theodora's attitude to and relationship with Fanny's children is more relaxed and natural than is their mother's. Theodora becomes the "Respected Aunt" who could tell about Meroë and make a dancer with a handkerchief. At this stage of their lives, because the contact is intermittent, the children find it easier to communicate with Theodora than with their parents. In spite of, and even because of her masculine attributes, Theodora is beloved because she gives freely of her love. Lou especially is attracted to her aunt. Marjorie Barnard points out that Lou is an unloved child just as Theodora was and also makes only partial contact with her father.

When she becomes older Fanny leads a peripheral life and she fears "the dark, the mad letters of Theodora. Before Fanny could destroy these, they had torn her" (p.268). Theodora, as Fanny's conscience and the mirror to her opaque soul, is rejected as being mad and this makes her unacceptable in that household.

Fanny's objectives in life become vague and undetermined, seldom reaching beyond the immediate gratification of her whims. Her resulting unhappiness is revealed in her nervousness. "Besides, his [Frank's] financial status and social position justified a wife who had nerves" (p.267). This may be regarded as a fashionable condition. Her distress on receiving Theodora's letter from Europe suggesting that she has found what she set out for, and her own dissatisfaction unrecognised or unadmitted, are revealed in the quotation: "Then Fanny took a knife and slashed the butter. She owed this for something that continued to rankle, under her laughter, unexplained, for Abyssinia perhaps" (p.269, my emphasis). Abyssinia suggests a place where man achieves fulfilment and satisfies that nameless "something that continued to rankle".

III Gentlemen Callers

Some of the friends and neighbours of the Goodman family try to understand and excuse the strange behaviour of Theodora by saying that she should have been a boy. The young gallants try to cultivate more than just a passing acquaintance, but withdraw because she does not have the feminine appeal that, say, Elsa Boileau or Fanny Goodman has. The general opinion among the young men can be summed up by their attitude and behaviour during the dance: "Theodora danced with the young men who were brought to her: Sam Irving, who was from that district, a Charlie King from Singleton, and a Ben McKechnie from Victoria. They talked to her, or rather, she gave them things to say, and altogether it was not so bad as they expected, Theodora was not so bad" (p.77). Theodora has not yet thought about sexual relationships. In this respect her body and her mind come into conflict. Her body demands fulfilment culminating in motherhood, whereas her mind moves on

a different level in its quest for meaning.

The influence Theodora has on both Frank Parrott and Huntly Clarkson is remarkable in the light of Theodora's plain appearance and the charm of women like Marion Neville and Elsa Boileau.

In explaining Theodora's relationship with men Dr Morley (1972, p.73) examines Julia Goodman's Circean attraction for her husband. She may have attracted him at first, but his life became miserable after their marriage because his masculinity could not withstand the dominance and force of her personality and temper. The effect Theodora has on Frank Parrott and Huntly Clarkson is much the same. Huntly is described as "a big grey emasculated cat, waiting to accept the saucer of milk that would or would not be given" (p.125). The Bestons believe that Theodora's negative effect on men stems from her "inability to relate to them" (1975, p.9). They quote from the text "I am a man, and you are a man" (p.172) as proof that Theodora acknowledges no male superiority.

Dr John and Rose Marie Beston quote, as an example of Theodora's unusual attitude to and influence on men, her behaviour during the shooting match at the fair. Although a woman, her behaviour is such that it shames the men and antagonizes the women who regard it as unfeminine. It is significant that some years before she also belittled Frank Parrott in much the same way, i.e. by outshooting him in a contest.

Theodora's adult opinion of men is that "on the whole men are prosaic. They cannot rise above themselves. Sometimes perhaps in love, but sometimes only" (p. 177). She expresses this opinion during one of her flights of fancy in the jardin exotique. In

her youth she found Tom Wilcocks, obsessed by his passion for Pearl Brawne, boring except that she admired his ability to carve things out of wood. Theodora is far more intrigued by the physical charms of Pearl.

Julia Goodman knows that Theodora does not appeal to men. "Men came to the house sometimes even now, and Theodora sat with them, but without the brilliance and deception they expect and need. Mrs Goodman listened to them take their hats and go, and she knew from their feet on the carpet they would go home undisturbed to bed" (p.99).

IV The Red Hawk

Wilkes and Reid say that Theodora has the unusual "capacity to shed her identity in phenomena of the natural world" (1970, p. 111). In this capacity she and Miss Spofforth are similar. To support their assertion Wilkes and Reid mention the shooting of the little red hawk: "Now she took her gun. She took aim, and it was like aiming at her own red eye. She could feel the blood beat" (p.74). Should one examine Theodora's growing habit of communing with the hills of Meroë, it becomes clear that she cultivates this blending ability in order to escape from her circumstances which are uncongenial to her.

One day while out hunting with her father (thus like the hawk a hunter, but one who kills for pleasure and not out of necessity) she observes the small red hawk with "a reddish-golden eye" for the first time. When she sees it, it is tearing through the wool of a sheep's carcass in order to get at the offal in the belly. Out of sympathy she assumes the role of the hawk herself. She

"could not judge his act, because her eye had contracted, it was reddish-gold, and her curved face cut the wind" (p.35, my emphasis). In her new role she is able to see new worlds and to explore new avenues of escape from a world which does not understand her. Her identification with the hawk can also be seen as an undefined desire to escape emotional commitment and to destroy those who stand in her way. "But the act of the hawk, which she watched, hawk-like, was a moment of shrill beauty that rose above the endlessness of bones. The red eye spoke of worlds that were brief and fierce" (p.35). White uses bone imagery to indicate sterility and barrenness and in this instance Theodora's desire to escape from her unsympathetic circumstances.

During the rabbit hunt which follows Frank's challenge to Theodora, the three of them, Theodora, Frank and Fanny, talk about Le Strange, who, true to his name, lived alone among the black hills where Theodora often rambled and where volcanoes once rumbled. "He lived there with his madness and his dogs until he died, and now there were tins and bones" (p.63). Theodora remembers that he was black. She understands the man who was an alien like herself. There is a strong resemblance between Le Strange's apparent habits, home and way of life and Theodora's behaviour during her stay at Kilvert's house before she is taken away by the well-meaning psychiatrist Rafferty.

The Bestons equate the hawk's red eye with Theodora's volcanic core (1972, p.36) of which she is afraid - "I have a core of evil in me that is altogether hateful" (p.126) - because it is this, so she believes, which makes her think of murdering her mother. In her passionate moments Theodora's anger is explosive, but is soon followed by self-recrimination. "Returning home [from

the visit to the Agricultural Show⁷ she erupts briefly against her mother, accusing her of having been born with an axe in her hand, but quickly contains greater eruption by self-recrimination, 'I have a core of evil in me that is altogether hateful'" (Bes= tons, 1972, p.36).

Burrows refers to the episode of the little red hawk as an exam= ple of the empathy Theodora feels for her fellow men and for God's creatures. The empathy Burrows writes about forms an inte= gral part of Theodora's quest for a meaningful existence. Her relationship with others is marred by her own nature. It is only when she has reached a state of apparent lucidity - "some moment of clear vision" (p.286) - that she comes to understand and love even those who come to take her away to an asylum. "She could not help but love the practical face of Mrs Johnson, which for the moment, at least, was practically helpless" (p.291). Theo= dora's empathy enables her "to see through the eyes of other creatures, to enter their very minds and to discover in them new aspects of herself" (Burrows, 1966, p.155). These discover= ies, whether valid or not, are attempts to understand herself and life. Theodora is, however, not blind to the fact that "there is much in human life too complex to be analogous to the starkly instinctive life of a hawk" (Burrows, 1966, p.154).

When Theodora looks at the hawk her empathy awakens in her "a hawk-like flight into beauty and freedom" (Burrows, 1966, p.154). The emotional turmoil which follows this escape from reality causes Theodora, says Burrows, to grasp at "another way to free= dom, a symbolic suicide, a destruction of the life she might have led with him [Frank⁷], a use of the hawk as instinctive as its own use of the sheep" (1966, p.154). At this stage of her

relationship with Frank "she is torn between sexual desire and an awareness of his brutishness".

Dr John and Rose Marie Beston (1972, p.39) say that the anger Theodora usually keeps well in check flares up for the first time when Frank aims and shoots at the red hawk she has come to identify with herself. The Bestons' explanation of Theodora's anger, which Fanny regards as madness, is valuable. She cannot vent her anger upon Frank so she turns it upon herself and shoots the bird. "This is the suicidal impulse of a person who feels his whole existence threatened and defiantly chooses his own way of death" (1972, p.39).

Much of the anger Theodora feels arises from a feeling of jealousy because Fanny has captivated Frank, which Theodora has not been able to do. It also stems from the realization that there is no possibility of any understanding between herself and Frank. This realization may well give rise to a symbolic suicide.

Frank, Theodora and the hawk can be linked together by their having on occasion the same reddish-gold colour. When Theodora sees the hawk for the first time her eyes become the same reddish-gold colour as those of the hawk. Frank's face has a reddish-gold colour when he comes to Meroë to challenge Theodora to the shooting match in question. Thus, by shooting the hawk, Theodora destroys not only herself but, as regards any hope of marriage, Frank also. Theodora attributed to Frank all the qualities of a hawk because she foolishly believed he would have been able to lift her beyond the "endlessness of bones".

Wilkes and Reid (1970, p.112) say that during the episode with

the little red hawk Theodora loses her consciousness in the activity of the hawk. After the death of the bird by her own hand, she "experiences an eclipse of the self, and isolation is momentarily overcome" (1970, p.112). The angularity of the broken umbrella suggests not only the "endlessness of bones" but also the angularity of Theodora herself. Her gently rejecting the dead crow (p.59) implies that she is dissatisfied with herself and that she would rather be similar to others than alien. Her disappointment is still "gentle". Later it becomes more violent when she destroys the Hotel du Midi.

V The Shooting Gallery

At the Agricultural Show Theodora visits with Huntly Clarkson and his friends she is once again an outsider to the gaiety and camaraderie of the others. "Her attitudes were those of carved wood, while the powdered, silky, instinctively insinuating bodies of Elsa Boileau and Marion Neville flowed" (p.122).

The strange Circean hold Theodora has on Huntly is revealed when the deference he is shown disappears as a result of his obsequious attitude to Theodora. At the shooting gallery discovered by Ralph Neville and used to boost his flagging masculinity - "for what febrile exhibition he could not quite suggest, but it had to take place, some primitive, dimly apprehended tail-spreading by the red cock" (p.123) - Theodora betrays her socially acceptable feminine behaviour and image by disparaging the men's smugness at their shooting ability. The women reject her for her unwomanly ability and the men avoid her because she has pricked the bubble of their masculinity.

When Theodora shoots she reveals her remarkable ability, as pointed out by Wilkes and Reid, to merge with her surroundings. "But Theodora took the rifle, closing her eyes to the glare. She stood already in the canvas landscape against which the ducks jerked ... Because the canvas moments will come to life of their own accord" (p.124). Huntly cannot share this experience - "from which the world of Huntly Clarkson had receded" (p.124). It is this ability (or madness?) which during her stay at the Hotel du Midi enables her to build a fantastic world peopled by characters from her past, shaped and changed to suit her own convenience and desire.

The Bestons (1972, p.42) explain Theodora's behaviour at the shooting gallery as an attempt at retaliation because Huntly Clarkson has revealed in the course of their relationship that it is because of Julia Goodman that Theodora cannot marry him.

It is evident that in her old age Julia Goodman has managed to get such a hold on Theodora that she is unable to think or act for herself. (Her freedom is a blunt weapon when the old woman dies.) Underlying this is Theodora's desire to win her mother's approval of which she has always been jealous, it having been given to Fanny only. It is probable that Theodora's behaviour betrays her anger at having had to spend the best years of her life in caring for her mother and that she now no longer has the adaptability to attempt marriage. If she then cannot have Huntly she is cruel enough to make sure that no other woman will find him attractive. She destroys his masculinity in the same way she destroys the ducks.

When she aims at and destroys the ducks she is destroying yet

another of her lives, just as she did when she shot the red hawk. In this instance she destroys the image of herself as a society woman successfully married to a financially secure and eligible man.

There is a clear parallel in the way Theodora's relationships with Frank Parrott and Huntly Clarkson come to an end. She is involved in a shooting competition with both men and in each case bests her opponent, thus losing him as a possible marriage partner. There is the possibility that she does this on purpose, having come to understand that she is unfit for marriage. In the fantastic world of the jardin exotique when she plays the part of Ludmilla, she turns destruction upon herself and imagines that she is shot dead by the revolutionaries she and her "brother" Sokolnikov encounter in the forest.

VI A False Note in the Corn Song

During her journey across America on her way home to Australia Theodora travels through apparently endless cornfields. Here there is harmony between man and nature: "There were now the two coiled themes. There was the flowing corn song and the deliberate accompaniment of houses, which did not impede, however structural, because it was part of the same integrity of purpose and of being" (p.269).

Dr Patricia Morley draws the reader's attention to the "corn song" and then especially to the idea that "the yellow corn blared as if for a judgement bearing on the 'frail human reed'" (p. 265). Dr Morley interprets this judgment as time and eternity becoming one. In conclusion she calls the music "the orchestral

finale to the whole work" (1972, p.65).

Once again, as with the music she plays, Theodora is out of tune. "Then in a gust, Theodora knew that her abstraction did not fit. She did not fit the houses ... In the bland corn song, in the theme of days, Theodora Goodman was a discord" (p.270).

The judgment called for by the yellow corn indicates Theodora's finally having to reject the familiar world for what is called madness by some and "lucidity" by Rafferty. The judgment comes into effect when she descends from the train at the unscheduled stop.

The settlement where Theodora finds herself is nondescript and could as well have been in any other semi-arid region, even Meroë for that matter. The dryness and the heat in which the "bronze cock brooded and drooped" are as much out of place in the flowing cornfields as Theodora is in life.

In the thin, dark Mexican woman Theodora recognizes her own soul rising out of deep darkness. This metaphor suggests that Theodora has come close to understanding life, an understanding she may grasp intuitively, but cannot explain. That is why she is glad the old Mexican woman does not ask questions which she will not be able to answer. The idea of a rebirth is enhanced by the bronze cock, symbol of resurrection. The colour of the cock is in keeping with that of the new day, also suggestive of a new life and illumination - "because every morning is the first" (p.271). The newness Theodora becomes aware of is suggested by her awareness of a change in her body odour. "She could smell

the expanding odour of her own body, which was no longer the sour, mean smell of the human body in enclosed spaces, but the unashamed flesh on which dust and sun have lain. She walked. She smiled for this discovery of freedom" (p.274).

Theodora's being hot and tired although it is still early morning suggests that she has come to the end of her journey, ready to begin a new life. "She sank her mouth in the cool milk, and it became warm from her suddenly hot, protesting mouth" (p.272).

VII Sydney Society

Prior to her mother's death and before her embarkation on her European odyssey, Theodora endures a sterile and soul stultifying period. Marjorie Barnard says that "there came a time of waiting without illusion, of going through the ordinary gestures of living by rote and without conviction" (1959, p.53).

One of the reasons for Theodora's unhappiness is the "thin" house they are forced to live in because of their straitened financial circumstances due to her father's bad management and her mother's extravagance.

While unpacking after their arrival in Sydney Theodora remembers the pine trees of Meroë and to her they seem to swell like waves and hint at some odyssey intended for her: "The sea of pines swelled, hinting at some odyssey from which there was no return" (p.93). This awareness makes the "waiting" life she is forced to lead even more unbearable.

Thelma Herring (1965, p.17) says that Meroë, after Theodora has

been forced to leave it, becomes identified with Ithaca - a promised land. No longer being able to merge with her immediate surroundings, Theodora begins to create, in her imagination, a fantastic world to which she can escape.

In the spiritually and culturally dead social circles of Sydney Theodora becomes more of an alien and an outcast. Her unhappiness is increased by Meroë having fallen into the hands of unfeeling men like Mackenzie, the brewer. Theodora cannot reconcile herself with polite society and women who write letters knowing that they are lies.

Dutton (1963, p.8) says that White sees the world as divided into two groups - those who care and those who do not. This can then be boiled down to Theodora versus the rest of Sydney society, typified by men and women like Frank and Fanny Parrott. The non-caring section comprises to a large extent the type of company Huntly Clarkson has at his parties. At the dinner given in honour of Moraïtis, the Greek 'cellist, we have a glittering display of fashion and sensuality. The nature of the people present at these parties is well expressed in their similarity to the dessert served at this particular meal: "they brought with the dessert some very expensive crystallized fruits, which were no longer fruit but precious stones, hard, and their sweetness had a glitter. This was the apotheosis of the meal, in which the light brandished swords" (p.111). Theodora has nothing to contribute to the "ragbag" of conversation because her communication with others is preferably in abstracts. This inability nudges Theodora even further away from society. Hers is "the country of the bones".

VIII The Johnson Family

By discarding all her earthly possessions as an act of honesty Theodora attains a new humility and when she sees the sad state of disrepair of the Johnsons' homestead she is gladdened by the "prospect". Apparently she feels that they too have aspired to more than earthly possessions.

"'You must be happy to live in this house,' Theodora said.

"'Are you crazy?' said Mrs Johnson.

"'I mean,' said Theodora, 'everything is so clear, I mean ...'" (p.276).

The red-eyed dog which attacks Theodora on her arrival at the house is by analogy of colour a reminder of the little red hawk and the world: "Because she remembered the red eye, and for a moment she quivered, and the whole hillside, in some other upheaval of mythical origin. She knew the white air, closer than a sheath, and the whole cold world was a red eye" (p.73).

As a family the Johnsons form a unit and achieve a harmony such as Theodora has never known, with Mrs Johnson humble in the presence of her husband, "or even before her children when they became a family" (p.281). This is why White describes the Johnson family in spherical terms - "Their sphere was round and firm" (p.281) - and Holstius somewhat later tells Theodora that to achieve happiness she has to accept "the two irreconcilable halves" (p.288). The unity of the Johnsons becomes more evident in comparison with the other families described e.g. the Parrotts and the Goodmans. I believe it has some significance that the Johnsons' harmony is achieved away from the city and the populated areas.

The family unit as a sphere should not be confused with the selfish roundedness of individuals like Huntly Clarkson and Marion Neville. This "roundedness" should be regarded as a synonym for "paddedness", suggesting hypocrisy.

Cirlot writes: "As Jung observes, the square, representing the lowest of the composite and factorial numbers, symbolized the pluralist state of man who has not achieved inner unity (perfection) whilst the circle would correspond to this ultimate state of Oneness" (1971, p.47, my emphasis).

Not only does Cirlot explain the unity of the Johnsons, but also Theodora's pluralistic state. She has throughout been described in angular terms. White describes the music she plays as "an angular music that did not exist" and Theodora herself as oblong: "She wore long shapeless dresses of striped voile which made her look an oblong with a head and legs" (p.118).

It is Theodora's pluralistic state which forms the focal point of Holstius's therapy: "You cannot reconcile joy and sorrow ... Or flesh and marble, or illusion and reality, or life and death. For this reason, Theodora Goodman, you must accept. And you have already found that one constantly deludes the other into taking fresh shapes, so that there is sometimes little to choose between the reality of illusion and the illusion of reality. Each of your several lives is evidence of this" (p.289).

Dr Morley associates Mrs Johnson with "the sandy shallows of life" (1972, p.66). Violet Adams is placed in the same group. The Johnson family also has its outsider in one of the children. "Three were sandy, but one was dark. His lips were full, and

red and dark. There was a great space between the dark one and the shadowless, sandy three, the difference between depths and surface" (pp.276-7). Theodora and this dark child, Zack, find immediate rapport. In spite of this contact Theodora cannot help him to an understanding of life. This wisdom has to be attained by each outsider in his own way. Unlike Julia Goodman who rejects her "dark child" Mrs Johnson loves Zack even if she does not understand him. "At the moment of his birth [Zack's], or moments in the arms of her husband, she had come closer to her rich dark child. But she preferred to sun her sandy self, to cover doubt with humorous exasperation. She preferred life to be unequivocal and freckled" (p.277).

There is a significant parallel between the Johnsons and the Parrotts in that each has a child who is an alien and who feels affection for Theodora. Theodora's reaction to Lou Parrott and Zack Johnson is, however, vastly different. In her mind Lou is the child of her and Moraītis's spiritual union during the concert and this determines the depth of her affections. When she meets Zack she has already shed her identity and come near the end of her quest. She makes spiritual contact with Zack and recognises him as a fellow outsider, but she has no inclination to build a lasting relationship with him.

CHAPTER SIX

THE FACES THAT SHE MEETS

I George Goodman

George Goodman is a weak character and also an outsider like his daughter Theodora. His acquaintances regard him as "a decent cove, educated, but weak and lazy" (p.88). Even though he is a dreamer and, as Marjorie Barnard (1959, p.52) says absent-minded in his affection for Theodora, he is correct in his evaluation of Theodora when he retorts in answer to his wife's praises of Fanny: "But Theodora has great understanding" (p.33). This is not so much praise as intuitive knowledge of Theodora's spiritual attributes and philosophy of life and a condemnation of Fanny's insincerity.

George Goodman, as a dreamer, fulfils the role of a mystic, modern Ulysses, who longs for Ithaca, but who, unlike Ulysses, never reaches his beloved country, home and adoring wife. "More actual even than the dream of actuality was the perceptual odyssey on which George Goodman was embarked, on which the purple water swelled beneath the keel, rising and falling like the wind in pines on the blue shore of Ithaca. ...The words in his mouth were as smooth and hard and round and tangible and bright as pebbles that the sea has made to glisten. And the names. When Theodora came into the room, into the green, cold sighing of the pines, his eyes, she saw had not returned" (p.69).

Thelma Herring (1965, p.16) says that George Goodman's life was an odyssey experienced in books - "George Goodman sat with his

beard spread above the book" (p.69) - and initiated by a journey to Abyssinia. The tragedy of his life is revealed in his last words: "In the end ... I did not see it [Greece]" (p.89). In addition he "cannot escape from his Penelope" (1965, p.16). Herring shows that Theodora in her relationship with her father "plays Telemachus to his Odysseus, and mourns the dwindling of Meroë as Telemachus mourns the wasting of his substance by the suitors" (1965, p.17). The Australian Odysseus, ironically, is responsible for his own economic decay, with the help of his wife.

Behind all the division and unhappiness in the life of George Goodman, Theodora senses some profound mystery which she must solve. The mystery surrounding George Goodman's private life is enhanced by the shut door of his study which prevents any communication between father and daughter. "Or else you waited for Father to come out from behind his door. It was a solemn and emotional event. Your father is not to be disturbed, said Mother, which gave his door a certain degree of awfulness. But Father himself was not awful. He was serious. He sighed a lot, and looked at you as if he were about to let you into a secret, only not now, the next time. Instead, and perhaps as compensation for the secret that had been postponed, he took you by the hand, about to lead you somewhere, only in the end you could feel, inside the hand, that you were guiding Father" (p.23). Part of Theodora's desire to solve the mystery that is her father is prompted by her need of understanding and affection.

Julia and Fanny are keen participants in the social whirl of Sorrel Vale. Its rather rustic pleasures are eclipsed by the glittering world of Huntly Clarkson and the gay life described

by Una Russell which, as one deduces from her marriage, leads only to unhappiness. Theodora and her father's pursuits are of a different nature and are more solitary, ideal for introspection, thought and musings on life and death. There is a considerate harmony between father and daughter which is not found in the selfish relationship between Julia and Fanny. "She [Theodora] was everything in imitation" (p.34). She, for example, respected silences because he ^{does} did. Neither of them had any longing or liking for the facade of the Parrott family. In fact, they avoid it. "Whenever she [Mrs Parrott] came to the house Father usually left. Father said, 'Come on Theo. You and I shall go out and shoot'" (p.33). Julia hates Theodora's little rifle and her hunting habits because they make her an outsider to the feminine world and are an embarrassment. Julia's suspicion that her daughter may have some secret knowledge inflames her antagonistic attitude.

J.F. Burrows (1966, p.152) accuses George Goodman of ineffectuality and says that it cost him Theodora's respect. He adds, however, that a "visionary Ithaca has sustained her father against the onslaughts of his wife and the young Theodora has come to share his vision". The loss of respect mentioned by Burrows is part of Theodora's conflict during her stay at the Hotel du Midi. During this stage of her life she attempts to come to terms with the memory of her father and to understand his nature. The conflicting feelings as regards her love for him arise from her having heard him and his affairs being discussed by spiteful neighbours and his inability to face his wife's scorn and domineering nature. George Goodman's rejection of his former friend, the Man who was Given his Dinner, makes a deep impression on Theodora. This betrayal of a child's confidence in its parent

is re-enacted when Theodora as Ludmilla goes for a walk with Sokolnikov and leaves Katina, again herself, to her own devices.

Dr Morley (1972, p.70) is in agreement with Burrows when she writes that Theodora regards Holstius as the father surrogate. Her disillusion lies in her own father "who was thick and mysterious as a tree, but also hollow, by judgment of the men beneath the balcony" (p.27).

Holstius as a solid and living tree replaces George Goodman - "She looked through the trees for the tree walking, which in time would become Holstius" (p.290). Holstius's workworn hands betray Theodora's wish for her father's own activities. She would far rather have him a labourer able to use his hands (cf. Tom Wilcocks) than sit at a desk delving into books. Theodora's rejection is inspired by her loneliness and the disapproval of Gertie Stepper: "The tone of Gertie Stepper's voice made it something sad and incurable, almost as if it were an illness, what Father did with books" (p.24).

Theodora does not want her father to die. They have been close, so much so that "her own close thought spoke to her from his mouth and said, ' I am glad you have come, Theodora. I thought that you would. Because I know that I am going to die'" (p.88).

The phrase "her own close thought" suggests that she heard what she much wanted to hear. This is in keeping with her behaviour when she builds a fantasy world in which at first the characters she creates in her imagination do as she wishes. His words may even be the fulfilment of her wishes and a reinstatement of their relationship. This desire influences her creation of and rela=

tionship with Sokolnikov.

During the autumn of the year George Goodman dies just about everything turns yellow. Yellow not only heralds the autumn season but also the end of George Goodman's life. Theodora, without recognizing it as the symbol of transitoriness, fills the house with gold chrysanthemums. She is the only one who feels some affection for her father in his old age. He is the only one she kisses out of affection, in fact the only man she ever kisses. "She bent and kissed him. She was kissing, she felt, not Father, but an old man" (p.88).

On the night of her father's death Theodora loses her only "friend and her context in Meroë" (Barnard, 1959, p.53). Thelma Herring holds that George Goodman's death emphasizes Theodora's alienation from the world. The relationships she has had with other men she has terminated herself - by shooting a red hawk and clay ducks and in both cases shaming the men involved as an act of revenge for shortcomings in herself and the liabilities of others as they affect her.

Theodora's behaviour and appearance are mystical on the night George Goodman dies. The atmosphere in the house at Meroë is more that of an ancient Greek sacrifice and funeral than the passing away of an old man. She feels ephemeral, passing through mirrors. Substance has no hold on her. To her everything, including herself, is unreal. "She was walking in the passages of Meroë, a reflection walking through mirrors, towards the door which has always been more mirror than door, and at which she was now afraid to look" (p.88).

The death of her father feels like her own death. It is after all Meroë which has passed away and Meroë, to Theodora, means home, security, communing solicitously with the black hills and a barrier between herself and the second Meroë of which she has been afraid since it was first mentioned by her father. Security having disappeared, there can be only loneliness and fear. "She was thin as grey light, as if she had just died. She would not wake the others. It was still too terrible to tell, too private an experience. As if she were to go into the room and say: Mother, I am dead, Meroë has crumbled. So she went outside where the grey light was thin as water and Meroë had, in fact, dissolved. Cocks were crowing the legend of day, but only the legend. Meroë was grey water, grey ash. Then Theodora Goodman cried" (p.89).

Dr Patricia Morley (1972, p.73) says that the death of Theodora's father is her second death, the shooting of the red hawk being the first. Dr Morley also points out that up to the time of her father's death "Theodora has been in the Homeric parallel, both Odysseus and Nausicaä. Now Theodora has set sail alone: 'The sea of pines swelled, hinting at some odyssey from which there was no return' [p.93]" (1972, p.73).

It is much later and in Theodora's fantasy world that Sokolnikov says of Katina Pavlou: "She is still too young to delude herself into thinking she will find anything better" (p.180). This criticism, that of Theodora herself, is levelled at the old people who seek a mythical country where life may be somewhat better; just as George Goodman did all his life.

II Julia Goodman

Julia Goodman is vindictive, ego-centric and inclined to victimize people, especially her husband, by a rather cruel display of temper. "She had a temper, Julia Goodman. The time she took her riding crop and beat the window in the dining-room because the horses were not brought round, beat the window with the handle of her riding crop, and the glass shattered, and she beat, she beat the jags that were left in the frame" (p.68).

George Goodman's reaction to his wife's display of temper is one of long-suffering forbearance: "And if Julia Goodman took a knife and turned it in her husband's side to watch the expression on his face and scent the warm blood that flowed, George Goodman stirred in his sleep and changed position, to another dream, of mortgages perhaps, or drought, or fire" (p.69).

Julia Goodman uses George and to a lesser extent Theodora as victims of her temper. Theodora believes that her mother's wicked temper stems from a real desire to kill. "Mother, must you destroy? ... I believe you were born with an axe in your hand" (p.126).

The strange union between George and Julia could well have resulted from George's sense of adventure and conquest, as revealed by the Man who was Given his Dinner. Julia was a foreigner and he an explorer and dreamer of dreams. It is likely that he regarded her as a new conquest and she in turn, as an ardent globe-trotter, saw in him the explorer of new domains. However as happens to all the characters in this novel, with the exception of Theodora, illusion turns into disillusion.

Julia is an enigma to their neighbours and friends: she is not one of them and they make no attempt to make her feel at home. "The mother of Mrs Goodman had been French, they said, or Austrian, or Portuguese, anyway foreign, which made Mrs Goodman somehow foreign and strange who could speak languages and read them, somebody said even Russian" (p.68).

After the death of her husband and the sale of Meroë, Julia becomes more demanding and even partially demented in her attitude to Theodora who is the scapegoat. She cannot bear Theodora because she is different and seems to be withholding something from her. She nags and belittles Theodora, blaming her unhappiness on her old age, her loneliness and, so she believes, her being neglected. She even hates Theodora because it is Theodora who has to care for her and not Fanny. Julia has never been able to come to terms with life and her surroundings. As a remedy to her unhappiness she contrives some form of escape, albeit an extended tour or a daydream with herself as the heroine.

Julia Goodman may be regarded as an ironic version of Penelope, the wife of Ulysses. She is also like "the sea nymph Calypso, the tyrant Polyphemus, the cannibal Laestrygonians and the enchantress Circe" (Morley, 1972, p.73). Julia is like Calypso in that she keeps her daughter a prisoner for several decades. She is afraid that Theodora may escape from her and this explains her tyrannical attitude. "There was not so much pity in her voice as a horrid suspicion that a shadow might escape. This kept Mrs Goodman breathless with anxiety" (p.95). The comparison to Circe is because of Mrs Goodman's efforts to change Theodora into something she is not and which is foreign to her nature. And "like the cannibal Laestrygonians, Mrs Goodman aspires to consume Theo=

dora's heart and soul, to lock them 'in a little box' [p.96] upon which Mrs Goodman's words and will may beat as regularly as an African drum" (1972, p.74). Dr Morley says that the "startling image of psychological and spiritual cannibalism is one of the few examples in The Aunt's Story of demonic imagery" (1972, p.74).

The homeric personae come "from Mrs Goodman's basic character as tyrant" (Morley, 1972, p.74). Julia's destructive Laestrygonian trait is illustrated repeatedly in her treatment of her husband and Theodora. The cannibal nature of the Laestrygonians on the other hand is given an ironic twist in that Julia sucks the blood from Fanny's finger because she loves her. Fanny is the only one she ever kisses.

Julia Goodman's view of life is fatalistic and her desires are aimed at escaping from the present moment to what she believes is happiness. Her aim is to get as much pleasure out of life as she can, regardless of the cost to others. When she wants to go on yet another overseas tour George objects to her recklessness. "Let us be reckless ... And die. We can sell a paddock. Let us go to the Indies" (p.28). George Goodman, however, knows that life should not be approached in such a febrile manner. His thoughts do not centre on the escape from reality only, but move ahead to death because he knows "death lasts for a long time" (p.35).

Hilary Heltay assesses the relationship between Julia Goodman and Fanny and comes to the conclusion that their "ideal is based upon neatness, the chances of social advancement, and the acceptance of material values" (1973, pp.96-97). This evaluation at

the same time explains the chasm which separates Theodora from her mother and sister. Theodora's world is that "solitary land of the individual experience, in which no fellow footfall is ever heard" (Preface).

True to her fanciful nature Julia Goodman demanded and got a rose garden which was imported and planted at Meroë. The garden was as foreign to that region as Theodora was in her own home. The function of the rose garden is to add to the importance of Mrs Goodman. This is also the function of Fanny who as an obedient daughter enhances Mrs Goodman's image as the perfect mother:

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

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

"Because Fanny was as pink and white as roses in the new dress" (pp.28-29).

Theodora is forbidden the rose garden - "Theodora, I forbid you to touch the roses" (p.23) - and this harsh attitude reflects the relationship between mother and daughter. There is no room for her in her mother's life and she may not detract from her mother's image. Theodora is the "grub" in her mother's life, and whereas Fanny is compared to pink and white roses, Theodora's symbol remains the black rose illustrating her being different and an outsider.

Mrs Goodman's attitude to her daughter is illustrated by her comment on Theodora's clothes: "'And Theo,' she said, 'all dressed up. Well, well. But I don't think we'll let you wear yellow

again, because it doesn't suit, even in a sash. It turns you
sallow,' Mother said" (p.29).

In spite of this disparagement on the part of Mrs Goodman it is
Theodora who eventually understands the meaning of life - "the
brown circles of perpetual water, stirring with great gentleness
the eternal complement of skeleton and spawn" (p.296).

Mrs Goodman feels that Theodora's wandering about the country=
side alone and with her father is a show of independence and
nonconformity. She fears this attitude because Theodora may
escape from her dominance. Being an outsider to the inane world
of the Parrotts, Russells and the Goodmans does not disturb Theo=
dora when she is alone among the pines and the black hills of
Meroë. It is when she is forced into company by her mother that
Theodora feels like a curiosity.

In her later years Julia Goodman is far too egocentric to have
any vision other than her own sphere of existence. "But Mother
had not embarked. Her world had always been closed by walls, her
Ithaca, and here she would have kept the suitors at bay, not
through love and patience, but with suitable conversation and
a stick" (p.93). In contrast to Penelope Mrs Goodman spends her
time in a way which reflects her character, viz. reading what
she calls "the latest dirty book ... as a commentary on life"
(p.93) in spite of there being "plenty of clean ones in the house"
(p.93). In this way she escapes from the reality of her age and
declining powers to a youthful maidenhood where she has many
affairs with handsome and loving men, herself in the leading
role. This escapism is expressed in the sensual image of her=
self as Huntly Clarkson's bride, once again not allowing Theo=
dora a husband.

When Julia Goodman insults Theodora by saying "you are a hard, plain, egotistical young woman who will never interpret the meaning of love" (p.96) she does not understand that she herself has never done so. She regards the meaning of love as the adoration of herself by one or more men bringing homage and gifts. Theodora achieves the ideal state of knowing real love. Just before she is taken away to the institution "Holstius laid his hands on, and she was a world of love and compassion that she had only vaguely apprehended" (p.294).

When Theodora and her mother move to Sydney Theodora has already lost her childhood innocence (Morley, 1972, p.78). This is perhaps brought about by the incident when George was ridiculed by his friends, the death of her father and the sale of Meroë to unfeeling people. Theodora has already become aware of feelings of guilt. It is "her recognition of the insufficiency of her love and the humility and the terrible strength of her hate" (Morley, 1972, p.78).

Theodora knows that it is expected of her to love her mother. She honestly desires this love, or at least the recognition of her identity and her mother's acknowledgement of her as her daughter. Her own nature on the one hand and her mother's forbidding attitude on the other prohibit any overtures of affection on the part of Theodora. Her mother's unwarranted rejection and scorn - "I am too discreet to ask ... But Theodora is a fool. She is a stick with men" (p.104) - arouse feelings of hate because Theodora naturally feels that she has been neglected in favour of Fanny and that her mother has made no effort to understand her.

During the war years, and because Theodora's working at the

canteen leaves her alone much of the time, relations between Theodora and Julia become even more strained. Theodora comes to hate their house and the monotonous regularity of her mother's existence even more intensely. Meroë cannot be a pleasant memory because Theodora remembers vividly "the mouths of the people at the general sale, the red, round, and greedy, or the brown, hatch=ety, suspicious faces, that gobbled or snapped at LOTS. Because ob=jects had lost their identity and become numbers. It was doubtful whether, even with the ticket soaked off, identity would ever be restored" (p.92).

The Bestons (1972, p.36) describe the feeling that Mrs Goodman has for her daughter as "murderous". They point out that Julia's hatred fluctuates with the seasonal heat. "Summertime the whole air burnt scarlet with salvia. She closed her eyes, let it become her smile and in the airy disintegration there was some peace." They point out that Theodora's "volcanic core" (p.36) shows signs of activity as her awareness of her mother's hostility grows.

Patrick White uses stone imagery to suggest the hardened core in Theodora. Her gentler emotions have atrophied with the passing of time and her having built up a defensive attitude to her mother's cruelty. This is revealed in the stone imagery White uses to describe Theodora holding Fanny's baby. (See p.84 of this study.)

Julia Goodman's senile recollections make her believe that she still has the right to command Theodora's affection and obedience, but Theodora has learnt that "love and hate are alternate breaths falling from the same breast" (p.127). Although she considers murdering her mother to get her freedom, physically and mentally,

she realises that as in the Jack Frost case, it will bring no advantages. Burrows says that it is because Theodora has been driven beyond her endurance that she thinks of killing her mother. "As she prepares to kill her mother, however, Theodora regains self-command. She recognizes that, like the hawk, her mother is what she is and acts only in accordance with her nature" (1966, p.154).

Even Julia Goodman's death does not bring any harmony to the relationship between the two sisters. They remain apart, even in their apparent grief. Dutton (1961, p.13) says that Theodora's decision about having the coffin-lid screwed down before her sister has had her "last glimpse" illustrates the gulf between the two women.

Theodora is freed from the "quasi-normal life forced on her by circumstances" (Barnard, 1956, p.163). Her freedom, however, can never be absolute. She has been dominated far too long. The fact that she wears her mother's garnet ring, even though "it had changed its expression, like most inherited things" (p.204) implies that she has accepted and even adopted some of her mother's traits. The changed expression of the ring suggests that it reflects the nature of the wearer. Instead of being a symbol of fidelity and love this ring binds the wearer to the memory of a hated parent.

III Meroë

Nature and setting are important aspects of The Aunt's Story and essential to an understanding of Theodora's quest. Hilary Heltay (1973, p.95) explains White's use of nature. It is "the objective correlative of the landscapes of the soul which the

outsiders in White's work traverse in their quest for genius, for truth, for destruction of the self - a state of being freed from everything earthly".

In this way Heltay explains Theodora's life and endeavour while she still lives at Meroë and the enduring influence this place has on the imagery and personality of Theodora. The harshness of the volcanic hills and the "solid majority of souging pines" reflect the condition of Theodora's soul - "the fire imagery associated with it [*Meroë*] ... tells us more about the make-up of Theodora ... [*and*] shows more clearly the process of disintegration" (Bestons, 1972, p.33).

At Meroë Theodora is able to commune with nature and find freedom in the open spaces. She is not an outsider among the black volcanic hills. "White links the yellow house and grass and the black hills of Meroë with Theodora's yellow skin and black dress or hat, and Theodora herself finds the black volcanic hills totally in harmony with her personality" (Bestons, 1972, p.35). White writes that "the story of Meroë was to listen to her own blood" (p.20). It is no wonder that Theodora does not want Violet Adams to visit Meroë. The earthly friendship of Spofforths' cannot be continued where Violet would be an intruder "because she did not feel there was much connexion between Violet Adams and Meroë. ... There was no connexion at all" (p.59).

Dr Morley regards Meroë as the family home in which "the human body had disguised its actual mission of love and hate beneath the surface of the commonplace" (1972, p.64). The relationship between husband and wife is negative: "They sat in their own rooms, and there was more than the house between them; or they

met at the round mahogany table, where their words bobbed and sank, bobbed and sank" (p.69).

In her search for similarities and parallels Dr Morley finds points of correspondence between Ulysses' Ithaca, Theodora's Meroë and Moraītis's Greece. All three countries are similar "to the country of the bones" (p.113) that Theodora speaks about (1972, p.63).

At Meroë ordinary man and nature are in opposition. The countryside is harsh. "Up towards the house the flat swept, the tussocks grey in winter, in summer yellow, that the black snakes threaded, twining and slippery, and the little unreliable creek whose brown water became in summer white mud. The house looked over the flat from a slight rise, from against a background of skeleton trees. But there was no melancholy about the dead trees of Meroë. They were too far removed, they were the abstractions of trees, with their roots in Ethiopia" (p.22). The trees have their roots in Ethiopia because Theodora has come to associate death with a second Meroë "a dead place, in the black country of Ethiopia" (p.25). "In this dead place that Father had described the roses were as brown as paper bags, the curtains were ashy on their rings, the eyes of the house had closed" (p.25).

It is only Theodora and to a lesser extent her father who are at home at and in harmony with Meroë. "It was both desolate and soothing to sit on the black hill. There are certain landscapes in which you can see the bones of the earth. And this was one. You could touch your own bones, which is to come a little closer to truth" (p.63). Rose trees, as foreign to that region as Julia Goodman herself, are imported as a whim. The pine

trees bring about a "brooding and vague discontent" (p.22) mirroring the life of George Goodman who spends much of his time reading and daydreaming in their shade.

Meroë was "our place" (p.25). It was flat and had a biscuit colour which made it blend with the countryside. When Theodora calls Meroë "Our Place" she links it to herself and her father with ties of love - "She was free to love the first [Meroë]. It was something to touch. She rubbed her cheek against the golden stone [yellow changed into gold by love], pricked by the familiar fans and spirals of the embedded shells" (p.25). It was an "honest" house because "it had been put up at a time when the object of building was to make a house, a roof with walls, and the predominant quality in those who made it was honesty of purpose" (p.21).

Brissenden delves into history in his effort to explain the origin of the name Meroë. He informs the reader that the first Meroë was the ancient capital of Ethiopia, and was ruled by queens (1958, p.21).

The ancient Meroë lay in a fertile valley where commercial routes met. The kingdom stretched from the First Cataract to the upper Nile region. The present day Meroë resembles Patrick White's Australian Meroë in some respects. Both regions are arid and not suitable for any kind of agriculture. The black hills of Meroë in Australia may resemble the slagheaps of ancient Meroitic mining endeavours.

The mention of a second Meroë may also be attributed to George Goodman's absorbing interest in ancient history, among other

fields of study, and in the work of Herodotus. Brissenden links Meroë and Theodora's unhappy life. He says that her ordinary life became unbearable and afflicted her with more torture than the legendary Meroë. As she comes nearer the borderland of insanity "the image of Ethiopia, black and burning, increasingly dominates her imagination" (1958, p.21).

In conclusion one may mention that some critics believe that the use of the name Meroë is merely a humorous reference to home, home being Meroë. I believe that they are wrong because at the end of her stay at the Hotel du Midi Theodora reveals that she wishes to return to Meroë. This is a reasonable deduction from the two quotations: "I shall go to my own country. Now I know. I shall go" (p.260), and: "'I may even return to Abyssinia,' Theodora said" (p.261).

There is no question of returning to the first Meroë. When Theodora tells Katina that she may go home to Abyssinia she is longing for the second Meroë, "in the black country of Ethiopia" (p.25) of which she was so afraid as a child. Having come to terms with life, as she reveals in her letter to Fanny, the fear of death and the unknown has disappeared. I think that Theodora has come to believe that she belongs to the Ethiopian Meroë, her colour and Ethiopia's colour being black. Thus, going to Meroë will be a returning home in more ways than one.

IV School Life

Theodora's life is characterized by definite stages which are interrelated. These stages are demarcated to stress her step by step development to eventual lucidity - "When your life is most

real, to me you are mad" (Epigraph to Part Three). Theodora's formal education at Spofforths' is one such a stage. This period in her life serves to illustrate once again her alienation and her loneliness which find only partial relief in her friendship with Violet Adams which in turn reveals Theodora's inability to conform, and most important during her stay at Spofforths', the understanding of the headmistress, herself the prototype outsider in this novel and the only one who fully understands the youthful Theodora. She is withheld by her innate inarticulateness, characteristic of all outsiders, from mapping out Theodora's life for her. Miss Spofforth (and later Theodora herself) seems like some deity who knows, but does not reveal the future.

Theodora Goodman is alien to the hurly-burly of boarding-school life. Dr Morley (1972, p.71) points out that during her school years Theodora begins to experience and understand isolation and contempt. She also comes to understand that her quest is a lonely one.

The difference between Theodora and the other girls is, however, that she has a spiritual quest whereas their immediate concern is marriage to some eligible bachelor. The young girls at Spofforths' are superficial in their approach to life. They regard a convenient marriage as the ideal state for any woman and the only achievements those exemplified by Miss Belle Spofforth: "She wore brown velvet ribbons and a cameo. Her hands though freckled, lingered emotionally over music. She could not leave a chord" (p.52). The young girls adopt this attitude because they have been taught to in spite of what they see in their own homes. Una Russell's life is a case in point. She regards marriage to a rich man as the sole aim of her life. When she does

eventually marry she sells herself to an upstart brewer whose toy or possession she becomes. "But Mr Mackenzie was on his way to the yard, to see where he could stable motor cars. Because, of course, he had bought a motor car in which his wife used to sit looking expensive with a little detachable parasol" (p.92).

Una's unhappiness is a lesson on the importance of positive life-values. Whereas Theodora retains her individuality and her desire to know everything, Una Russell ceases to exist spiritually and consequently stagnates.

All the girls, with the exception of Theodora (and not because she is convinced of her being different at this stage) are willing to submit, unthinkingly, to marriage as the only share of life awarded women. This attitude colours their conversation and their interests and anyone who may be different is viewed with suspicion and scorn and becomes an outsider. In the same way that Theodora feels that her fate has been decided so they accept their married lot, looking for comfort, evading any real issues and prepared to don the hairshirt of marriage as long as society is unaware or at least pretends to be unaware of any cracks in the matrimonial facade. And it is obvious that society prefers to ignore what is evident. These puppet men and women never learn the difference between "the reality of illusion and the illusion of reality" (p.289).

Barry Argyle (1967, p.52) says that Theodora's unusual and unfeminine quest to "know everything" (p.41) is not acceptable to the other young women at Spofforths'. Argyle quotes from the conversation Theodora has with Una Russell who is antagonistic towards Theodora. "She looked at Theodora, sensing something she

would not understand, and possibly something from which she must defend herself, or even hate" (p.51). The hostile attitudes of Una Russell and Julia Goodman to Theodora are remarkably similar. Una cannot understand Theodora because she does not have the same interests or ideals:

"'I don't want to marry,' said Theodora.

"'Why ever not? There is nothing else to do.'

"'I want to do nothing yet. I want to see.'

"'If you are not careful you will miss the bus,' said Una Russell" (p.54).

Una Russell means that Theodora will miss her chances in life, but because Theodora and Una do not share the same vision of happiness, it does not matter to Theodora whether this happens or not. The two girls represent two worlds on a collision course. Una hates because she does not understand. She reveals her attitude by her condescending approach. She tells Theodora of an ugly woman who made a successful marriage. The so-called "bus" represents an approach to life in which the "passengers" have and want no control over what happens to them. Theodora's awareness of her quest rejects such an attitude.

Una Russell represents a world so elite and "upper-crust" that even Fanny Goodman and Grace Parrott feel countrified. In contrast to Una's life of racing, meeting interesting people and reading love stories forbidden to other girls, their lives are dull. Fanny and Grace are really concerned about "missing the bus".

Violet Adams and Theodora are kindred souls in that they are usually alone, partly for the same physical reasons. Violet has

a seeping catarrhal nose and her skin is "thick and pale" (p.60). Theodora is at first attracted by Violet's white blouse among the apple trees in the same way as she is attracted by the white and pink of Pearl Brawne.

Violet, because she is physically objectionable in revealing light, has very few friends and in order to compensate for this she has developed a selfish conceit: "She wanted to drift back into thinking about herself. But she warmed herself on Theodora, even on what she did not understand" (p.56). In spite of adverse criticism and inner tension during the period of her friendship with Violet, Theodora changes, Fanny believes, for the better. The human and physical contact with a girl of her own age has a humanizing effect on Theodora. The "pulse of existence quickened" (p.56) and Theodora loves Violet out of gratitude. Although she enjoys Violet's company Theodora knows that at times she prefers "to risk the darkness and walk alone" (p. 59). In this respect she and her father are the same. Meroë is peculiar and private to Theodora and consequently Violet is not invited to spend time there, even though Julia Goodman suggests it, "because she does not feel that there is much connexion between Violet Adams and Meroë ... There is no connexion at all" (p.59).

Another reason why Theodora is pleased with her friendship with Violet is that the girl is one mystery she can touch even if she cannot fully understand her. As their relationship continues Theodora consolidates her superiority over Violet. "Theodora loved Violet dearly. She could afford to. She was strong" (p.60). Of the female characters in the novel Theodora is the only one who loves because she can afford to and because she

can afford to she has no ulterior motives.

In the church where they have to attend services Theodora is impressed by the stained-glass window picturing St George triumphing over a dragon. Morley writes that it represents the triumph of good over evil and is an archetypal image which represents good and evil as in Theodora herself, for "Theodora is herself both dragon and saint, or saint and sinner, rather than the idealized saint of romance proper" (1972, p.71). As Dr Morley points out, the dragon Theodora has to destroy is "the great monster Self" (p.134).

Religion and religious words do not touch Theodora during her stay at Spofforths'. The mystery of religion is less attractive than the mystery of her own being - the why and wherefore of living. She has not yet felt the need to pray, so God remains an image in a stained-glass window.

It is during one of the church services that Theodora discovers a dead crow underneath the pew: "a crow that had closed its wings and died, stiffer and blacker than old umbrellas ... The crow was folded as neatly and as decently as a soul should be" (p.58). It is significant that Theodora should notice the bird and associate it with a soul because in Christian symbolism the crow is a symbol of solitude (Cirlot, 1971, p.71). When she killed the little red hawk which she identified with herself she committed symbolic suicide. The dead crow now becomes her symbol seeing that it is associated with solitude.

Dr John and Rose Marie Beston underscore the difference between Theodora and Violet when they discuss the writing of poetry and

its subject matter. "To Violet Adams Theodora confesses that she would like to write a poem about 'fire. A river of fire. And a burning house' (p.56), a clue that the fire which is to consume the Hotel du Midi is born in Theodora's fantasy" (1972, p.36).

The Bestons write that even as a schoolgirl Theodora is obsessed "with the power of fire" (1972, p.36). This interest contrasts vividly with the interests of Violet Adams which are centred on housekeeping, arranging flowers and with a waltz in some man's arms as a highlight. Theodora's interest shows her affinity for and similarity to the black volcanic hills of Meroë. The difference in the two girls' interests reveals the difference in their natures.

The friendship between the two girls has, according to Violet, all the undertones of passion. The poem Violet reads to Theodora is understood to reveal Theodora's feelings when Violet is separated from her. This is characteristic of Violet's desire to be loved. The last stanza of the poem is, however, an ironic allusion to the life of drudgery Violet will lead, just as the whole poem refers to her future role as the rejected one.

In spite of what Violet Adams offers, Theodora, true to her honest nature, is not taken in by the professed friendship. The "schoolgirl friendship, all poetry and secrets of its kind was hollow and she recognised it as such" (Barnard, 1959, p.52). Theodora equates hypocrisy with "hollowness".

Violet's news that she is to leave school at the end of term brings out the socially alien nature and the honesty of Theodora. She cannot lie and counterfeit emotions which do not exist simply

to appease Violet's hunger for attention: "Violet... you ask me to say such difficult things" (p.62).

Theodora's strange behaviour is again illustrated when she burns the letter she receives from Violet Adams. She does this because she does not want to be beholden to Violet and because she believes that letters contain lies. At this stage of her life she is more worried about her life and future than she cares to admit. In her letter Violet writes that she wonders what Theodora will do one day. This question, together with Una Russell's warning that she "will miss the bus" (p.54) haunts her thoughts, aggravated by her fear of what was prepared for her.

Miss Spofforth, like Moraītis (p.110) is opaque. White uses opacity to describe the outsider, the one who has no contact with the "reasonable world". In this way he describes Theodora, Miss Spofforth, Moraītis and Zack. Miss Spofforth cannot communicate with or open up to a fellow outsider like Zack does to Theodora. "He had come and stood behind, and his face had opened, she noticed, to communicate" (p.283). Miss Spofforth does not have any other medium of communication, as for example, Moraītis has, viz. his music. "Miss Spofforth was murmuring. She had not discovered the secret of unlocking other people, because she herself had never really opened" (p.53). She knows that Theodora will experience such moments of understanding. Theodora later understands this inability because although she can share Moraītis's experience, she cannot unlock the hearts of others, e.g. Lou, who having been nursed by her, should also have been tutored by her.

Miss Spofforth's analysis of Theodora's and her own dilemma is remarkable in its accuracy and for its expositive nature. It

answers Theodora's question about her own nature and place in life.

"And she sighed. Because she would have offered this girl her wisdom and her kindness, of which really Miss Spofforth had much. She would have touched her hand and said: Theodora, I shall tell you the truth. Probably you will never marry. We are not the kind. You will not say the things they want to hear, flattering their vanity and their strength, because you will not know how, instinctively, and because it would not flatter you. But there is much that you will experience. You will see clearly, beyond the bone. You will grow up probably ugly, and walk through life in sensible shoes. Because you are honest, and because you are barren, you will be both honoured and despised. You will never make a statue, nor write a poem. Although you will be torn by all the agonies of music, you are not creative. You have not the artist's vanity, which is moved finally to express itself in objects. But there will be moments of passing affection, through which the opaque world will become transparent, and of such a moment you will be able to say -" (p.66).

The final sentence of her prophecy remains incomplete because she cannot communicate what is yet unknown. Theodora will have to learn on her own what her reward will be. And the supreme irony is that when Theodora has achieved this insight she is rejected as insane. "When your life is most real, to me you are mad." (Epigraph to Part Three.)

V Frank Parrott

When Fanny and Theodora come upon Pearl Brawne and Tom Wilcocks

making love by the cowbail, Theodora becomes aware of "a great spreading shadow, which grew and grew" (p.39). Fanny regards it as a funny incident during which Pearl has lost her buttons.

There are depths in Theodora's psyche which she becomes aware of during her association with Frank Parrott. He arouses her sexual awareness - "Frank made her feel experienced" (p.71) - but this life force can never be brought to any kind of consummation because Theodora is haunted by the spreading shadow of unhappiness and spiritual death she intuitively felt by the cowshed and in the smell of the crushed nettles. She is disappointed by the weakness in Frank. She desires male dominance because her father is weak. It is only in the composite figure of Holstius, whom she creates in her imagination, that she finds the male figure she has visualized. Whereas Theodora on the one hand experiences spiritual and physical regeneration in the last stages of her life, Frank is, on the other hand, eroded by physical and spiritual degeneration.

When they go hunting rabbits and Theodora is more successful than Frank, she realises his weakness and her dominance: "He is like a big balloon that I hold at the end of a string, tightly when I shot the rabbit, but then he soared, as I let him out, giving him the string, the sky. Because the rest of the afternoon she had aimed a little to the right. She had wanted to. She had wanted to feel his child's pleasure soar, and say this is mine" (p.73).

Vincent Buckley (1964, p.414) writes that in each of White's novels there is "the figure of the male seducer, masculine, hairy, middle-aged, narcissistic and hollow, seen as a woman

might see him, with fascinated dislike". Frank Parrott is mirrored in this description. "The mature Frank Parrott often reminded Theodora of a stuffed ram, once functional within his limits, now fixed and glassy for the rest of time. He was what they call a practical man, a success, but he had not survived" (p.16). In his state of moral decay and in his awkwardness in the presence of Theodora, Frank does not even attempt the niceties of condolence after the death of his mother-in-law. He is more concerned about "pass[ing] time in the lavatory" (p.16) and getting to the club where he can talk about sheep and farming.

Fanny has, by and large, rejected Frank except as a source of income. "There is a time in life when there are pretty long stretches of contempt, broken by the bubbling moments of lust, which are also called love. So Fanny loved Frank. He was the father of her complacency" (p.268).

For as long as they know each other Frank remains ignorant of the psyche of Theodora Goodman even if there are momentary glimmerings of understanding. He is discontented in Theodora's presence because he feels she is "always about to ask something that you could not answer" (p.16), in this way humbling him by exposing his ignorance. In his uncertainty he is like Huntly Clarkson. When Frank remarks on Theodora's plainness - "God, Theodora is ugly" (p.118) - he is using this disparagement as a defence mechanism against Theodora's ego-destroying personality and presence.

During the sale of Meroë and all the movable property Frank once again betrays his bewilderment in the presence of Theodora. Even though he is doing good he still feels guilty. "But Frank

looked sideways at Theodora. It was becoming a habit, as if he blamed her for his own guilt, or else her ugliness, or both" (p.92). Frank reveals that he is unable to see beyond the exterior. Each time he has been on the verge of a breakthrough to understanding Theodora and himself, as at the dance, he is halted by the limitations of his background, intelligence and character. In his unquestioning acceptance of life and events he acts as a foil to Theodora, highlighting her quest and vision.

Frank, like Huntly, when he speaks to Theodora, addresses her "with the accent of kindness with which people address the surface of one another's lives" (p.92). Because Theodora is, if not always consciously, aware of other shades of meaning in life apart from the everyday and sensual and because she looks deeper in her quest for honesty in her evaluation of things, people and events, she is challenged and even avoided by this other world of which Una Russell is a prime representative.

At the time of Julia Goodman's death both Frank and Theodora have reached middle age and even at this advanced stage of their lives neither has mellowed. Theodora remains painfully honest in her approach to Frank and his image, public and private. His criticism of her affects her less and less and she becomes more remote from him as she advances in her spiritual development. When they were both young Theodora loved Frank and longed to accept his easily made and soon forgotten invitation to go on a picnic. Frank's forgetfulness remains with Theodora and she remembers the picnic many years later when there is once again mention of such an event at the Hotel du Midi.

After the shooting match which involved the red hawk and before

the ball Frank spoke about half a dozen words to Theodora. She made him feel uncomfortable. "He would have hated her for the incident of the hawk, hated her out of his vanity, but because there was something he did not understand, he remained instead uneasy, almost a little bit afraid" (p.74).

At the Parrotts' party Theodora's appearance is striking and in keeping with her state of mind. Increasingly susceptible to emotions, she becomes aware of crueller and kinder moments in life. She does not mind the words said or left unspoken by the guests, but "sometimes a silence or a presence seemed to emanate a will of its own, and this was what she resented. The militant will in an intake of breath. Then she could hate the cut of a nostril, the droop of an eyelid above an eye" (p.78). This antagonism is in a form Theodora feels most intensely, viz. in abstracts, and thus for her who prefers this method of communication, it is far more devastating.

At the dance Theodora experiences one of her rare moments of understanding. "Quite suddenly she had felt...she would have to live all her life in one evening. And her life was endless" (p. 76). There would never be another chance. This understanding and moment of insight - "All of a sudden her life had become as elaborate as a figure in the lancers. But as quickly finished, as significant" (p.77) - gives her a new confidence and a new brightness, and a willingness to experience the peaks in life in a few condensed moments. She readily accepts Frank's proposal that they should dance, an invitation and an acceptance surprising to both. Heat images dominate in White's description of Theodora and her behaviour. "But he was a blaze of fiery gold she had never seen, and Theodora was burnt" (p.79). Later when

she has rejected life in favour of a world of fantasy the imagery associated with her becomes cool and even cold. When Katina returns from her encounter with Wetherby in the tower "her voice was cold. Her voice was as cold as stone" (p.248).

We read that during the heat of the dance with Frank, Theodora experiences a release from her body and is caught up in the molten gold of Frank's passion. After the fever pitch of their unity their passion cools and Theodora's expectation turns to dust. In Part Three when she has discarded her possessions, even changed her name and the remains of her passion have left her, Theodora is again almost overwhelmed by dust, the equivalent of ash, all that remains after the flame of her passion.

During the dance and immediately afterwards Theodora is once again misunderstood and censured: "and it [the dance] was something strange and wonderful that they saw, also shameful because they did not understand" (p.79). This characterizes the people with whom she comes into contact.

Vernon Young (1948, p.424), suggests that Theodora Goodman substitutes music for sexual intercourse. Should the reader accept this idea, it bears out Theodora's mental and physical condition during and after the dance, as well as her meditations after having attended the Moraitis concert when she looks at an expanse of nasturtiums where young couples met to make love.

Whereas Vernon Young parallels music and sexual intercourse, the Bestons equate fire and sexual intercourse. Heat images are common to both views.

After the passionate heat of the dance Theodora and Frank go out into the quiet cool of the garden. The heady state of mind she has enjoyed is shattered by the commonplaces of Frank's conversation. John Woodburn (1948, p.28) denounces Frank as "a big, rufous boy, whose clattering extraversion shattered her quietness."

Alone in the dark (Theodora's colour) with Theodora, Frank becomes afraid because he is out of his depth. He "had to make some motion to hold up the darkness that was pressing down. It was too big" (p.79). Theodora is a part of this darkness. Without his vanity and his ego Frank is lost and thus "he [cannot] scrape together a few sticks quickly enough, to make a little fire, to sit against" (p.80).

Burrows explains Theodora's appraisal of Frank in terms of her sexual attraction to him and her "growing awareness of his brutishness" (1966, p.154). Frank is too close to his own little fire of self-esteem to be fully aware of the conflict in Theodora. Intuitively, however, he is perturbed by what he does not understand.

It is after the dance that Theodora discovers an important fact which influences not only her way of life but her thoughts as well. She understands that one "can sometimes grasp experience before it is undergone" (p.80). This is true of her experiences with Frank, Moraitis and her role in the seduction of Katina Pavlou. In the same way Theodora anticipates her father's death and her own role in this event.

The deep psychic effect of the sexual awakening Theodora expe=

periences with Frank is reflected in the dream she has in which she is clasping a lifeless body when the lightning strikes her. In spite of her fear and agony she cannot scream. "A stale cry came out of the mirror in the passage, choked, as if it just could not scream, even in its agony" (p.81).

The faceless body she clasps is that of the as yet unknown man who must satisfy the sexual need awakened by Frank. The lightning which strikes the body is her mother (often compared to lightning) whose influence is so strong that Theodora will never be able to free herself from it and marry. This aberration is evident in her relationship with Huntly Clarkson. The conflict between the two extremes, sexual passion on the one hand and a longing for her mother's affection on the other, comes to dominate much of her life and influences the fantasies she creates during her stay at the Hotel du Midi.

Dr Morley explains Theodora's nightmare as follows: "The burden of sadness which she bears is once more associated with Father ... and her fear that he would suffer some humiliating exclusion, 'the fate of the Man who was Given his Dinner'" (1972, p.72). Thus the body she protects from her mother's anger is that of her father. Dr Morley believes that George Goodman's ultimate exclusion is his death.

On the night she has her dream Theodora already anticipates the death of her father. "But there are occasions when you cannot stop the closing of the door. It closed. It closed on Father. She was alone in the passage. It would happen. It would be like this in time" (p.81). Her being an alien and a Tiresian figure unable to share her feelings or get rid of pent-up emotions,

makes her loneliness more acute.

Theodora adopts a feminine role on two occasions. The first is when she dances with Frank Parrott and is swept away by their joint passion. The second is when she and Frank are alone together under the apple tree. Here she finds that she cannot respond to Frank and cannot answer his need or her own (Morley, 1972, p.77).

On the night of the full moon when she and Frank meet and he talks about sheep and money Theodora feels old and oracular and almost as if she does not belong. This feeling goes hand in hand with her belief that she has several lives. Frank excuses her strange behaviour by saying "but you are you" (p.84). He confides in Theodora thoughts he would never have thought of trying to explain to Fanny. "His voice groped. It had great difficulty in choosing words to express what, anyway, had no shape" (p.84).

Just as Theodora willingly gave love to the collie dog, she unbends to Frank because he needs her, imagines that he is a red dog and pets him. Later when Theodora is unmoved by the attack of the Johnsons' red dog, she reveals by her impassive behaviour that she has thrown off all passion. And yet Theodora has to withhold herself from touching Frank. If she did she would have revealed his soul for what it is and also her own passionate nature which has surrendered all claims to Frank's love.

Although Marjorie Barnard (1956, p.164) writes that Theodora loses Frank to her sister Fanny it is not through any fault of her own. Dr John and Rose Marie Beston (1972, p.141) point out that Theodora's theft of her mother's paper-knife with which she

used to rap her children's knuckles can be regarded as an indication of Theodora's desire to take Frank in the face of her mother's hatred. She could have won Frank, but her fear of the consequences gives him to Fanny. After Frank has proposed to Fanny, Theodora returns the paper-knife.

VI Huntly Clarkson

It is after the World War and in Sydney that Huntly Clarkson comes into the life of Theodora Goodman. He is present, because he is that kind of man, at one of Julia Goodman's tea-parties during which the gossip turns to the murder case of Jack Frost, then very much in the news. Theodora leaves the company gathered around the remains of the tea because she has intuitively become aware of undercurrents of emotion aroused by thoughts of the murder of which the others are unaware. The domestic facade "through which Frost himself had finally dared to pitch the stone" (p.103) resembles the quiet scene in her mother's sitting-room. "The afternoon was, in fact, as settled as the voices of middle age that murmured through the glass door" (p.103) through which Theodora herself would dearly have loved to throw a stone, her purpose being to shock the man and the women into a realization of the true nature of things and people.

Theodora and Huntly are poles apart. Although they are more or less of the same age, he has become obese in his conceit and does not "hear silences" (p.103) as Theodora does. Clarkson disturbs Theodora because he is kind to her and "because kindness wears an expression that expects truth" (p.102). She finds it difficult to hide her doubt and anxiety from him. She has not yet found a replacement for her father in her affections and Huntly being wil-

ling and available she feels that "it might be a pleasant thing, a friendship with Huntly Clarkson, if she could resist his house, his servants, and his furniture" (p.106). Theodora does not want to surrender to the glamorous world of Huntly Clarkson much as she may be tempted to: "It would be very easy, she felt, to allow the kindness, the affluence, the smoky voice of Mr Clarkson to engulf. But because of this she resisted" (p.103). Her resistance takes the form of a retreat into her ugliness there being no dark place to hide. She is dishonest in her defence against his expression that expects her to confide in him. There is little or no duality in Huntly Clarkson. His life continues its even, luxurious tenor from day to day until Theodora enters it. (We have the similarity to the smooth passage of Ulysses until he becomes involved with Circe.) Dr Morley finds another parallel between Huntly and the Lotos-eaters who desired no change in their way of life. Huntly is unaffected by much of what he sees. Dr Morley draws the reader's attention to Huntly's use of the word "puritan" as it appears in the passage: "I enjoy myself ... It would be tempting to do this all the time. If one hadn't a kind of puritan misgiving. But outside this I succeed very well. I eat rich food. I smoke cigars. I go on an average of once a week to the races. I give dinner parties, which are sometimes boring, but there is always the spectacle of smart women with bare shoulders and diamonds" (p.106). Dr Morley writes that the use of the word puritan suggests a guilt complex for enjoying the pleasures of life - "some misuse of the world's goods" (p.74).

Clarkson's boredom and vanity lead him to collect rare objects and it is apparent that he would like to add Theodora to his collection as a human rarity. "I collect ... unusual objects. I have the signatures of four English kings" (p.107).

At one of the dinner parties Theodora attends at the house of Huntly Clarkson roses are much in evidence. Thelma Herring (1965, p.20) says that the use of roses here illustrates how White uses the same image to draw his themes together. In Theodora's life roses have a dual role. They offer an avenue of escape, but are also a foreboding, having the same effect as the mention of the second Meroë and Theodora's fear of what was prepared. The roses in life have their beauty destroyed by the grubs among the petals, symbolic of the cancer in everything of beauty, including people like Huntly Clarkson. The physical beauty of Pearl Brawne is compared to "a big white rose" (p.40) and Theodora's admiration is evident. "I am a stick. If it is good to be a stick ... it is better to be a big white rose" (p.40).

During her acquaintance with Huntly Clarkson Theodora at intervals wonders how other women would have acted in her circumstances. Her active fantasy pictures the "kind of woman who would receive a diamond brooch in a velvet box without a performance of gaucherie, who would press the hand that gave" (p.105). Theodora cannot be untrue to herself and behave in such a manner. In the words of Julia Goodman, "Theodora is a fool. She is a stick with men" (p.104). Theodora's limitations as a social being are summed up by Clarkson's servants the first time she has dinner with him: "She was a woman of no account, whose clothes were not of this or any fashion, whose face was ageless in appearance, though they would have put her somewhere in the thirties" (p.106). The servants at Audley behave in a similar way: "Miss Goodman, an old maid, they said, a scarecrow in a mushroom hat" (p.118). It is not strange that Theodora's fear of servants is carried with her when she goes to Europe and stays at the Hotel du Midi. There the sound of cutlery awakens in her the fear of public

meals and servants. She fears the meals at the hotel because, as when she dined with Huntly Clarkson, she is an island (Ithaca?) in a sea of strange faces. She fears the servants because she is "not made of scorn" (p.147). Theodora is isolated and at the same time dominated by externals, e.g. her mother's beringed hands, and, as Thelma Herring has pointed out, she has to free herself from them.

Unwittingly Huntly Clarkson adds to the load Theodora has to carry when he tempts her with a world of luxury and ease. "He bent forward to confide, so that she looked into his well-shaved skin, and smelled the smell of rich, urbane men, which was new to her. Huntly Clarkson described happiness, and it was something you could touch. She drew back a little, almost afraid he might expect her to. But it was very delightful, and afterwards, sitting on the verandah, in a lull of wine, when the little fox terriers came, jumping, flirting, flashing, worrying and prancing on their thin white wooden legs" (p.107).

As a result of Huntly's temptation Theodora's fantasy casts her in the role of a society belle: "almost as if her shoulders were bare and she flashed like a spray of diamonds" (p.107). Alone and relatively at ease in Huntly's company Theodora feels warm and comfortable, but as soon as his friends are mentioned their intrusion into her private world "brushed cold along her skin" (p.107). This coldness is contrary to her own volcanic nature.

The extremes of heat and cold, passion and indifference indicate the personalities of Theodora and Huntly Clarkson and also explain why they will never be in harmony, and will certainly not get married. Dr Morley (1972, p.75)

writes that Theodora can escape from the lure Huntly spreads for her when he admits himself to have been unimpressed by the spectacle of an erupting volcano - "I have seen Vesuvius and Etna. And Stromboli. That was from a ship. They were not so very extraordinary. None of them" (p.108) - and because he is not a compatriot of her and Moraītis's country of the bones. Julia Goodman, as mother, realises what Huntly Clarkson does not: "Theo is an admirable girl, although I am her mother, but not of Huntly Clarkson's world" (p.108).

Like Frank Parrott Huntly cannot "read" Theodora, and "she made him conscious of this illiteracy, amongst his other limitations" (p.120). Instead of pandering to him as Elsa Boileau would have done under similar circumstances, she "broke the corners off his self-esteem, the most brittle of his valuable possessions and continually failed to repair the damage" (p.120). At times Huntly can hate Theodora in a way that "you can hate something that is untouchable" (p.112). Huntly Clarkson's feelings for Theodora border on those of a victim of the Spanish Inquisition, an apt comparison in the light of their behaviour. Apt also in the light of his feelings of guilt, bedded in his luxurious way of life. "Theodora, felt Huntly Clarkson, is an upright chair, a Spanish leather, in which an Inquisitor has sat, a shabby rag of skin passing judgment on souls. For a few moments he hated Theodora" (p.112).

The remarkable influence Theodora has over Huntly Clarkson is expressed in the words of Marion Neville when they talk about the relationship between Theodora and Huntly Clarkson. "That is not the point at all ... The point is, will Huntly catch Theodora? That is what it amounts to, which makes it far more strange" (p.122).

Theodora attracts both Frank Parrott and Huntly Clarkson because they are intuitively aware that she alone among all their friends is honest and can be trusted with confidences they would not think of revealing to anyone else. The urge to reveal their hidden thoughts has, however, been neutralised by their way of life. Theodora embodies that nameless something which they, representing all people, long for, viz. an obedience to the Law of Nature, or "decent behaviour known to all men" (Lewis, 1974, p.17). Being a Tiresian figure Theodora understands their longing.

Theodora has learnt that marriage and marriage proposals are illusions of happiness. Clarkson is under a strange compulsion over which he has no control when he proposes to Theodora.

"If I were to suggest marriage, Theodora,' apparently he said ...

"It would be a supreme act of kindness ... Even for you."

"Rationalized, his gesture was a little feeble. Huntly Clarkson was not pleased. But Theodora was grateful. The farce had not screamed" (p.121).

Because of his slight feelings of misgiving Huntly's proposal to Theodora may well be seen in the light of penitence for having enjoyed the luxuries of life excessively. Theodora, on the other hand, because of the compelling circumstances and a desire to escape the fate prepared for her "can almost accept the illusion" (p.121).

All that Clarkson gains from having proposed is a feeling of discontent and the knowledge that it was a mistake. Theodora has revealed what he has kept comfortably hidden - his lack of masculinity and an inability to take the lead in any matter. Huntly

does not learn. Instead of improving spiritually and so coming to an understanding of the true values of life through his knowing Theodora, he sulks. His materialistic soul cannot understand why Theodora should refuse "the yellow facade and the laurel blaze of his great stone house" (p.122).

As Huntly's relationship with Theodora continues he becomes increasingly dependent on her for approval and guidance: "He was all acceptance, like a big grey emasculated cat, waiting to accept the saucer of milk that would or would not be given" (p.125). At the show they attend their relationship comes to a crisis and Theodora knows that she has to terminate yet another stage and friendship in her life. Whereas her anger had boiled up against Frank because he had fired at the hawk she identified herself with, she is angry with Huntly Clarkson because he has revealed her dependence on her mother. It is also a realization that she must continue in her quest for that which was prepared. Thelma Herring believes that Theodora is too honest to marry Huntly (1965, p.8). It seems logical that Theodora should channel her disappointment at not being able to marry Huntly into thoughts of some kind of revenge. For a few brief moments she considers murdering her mother.

Theodora's meaningless victory at the shooting gallery, symbolized by the kewpie doll, means the end of her relationship with Huntly and what he stands for. Her odyssey now becomes a retreat into a world of her own making. "She looked at him and regretted his smile. It was like the last smile of someone on a railway platform to whom one should have spoken while there was still time" (p.125, my emphasis). "Huntly knew then that the door had closed. This, perhaps was the extent of his relationship with

Theodora Goodman. She closed doors, and he was left standing on his handsome mahogany interior, which was external, fatally external, outside Theodora Goodman's closed door. Huntly Clarkson stood and wanted to overcome his humiliation, which he could not pay anyone to take" (p.113).

VII Moraītis

Dr Patricia Morley (1972, p.64) writes that Theodora and Moraītis are compatriots and that at the dinner party where they meet, Huntly and his guests are the aliens who can only marvel at the world they cannot understand. The "inner" world of Moraītis is even further removed from Huntly Clarkson's drawing-room than the world of Theodora Goodman.

Moraītis has an intimate knowledge of his country and its people because he has felt it in his bones and because he has seen and experienced its stark reality. "You see, I am a peasant...I am very conscious of the shape of the country. I come from the Peloponnese. It is rich, fat, purple country, but underneath you can feel the bones. Many people were killed there. Greeks die often" (p.113). The stress falls on his having worked with the soil. (This explains Fanny's dullness, "because land is just land" p.97.) Theodora on the other hand moves close to the earth.

Thelma Herring points out that through Moraītis Theodora "perceives an analogy between Greece and Meroë, each being a country of bones" (1965, p.16). It is also the country beloved by her father. Greece becomes her new home. In her fantasy (Part Two) she becomes Aunt Smaragda who lives in Athens (p.184). When George Goodman dies Theodora feels that Meroë has disappeared -

"Mother, I am dead, I am dead, Meroë has crumbled" (p.89) - and in its place she puts Greece.

The "country of the bones" must be regarded as the antithesis of the concert halls where "everyone was rounded and well fed. Music filled out the lines and emphasized banality" (p.114). The people of Greece are the counterparts of Huntly Clarkson's acquaintances, who are also rounded, well fed and afraid of dying. They are the outsiders to the "country of the bones" (p.113) of which Theodora and Moraïtis are compatriots.

Dr John and Rose Marie Beston (1972, p.40) believe that the bone images complement Theodora's preoccupation with volcanic fire. "The bone imagery ... bespeaks her apartness and defensiveness, qualities which must somewhere be accompanied by hostility too. She is aware that her protection is vulnerable, that bones can melt and walls dissolve under external threat (destruction from her mother or disarming affection from Frank or Katina) or internal threat (her own destructive anger)" (1972, p.40).

At the dinner Huntly Clarkson gives in honour of Moraïtis the latter becomes a part of the reflected roselight of Meroë and shares experiences with Theodora. He is an alien to the world suggested by the candelabra overhead. The psychic contact between Theodora and Moraïtis is revealed in their sharing the mystery of being.

As with all the men she meets Theodora's attention is drawn to their hands and she judges these members in conjunction with the owner, and in this way judges the attitude of the particular man to herself. Moraïtis has "thinking hands" (p.112). Her

own hands do not seem to belong to her at all. "Her hands she often felt, belonged by accident, though what, of course does not." (Again the suggestion that "life is full of alternatives but no choice" p.132.) This reveals Theodora's inability to assess her own personality as she does others. Her hands reveal her "gipsy fate", her inability to settle down and come to terms with life.

Characteristic of Theodora's being different is that although she cannot play a nocturne as it supposedly should be played, she can fold her hands into the shape of a rose. On doing this her hands take on a new form of life: they become one with nature and tentatively hold the illusory beauty Theodora has attached to roselight.

Dr Morley says the prophecy of Miss Spofforth - "You will see clearly beyond the bone" (p.66) - is essential to an understanding of the imagery White uses to describe Theodora's meeting with Moraītis. Their conversation is dominated by their both coming from the country of the bones (p.112).

In her conversation with Moraītis Theodora comes to understand that he has reached some further phase or stage of spiritual development than she herself has achieved. Moraītis accepts the distances, the isolation and his own inadequacies.

Moraītis teaches Theodora a truth the meaning of which she learns only much later during her association with Holstius. This item of germinal wisdom is spoken when she and Moraītis talk about the theatre at Epidauros. The appearance of this theatre, a ruin, is in harmony with "bare" imagery and Theodora's withdrawal into

a world of her fantasy where she stage-manages so many "puppets". She has to admit to the experienced Moraītis: "I have not seen it ... I have seen nothing" (p.113). It is then that Moraītis reveals his insight and wisdom when he says: "It is not necessary to see things ... If you know" (p.113).

Moraītis's assertion explains the insight Theodora has at times been intuitively aware of, but unable to rationalize for herself or others. Her inexplicable fear of the second Meroë and her intuitive understanding of Jack Frost's motives, for example, are explained as well as her moments of insight into those matters others have become insensitive to. This knowledge that she has, being one of the illuminati, explains her alienism and her sibylline behaviour as, for example, when she meets Frank under the apricot tree on the night he comes to propose to Fanny.

It must be remembered that much of Theodora's knowledge is an awareness of and a belief in a supernatural force which influences the lives of mere people.

The joy Theodora feels at Moraītis having opened new vistas of spiritual growth and insight is "cold without the touch of hands, the breathing and stirring, the wakening of the tree in the snow" (p.114). This refers on the one hand to the intimate friendship between George Goodman and the Man who was Given his Dinner when they got lost during one of their adventures and sat huddled together "under the shelter of a big dead tree" (p.45) and to Theodora's personal longing for such a friendship without, however, the betrayal which inevitably seems to follow. Theodora never achieves this feeling of human solidarity, even in the fantastic world of her imagination where the characters, once

created, lead their own lives independent of her will.

Theodora's attending the unplanned Moraītis concert is part of "what was prepared" (p.48). At the concert Theodora is once again the outcast: "Theodora Goodman sat close, but to one side ... And her bones were sick and brittle, her hands burned" (p. 115).

Moraītis brings his isolation with him onto the stage. His bald head which shines like a bone shows his heritage and his being a compatriot of Theodora. The bone imagery is also a contrast to the roundedness of the general public. Moraītis's isolation is an armour to him and this is accepted as right by his admirers because he is an artist and strange behaviour is part of his role. Theodora is not an artist in any way and her isolation makes her an object of scorn.

Dr Morley (1972, p.75) in her interpretation of Moraītis's music, distinguishes a journey through hell to paradise. In her participation in this music Theodora shares the journey, so similar to her life's odyssey. Dr Morley stresses the experience which makes Theodora's "hollow body vibrate" (p.117) and which is associated with the second Meroë. "Moraītis's music expresses the purity of primitive vision and its simplicity and purity border on the dark and tragic: 'But in the last movement Moraītis rose again above the flesh ... there were moments of laceration ... the savage lashes of the violins ... But Moraītis walked slowly into the open ... The sun was in his eyes, the sky had passed between his bones'" (p.116). Theodora has for the moment shared his spiritual rebirth and honesty, all deceit having been stripped away together with the flesh.

Theodora equates spiritual vacuousness with hollowness. Her father is a hollow tree derided by his neighbours and she too is hollow until Moraītis's music fills her body and makes it vibrate. "Because it was the face to which nothing had yet happened, it could not take its final shape. It was a vessel waiting for experience to fill it" (p.54).

It is important to understand White's view of sexual love. White shows sexuality "within a supra-temporal framework. The view that physical love is not the ultimate expression of love is more evident in The Aunt's Story ... than in his first two novels. His novels depict sex as only one way by which love and hate, good and evil may be expressed, and emphasize that spiritual fertility or creativity is not limited to physical reproduction" (Morley, 1972, p.7).

At the concert Theodora "becomes" the 'cello Moraītis plays and she and Moraītis become one. "She was close. He could breathe into her mouth. He filled her mouth with long aching silences between the deeper notes that reached down deep into her body" (p.116). This fulfilment comes with Holstius and the realization that she has to "accept the two irreconcilable halves" (p.288) of illusion and reality.

The image of the 'cello reappears in Part Two where Wetherby's face is compared to a 'cello, thus suggesting his function of supplying the fulfilment she has anticipated with Moraītis. The sexual encounter with Wetherby is a failure and the disappointment leaves her "hollow".

When Theodora comes home from the Moraītis concert her mother

asks her if she has enjoyed it, no doubt having her misgivings. Theodora's answer - "It was more than enjoyable" (p.117) - hints at the feeling of sexual fulfilment she has experienced. The music and her union with Moraītis make her strong in the face of her mother's destructive mood: "only she saw that Theodora was now strong, and for this reason she did not dare. Theodora was removed. She had the strength of absence, Mrs Goodman saw. This made her very strong. It was also rather immoral, the strange withdrawn mood that one could not share" (p.117).

Some time after the concert when Theodora sits and looks at the wasteland, between their house and the beach, which reminds her, unseen, of the bare country of Greece, she relives the effect of Moraītis's music. The effect of the music is more pervasive than the hot words of passion spoken by lovers on the nasturtium bed which covers the wasteland she looks over. This stretch of land is as sterile as the love made there. The "thing" between her and Moraītis is far more intimate and has a spiritual depth which the love of the people of the night does not have. Theodora even holds her belly and anticipates life in her womb, the "hollowness" becoming filled. Theodora's wishful thinking and her interpretation of the effect of the music on herself are revealed in the words: "if I were meant to be a mother, it would soon smile in my face" (p.117). Theodora is happy and feels, for the first time, that "existence [ḥaṣṭ] justified itself" (p.117). Fanny never experiences this feeling of completion. The Bestons write that because Theodora "is starved for love she sees it in consuming terms, whether of a volcano or fire or lightning" (1972, p.38). This is why the Hotel du Midi goes up in flames when she realises that she will never achieve any kind of sexual fulfilment.

It is significant that soon after Theodora's experience with Moraītis's music Fanny falls pregnant and the child, Lou, is much like Theodora and the two are attracted to each other. Lou is Theodora's spiritual child, borne by her sister. White uses the same idea in Voss where the illegitimate child of a former convict is adopted by Laura and eventually seems to become her biological child, the result of her spiritual marriage to Voss.

VIII Lou

Theodora comes to the brink of a release from her "self" in her relationship with her young niece Lou Parrott and Zack Johnson. These contacts are "exempt from the painful, spiny conditions of ordinary life" (Walsh, 1970, p.92).

The resemblance between Theodora and Lou is in all respects remarkable. It seems as if Lou imbibes Theodora's features and alien nature when as an infant she is sometimes held by her aunt. When the child is near her aunt Theodora, the latter feels "the pressure of the child, almost as slight as paper on her side, her breath that was almost her own. Her own arm around the child was a formal gesture of protection, scarcely flesh" (p.136). As a child Lou's appearance is like Theodora's was - "yellow, scraggy and unattractive" (p.19). Yellow becomes Lou's colour. Even the thunderstorm she draws is yellow. Her name, Marie Louise, has, like Theodora's name, been corrupted into what can pass for a boy's name. She is called Lou. The resemblance between the aunt and the niece does not end with physical features. Lou also has an enquiring mind: "Tell me about something ... Tell me about Meroë" (p.19). As much of Theodora's quest for knowledge is shadowed by her having witnessed the affair between Pearl Brawne

and Tom Wilcocks so Lou's thirst for knowledge is at the time influenced by "a hideously shiny box [which] endeavoured to contain a mystery" (p.19). Lou too cannot play her piano pieces in such a way as to please her mother and consequently has her knuckles rapped as Theodora had hers rapped. The schoolgirl friendship between Theodora and Violet Adams is mirrored by the friendship between Lou and Sister Mary Perpetua. Lou understands instinctively the meaning of the filigree ball. Even if it is old, as old as Theodora seems to be to Lou, it is still (again like Theodora) "filled with a subtle fire" (p.16).

In spite of her masculine attributes (Theodora, corrupted to Aunt Theo, and her having a moustache) Theodora is much loved by the young Parrotts and especially by Lou. "She [Lou] was like some dark and secret place in one's own body" (p.13). Much as she would like to, Theodora, like Miss Spofforth, cannot communicate her experiences to Lou and so help her on her way. Lou still has to learn that "there [is] some great intolerable pressure from which it is not possible to escape" (p.269).

Like Miss Spofforth in her own life, Theodora cannot give Lou the knowledge she has gained. Instead of growing towards each other their ways separate, Theodora having to follow her destiny alone. The break in their relationship comes with Theodora's departure to Europe.

During Theodora's stay at the Hotel du Midi it is significant that as she watches Katina Pavlou she has a letter from Lou in her pocket. The letter and the love she has for Lou influence the role of Katina whose part is the focal point of their lives. What happens to Katina is what Theodora imagines for herself and

what, along the same lines, may well happen to Lou.

IX Zack

Barry Argyle calls Theodora's meeting with Zack "a last contact of identity - while she still has hers intact"(1967. p.25). Prof. Walsh calls it "a fleeting moment of 'rare alliance'" (1970, p. 97).

Zack has more depths than his father who is "dark and physical ... full and blind" (p.280). He knows that Theodora is not going to stay with them. Just prior to Theodora's departure there is a moment of intense communication: "Because he had rubbed his cheek against her cheek. Their blood flowed together ... locked hands lay in solid silence" (p.284, my emphasis). To Theodora their locked hands indicate true spiritual contact.

Zack is an outsider in his family - like Theodora and Lou. "There were four of these. Three were sandy but one was dark. His lips were full, and red, and dark. [Basically Theodora's own colours, red, yellow and black.] There was a great space between the dark one and the shadowless, sandy three, the difference between depths and surface" (p.277). The sandy colour of the Johnson children is in contrast to the black and red of Zack.

The understanding between the two, Theodora and Zack, is expressed in Theodora's telling him "you will know in time ... that it is not possible to stay" (p.278) and in Zack's unquestioning acceptance. She has come to play the part of Miss Spofforth, and Zack now finds himself on the threshold of his odyssey, just as Theodora did when she was at Spofforths'.

Zack is precious to Theodora because she "continued to experience all the triumph of the rare alliances"(p.278). Zack is also the only one who understands the significance of the black rose, "more a sop to convention than an attempt at beauty" (p.270).

X Jack Frost

Although Theodora never meets Jack Frost she understands his behaviour. "It is very personal. I find it difficult. Quite honestly. Difficult to discuss. I have thought about it. And it is still so close. Like something one has done oneself" (p.102).

Some time after the War Theodora's relationship with her mother is particularly strained because of Theodora's withdrawal and Julia's feeling of loneliness. Theodora finds peace in withdrawal, her behaviour hinting at the fantasy world she creates somewhat later. During this time a baker, aptly named Jack Frost, murders his wife and three daughters thereby causing a sensation in certain circles in Sydney where his bread and cakes were bought. Theodora feels herself akin to Jack Frost, because she too, at a later stage, thinks of cutting herself loose from her mother's dominance by killing her with the kitchen knife. The Bestons say that Theodora is unwilling to discuss the Frost murders because "they are so personal, 'like something one has done oneself' [p.102]" (1972, p.36).

Frost committed the murder because he craved freedom, to get to a place of which he had forgotten the name, but most likely some Meroë of his own. His vague longing for some place parallels the vague and undefined longing of Frank, Huntly and Fanny. Patrick White suggests a possible reason for the murder: "Now [after the

World War⁷ the individual was free to take the centre of the stage again and dramatize himself" (p.102).

Dr Morley answers the questions surrounding the Frost murders by saying that Jack Frost and Theodora find it intolerable that the facade of life should be so readily accepted as the only reality. The society in which they move, the so-called "reasonable society" has a definite Frost-like facade of decency and politeness (1972, p.79).

XI The Syrian Peddler

Theodora finds herself attracted to and able to communicate with foreign men and women who are not members of the society in which she moves and which is symbolized by Huntly Clarkson and his friends.

It is during the visit of the Syrian peddler that Theodora becomes aware, for the first time, that she "walked outside a distinct world, on which the grass quivered with a clear moisture, and the earth rang. In this state, in which rocks might at any moment open, or words convey meaning, she stood and watched the Syrian go" (p.31).

Theodora's active fantasy together with the "white-lit evening" (p.31) and the excitement of the Syrian peddler's visit (which may well have been the open sesame to a new world - "Yairs, yairs ... That may be, Mr Ali Baba" (p.31) - all inspire Theodora to experience a change in herself. Instead of being Theo, moustached, sallow and a stick, she takes on a new physical shape: "Her hair flew. She had increased. She walked outside a distinct world, on

which the grass quivered with a clear moisture, and the earth rang. In this state, in which rocks might at any moment open, or words convey meaning, she stood and watched the Syrian go. His silence slipped past. The hills settled into shapelessness. She was left with the trembling of her knees" (p.31).

The silver shawl (implying material values and the Biblical money pieces) is suggestive of the illusory world sought by Julia Goodman, the Parrotts, Huntly Clarkson and even Mrs Johnson. Their being blinded by apparent splendour is symptomatic of their unawareness of reality and their dishonesty. They prefer to hide the holes and present only the glittering facade. Gertie Stepper is not fooled. She, as a servant, is sober and realistic in her approach to life. She has no illusions about her old age: "When I am old all I shall want is a cup of tea, and die" (p.42). This attitude is contrasted to the hopeless attitude of the men and women at the Hotel du Midi.

XII The Man who was Given his Dinner

It is on Theodora's twelfth birthday, the day she is knocked down by lightning, that she meets one of her father's former friends.

The visitor "had a beard, like a prophet, greyer than Father's, thick and big" (p.43). The impression of the man being a prophet is important in the composite impression of Holstius in Part Three. Much later when Theodora is with Holstius, she remembers the visit of the Man who was Given his Dinner and "how at the time she had been infused with a warmth of love that was most thinly separated from expectation of sorrow" (p.288).

Theodora feels herself attracted to this former friend of her father "because something warm and close has been established with the man" (p.43). When his coat brushes her face it is like a caress. It is what she has looked for, but not found in her father. Because this man was her father's friend, he becomes acceptable as a father surrogate.

The visitor describes an exciting and romantic world which breaks down the walls of Meroë and reveals "the safe sounds" (p.41) within it. He is different in every way, "unlike the other people who came to the house, or anyone in the house, except a little like Father" (p.44).

Dr Patricia Morley says that Theodora shares her father's shame when the former companion is obliged to eat his dinner on the verandah. Theodora takes her father's place in the friendship and trust the two men once enjoyed. "By her twelfth birthday the girl has replaced her father in his spiritual odyssey, for it is Theodora who sits, in an eternal now, beneath the sheltering tree with the Man who was Given his Dinner" (Morley, 1972, p.71).

The intimate friendship the two men enjoyed reveals man's need for such human solidarity. The friendship between Theodora and Violet Adams does not fulfil this need. The unhappy choice George Goodman made when he married Julia seems to indicate that marriage is no substitute for real friendship between two men.

"You're more like your father ... More like your father used to be. We was mates. We went prospecting down Kiandra way. I remember once we got lost, one Easter, in the mountains, when the

snow came. There was the ghost of a man in the mountains, they said, who got lost in a snowdrift driving his sheep. We sat all night, your father and I, under the shelter of a big dead tree, listening to the dingoes howl, waiting for the ghost. Cripes it was cold up there. We had a fire each side. But it was cold. We sat with our arms round each other, and then your father fell asleep" (p.45, my emphasis).

Dr Morley points out that the encircling arms of the two men make a mandala - a "living circle of love" (1972, p.71). In the schoolgirl friendship already mentioned, Theodora's encircling arm lacks the honesty and sincerity of the men and is also apologetic. "Theodora could feel her own humility, round Violet's thin waist her apologizing arm" (p.55). This behaviour explains Theodora's inability to identify herself with her family and her unwillingness to commit herself. Her honesty does not allow her to deceive others or herself. Her weakness also indicates an unwillingness to commit herself to anything or anyone.

The prophet-like visitor offers two approaches to life. He believes wandering and looking for gold is "as good a way of passing your life as any other" (p.43). This approach reflects the former life of George Goodman and hints at the questing life Theodora is to lead. Such people go out into the mountains and the so-called reasonable people believe that they are mad. Important, however, is that such a way of life shows some progress. Once you put your life "in a house it stops, it stands still" (p.47). It is clear that the visitor has George Goodman in mind when he speaks these words. The problem of which of the two men is insane remains unsolved. Each from his own point of view thinks the other unbalanced. "Though who is crazy, and who isn't?

Can you tell me that, young Theodora Goodman? I bet you couldn't" (p.47).

Patrick White explains Theodora's attraction to the Man who was Given his Dinner when he introduces Holstius who has the same character traits: "He was both detached and close. Because, although he spoke in abstractions, these answered the depths of her being" (p.288). For the first time Theodora shares a fragment of another human's life. The stranger is both solemn and prophetic when he tells Theodora: "You'll see them because you've eyes to see. And they'll break you. But perhaps you'll survive. No girl that was thrown down by lightning on her twelfth birthday, and then got up again, is going to be swallowed easy by rivers of fire" (p.47).

Theodora is not broken, and does manage to survive in a world of her own, having overcome her passions by mentally experiencing them in the person of Katina Pavlou. The Bestons call the visitor's reference to "rivers of fire" Theodora's concept of love (1972, p.38).

George Goodman ironically refers to his former friend as an outcast and one who should be avoided. "Let Gertie hand it through the spare-room window. To the leper" (p.45).

Theodora takes her father's place at the side of his erstwhile friend: "They sat beneath the shaggy tree in the night of snow, and the snow as it fell melted, on entering the circle of their warmth. She rose and fell on the breathing of the tree" (p.48). This awareness may be regarded at Theodora's first fugue.

Like Moratīs, the Man who was Given his Dinner has to pay the penalty for the abstract pleasure of knowing - he is an outsider.

XIII Pearl Brawne

The short, but fiery relationship between Tom Wilcocks and Pearl Brawne reveals a new dimension of life to both Fanny and Theodora, the impact on each of the two sisters being different. Pearl Brawne's name indicates her physical nature. Her physical charms are as temporary as the purple world she subsequently finds herself lost in.

Patrick White's inclusion of the Tom Wilcocks-Pearl Brawne affair is meant to reveal yet another world to which Theodora is an alien: "Theodora wondered how the purple world of Pearl, that was so close, eludes other hands" (p.132).

To the young Goodman girls the departure of Pearl after having conceived, remains a mystery. In their home there "was always a great deal that never got explained" (p.41).

Pearl Brawne is the victim of her own body. In answering its call she becomes an outcast, only sought after by men equally enslaved by their passions. To Theodora the power of Pearl's body is such that if "Pearl Brawne took off her clothes, ... and lay in the water, the hills would move, she is fine as a big white rose, and I am a stick. If it is good to be a stick ... it is better to be a big white rose" (p.40). The "hills" are Pearl Brawne's breasts which by their exposed nakedness have become important symbols in Theodora's feelings for Pearl. She intimates her awareness of Pearl's sexual normality and her own

weakness. As an adult Theodora realises Pearl's fate and that she cannot help being what she is. When they meet again after many years Theodora knows: "Life is full of alternatives but no choice" (p.132).

Theodora is profoundly impressed by what has happened between Tom Wilcocks and Pearl Brawne: "It was terrible and strange. And the terror and strangeness mounted. It took you" (p.39). The sexual aspect, most likely because it is not considered "nice" to think or talk about, becomes associated in Theodora's mind with the smell of nettles which was her first awareness when they came to the cowbail that wet afternoon. Later, when in Theodora's imagination Wetherby seduces Katina Pavlou, we have "the scream of nettles" (p.249) which indicates abhorrence on the part of Theodora, it being the climax to a long time of anticipating such an event.

One other memory Theodora has of her youth is the milk Tom Wilcocks brought to the house. Elizabeth Loder (1963, p.85) holds that the nettles and the milk are associated with sensuality. As another example of sensual imagery she points out that in The Ham Funeral, and elsewhere, eels are used to suggest "the slippery struggle of human beings" (1963, p.85). In The Aunt's Story we have only one mention of eels. The context in which they are mentioned, does, however, have to do with the sensuality of Tom Wilcocks and the effect of this sensuality on Theodora and Pearl Brawne.

When Theodora meets Pearl again later in their lives the latter has, ironically in the light of her "profession", attempted to forget her affair with Tom Wilcocks, most likely because its

sterility is branded on her mind by the death of her child. She is unwilling "to open a cupboard of which she had thrown away the key" (p.130). Marjorie Barnard (1959, p.53) says that when Theodora meets Pearl she again fleetingly glimpses the "rose=light" she once knew at Meroë. There is a warmth in the sordid life of Pearl that Theodora has never known.

Thelma Herring (1965, p.17) shows the similarity between Theodora's meeting with Pearl and Ulysses' encounter with the Sirens. To check the power of the memories called up "Theodora would have blocked her ears with wax. She could not bear to face the islands from which Pearl sang" [p.133].

Theodora's mother's death follows soon after this meeting and allows Theodora to answer the call to these "islands" where she believes she might find all the answers.

Geoffrey Dutton says that Pearl Brawne gives Theodora a glimpse of the humility one needs in order to be able to accept life. This Theodora does when she has come to terms with the people in her life (1961, p.15). Wilkes and Reid (1970, p.110) point out that Mrs Lusty (The Ham Funeral) and Pearl Brawne represent "the acceptance of life at any level". This parallels Theodora's own acceptance: "but now I begin to suspect that any place is habitable, depending, of course, on the unimportance of one's life" (p.91).

The meeting between Theodora and Pearl takes place in a city which is sick, the "sickness" being symptomatic of the spiritual condition of Pearl Brawne and society. White compares the city to a human body which has a fever and "violet and crimson

wounds" (p.129). The life-blood of the city is the people who are sick and who "clot" at corners at the end of working days, in this way indicating the death of the city at night. The predominant colour is purple which in this context indicates a desire to escape from reality by over-indulgence in wine. White has used this image to reveal the life of Pearl Brawne in the same way as he makes Theodora a part of the black volcanic hills of Meroë.

Although the only thing that has happened to Theodora is that she has become an aunt it is still more than has happened to Pearl Brawne who will "vanish" at her death without ever having become anything. The "crimson world" of Pearl Brawne is no solution to Theodora's problems.

At the meeting between the two women Theodora reveals that she has gained insight into what acceptance of life is. She has come to accept her role of the outsider and knows that there can be no change. The world Theodora cannot be part of, much as her body may demand it, is the world of passion: "Lawrence's world of blood-heat" (Morley, 1972, p.75).

Hilary Heltay (1973, p.97) maintains that Theodora's conflict is against the firmly established, if biased values of society. The world has two areas of experience: "the solid world of everyday existence and the evanescent, constantly flowing world of inner reality". As Theodora has become more reconciled to life and her place in life, Pearl has become progressively more lost. "Outside the night had ripened. It was big and black. Pearl began to look all ways. Pearl was lost ... Then the night gulped, and she was gone" (p.133). Time has been kinder to Theo=

dora than to Pearl. Pearl's fresh beauty has eroded: "and she kissed the big white face from which the wind was blowing the powder" (p.133).

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE JARDIN EXOTIQUE

The Stage

Part Two of The Aunt's Story is difficult to understand and interpretations are many and varied. Part Two mirrors the passing scene of Part One and entails much mental wish fulfilment on the part of Theodora Goodman. Marjorie Barnard (1959, p.54) regards the whole of the "Jardin Exotique" section as a satire on human weakness. She describes it as a phantasmagoria, but in spite of this judgment finds examples of wit and excitement. Part Two, she says, "is a distorting mirror of actual events and characters, or a subjective phantasy" (1959, p.54). In an article written some years earlier Barnard calls Part Two of The Aunt's Story a nightmare, but adds that in "her nightmare Theodora is always practical, and full of commonsense enjoying the illusion of sanity, the heroine of a mad world" (1956, p.164).

During Theodora's stay at the Hotel du Midi the seed of frustration sown during her youth at Meroë "finds a strange blooming amid people who are nearer to the figments of a disordered imagination than to flesh and blood" (Barnard, 1956, p.163). Barnard writes that the "changed skies [of the Hotel du Midi] become an externalization of her changed mood" (1956, p.164). By this statement Barnard apparently means that just as White uses the sickness of the city and the black hills of Meroë as correlatives to describe the spiritual condition of Theodora and Pearl Brawne so the changed skies indicate Theodora's freedom which has allowed her a new state of mind and led her to a new country.

Dr John and Rose Marie Beston (1972, p.34) say that Theodora has spiritually never left Meroë. "The jardin exotique is another Meroë, as she senses as she first enters it: 'she began to be afraid she had returned to where she had begun, the paths of the garden were the same labyrinth, the cactus limbs the same aching stone'" [p.146]. In a later article the Bestons (1974, p.99) make the observation that "frequently in White severe illness ... or some kind of 'doffing' of the body, precedes spiritual illumination." The Jardin Exotique section is thus a transitional period to Theodora's spiritual illumination, which is then what occurs at the end of her odyssey. The Bestons point out that Theodora's world is free "from many of the restrictions that govern the ordinary world" (1975, p.4). There are, for example, in her fantastic world no barriers of time, space and location.

Vincent Buckley (1958, p.194) says that Theodora's life "seems to come to a spiritual and emotional climacteric long before it comes to a physical one." Having most likely the jardin exotique in mind Buckley says that Theodora's life "becomes a drifting, a lax holding onto what is left of experience while clutching in a convulsive or vague nostalgia at the memory of all the possibilities which have been surrendered. The spiritual life becomes a musing on a lost or unfulfilled emotional life, and the grip on present reality becomes, if not weaker, at least more desperate and confused" (1958, p.194).

As regards the complexity of Part Two the Bestons believe an understanding depends on "the meaning proceeding from the personality and experiences of [the] creator" (1975, p.6). They warn that for "most readers the natural error will be to identify the figures of the 'Jardin Exotique' with one character or at least

with characters of the same sex. Except for Misses Bloch, all the characters, women and men, are at the same time aspects of Theodora or have undergone her experiences" (1975, p.6).

Kirpal Singh differs from the Bestons in that he suggests that the men and women in Theodora's fantasy are real and have illusions. "Here Theodora meets people for whom their illusions have become realities and whose lives have become fixated at some point. Thus, for instance, there is General Sokolnikov who is only a major, living in a past world with his sister Ludmilla" (1975, p.91).

The jardin exotique is vital to Theodora. "She approaches eagerly, and wastes no time in setting the stage on her entrance into it. She is the master puppeteer, with a good sense of the right time and place for the appearance of her various personages" (Bestons, 1975, p.2). They explain Theodora's haste to get into the garden by saying that it is "the domain of her fantasy". Theodora comes to the Hotel du Midi with the characters already formulated in her imagination. "Signing the hotel register, Theodora is afraid she might meet too soon, before she had washed her hands, on the stairs for instance, Mrs Rapallo, on whose face she had not yet decided, but it wore a purple bloom' (p.142)" (1975, p.4). This substantiates the assertion that all the characters are imaginary. Marjorie Barnard says the reader is never sure whether the other guests at the hotel are real. John Woodburn (1948, p.28) takes the element of doubt even further. He says that the jardin exotique is yet another Meroë, but it is in the present, whereas the Australian Meroë has been released by the past. Neither of them is real.

Brian Kiernan gives a neat and suggestive explanation of the role of the jardin exotique. "The 'Jardin Exotique' of the pension Theodora stays at in France is a surreal museum of the jetsam of European culture." Kiernan quotes the description of Mrs Rapallo's bedroom (p.219) to prove his point (1974, p.86). The guests are the old ones who no longer have any illusions to help them on their way.

The manager of the Hotel du Midi speaks about "notre jardin exotique" (p.146), but Theodora knows that it cannot be possessed and that it is a world all on its own. "This was a world in which there was no question of possession. In its own right it possessed, and rejected, absorbing just so much with its pink and yellow mouths" (p.146). The jardin exotique awakens in Theodora a mood that suggests that one should make the best of things and that this is all that one may expect in life. The atmosphere of the Hotel du Midi is one of shabby hopefulness which fills Theodora with dismay. There is no real desire for improvement or achievement and this weakens Theodora's vitality in her quest for meaning. Even from where she sits in the jardin Theodora has insight into the illusory hopefulness of people and this echoes her own thoughts. When she is alone in the garden Theodora experiences some contact with the hostile plants. The air and the atmosphere become congenial. The nearness and the comfort are, however, illusory.

Nancy Potter believes the jardin exotique is the equation of a garden. It "encourages people inside it to create legendary pasts". She writes that "like the grand hotels in fact and fiction before World War II, this one is filled with European drifters from White Russia, Germany, Birmingham, or nowhere, each with one room

filled with wax fruit, doilies ... This section of the novel is constructed as a dream, the result of Theodora's puzzled reaction to other drifters" (1964, p.10).

J.F. Burrows refutes those critics who regard Part Two as a verbal chaos. Burrows attempts to show that this part is the "natural issue" of Part One "for Theodora's European experience consists very largely in facing problems of her earlier life" (1966, p.153). He believes that there is not much change in Theodora, from her youth to spinsterhood and middle age at the Hotel du Midi. He bases his argument on the recurrence of images in both sections:

"The roses and the warm yellow stone of Meroë itself, the Abyssinian associations of its name, and the dormant fires of its black volcanic hills, the greenish light filtering through the pine trees into her father's study, and the bearded figure at the desk, the garnet rings of her mother's disciplined hands, the pink artificial flowers of Fanny's facile charms, and her own struggle to find personal music" (Burrows, 1966, p.153).

Burrows says that the characters living at the Hotel du Midi, which he calls "a dreary little hotel on the French Riviera" (1966, p.155), each has a dominant concern, viz. "the preservation of his imposture" (1966, p.156). Woodburn says that Theodora's presence in the Hotel du Midi among the figments of her imagination is like the presence of "a ring-dove among a group of shadowy heterogeneous exiles" (1948, p.28).

Among the residents there are a number who play relatively minor roles. Elizabeth Loder (1963, p.90) says that these men and women

exist for the sake of the major characters. The minor characters "do exist, but, as with a mirror image, only with reflections. They are used as the embodiments of some of the characteristics of the aunt, Theodora Goodman. They represent the various lives she could have led ... we see their past lives only as they are reflected in Theodora's imagination" (1963, p.90). Elizabeth Loder adds that Theodora will not "achieve her insight and peace of mind until the evil aspects of the self, as represented by some of the characters in Part Two of The Aunt's Story have been consumed by fire" (1973, p.83).

It is about the reality of the characters that Burrows and the Bestons disagree. Dr Beston and his wife regard the characters at the Hotel du Midi as extensions of Theodora's fantasy and as signposts in her worsening schizophrenic behaviour. Burrows, on the other hand, believes that the characters are rewarding to Theodora. What the Bestons regard as schizophrenia Burrows regards as "disorientation of the traveller newly arrived" (1966, p.156). Howarth, in much the same way as the Bestons, regards Theodora as the manipulator of the lives of the men and women she meets within a very short space of time. He says that when Theodora takes up residence she is "now free to range among the past and present of the existences of other people, and fully enjoys the novelty" (1950, p.210). The figures she conjures up in her fantasy represent the heartache and the frustrations of her youth in some or other form. She attempts to solve these problems or to come to some sort of compromise by being "an ointment" (p.170).

Burrows distinguishes two phases in Theodora's association with the guests staying at the Hotel du Midi. "As it developes, her

association with them is to fall into two phases: that where, in Sokolnikov's words, Theodora 'creates the illusion of other people'; and that where, 'once created, they choose their own realities' (p.246) (Burrows, 1966, p.156).

Marjorie Barnard says that Theodora finds "a make-believe resting-place" in the garden. "It is Theodora's clumsy and ineffectual attempt to attain a full life, a story book life" (1956, p.164).

Burrows believes that one of the most important aspects of the first part of Theodora's stay at the hotel is what he calls her "fugue-life". He explains the term as follows: "In speaking of fugues, I would admit the word's connotations of flight, but would regard them as secondary to the creation of 'a painful, personal music, of which the themes were intertwined'. To the extent that Theodora's fugues are flights, it is as projections of herself into these other lives, and not as retreats from reality. What she is doing is facing her problems in the subtly altered perspectives that these other lives afford" (1966, p. 156). These lives end when the characters involved have the right to an independent existence.

In considering Theodora's fantasy as part of Patrick White's technique in Part Two of The Aunt's Story Thelma Herring writes that it is "a bold experiment in rendering the mental life of Theodora by a more dramatic method of blending past and present, illusion and reality than ordinary interior monologue" (1965, p.21). She explains Theodora's empathetic flights of fantasy by saying that "on a chance remark Theodora will build a fantasy of the past involving herself" (1965, p.21).

It is at this stage of her odyssey (her stay at the Hotel du Midi) that the reader recalls that at the time of Julia Goodman's death, Theodora's new-found freedom was still a blunt weapon. With each imaginative stroke and flight of fantasy it becomes more lethal in the destruction of her conformity.

Thelma Herring writes that when Theodora goes to Europe she "enriches her mental experience by entering in imagination into the lives of the amusing and pathetic eccentrics at her Riviera hotel" (1965, p.12). The men and women she meets "take on the aspects of the people she has known" (1965, p.12). Thelma Herring describes the conditions at the hotel in a nutshell. She calls it a "bubble world of unreason" (1965, p.13).

Manfred Mackenzie (1963, p.293) says that during Theodora's European stay her personality disintegrates. Mackenzie believes that Theodora transmits her madness into clairvoyance and subjects herself to "Egypt" or "to the fragmentation of Europe, called in the novel the jardin exotique".

Always bearing in mind the Bestons' view that Theodora is the "master puppeteer" (1975, p.2) the characters of Part One, Theodora included, are revealed in Part Two as she appraises them, consciously or unconsciously, by the impressions made on her.

The Hotel du Midi

Theodora chooses the Hotel du Midi because of the garden, "the ideal environment for her indulgence in fantasy" (Bestons, 1975, p.2). Apart from the arguments and quotations given by the Bestons there is yet another passage which is particularly apt in

revealing her indulgence and that her method of escapism, her fantasy, is not all that different from the purple world of Pearl Brawne. Pearl drinks wine and Theodora imagines a kind of Alice in Wonderland existence. The passage in question is: "Theodora remembered, there would also be the jardin exotique. She considered its possibility, smiling for her own weakness" (p.142).

The Hotel du Midi is like many of the characters in the novel. It carries the label de luxe, but this is merely pretence. The brochure is glossy and hints at all kinds of pleasure and comforts. The hotel has been reduced "from solitary splendour to a tight fit between a garage and a confectionary" (p.141). Even the smells detract from the idea of de luxe. Argyle regards the Hotel du Midi as "a microcosm of Europe". The less important residents of the Hotel "have a lively interest in life, provided solely by the power of imagination over actuality" (Argyle, 1967, p.24).

Theodora attempts to impress her personality on the hotel room by distributing her few personal possessions, almost as dismal as the room. From the manager's apology for the room one may deduce that it is not the best available. Again Theodora has to be satisfied with the second best. The meagreness of her possessions reveals that she has begun to set less store by material things. Burrows (1966, p.55), however, maintains that her belongings reveal a dependence on familiar objects in the light of her strange surroundings. In the same way she depends on tenuous links with her relatives to keep her world in some sort of equilibrium.

Monsieur Durand is that aspect of Theodora's fantasy which holds forth countries or places of promise, havens of rest and happiness,

all surrogates for an earthly paradise. In his physical appearance he reveals his disillusionment. His tiredness is that of Theodora. Henriette, the female factotum, smells of the sun and nakedness. She seems ageless and as if belonging to the desert. She hints at adventure and foreshadows Theodora's casting off her belongings and even her human smell prior to her final liberation.

On her "odyssey" to her bedroom on the day of her arrival Theodora passes the bedroom of le petit. Keeping in mind Tom Wilcocks's brazen behaviour and his masculine appeal to both Fanny and Theodora it is not strange that le petit should throw open his door in contempt, whereas all the other residents hide in their rooms. "Theodora passed an open doorway that blinded by its audacity, or rather an unconscious insolence of solid light. The audacious doorway had the same contemptuousness as certain flesh, which does not interpret dreams, nor see beyond its own reflection" (p.202).

Le petit is like Theodora in that he cannot wait to escape from his monotonous everyday work into a fantasy world of caporal bleu and a tango. Theodora's sharp perception is aware of the canker "of the rose mouth" (p.156). It is significant that Theodora does not see le petit herself, but his reflection "stood in the mirror" (p.202). One of the dominant contrasts found throughout the novel is the darkness of doubt and the unhappiness Theodora lives in on the one hand and the golden colour of physical attractiveness and the egotism of le petit on the other. In her fantasy le petit becomes more attractive than Tom Wilcocks ever was. The sigh of Henriette (Pearl Brawne) which he ignores is the echoed sigh from Theodora herself, jealous of his being able to escape from reality.

Theodora once again experiences the influence of Tom Wilcocks and Pearl Brawne when she conjures up le petit and Henriette. The "great spreading shadow" (p.39) she became aware of in her youth resembles the darkness of the passageway along which she gropes her way to her room. The older Theodora becomes the less she manages to find her way in this shadow, and the light of sensuality, as suggested by le petit's open door, indicates a consummation she has never been able to achieve with any man except, perhaps, spiritually with Moraitis.

It is likely that Theodora uses the names Sokolnikov and Rapallo in her flights of fancy because these names were mentioned by Durand at her registration at the hotel. They sound exotic enough to have stuck in her memory and Durand may have used them to impress Theodora.

"The names of the guests at the Hotel are more international than one can readily believe. It is appropriate from the richness of Theodora's fantasies, however that the characters should be as international as they are: Greek (Katina Pavlou), Russian (Sokolnikov), Dutch American (Elsie van Tuyl, who marries an Italian American), English (Wetherby), German (Lieselotte), and possibly Swiss (the Misses Bloch). One can posit persuasive reasons for Theodora's choice of some of the nationalities. Katina's Greek nationality refers to Mr Goodman's knowledge of Greek literature and the Russian characters acknowledge Mrs Goodman's ability to read Russian. The other names probably proceed from Theodora's travels in Italy, England, Germany and France" (Bestons, 1975, p.4).

Elsie Rapallo and Gloria

Elsie Rapallo is the other side of Julia Goodman's apparent mirror reflection. The former's browbeating of Sokolnikov is the same as Julia Goodman's treatment of her husband - "when as a magenta sword she opposes the rubbery Sokolnikov [p.162] Mrs Rapallo is setting the castrating qualities of Julia against the impotence of George Goodman" (Bestons, 1975, p.10).

Burrows's idea of a European past is borne out by Mrs Goodman's heritage. "The mother of Mrs Goodman had been French, they said, or Austrian, or Portuguese, anyway foreign and strange who could speak languages and read them, somebody said even Russian" (p.68).

Elsie Rapallo's appearance seems magnificent, but is spoilt by mould having set in. Beneath her flamboyant exterior Mrs Rapallo's "breath was grey" (p.161). The reaction to her entrance into the dining-room varies from agitation and anger on the part of Sokolnikov to sympathy and even understanding on the part of the Bloch sisters. They have even taken the trouble to learn the title of Mrs Rapallo's daughter: Principessa dell' Isola Grande. The adulation they have for mother and daughter reminds the reader of Fanny Goodman and Grace Parrott in their admiration of the worldliness of Una Russell. The Principessa is, however, the figure Theodora would have liked to have been in order to find favour in her mother's eyes. But, as Marjorie Barnard points out, the Principessa is as illusory as Varvara and Ludmilla (1956, p.164).

It is typical of Elsie Rapallo that she should time her first appearance to coincide with dinner time (late of course!) in order to impress with her mien. She even carries an exotic nauti-

lus to add impact to the impression the diners get of her. Mrs Rapallo learnt this behaviour in order to be able to survive in the royal circles of Europe.

"However ... as I had been endowed with physical agility and mental whalebone, I continued to appear dans le monde. I kidded this same monde into accepting me for my wealth and wit, though the one had disappeared, and the other had been damaged. In return I was allowed to suffer the knout in all the best drawing-rooms in Europe" (p.253).

Whereas John Woodburn (1948, p.27) compares Theodora herself to a nautilus, Marjorie Barnard (1956, p.164) casts a different light on the nautilus itself. She says that it may well be regarded as "the grail of the strange world" (1956, p.164). The strange world is that created by Theodora in her fantasy. Cirlot, (1972, p.121) writing about the grail and its importance, says that it involves the quest for it and that the loss of the grail is "tantamount to the loss of one's inner adhesions whether they are religious ties or some other source of happiness" (1972, p.121). In the light of what happens, this statement bears out that of Marjorie Barnard.

Because of their long-standing vendetta and affronted by her dramatic appearance in the dining-room Sokolnikov demands the nautilus from Elsie Rapallo saying that it is his: "It is mine from staring at, for many years. It responded through the glass. A tender, a subtle relationship has existed, which now in an instant you destroy. Oh, what an arrogant woman! What a terrible state of affairs! What assassination of the feelings!" (p.163). Sokolnikov's cry echoes the unspoken feelings of George Goodman

as regards his life and his daughter. Dr John and Rose Marie Beston say that "in their wrangling over the nautilus, Mrs Rapallo and Sokolnikov represent Theodora's parents fighting for possession of her, the one out of a desire to possess, the other out of some affection" (1975, p.10).

Elsie Rapallo, a parody of the accomplished actress Julia Goodman believed herself to have been, ("In her mind Mrs Goodman had already roughed out several landscapes, in which a younger, more exquisite version of herself stood" p.105) superbly carries off her bluff of superiority in the face of Sokolnikov.

Theodora's fantasy (Burrows calls it a fugue) carries her into a glittering world where she meets Mr Rapallo, Elsie van Tuyl looking "like a million dollars, in white satin by Sargent, over the dining-room mantelpiece" and older men and women resplendent in their diamonds. Theodora acts the part of a confessor and is asked about the feasibility of a romantic elopement by a young, daring and financially well-off Elsie van Tuyl. This reflects the image of a young Julia Goodman who declares to her husband: "Let us be reckless, ... And die" (p.28). The giggling, secret-sharing relationship between Elsie van Tuyl and Theodora Goodman mirrors an earlier relationship between Violet Adams and Theodora. The romantic elopement suggested by Elsie van Tuyl is what Theodora may well have imagined for herself and Frank Parrott, influenced by an awareness of Julia Goodman's own romantic dreams.

It is with wry amusement that the reader sees the aging Elsie Rapallo, asleep, toothless, hairless and friendless with only a mangy monkey for company. This image is Theodora's revenge for having had to nurse the old Julia Goodman. "At night Theodora

Goodman would bring her mother cups of hot milk, which she drank with little soft complaining noises ... [having] the appearance of an old white goat" (p.126). After her death the likeness to Elsie Rapallo is even more startling: "Her lips had sunk in on her gums, leaving her with a final expression that was gentle and prim and uncharacteristically silly" (p.134).

Theodora is never far removed from her mother and home. Even a happy family with normal relations between husband and wife, i.e. the Johnsons, still reveals the withdrawn husband who has his darkness into which he retreats (Burrows, 1966, p.159). Theodora has no such darkness. She has to bury her face in her pillow and wander over the black hills of Meroë in order to find some darkness into which she can retreat.

Just as George Goodman betrays Theodora's trust during her childhood, Theodora now betrays Sokolnikov by taking sides with Rapallo against him and in this way also reveals hidden desires of once having wanted to gain her mother's approval and even to follow her example. It is also a form of revenge for George Goodman's having deserted and betrayed her.

"So that Theodora laughed too. Her voice cut. It was quite horrible, rending. In betraying the General, she had laid bare many gaping moments of her own. If she could, she would have made some gesture asking for forgiveness. She would have touched his receding back, but already he was a footfall" (p.191).

Theodora's fantasy, born partly out of her longing for maternal affection, projects her into the shadowy figure of Gloria, Elsie

Rapallo's daughter: "Gloria, Principessa dell Isola Grande (Australia)" (Bestons, 1975, p.2). The Bestons write that the spectacle that Theodora attributes to Mrs Rapallo is what she actually desires for herself but that it is inappropriate for a yellow, sallow woman like herself (1975, p.2).

The choice of the name Gloria betrays Theodora's desire to be in the limelight and not hidden with the furniture in dark corners. At the first meeting between Mrs Rapallo and Theodora the image of Gloria is still vague - "because Gloria was still a blur" (p.192). Gloria never assumes any real shape because Theodora cannot picture such an ideal image and situation. "But Canova just failed to disclose the body of Gloria. Her mind remained obscure, together with the problem of her thighs, though her shadow fell velvety across the marble floor" (p.193). The impression that Gloria makes on this resplendent and holy world is resounding and international, more than anything Una Russell could have hoped for in her wildest dreams. The stress of Gloria's achievement does, however, fall on intellectual ability and not so much on feminine charm although Gloria is visualized as lying almost naked in the sun which again links up with the nakedness of Henriette in some Abyssinian Utopia.

In the fantastic scene in which they witness the passing of the cardinals, Theodora finds the marble world hostile to herself - "the transition from asphalt to marble was too abrupt" (p.192). The transition from the black hills of Meroë to the streets of Sydney had also been too much for her. To a woman of Elsie Rapallo's nature, physical suffering is a social obligation. Such behaviour does not occur to Theodora. Her mental anguish

and her nature have precluded any inclination to, for example, impress people by her poise while standing on stairs. Theodora's attitude to life and people reveals that whatever social graces her mother attempted to teach her have had no shaping effect on her.

Gloria remains only a shadow. Of this Italian episode in Theodora's odyssey Burrows says that "it is less a creation of Theodora's own than a visualizing through Theodora's eyes of Mrs Rapallo's glorification of her daughter's wealth and influence as Principessa dell' Isola Grande" (1966, p.161).

The transition from the marble splendour of Italy to "the grey friable landscape, between the sea and what remained of the hills" (p.194) is painful and Theodora shivers at the impossibility of what she has imagined. The transition is from splendour to destitution - to the refuse baskets which contain the "aching letters and brown roses" (p.194) of imagined and past happiness. It is also the end of the roselight Theodora once enjoyed. The attempted glorification of herself amid the marble splendour fails and ends in the same refuse basket.

Theodora is upset and chilled by the fantasy figment of the Italian show. She has gone further than she would have liked in the glorification and gratification of the "great monster Self" (p.134). She has a lack of confidence and nothing to believe in. "But Theodora was uncomforted. Mirrors also expressed doubt. We like to believe that we believe was multiplied in glass" (p.195). It is just this security that Theodora does not have and which she tries to find by building fantasy figures which eventually culminate in the ideal figure, Holstius.

Theodora belittles her mother's habit of reliving the past in some or other romantic dream, and betrays the fact that Mrs Rapallo is not real: "I am a victim of regurgitation" (p.194). Mrs Rapallo tells Theodora that when she was young she drank champagne because the gentlemen expected it. Theodora's reply to this boasting is ambiguous - "That is the difference" (p.195). It suggests that she either regrets her middle age or that she was never so popular that there were gentlemen who expected her to drink champagne with them.

Elsie Rapallo's room mirrors a tarnished and vanished glory, mirroring at the same time the feelings of Julia Goodman. "Mrs Goodman read with pleased indifference of Fanny Parrott's magnificence. Because her day for this was done, she could not altogether believe that magnificence existed still" (p.99). The difference in attitude and philosophy between Theodora and Mrs Rapallo (Julia Goodman) is clearly illustrated by what each needs to make life liveable: "It all depends on what you need" (p.196). This explains the austerity of Theodora's almost monastic cell and her life which is aimed at the acquisition of knowledge and the intangible things such as parental love and understanding.

Elsie Rapallo, on the other hand, lavishes her frustrated maternal affection on a smelly monkey, but in this process reveals a humanity which Theodora seems to lack.

In her self-pity Theodora becomes, not Gloria, but a monkey which plays much the same role as Gloria. The love and dependence which come from her and not from her mother are a parody of mother and child love. The situation does, however, once again stress Theodora's inferiority to her mother. The pathos lies in Theodora

having adopted the role of a monkey, completely inhuman, and then still unwillingly having to give love and warmth: "Whether it was cold or not, she warmed the shabby fur, trying to revive in it her own ghost of passion" (p.196).

Theodora's choice of playing the role of a monkey is not altogether strange if one considers her life with her mother while they still lived in Sydney. "Theodora hides still, in the darker corners of the house, amongst the furniture, or she hides her face in a silence and thinks I cannot see" (p.96). She cared for Julia Goodman and was used whenever Julia in her hypocrisy wished to play the role of the devoted mother. Mrs Rapallo does the same.

The monkey is an alien in the hotel room, as much out of its environment as Theodora ever was in the city, far away from the black hills of Meroë. The monkey's longing for physical contact equals that of Theodora. Physical proximity, as she experienced with Violet Adams at Spofforths', releases her from this state of solitude.

Mr Rapallo is dark, masculine and unseen, like the faceless body Theodora, sitting under a tree, holds in her arms. Mr Rapallo remains faceless because he represents the ominous darkness of disillusion to come - "a great spreading shadow, which grew and grew ... [and] was difficult to ignore" (p.39), and the meaning which first Pearl Brawne and then Elsie van Tuyl prefers to ignore. Having chosen an apparently romantic elopement she finds herself deserted in some drab hotel, rejected and discarded. Rapallo is threatening and superior and Elsie van Tuyl is humble and abject before him, having the attitude Theodora wished her

mother to have had. When Rapallo disappears reality also vanishes and Elsie again adopts her fantasy world in which she can forget her debts which are not all financial. "He has gone ... Then we can rattle. We can fill our lives. We shall forget our debts and our failures" (p.198). It is also possible that the unknown Rapallo suggests George Goodman who remained secluded in his study.

Elsie Rapallo's elopement and her desire to escape from the facade of reality is again illustrated in her invitation to Theodora: "Let us take our things and go to the shack. Just the two of us. Alone. We shall walk in the lanes, and gather blueberries, and feel the rain on us, and watch the emerald beetles" (p.166). The dream of a country cottage and soothing surroundings is an illusion and an escape from the sensuality of Rapallo. "But they walked in the lanes, the little, sour, sandy lanes, where the emerald beetle staggered, and roots tripped, and the mouth contracted under sour fruit" (p.166).

Burrows calls Theodora's fugue into the world of Elsie Rapallo, nee van Tuyl, "a menopausal daydream about the still mysterious Mr Rapallo, wealthy and virile leaving traces of the men she might have married - and yet a person of no consequence in the lives of his wife and daughter" (1966, p.161). Burrows makes a good point when he says that in the three fugues which have to do with Mrs Rapallo Theodora plays passive and submissive roles. It is Theodora who is ironically placed before the reader (p.161). "At bottom we are being shown Theodora's ignorance and puzzlement in the face of the essentially unreal" (Burrows, 1966, p.162).

Burrows explains Theodora's passive behaviour during the "fugue" by saying that she is for the time overcome by the dazzling dis=

play of wealth in the world of Elsie van Tuyl. In all the fugues "Theodora is romanticizing the ostentatious display of wealth when it is carried to an extreme pitch" (1966, p.162). Burrows says that Theodora forsakes the attitude she and her father used to have towards wealth (1966, p.162). "Our place is a decent size, not so big as Parrott's or Trevelyan's, but my father says big enough for peace of mind" (p.25). Elsie Rapallo's banality about the pearl collar her husband took from her arouses in Theodora memories of when such "banality is balm" (p.198). She no doubt thinks of Frank Parrott's triteness on the night of the waltz; when he came to propose to Fanny and of the numerous occasions when she was a visitor at Huntly Clarkson's house. Theodora's futile longing for her mother's love becomes evident in the "conversation" they have about religion. "But wait, Theodora, wait. Gloria's learning about religion. It's time, I thought, and you've got to somehow bring in God. Jesus loves Gloria? she says. Of course, I say, of course, gentle Jesus loves us all. And Maman loves Gloria? Well, I kind of guess she does. Oh, says my Gloria. Why, I say, isn't that enough? Oh, she says, it all helps, but if no one does, it don't matter, Gloria can love herself" (p.199). Gloria's attempt to console herself is an admission of her alienism.

In her lifetime Julia Goodman ^{is} ~~was~~ dependent on pills as cures for loneliness and affection. "Ah, where would we be without aspirin!" (p.128). This habit finds its reflection in Mrs Rapallo's habit of taking sleeping pills, Rapallo no longer being able to make her forget. Henriette, who guides Theodora to her room when she has lost her way, points out the sleeping Mrs Rapallo and mentions that she takes her dreams from a packet, recalling the medicines Mrs Goodman took.

When Elsie Rapallo accuses Theodora of being a thief she does not deny it, but cannot explain her behaviour: "She could explain nothing, least of all her several lives. She could not explain that where there is more than one it is inevitable always to betray" (p.222). It is not the first time that Theodora is a thief. As the Bestons point out, she stole the paper knife from her mother as a sign of her rebelliousness and out of a desire to break away from her mother's dominance.

The picnic Theodora imagines for the creatures of her fantasy is the result of her disappointment at that picnic which many years before did not materialize. Burrows (1966, p.168) says that the reaction of the residents to the news of the picnic is determined by whether they feel they can venture beyond the walls of the hotel. Theodora, says Burrows, "feels a strong but rather Olympian concern for them" (1966, p.168). She cannot, however, stand aside - "In this charade she is an actor" (Burrows, 1966, p.168). In spite of not being one for the "al fresco" (p.230) Mrs Rapallo nevertheless goes on the picnic. Her love for the indoors finds its origin in Julia Goodman, whose mirror image she is: "Her [Julia's] world had always been enclosed by walls" (p.93). Since the loss of the nautilus Mrs Rapallo seems to have shrunk in stature, her "crutch" having been removed. In her ignorance of life beyond the walls, she foolishly, but characteristically believes that she can improve nature. Theodora diagnoses her foolishness: "It is from long looking at a wall, Mrs Rapallo" (p.232).

Cirlot (1972) points out that orange, the colour of the dress Mrs Rapallo wears to the picnic, is the colour of desperation. Against the blue background of the sky it indicates that she is

aware that she no longer has any place in the world. Elsie Rapallo has become weary of life, similar to Theodora's own weariness. She subsequently contemplates suicide, having rejected her romantic illusion, Gloria and her husband (Burrows, 1966, p.170). Mrs Rapallo's Ryvita, standing alone on her table, is ironic in the light of her physical decay and her desire to escape from the final reality of old age and death.

Theodora visits Mrs Rapallo because she is unwell. It is a feeling of duty towards her creation that takes her there and not any kind of daring to challenge the past. She has overcome this threat to a large extent.

Sokolnikov

"The essential vitality of Sokolnikov, the peak of the novel's comic achievement, lies in his unique blending of worldly disillusionment with a continuing dependence upon the illusory, of a mostly tolerant scepticism with an irrepressible joy of life" (Burrows, 1966, p.162).

It must be borne in mind that Sokolnikov is the product of Theodora's fantasy and that he to a considerable extent mirrors her father. The notion of Theodora being omnipotent over the lives of her "puppets" is borne out by her belief that "the world was a little crystal ball" (p.159).

Dr John and Rose Marie Beston (1975, p.10) write that George Goodman appears in the novel only as Sokolnikov. The latter has all the characteristics of rubber and this is a phallic image (Bestons, 1975, p.10). To prove their point they refer to

a number of textual examples: "and now he [Sokolnikov] advanced too, huge domed, but never confined, increasing always with the resourcefulness of rubber, pink rubber at that" (p.162). Apart from Sokolnikov's being a phallic symbol the general softness of rubber suggests the weakness (lack of firmness) of George Goodman's character, especially in the face of his wife's anger. Theodora's attitude to Sokolnikov has the same duality of her feelings for her father. [Her distasteful feelings which result in edged recriminations remind the reader of her mother - she wears Julia Goodman's ring. Sokolnikov says that her shrewishness reminds him of Anna Stepanovna who in turn suggests Julia Goodman.] "They were, in fact, that complementary curse and blessing, a relationship" [p.207] (Bestons, 1975, pp.10-11).

The Bestons point out that Theodora's dislike of Sokolnikov is focussed on the physical and that in spite of this she cannot sever her connection with him because of the need to express "that desperate affection which she had never quite been able to give" [p.210] (1975, p.11).

In the fantastic "bubble world of unreason" (Herring, 1965, p.13) that Theodora forms around herself and Sokolnikov she at first assumes the role of Ludmilla, Sokolnikov's sister who "took snuff, and spat in the corners, and wore boots like a Cossack under her long skirts" (p.155). Dr John and Rose Marie Beston believe that the stress on Ludmilla's wearing boots refers back to the times Theodora and her father went hunting (1975, p.10).

It is a reminiscing Sokolnikov who remembers that when he was young he tried to put away things in boxes, but found, even then, that "this might not be feasible. Because everything is nothing"

(p.158). This mirrors Theodora's own youthful foolishness when she wanted to "wrap it up and put it in a box. This is the property of Theodora Goodman" (p.42). Her childlike naivety shows its disillusion in the words of Sokolnikov.

Sokolnikov's interpretation of his life differs from that of Theodora. "She is to find, however, that his version is very different and that, just as he and the others are actors in her fugues, so she and Katina Pavlou have parts to play in his" (Burrows, 1966, p.163). Theodora regards him as an old clown, and one she, as Ludmilla, has to serve by "mopping up the little damp patches where his thoughts dripped" (p.176). The many varied and illusory roles he plays are explained by his belief that "one moment of my existence is intensely varied, intensely moving. Take that gob of spittle, for instance. A moonstone, a jewel. There is no denying that I am an artist" (p.176). What is important about his story, however, is that "he and Theodora concur in seeing her as Ludmilla and Katina Pavlou as Varvara. But whereas Theodora sees her own parents in him and Anna Stepanovna, he sees only himself and Anna" (Burrows, 1966, p.163).

Marjorie Barnard explains Sokolnikov's life and his relationship with Varvara and Ludmilla by writing that he "spent his mornings with his young love, Varvara, and his afternoons with Ludmilla, his sister who is also his conscience and with whom he identifies Theodora" (1956, p.164).

When Theodora and Sokolnikov argue about religion and faith, Theodora as Ludmilla denies that she believes in God. She asserts her belief in a table as an article of furniture because it is convincing. (Compare her frantic groping at the table when Holstius speaks to her, p.288.) Her faith, she tells Sokolnikov, lies "in

a pail of milk ... with the blue shadow around the rim" (p.159). This refers back to her youthful memories of Tom Wilcocks carrying pails of still warm milk, and points ahead to when "she sank her mouth in the cool milk, and it became warm from her suddenly hot, protesting mouth" (p.272).

Sokolnikov's comment that abstractions are a great mistake (p. 182) is George Goodman's admission of failure because he adds, rather wryly, that the concrete (Julia Goodman) does not always offer itself in very attractive form. Theodora achieves pleasure from talking in abstractions, the value of which is illustrated by the words of Moraïtis: "It is not necessary to see things ... if you know" (p.114). In the light of this belief Sokolnikov's idea of everything being hidden by an exterior facade is negligible: "But there is never anything to see, ... Anywhere. The meat is all inside the shell" (p.183).

Sokolnikov, talking about letters (to and from his wife), describes a way of life as dissatisfying as that of George and Julia Goodman who slept in separate bedrooms (p.69). "We have adopted this peculiar convention of two people exchanging letters ... In this way we cherish what remains of an unfortunate relationship. In this way it is easier to impose the reality one chooses" (p.245). He married Edith for her money and found that this was also an illusion. "A retired cook. I married her for her income, and for years ate mince" (p.188). George Goodman married for love and lived in hate. Sokolnikov compares the unfeelingness of Edith to the mechanical workings of a clock of which she was particularly fond: "You should have seen, Ludmilla, the love and agility with which she removed the dome, as if she were baring her own bronze soul" (p.188). This description and

his equating bronze with heartlessness applies to Julia Goodman as well as Edith. Even Julia's destructive nature is revealed in Sokolnikov's suggesting that Edith destroyed her benefactress, Mrs Arbuthnot.

When Sokolnikov and Theodora go for a walk along the promenade we have a similar situation as when Theodora and her father went for walks. Black is once again the predominant colour with the skeleton trees replaced by iron railings; the paddocks and yellow tussocks by the asphalt promenade, brick and stucco, glass and iron. Whereas Theodora and her father talk about death, she and Sokolnikov talk about eternity, to which point Theodora's thoughts may have progressed. The scene that unfolds before them reveals the continuity of being and is made up in this case, of life and death. Theodora notices that the people passing only wondered at their own charade, just as if they had no control. Her charade is of her own making, and thus controlled, with the many characters initially dependent on her will. The background to Theodora's charade is the jardin exotique and is composed of eternal being, hope, despair, devouring and disgorging endlessly - all of these actions attributes common to man. The evening as background to their walk is gentle in comparison with the wounded sky of the city on the night Theodora meets Pearl Brawne. Then the evening sky was welted with violet and crimson wounds. (These two colours are associated with Mrs Rapallo.) Even the faces of the pedestrians on the night they met were like old wounds - they clotted at the corners.

As the evening with Sokolnikov passes Theodora wonders at the rightness of it all. What she sees and experiences is right in comparison with the world she has rejected.

Theodora cannot withstand the attraction of Sokolnikov when he invites her to talk, just as she could not reject her father in spite of his failings. "But she came, as she had always come to Alyosha Sergei, her man's boots on a board floor. They were, in fact, that complementary curse and blessing, a relationship" (p.207).

During the meal they have together Sokolnikov stuffs himself with sprats. Sokolnikov's eating habits which, in spite of affection, disgust Theodora, are representative of her conflicting feelings for her father. Sokolnikov tells Theodora about Anna Stepanovna who suffered the fate she promised any revolutionary insurgent. It is a shameful death, such as Theodora may at times have wished for her mother, and an execution she may have feared subconsciously had she murdered her mother with the kitchen knife. The destruction of Anna Stepanovna's estate links up with the sale of Meroë when personal items lose their individuality. The crowds in both cases are much the same - "the red, round and greedy, or the brown, hatchety, suspicious faces, that gobbled or snapped at LOTS" (p.92).

Theodora's fantasy transfers herself and Sokolnikov to the period of the Russian Revolution and the arena of political conflict. They manage to escape from an unnamed crisis which costs the lives of many people. They depart from the city to some unknown vastness which seems to Theodora to be "the mysteriously open space which separates beginning from end" (p.211). During this event Sokolnikov's behaviour is as unrealistic as George Goodman's ever was. Prior to their flight Sokolnikov "looked into the street, as if he expected a bear with a hand-organ, or dancing girls with streaming ribbons" (p.211) and not any kind of

danger. This is similar to the escapist dream world of George Goodman.

The cloak Theodora wears during their flight "smelled of time, of childhood, nettles, rain and the slow smell of dung" (p.211). She attempts to turn her back on these memories which recall forceful impressions, but "the act of turning was as much avoidance as exasperation" (p.211). To disguise herself for their flight Theodora discards what little femininity she had. It is at this stage that Sokolnikov calls her the "Pale Horse" which by its colour (cf. p. 217) presages her death which takes place soon after their flight.

The amiable though imbecilic landowner from the Ukraine who boiled nettles with kvass offers this as a cure to all problems. The old man's cure is linked to Theodora's associating the nettles with the sexuality of Tom and Pearl, her memories of the Moraïtis concert and the seduction of Katina Pavlou. Is sexual gratification then the cure to all her problems and does it replace the need for love? Does it explain the phallic imagery associated with Sokolnikov? Only when she has destroyed her tickets bought "for the purpose of prolonging herself through many fresh phases of what was accepted as Theodora Goodman" (p.274), and when she is impervious to the attack of the Johnsons' red dog (like the red hawk suggestive of her core of passion) does she know that sexual gratification is not the answer in any endeavour to achieve fulfilment and self-realization.

The fact that Sokolnikov tells Theodora that they cannot buy off God, hints firstly at a feeling of guilt which underlies their flight and secondly that doom and punishment are inevitable.

Sokolnikov is surprisingly phlegmatic about the whole affair, just as George Goodman was about his business.

The Sokolnikov of Theodora's dream fantasy (as separate from her waking fantasy) is more like an oracle than an image of her father. When she tells Sokolnikov that she has survived the impact of 'everything' he corrects her and says "you are an illusion" (p. 212) hinting at her dreams in which this is happening and that the world of her fantasy which she has created is also an illusion. Her illusory state is borne out by Sokolnikov telling Theodora that as Ludmilla she is dead.

Burrows (1966, p.167) writes that during their flight and Theodora's subsequent questioning, the pine trees remind her of her father and most likely of Meroë. At this time Theodora comes to realise that her appraisal of her father has been wrong. Burrows maintains that "Theodora realises for the first time that her father was neither the 'bearded benevolence' of the church window at Meroë nor the mere weakling she later saw in him. Less adequate than some of his fellows, he had nevertheless done what he could for her and, far more important, had attended to his own necessities. He had not been Father, but a human being. Theodora has long needed to be shown these things. They can be shown now only because she has at last discovered the compassion, even the good humour, that they deserve" (1966, p.167).

Sokolnikov in his optimism influences Theodora to see people a little less harshly. Burrows believes Theodora would rather see Katina Pavlou as Lou Parrott for whom she feels affection than as Varvara. Guided by Sokolnikov's attitude and wry wisdom she comes to view Varvara, and hence Fanny, in a more tolerant light

(p.164). Because Sokolnikov comes to withstand the hectoring of Anna Stepanovna, Theodora is able to view her mother less earnestly and obsessively. Theodora has been "so obliged to consider her mother's side of the case, her father has suffered in her esteem" (Burrows, 1966, p.164).

Sokolnikov rejects generalizations about life, and believes that "circumstances so alter cases that cases cannot intelligibly be divorced from their circumstances" and in this way "she is given access to a freedom more meaningful than all her cries for freedom" (Burrows, 1966, p.165).

As in her youth when she felt the heat of passion, she now during their flight sees the "lusty, palpitating gold and red of firelight" (p.213). In her middle age (menopause) the imagery associated with her life is watery and cool if not altogether cold. Filled with her childhood memories the heat revives, if only for a short time.

When she is confronted and questioned by her captors there is a "general disintegration of firelight, and darkness, and burning resin, and sailing trees" (p.213). In this atmosphere the belt she wears does not guarantee her personality. She is not concerned about whether the fire reveals her sex, but about the threat to her personal existence or identity.

In spite of being in grave danger Theodora must sit and put her face on her drawn-up knees. This characteristic behaviour is important because at a time of crisis she is inclined to hide her face. To escape from reality Theodora adopts a fetus-like position. As a child she did this when she imagined herself in

roselight and later she kneels by her father with her face on his knees and begs him not to die. She finds eventual fulfilment in the same posture when she rests by the feet of Holstius.

The questioning by the revolutionaries who seem unreal in their gaiety, is in keeping with the questioning by and the attitude of the senior pupils to a child who attends school for the first time. From what we have learnt of Theodora's nature we can assume that such an attitude must have made a strong impression on her on arriving at Spofforths'.

Sokolnikov mentions that any movement (thus also an odyssey; my emphasis) needs a rock, thereby implying that enthusiasm only is not enough. One must keep one's feet on the ground. This criticism is levelled at Theodora and at her father whose "journeys" are mere flights of fancy and escapism. Theodora has also come to understand that dreams are not enough. This realization is reflected in the image of Holstius, who comes to her only twice.

No doubt the love Theodora and her father had for walking among the pines and the importance this has for her gives rise to the story Sokolnikov tells the revolutionaries, viz. that they are timber merchants, and that because of insomnia they take their walks there. The interrogation of Ludmilla is the fantasy trial of Theodora by the society she has rejected because finally "you are answerable to the people" (p.215).

Morally Theodora has to decide whether she is a "person" or not: a person then being a member of society. When she is asked about herself she maps out her life along the right lines, but with some major changes. The major difference from fact is that she

says that she keeps house for her brother Sokolnikov - her father George Goodman. She reveals the enhanced status of her father and that he has been re-instated in her favour. Theodora has in her renewed relationship with her father come to realize that Gloria Rapallo can never be and has consequently rejected her mother completely in the account of her life.

Approaching the moment of her death "the mysteriously open space which separates beginning from end", Ludmilla has the insight that life is a game in which the ridiculous usually prevails. Her protests against the enormity of the truth of life and living sound equally ridiculous. "It is absurd ... We are ridiculous, all of us, standing here among the trees, playing a ridiculous game, when we should be in our beds" (p.216). The irony of her insight is that "she was not sure that the ridiculousness of this game which is called life, whether it is played in a salon, or on a battlefield, or in a forest clearing, does not invariably prevail" (p.217). Her death is an ebbing of the tide, in keeping with the image of their arrival: "and the whole darkness lunged and plunged as if it might soon tear free. The passage was full of wind. But the room into which they walked, after a last lurch and a last righting, the room at least was moored"(p.208).

Sokolnikov tells Theodora that Ludmilla's death at the hands of the revolutionaries (all the people who never understood her) was apocalyptic, but does not say what it revealed. This knowledge comes to Theodora only after her meeting with Holstius. Her death seems to promise a beautiful release from an uncomprehending world: "Her life was moving around her. She heard a burst of pigeons released from the silver bellies of the trees beside the lake. She bit her mouth for the loveliness of many heavy, breaking

summers. Then she began to ebb with the greatness and paleness, the thin, watery lightness, of the event [death] in which she was taking part. It was a mystery which even the hand on the trigger now admitted" (p.217).

Sokolnikov who runs away from the scene of Ludmilla's death and becomes a wreck of his former self, resembles Theodora after the death of her father which is apocalyptic in that it reveals that life usually ends in discontentment at desires having been left unfulfilled. It is indeed after her father's death and her feeling of betrayal that Theodora becomes unfeeling, "as if experience had wrenched out my conscience by the roots, with a pair of tongs, and after a short bleeding space I sensed that it was dead" (p. 218).

When Sokolnikov looks at Katina he says that he will deny his own tragedy. This denial will mean a failure to achieve a romantic and spectacular end. George Goodman's cry was that he had never visited Greece. Sokolnikov will sacrifice his own craving for greatness by subjecting himself to the wishes of the young woman Katina Pavlou. This reveals Theodora's wish that her father should have denied his own tragedy in favour of her life and happiness.

Sokolnikov manages to find release and to extinguish the past by making Katina Pavlou his dabchick and also his youthful love, Varvara, the one who married a commercial gentleman. Katina becomes his only hope for the future. Thus we have an image of the ideal father-daughter relationship and a relationship which would have been a balm to George Goodman's unhappiness.

When Theodora listens to the music Katina plays on the piano

she is caught in the "iciness of music" (p.244). The iciness reflects Theodora's awareness of her own sexual coldness in spite of the passions aroused in her as at the dance at the Parrot's and at the Moraïtis concert. She attempts to escape from the music, i.e. the sensuality in herself, by leaving the room and closing the door, in this way behaving like her father who shut the door of his study on his domestic and financial problems. Sokolnikov, as Theodora's reasonable self, tells her "it is difficult to escape from music. Music pursues" (p.244). Had she been able to say, like Katina after her affair with Wetherby, that "one is glad for something that has happened, something nauseating and painful, that one did not suspect. It is better finally to know" (p.249), then she could have "closed the door" on this aspect of her nature.

Sokolnikov admits having lived in an illusion, that of being a general and all the pomp that pertains to it. "But how I have lived, in spirit. Such bugles!" (p.246). He resembles George Goodman, yet another general, in his aspirations and odyssey. George Goodman, however, never achieves the spiritual comfort Sokolnikov does when he makes Katina Pavlou the object of his affections thus solving the problem of his loneliness and desire to be understood. This is what Theodora had wanted her father to do.

The Nautilus

The nautilus, as an object of beauty, is as out of place in the decay of Mrs Rapallo's room, as Theodora was in her mother's life. To Katina it offers the same release Theodora once knew: "The girl took in her hands the frail shell. She listened to

its sound. She listened to the thick-throated pines fill the room, their clear blue-green water rising and falling. The music of the nautilus was in her face, Theodora saw, behind the thin membrane that just separates experience from intuition" (p.162).

Theodora's agreeing to fetch the nautilus from Mrs Rapallo's room and the resulting conflict in which it is smashed raise a number of important questions.

In the dust on the table on which the nautilus was kept, someone, most likely Mrs Rapallo, had written the name Gloria Leoncini, with the titular addition, Principessa dell' Isola Grande. As Theodora's fantasy has changed her into Gloria, the writing in the dust bears out the Bestons' assertion that "in their wrangling over the nautilus, Mrs Rapallo and Sokolnikov represent Theodora's parents fighting over possession of her, the one out of a desire to possess and the other out of some affection" (1975, p.10).

It does seem strange that Theodora should consent to steal the nautilus from Mrs Rapallo's room. However, if the re-instatement of her father in her estimation is considered together with the concept of herself as the nautilus, then she is symbolically carrying out the final transfer of her affections to her father. Burrows says that she agrees to fetch the nautilus because she responds to Sokolnikov's more refined sense of ownership (1966, p.167).

Geoffrey Dutton's idea that the shell is the "symbol for the destruction of the Hotel du Midi" bears weight in the argument that the fire which destroys the hotel also destroys Theodora's

final passion and that the destruction of the shell solves the problem of which parent she belongs to. Only now does she understand her individuality and that she is not something which can be possessed. It is during the struggle for the nautilus that Theodora learns yet another lesson: "that vulgarity is no necessary mark of insincerity, that she must arbitrate between individuals as uncompromising as her parents, and that she cannot do so" (Burrows, 1966, p.167).

After the breaking of the nautilus both Sokolnikov and Mrs Rapallo avoid Theodora, just as if her existence ended with that of the shell. They have given up all thought of affection. "Since the evening of the nautilus both Mrs Rapallo and Sokolnikov avoided her, as if mirrors tell" (p.229). They are both guiltily anxious to avoid their past. This feeling of rejection is the same Theodora felt when they were together at Meroë.

Wetherby and Lieselotte

While Theodora is alone in the jardin exotique she meets Wetherby who is calling for Lieselotte. Wetherby is yet another alien who has left his home and lives at the Hotel du Midi at the expense of Mrs Leese-Leese. "Theodora does not see that the case of Mrs Leese-Leese presents, in a radically altered perspective, the case of Julia Goodman. (Thus Wetherby's insistence that Mrs Leese-Leese exerted a godlike power over her minions revived a charge Theodora had once [p.126] laid at her mother's door.)" (Burrows, 1966, p.158).

The incidents Burrows may have in mind include the following: the confrontation between Theodora and her mother immediately

after the shooting incident during which Huntley and his friends are shamed, the summary dismissal of Pearl Brawne and the high-handed treatment of the Man who was Given his Dinner.

As a poet Wetherby hunts for the truth (so he says), but also for the illusion of greatness. Theodora recognises that Wetherby is a cage of bones and somewhere inside him "fluttered his sick self, trying to break free from the cage of bones" (p.172). Wetherby's face is shaped like a 'cello which is the instrument Moraitis plays and brings forth "touching, simple shapes, but because of their simplicity and their purity they bordered on the dark and tragic" (p.116). Wetherby swings with the same pendulum motion as the man who prays (p.169). Whereas this man calls upon God, Wetherby calls for Lieselotte, with whom he is involved in a love-hate relationship.

Theodora's fantasy here involves her in empathy and antipathy. Her attitude to her mother is much the same as that of Wetherby to his and yet Theodora finds, in the mother's facial deformity, some kinship because of her own moustache. The power Muriel Leese-Leese has over Wetherby is pathological and resembles the power Julia has over Theodora.

Lieselotte's evaluation of Wetherby is accurate if harsh: "By nature he is the hero of an operetta. But he chose to be a disinfectant. To disinfect the world" (p.173).

Wetherby, mirroring Theodora in her relation to her mother, says that Lieselotte's passion (Julia Goodman's) is to destroy. The emotional encounter between Lieselotte and Wetherby, as evoked by Theodora's fantasy, is no doubt brought about by her remem=

bering Tom Wilcocks's affair with Pearle Brawne and it as the possible solution to her loneliness.

Wetherby (he despises his mother and is dependent on a woman, Muriel Leese-Leese) and Lieselotte (a hard and destructive woman who believes she was rejected by her Rudi) are both facets of Theodora herself. The heat of passion must eventually destroy Theodora as it does Wetherby and Lieselotte.

As regards Wetherby the "male guise is only superficially a problem in the identification of Theodora: we have already seen her in Sokolnikov and Wetherby and her moustache stands as a central symbol of her ambiguous sexual identity" (Dr John and Rose Marie Beston, 1975, p.9).

That the two are actually one is explained by the words:
"When I look into your eye I can see myself," said the voice.
"That is why you are so necessary to my existence" (p.205).

The murder of the one would mean the suicide of the other. When Lieselotte speaks about the eye which "reduces as well as intensifies" she means the mind, which in Theodora's case intensifies her experiences into what she imagines in the jardin exotique. This concept of the eye which "reduces as well as intensifies" has its origin in the "detached eye" which reduces the stature and the respect for George Goodman and at the same time intensifies his weakness.

When Wetherby cups his hands like a cage around the neck of Lieselotte he attempts to retain and yet also to destroy this other facet of his existence necessary yet hateful to him.

Lieselotte destroys his ego in the same way Theodora knocked corners off Huntly Clarkson's ego. Theodora's honest nature which sees through the flesh to the bone looks at Wetherby and sees that the love for his mother as well as Lieselotte's own feelings for Rudi (Huntly Clarkson) are false: "I have given you what I have been given ... Surely by this time you must understand that we have entered the age of Ersatz" (p.205). Lieselotte does not believe in love. She calls it pity or as an alternative "it is also contempt. It is also power" (p.205).

The Lieselotte-Wetherby affair mirrors the love-hate relationship between Huntly and Theodora, the former becoming dependent on Theodora without knowing why - and yet they destroy each other - she by emasculating him (p.125) and he by revealing her dependence on her mother, thus making her unable to marry him.

The love-pity dominance Lieselotte has over Wetherby again reflects Theodora's power over both Frank and Huntly. She can have no respect for the man who accepts pity. "Once the object of pity accepts, he is lost. The rot has set in" (p.205). This explains the deterioration of the Goodmans' marriage and the crumbling of Theodora's friendship with men. Even the Ludmilla-Sokolnikov relationship is built on this quicksand.

One must agree with Burrows (1966, p.158) when he says that Theodora even associates Wetherby with the 'cellist MoraTis. The passion aroused is much the same. Burrows's idea that Wetherby awakens a latent mother instinct explains Theodora's concern for Wetherby. She admits to him that she is capable of offering sympathy and understanding - a situation she would have liked. "For a long time now ... I have been an ointment. I was also an

Aunt once" (p.170).

"That the Lieselotte-Wetherby conversation is a realization of Theodora's own pre-occupation with love is clear from her personalized interjection that 'love is undoubtedly an acrostic, and that is why I have failed, she decided' (p.206)" (The Bestons, 1975, p.9).

Lieselotte tells Theodora about her husband Rudi who lived a myth in "a country of myths and tapestries and music" (p.173). The mythic story brings the reader strongly under the impression of the gothic: "In the fairy-tale that Lieselotte told, Theodora expected the candles to be dashed to the ground when doors opened. Wind rushed down the stone passages, swelled beneath the tapestries, till tree and stone and jousting manikins had turned to water, ebbing and flowing where the wall had been" (p.174). The important aspect of Lieselotte's story is that she "reincarnates Julia Goodman the wife in her intense but tight-reined sexuality, her marriage to a man whose life was real only when it was mythic, and her lust - cause or consequence? for destruction" (Burrows, 1966, p.159). Burrows points out that as Theodora gets to know Lieselotte better she sees the Goodmans' married life in a new light. Theodora puts to Lieselotte the question of how many of us "lead more than one of our several lives", the answer being the key to happiness. Lieselotte's answer betrays her Julia Goodman-like desire for dominance.

Lieselotte, the projected image of Theodora, is harshly honest in her approach to life and is basically cruel in her attitude to men. Wetherby tells Lieselotte, while they speak of love and pity: "Do you know, Lieselotte, you have never stopped being a

little girl, except that you have learnt to look at objects through a glass eye and then to describe their antics?" (p.206).

"When, for instance, Lieselotte gives an account of her life with Rudi, she is re-presenting both Theodora's relationship with Huntly and a romanticized version of Theodora's cultural life with her father at Meroë. The Huntly relationship (especially as we have seen in connection with Moraïtis) is clear in Lieselotte's description of people coming 'to the castle to hear the music that Rudi ordered as his duty towards Kunst ... We caught the sickness of the violins ... Finally Rudi sent me away ... Because I am decadent?'" (Bestons, 1975, p.7).

Rudi in jackboots points to Huntly on the one hand, the farmer figure at the agricultural shows where he is treated with respect, and on the other to her father, the landowner whose shame she has to bear and who built up a door barrier between himself and his daughter: "Or else you waited for Father to come out from behind his door. It was a solemn and emotional event. Your father is not to be disturbed, said Mother, which gave to his door a certain degree of awfulness" (p.23). It seems more likely that the idea of dismissal arises from Theodora's being dismissed by her father than by Huntly Clarkson. The myth mentioned by Lieselotte indicates George Goodman's "perpetual odyssey ... on which the purple water swelled beneath the keel, rising and falling like the wind in pines and the blue shore of Ithaca" (p.69). The "smell of rot" Lieselotte speaks of is the decayed state of Meroë.

It is apparent that Theodora's interpretation of her piano playing is that it was a creative act and not the mere reproduction of an original. Lieselotte tells Theodora that when the people

looked at her paintings they "began to suspect my sanity and health" (p.174). This statement also reveals Theodora's intense awareness of her mother's attitude to her music and her nature. It shows that Theodora on the one hand has been aware of public opinion that she is mad and on the other that she herself is aware of her mental state.

The room into which Lieselotte takes Theodora does not reflect the past, as does Theodora's own room at the hotel, but points ahead to Theodora's stay at Kilvert's house. As in Lieselotte's room there are large windows in Kilvert's house on the top storey. Theodora's process of disintegration is reflected in Lieselotte's destruction of the paintings. Lieselotte who has the passion to destroy; acts the role of Julia Goodman who destroys her husband's dream world. The destruction of ourselves which Lieselotte pleads for as a precursor to rebirth has its foundation in Theodora's desire to destroy the core of evil inside herself.

The Bestons say that Theodora retreats from Lieselotte's assertion that everything must be destroyed (p.174) "because she knew that her crisis was not yet", the crisis comes with the conflagration which is also pure fantasy (Bestons, 1975, p.12).

The newspaper items Wetherby tells Theodora about concern murder, theft by Hitler and other disasters. Without any argument or preamble Theodora, because she knows his thoughts, says that the personal disasters one experiences are at times related to the universal. She is reaching into the future, aiming at the seduction of Katina by Wetherby. Her assumptions for the future are based on her imagined experiences, which in turn again are based on the Pearl Brawne-Tom Wilcocks affair.

Theodora and Wetherby find themselves in zinc surroundings, which colour intrudes its intimations of death. The knife Theodora thought of using to kill her mother lay on the zinc, the morning of Julia Goodman's death had a zinc colour. Zinc shows no sympathy and is indicative of indifference to the fate of men. Wetherby is unimpassioned by any turmoil in Theodora and calmly accepts his role. Only later is Theodora able to account for Wetherby's attitude. Sokolnikov tells her "you can also create the illusion of other people, but once created, they choose their own realities" (p.246).

Wetherby tells Theodora that because "the times have turned sour" all romantic illusions about love should be avoided and that he is "right in saying of love that the most one can expect is the logical conclusion" (p.242), the spiritual death and drought after guilty sexual passion. In another age he and Theodora, knowing that Theodora and Katina are one, may have fulfilled the role of romantic lovers. Wetherby implies that the seduction is actually between them. "Perhaps in different circumstances I would have lain with my head in your lap, and discussed Tennyson and Morris" (p.242).

Elizabeth Loder finds an answer to Wetherby's desire in a passage from The Season at Sarsaparilla. "So Theodora Goodman will not achieve her insight and peace of mind until the evil aspects of self, as represented by some of the characters in Part Two of The Aunt's Story, have been consumed by fire. In all White's later novels, the suffering endured by the major characters results in this purging of evil; and, with the acceptance of simplicity and humility, the attainment of insight" (1963, p.83).

Aunt Smaragda

Katina has an aunt who lives in Athens. This woman, Smaragda, being unmarried and living alone, suggests Theodora herself. There is also the parallel of an unfortunate love affair with a man who went away. This echoes Elsie Rapallo's elopement. The fact that the aunt lives in Greece hints at Theodora's attraction to this country arising from her father's odyssey and its being Moraītis's fatherland.

Aunt Smaragda speaks the thoughts of Moraītis, viz. "As Greeks are born to die, then they can die best on the road to Constantinople" (p.184). This is her "Great Idea" and includes an odyssey, almost a pilgrimage (p.184). Theodora's fantasy confuses Ludmilla with Aunt Smaragda, both being familiar with the Saints.

Ludmilla and Varvara

The Bestons point out that Varvara and Ludmilla are both "projections of Theodora, Varvara representing the girl she would have liked to be with her father, Ludmilla more the girl she was" (1975, p.7). The latter statement is borne out by Sokolnikov's words: "But Ludmilla, my sister, is my reason. She is a good soul, even though her face is yellow and her skirt trails in the mud when there is a thaw" (p.176). Varvara, the swan who swims against the waltz, reflects the woman who may have been an ugly duckling but who became a beauty - the beauty Theodora wanted for herself.

The life Varvara describes to Theodora (p.180) "is l̄ā telescoped summary of what is really Theodora's life at Meroë after boarding-

school and her life in Sydney" (Bestons, 1975, p.8). Varvara journeys to Storoya Russa to visit Anna Stepanovna where she spends a dull time over tea-cups and photographs. The way of life and the behaviour of Anna Stepanovna mirror that of Julia Goodman, with Varvara as the ideal daughter. This cultural and spiritual sterility is also the fate of Violet Adams: "I am going home... Mother considers I have had enough of school. I shall help with the house-keeping and do the flowers" (p.61).

Dr Beston and his wife write that "Varvara is a younger and romanticized Theodora, 'pretty and talented' (p.179)" (1975, p.9). There are two men, apart from Sokolnikov, in her life. Federman, who mirrors Huntly Clarkson, is a Jew, and a merchant, and is reliable but undistinguished. Ivanov, (Frank Parrott) has estates in the Crimea and is connected with a minister. They represent what Theodora's parents (Anna Stepanovna and Sokolnikov) wanted of her and "testify to the conflict born in her of trying to please two very different parents at strife with one another" (Bestons, 1975, p.10). Varvara's attitude to the men in her life reveals Theodora's superiority. The fact that Varvara has three men in her life can only be explained by Theodora's indecision about Frank and Huntly and her love for her father.

Katina Pavlou

Katina Pavlou, the first to enter the garden, has, like Theodora, been discarded by her parents and she spends much of her time wandering from hotel to hotel in the care of a nurse. Young as she is, she wants a home and security - not to be in continual transit. "And Theodora Goodman had become a mirror, held to the girl's experience. Their eyes were interchangeable, like two

distant, unrelated lives mingling for a moment in sleep" (p.148). Most critics believe that Katina Pavlou mirrors Theodora Goodman as a young girl. Marjorie Barnard says that Katina is the young girl Theodora might have been (1956, p.164).

Katina represents not only Theodora. When we first meet Katina she represents Theodora at boarding-school and later Lou and Violet Adams. Katina writes a poem in purple ink, the same colour Violet used. Even Lou uses a purple ink to tell Theodora of her friendship with a nun, Sister Mary Perpetua (Bestons, 1975, p.7). The nun mentioned by Lou is suggestive of the character and behaviour of Theodora when she still played the part of an Aunt.

Burrows calls the part Theodora plays in the earthquake a fugue. (See his explanation of this term on page 169 of this study.) In contrast to the Bestons, Burrows believes that life at the Hotel du Midi is reality which moves to fugue and back to reality (1966, p.157). The first fugue, the earthquake in which Theodora plays a part, is already foreshadowed in Part One. Burrows mentions the "black island that shook" and equates it with the black hills of Meroë. He points out the significance of the role Theodora plays, viz. the humble governess and the way in which she comforts the young girl. He contrasts her behaviour to that of Grigg, Katina's nurse. Theodora's behaviour is an attempt to atone for Grigg's treatment of Katina Pavlou. Theodora does not, however, "absolve her of original failure: austere as ever, she regards her fugue as a spurious comforter, an indulgence more contemptible than her mother's aspirin tablets" (Burrows, 1966, p.158).

When Katina sees the nautilus carried by Mrs Rapallo she is

immediately attracted to it. "The girl took in her hands the frail shell. She listened to its sound. She listened to the thick throated pines fill the room, their blue-green water, rising and falling. The music of the nautilus was in her face, Theodora saw, behind the thin membrane that just separates experience from intuition" (p.162).

Theodora's childhood interviews with her father are recalled when Katina comes into the jardin carrying the white kitten and Sokolnikov calls her. Theodora understands Katina's pent-up emotions because they were once her own. Katina's room is her secret place where she "attempts to invoke life" (p.181), or like Lieselotte, she has windows looking out onto life, full of questions, but a world which does not exist except in her imagination. Katina becomes Sokolnikov's lost love, his Varvara. Again we have the implication of an Oedipal love between father and daughter.

Katina echoes Theodora's youthful romantic dreams when she says: "I would like to marry a scientist, and sail with him up the Congo and do something historical" (p.184). She reveals her ignorance and her distress by obviously confusing a scientist with either a missionary or an explorer. Katina's mother's practical answer echoes the attitude of Julia Goodman who allowed nobody except herself any kind of escapist dream: "But Mamma says I shall make a successful match" (p.184).

It is a young and very lonely Katina who pleads with Theodora not to leave her. In much the same way Theodora pleaded with her father not to die and leave her alone. This act of "desertion" also took place in Theodora's childhood when the Goodmans, on one of their European tours, left the children at Meroë which

was then no longer home because of its many closed rooms and the sheeted furniture. In this way the youthful Katina, like Theodora before her, becomes aware of the "detached eye" and knows that grown-ups are not to be trusted and "that people are generally forced to do the opposite of what they say" (p.186). Katina resolves that in their absence she will either write letters - the "descriptive letters never did describe. And the writing tables of women, the useless women, must be littered with these lies. The polite, kind letters written in the code of friendship" (p.91) - or go and darn her stockings as Theodora and Fanny did when Fanny was eighteen.

Katina Pavlou cannot confide in Theodora as to what disturbs her - just as Theodora was not able to talk about her passion for Frank Parrott and was not able to communicate with her father. "Dear Miss Goodman, I wish I could tell. I wish that I knew ... But it is nothing. Nothing. Nothing at all" (p.230).

It is at the picnic Theodora asks for that Wetherby makes his advances to Katina (just as Theodora had hoped Frank Parrott would do when he invited her to a picnic). When he takes Katina's hand in his to tell her the story of her life, the reader is carried back to the meeting between Frank and Theodora, just before she finally loses him to Fanny. "If she had touched him, touched his hands, the bones of her fingers would have wrestled with the bones in the palm of his hand" (p.85). It is clear that Theodora, because of her obsession with hands, believes that they tell the life-story of the owner.

At the picnic Katina's hands have purple stains on them and these together with their dampness betray her passion. (See page 40

of this study.) Wetherby's behaviour and reaction to her passion will decide Katina's future. Theodora knows this as she imagines "Katina Pavlou's face in Wetherby's hands" (p.237).

As Theodora stage-manages her life-story with Katina and Wetherby as the actors, she is herself sub-divided. On the one hand, as Theodora Goodman she supplies the script and on the other as Lieselotte, she delivers ironic comment on the affair between the two young people.

Katina's infatuation blooms in response to Wetherby's flattery and to her the world reveals new growth and dimension. She is blind to the reality of illusion and the illusion of reality. Her infatuated behaviour which encompasses the world with what she believes is love is part of the "ridiculousness of this game which is called life" (p.217). As outsider and puppet master Theodora knows what is right and what is necessary. "And Theodora Goodman watching the charade move with all the hopes and hesitations of the human mechanism, knew that because she loved and pitied, the humiliation and the pain were also necessarily hers" (p.236).

Katina Pavlou becomes the focal point of the contention between Wetherby and Theodora who has become suddenly very masculine. "Now she could not control her dark moustache. It was a fierce and hateful thing" (p.242). The events which have been set in motion have gone beyond Theodora's control and her anger is the anger she feels towards all men because of the sexuality in herself. "You can also create the illusion of other people, but once created, they choose their own realities" (p.246).

The tower to which Katina and Wetherby go is a phallic symbol.

Theodora has never been near it, and has always suspected it, instinctively regarding it as a symbol. She recoils when she imagines the tower's atmosphere - "the dark smell of damp stone and possibly a dead bird and the maggots in its eyes" (p.243). The darkness points directly to evil and death and the dead bird to her own death - physically and spiritually - as suggested by the death of the red hawk and the dead crow in the church at Spofforths' which she rejected with her heel. The maggots in its eyes not only destroy, but are symbolic of her fear that after such an event as that which takes place, the victim's outlook on life can never be anything else but cancerous. The horror is increased by Wetherby's squamous hands, like the claws of some predator. Katina is the victim of herself, her desire to know and her circumstances.

At the picnic Theodora planned what was to happen between Katina Pavlou and Wetherby. That is why Wetherby knows that she is going to be angry with him (p.236), and that everything is again part of Theodora's fantasy is revealed by Wetherby who says to her: "All right. It was no choice of mine" (p.243).

Once again a sexual union is associated with music and is also equated with the murder of a virtuous young soul (p.244). The music Katina plays before her seduction is at first hesitant (indicating her indecision) and then it "flowed into a surer music, whiter and lighter" (p.244). Like the milk which is also associated with passion, "the music doubled on its underwater self, with the glistening surety of snow water, a bluish white" (p.244). However warm and attractive Katina finds the music, it freezes Theodora.

Theodora's thoughts of the tower are pervaded by the mist and the "intolerable, pervasive smell of crushed nettles" (p.247). After the seduction of Pearl Brawne Theodora became aware of "a great spreading shadow which grew and grew" (p.39). This shadow has been replaced by the mist. The smell of the crushed nettles which impressed her during the Pearl Brawne - Tom Wilcocks affair has stayed with her, firmly rooted in her subconscious mind. It is worth noting that she finds the smell of the nettles "intolerable", but that in spite of this resistance she wants "to know" and this is the last struggle between her body and her mind.

The reasons for Theodora's hurried walk to the tower are twofold. She first hopes to experience, through Katina Pavlou, sexual fulfilment, and secondly, should this fail, to "be confronted with my own inadequacy" (p.248).

Sokolnikov, now independent of Theodora's will, understands her behaviour when she sets out after Katina Pavlou and Wetherby. Katina's hurry to be with Wetherby is equalled by Theodora's hurry to meet Katina, so flustered that she does not put on her hat, symbol of her conformity to the norms of society, but also a revelation of her having thrown overboard all restraints in a final endeavour to find out about the sex act. Sokolnikov asks her, "why put on your hat if your haste is so indecent?" (p.246). Hatless, she is unprotected from prying eyes and her ugliness and singularity are also revealed. The first thing Katina notices when Theodora meets her is that she is without her hat.

After such an intense personal experience as Katina lived through the return to apparent normality "is always a long and intolerable

stretch of road, but it is not interminable" (p.249).

Katina asks Theodora if she has ever been inside the tower - thus has she ever had sexual experience? Theodora says she has not and excuses her inadequacy by saying that there is very little to see because "it is not necessary to see things if you know" (p.114). And yet they both know that "for the pure abstract pleasure of knowing there was a price paid" (p.114). The conclusion they reach is that "it is better finally to know" (p.249). Satisfied with the fact that she now has the knowledge she wanted, warmth comes back into Katina's hand. The price she has paid is that the softness has gone and the bones have appeared, bones indicating reality, stripped of all illusion.

Katina's insistence "that despite pain and unpleasantness it is finally better to know echoes Theodora's youthful determination to know all the implications of experience, including sexual experience" (Burrows, 1966, p.170). The fulfilment Katina has experienced is revealed in her golden eyelids and her increasing gaiety. But, as she has become independent of Theodora's will, Theodora is still unfulfilled.

The Fire

Writing about the fire the Bestons (1972, p.40) say that "as she unleashes the fire within her, she identifies her destructiveness with her mother's, and dons the garnet ring: 'All the violence of fire was contained in the hotel. It tossed, whether hatefully or joyfully, it tossed restraint to smoke. Theodora ran, breathing the joy or hatred of fire' (p.256)". The ugly little garnet ring that Theodora is so anxious to preserve and fit on her finger,

which had belonged to her mother, shows that "Theodora has at last come to terms with her mother" (Burrows, 1966, p.171). It may have the added meaning that she is not yet prepared to shed completely the old familiar way of life which the ring represents. Her new freedom (from her core of evil) fills her with anxiety because it is strange and does not have the foundation of normality. The complete chrysalis-like emergence from the cocoon of her old self is only completed when she tears up her train tickets, showing that she no longer needs to travel to achieve her goal, i.e. fulfilment and self-realization.

Dr Beston and his wife (1972, p.38) believe that Theodora senses a parallel between the fire inside herself and her mother's garment ring, "seeing her destructiveness as similar to her mother's". They also supply, I believe, the most acceptable reason for Theodora's fantasy causing the imaginary fire. They maintain that the sexual frustration Theodora feels explodes: "in an angry eruption, she consumes the Hotel with her fire and disposes of 'the figments of Mrs Rapallo and Katina Pavlou and Sokolnikov'" (1972, p.36).

The fire is also Mrs Rapallo's last moment of glory. Because Theodora persuaded Mrs Rapallo not to take her pills [to which Mrs Goodman had also been enslaved] she wakes up during the fire. Her ennui dissuades her from attempting rescue. Instead she has a "splendid death, her glory apparent to all eyes" (Burrows, 1966, p.170).

The jardin survives the fire, but it has served its purpose and Theodora has done with it. John Woodburn (1948, p.28) describes Theodora's attitude and state of mind during the fire. He says

that as "the little hotel burns before Theodora's accepting eyes, she has already begun to relinquish reality and quietly begins the long, homeward journey, back to her lost Meroë".

Elizabeth Loder (1963, p.83) connects Theodora's quest with the fire. She describes the quest as a desire for "insight and peace", which she will not attain "until the evil aspects of the self, as represented by some of the characters in Part Two of The Aunt's Story have been consumed by fire." Elizabeth Loder explains that each of the men and women created by Theodora's fantasy makes up a part of the core of evil inside her. She believes that the evil has to be purged before humility, insight and acceptance of evil can be achieved. In much the same vein as Elizabeth Loder, Thelma Herring (1965, p.13) says that in the fire which destroys the Hotel du Midi, the illusion of the characters is ended, "the acquisitive Demoiselles Bloch lose their possessions and those subject to consuming passions their lives".

Burrows (1966, p.171), writing about the destruction of the "monster Self" in the fire, says that Theodora learns that to do this she has to cut herself off from many memories just as she would have done had she murdered her mother.

Marjorie Barnard (1959, p.54) believes that Theodora remains unchanged by the fire. The only relevant result is that "her destiny has now become clear." Barnard adds that "she had been offered the world and had turned away from it towards her own negation".

The Bestons (1972, p.39) say that the fire follows immediately after Theodora has heard Wetherby and Lieselotte talking, and mainly Wetherby accusing Lieselotte of wanting to regain her lost

innocence. The fire then follows after Theodora has given up all hope of sex.

Katina Pavlou and Theodora want to go home. The Bestons (1972, p.33) believe Theodora wants "to recover the lost reality of childhood." They write about her longing for home and say "the motif of returning home had begun and ended her fantasies in the jardin exotique. In both cases it is given by mouth of Katina Pavlou who on these occasions is a representative of Theodora about to leave boarding school. Katina speaks the first words in the garden: 'I am tired of all this' [p.147]. Katina concludes her final colloquy with Theodora announcing 'I shall go away ... I shall go to my own country. Now I know'" [p.260].

The Bloch Sisters

As Burrows points out, "the sisters Bloch have little to offer anyone" (1966, p.158). They represent a world in which possessions are temporary and of no real value. They reveal the concern of some with temporal matters because "without possessions one ceases to exist" (p.154).

The Bloch sisters regard Theodora as an outsider, even an enigma, because she cannot say what she is, a Fascist or a Communist. Theodora's ignorance of what she is goes much deeper than this. Her loss of self lies at the root of her ignorance of her identity.

"The function of the misses Bloch is difficult to interpret. Perhaps in their continual losing of things (a stylo, a toothbrush, a doily, finally all their possessions) they are meant

to serve as a kind of chorus, warning of the increasing loss of control, vague threats to come. But it is just as likely that they have only a tenuous relevance to the other characters, like the scavenger women in The Ham Funeral, and provide a kind of comic relief" (Bestons, 1975, p.13, note).

Berthe Bloch's surprising and rather unexpected revelation (the chorus?) that "walls are no longer walls ... Walls are at most curtains. The least wind and they will blow and blow" (p.201) prepares the way for Theodora's experiencing the passion of Weth=erby and Lieselotte and also hints that Theodora is becoming less and less bound to time and place. The lack of solidity hints at Theodora's soon being able to let her mind escape from the prison and desires of her flesh. "In the peace that Holstius spread throughout her body and the speckled shade of surrounding trees, there was no end to the lives of Theodora Goodman. These met and parted, met and parted, movingly" (p.295).

CHAPTER EIGHT

FULFILMENT

Marjorie Barnard (1956, p.165) says that when Theodora killed the little red hawk it gave her pain and in the same state she now tears up her transport tickets and soon after changes her name. In a later article (1959, p.54) Barnard writes: "Slowly, quietly she divests herself of everything, of name, her identity, her aunthood ... Holstius comes to her." This rejection at the same time destroys "the monster Self".

Theodora's abstracted mental state after having discarded her belongings makes her unaware of the red dog's attack. The dog's red eye is also that of the red hawk which is Theodora herself. The dog's penitence indicates that Theodora has subjected all passions, thus also the core of evil in her. The dog's puzzled friendliness resembles the attitude of Frank Parrott and Huntly Clarkson, who also represent two of Theodora's temptations, viz. sensuality and the ease, forgetfulness and selfishness of married life.

Most of White's critics pay close attention to Theodora's arrival at Kilvert's house. Barry Argyle (1967, p.343) imagines that Kilvert's house is the replica of Sokolnikov's family house and perhaps even her own at Meroë. I believe that this latter statement is closer to the mark as Sokolnikov is the image of her own father but with a Russian name. Both the Bestons (1972, p.34) and Wilkes and Reid (1970, p.112) believe that Theodora's arrival at the deserted house is her final homecoming. The landscape around Kilvert's house has points of similarity to the terrain of Le Strange's

shack. "The landscapes are similar - black hills, dark pines, and dead yellow grass - and Theodora transforms the similarity to identity. As she looks out at 'the black sonorous islands' around Kilvert's house she is again among the black volcanic hills of Meroë" (Bestons, 1972, p.34).

The world Theodora has rejected finally disintegrates. "Seen from the solitude of the house the process of disintegration that was taking place at the foot of the mountains should have been frightening and tragic, but it was not" (p.286).

"Disintegration and solidity, appearance and reality, madness and sanity are constantly re-shaping themselves so that, as Holstius tells Theodora 'there is sometimes little to choose between the reality of illusion and the illusion of reality' (p.289)" (Morley, 1972, p.66).

Marjorie Barnard (1956, p.163) describes Holstius as a "consummation of a dream in insanity". Holstius is the key to Theodora's achieving a state of fulfilment. Both the Bestons (1972, p.34) and Marjorie Barnard (1956, p.165) state that Holstius is a figure made up of her father, the Man who was Given his Dinner, and, Barnard adds, Moraītis, "the musician who had opened but not filled her heart". Barnard (1959, p.54) believes that Holstius may be "an epitome of the ordinary life she never lived". The idea that Holstius is a composite figure and one built by Theodora is borne out by their pre-knowledge of each other.

In his evaluation of Holstius, Burrows writes in much the same vein as the other critics. He writes that Holstius "bears marks enough of father figures in general and of George Goodman and

Alyosha Sergei in particular to indicate that, unlike the actors in Theodora's fugues, he is entirely an emanation of her psyche. At bottom Theodora is Holstius herself drawing on her experience of fatherly preceptors in order to act as a preceptor herself" (1966, p.172). Burrows makes it clear that when Holstius "persuades her of something which those others have striven to teach her we are to recognise that she is at last assimilating the earlier lesson" (1966, p.172).

Holstius, apart from being partially the result of her mad memories, also has in his mental make-up the philosophy of the German student who believed that at the moment of death the soul is allowed to choose its fate. Theodora comes to her cross-roads, not at the moment of death, but when she comes to understand that people believe her to be mad (Argyle, 1967, p.25).

Although Holstius may be a figment of her imagination Theodora's conversations with him "sum up the deepest insights of her life" (Hilary Heltay, 1973, p.99). Heltay says that when they (the representatives of the "safe" society) come for Theodora and for a moment believe her to be either gone or dead, she has entered "a state of peace and illumination, in which she perceives the meaning of her life" (1973, p.99).

Her behaviour towards her father and to Holstius later is much the same. In both instances she buries her face in their knees, which attitude indicates her supplication and dependence (Barnard, 1956, p.163).

Elizabeth Loder regards Holstius as a "means by which the mind may be brought to recognise things it knows but does not wish

to accept: 'There was nothing she did not know, only this had to be laid bare painfully. Holstius laid his hands on, and she was a world of love and compassion that she had only vaguely apprehended'" (1963, p.83).

Kirpal Singh writes not about Holstius only, but also about the place in which Theodora meets him. That "the place where Theodora meets Holstius is actually the dream Meroë is borne out by the fact that there Theodora recalls her childhood Meroë, her father, the Man who was Given his Dinner, and all the crucial episodes of her life" (1975, p.90).

Theodora hates the revealing honesty of Holstius's face because it reveals her own inner conflict and her weaknesses. Her conflict lies between the spiritual and the material world. "Why ... am I to be subjected to these tortures? I have reached a stage where they are not bearable" (p.288).

Holstius explains Theodora's conflict to her: "Your sense of permanence is perverted, as it is in most people. We are too inclined to consider the shapes of flesh" (p.295).

Worried about her lack of humility Theodora attempts to achieve a show of normality by scrubbing the floor and adopting a servile attitude. "She approached close, but respectfully, to the wood, so that she might appreciate its ingrained humility and painful knots" (p.290). Barnard calls Theodora's efforts at scrubbing the floor "the pitiful travesty of living the life of a housewife in a derelict house" (1959, p.54).

Theodora's instinctive reaction to Mrs Johnson's invasion of her

euphoria reveals that she has not yet mastered her new-found state of humility, even if "she could not help but love the practical face of Mrs Johnson" (p.291). She no longer cares about being an outsider. She longs for some form of appeasement. Mrs Johnson resents "Theodora's state of mind because it was something she could not understand" (p.291). Because she feels herself at a loss in Theodora's strange world she looks "for some object, from out of the circle of her own life, with which to make an alliance, but all she found was the iron bowl" (p.291).

Rodney Mather (1970, p.48) finds some significance in Mrs Johnson's invitation "to come down to our place". It is also the last temptation to rejoin the world she has rejected. The struggle against Mrs Johnson for Theodora's soul is the last conflict against the powers of society: "The struggle to preserve her own instrument for some final, if also fatal, music that Holstius must play, had been at times difficult and unpleasant, but at least it was preserved" (p.293).

Theodora reaches the end of her odyssey when she feels that "in the peace that Holstius spread throughout her body and the speckled shade of the surrounding trees, there was no end to the lives of Theodora Goodman" (p.295).

Dr Beston (1971, p.175) writes in conclusion: "Theodora is portrayed at the end of The Aunt's Story as a black rose in so far as her external life is concerned, but it is transformed into a doubtful rose that glitters when she opts for a life lived within her imagination."

Brissenden says that the only way Theodora "can live with the

knowledge of herself attained through loneliness and suffering is by retreating into the world of madness, having learned, in the words of Lex Banning that the mad escape the anguish of the sane" (1959, p.418).

After having examined all the facets of Theodora's fantasy it becomes clear that the figure of Holstius is the peak of her achievement. He has taught her that the way to peace and fulfillment is to accept things as they are. "You cannot reconcile joy and sorrow ... Or flesh and marble, or illusion and reality, or life and death. For this reason, Theodora Goodman, you must accept" (p.289).

The reader would do well to bear in mind the epigraph to Part Three when Theodora's mind is judged. Theodora's mind has become most real because she has escaped from her crippling weaknesses (her microcosm), which have dominated her thoughts, almost extinguishing the spark of awareness of some other, and better world. The Johnsons, as representatives of a society which cannot understand either Theodora or her odyssey, regard her as mad and, ironically, in need of help. There is also irony in Rafferty's diagnosing Theodora's state as "lucidity" (p.297). Theodora is prepared to endure an asylum as indicated by the hat and its black rose which she puts on her head and by her touching the "cruel spikes" (p.297) of a thistle in anticipation of her ordeal.

"So that, in the end, there was no end." The Tree of Man.

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