

INTRODUCTION

When Cain slew Abel he was branded so that his sin and his criminality were made known by his disfigurement. To this day physical abnormality has continued to have meaning - 'that meaning being invariably a moralistic one'.¹ The kin of Cain live in the land of the monsters - trolls, elves and giants - or so we are told in the Anglo-Saxon epic *Beowulf*:² and in this land the evil Grendel lives. Chaucer continues the equation of deformity as a conspicuous trait of evilness in his portrayal of the Summoner of whom 'children were aferd'. The uncomely Summoner ('saucefleem he was')³ is as 'lecherous as a sparwe'. Shakespeare's Richard III is a hump-back whose actual deformity is 'inextricably tied to his malevolent lust';⁴ and that 'the proposition that Richard is evil because he was born ugly can be logically reversed as well: he was born ugly because he is evil'⁵ is a closed-ended conclusion which leaves the person who is deformed damned either way. In Fyodor Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* (1880) old Fyodor Karamazov is hook-nosed, double-chinned, has a pendant Adam's apple, and an animalistic low, receding forehead. Needless to say he is also lecherous, blasphemous, and avaricious.

Deformity⁶ as retribution, as an outer manifestation of inner deviance,

¹ Shari Thurer, 'Disability and Monstrosity: A Look at Literary Distortions of Handicapping Conditions', *Rehabilitation Literature*, 41 (Jan-Feb 1980), 12.

² 'Beowulf', in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, ed. Abrams, Meyer Howard, 3rd ed. (1962; rpt. New York: W. W. Norton, 1975), pp. 19-79.

³ The Summoner appears to be suffering from alopecia. See Walter Clyde Curry, *Chaucer and the Mediaeval Sciences* (Oxford University Press, 1926; rpt. New York: Barnes & Noble, 1960), p. 38.

⁴ Thurer, p. 13.

⁵ Hardin Craig and David Bevington, ed., *The Complete Works of Shakespeare* (1951; rpt. Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foresman & Co, 1973), p. 300.

also implies death. Direct examples include Voivode in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897): Dracula is the Un-Dead, the epitome of eternal death; the West African *vekongi*, the 'zombie spirits' popularised in movies, are the living dead;⁷ and the terror evoked by Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) arises not from the creature's evilness (since he is shown to be more human than his creator) but from his representation as death-in-life. Deformity and death are associated in less extreme, more experiential examples of physical deviation: as Bakan notes in *Disease, Pain and Sacrifice* (1968) 'the loss of a limb constitutes the literal death of at least a part which was once integral to the ego'.⁸ Examples in literature include Captain Ahab in Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* (1851); Captain Hook in J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan* (performed 1904; published 1911); and Long John Silver in R. L. Stevenson's *Treasure Island* (1883). These characters have all experienced the death of a part. In addition, when observers note the absence of limbs they perceive pain, and 'pain is a harbinger of death' (Bakan, p. 78). The absence of limbs is made significant with the wearing of false parts - they invite distrust of the un-whole-some body. Captain Ahab cannot trust his own, soon-to-be-replaced prosthesis, for 'though it seemed entire, and to all appearances lusty, yet Ahab did not deem it entirely trustworthy' since it has already 'all but pierced his groin'.⁹

These characters, Ahab, Hook, Silver, are all familiar to us; and apart

⁶ The word 'deformed' is here used interchangeably with 'disabled', 'handicapped', and 'impaired', unless a particular usage is preferred by a cited authority: e.g. Kriegal uses 'cripple'; Fiedler 'freak'. This author is aware of the differences between the terms, as defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Handicapped Persons Australia, 1981*, Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 1982.

⁷ Edwin Ardener, 'Witchcraft, Economics, and the Continuity of Belief', in *Witchcraft Confessions and Accusations*, ed. Mary Douglas (London: Tavistock Publications, 1970), p. 148.

⁸ David Bakan, *Disease, Pain and Sacrifice: Toward a Psychology of Suffering* (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1968), p. 78.

⁹ Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick*, ed. Harrison Hayford and Hershel Parker (1851; rpt. New York: W. W. Norton, 1967), p. 385.

from Frankenstein's biological-mechanical monster, and the spectre Dracula, the abnormalities listed exist within the framework of human experience; characters may *act* like 'monsters' but monstrosity is reserved for those beings whose abnormality, like that of Frankenstein's creature and Dracula, is so outside the public experience that they have frequently been held up to the public gaze through the medium of the circus.

The nineteenth-century circus was a place where boundaries between the human and the animal world were intentionally blurred. This tradition exists in some circuses today, as animals are taught to act like humans: seals applaud; dogs ride bicycles; horses and elephants walk upright; and chimpanzees attend tea-parties. In *Haxby's Circus* (1930), Phil the piebald pony is 'the octo-miraculous wonder of the world . . . a horse almost human'.¹⁰ The blurring of human-animal distinctions is capitalised on by the New Zealand performance team 'Humanimals!' who performed in Hobart in 1983: Richard von Sturmer, a dwarf, and Charlotte Wrightson are the 'Humanimals' who perform 'parables on the human condition'.¹¹ Conversely human beings, some actually deformed some fake, have been billed as animals: Grace McDaniel was billed as The Mule-Faced Woman; there was Lionel the Lion-Faced Man; Jo-Jo the Dog-faced Boy; The Alligator Boy; and John Merrick is better known as The Elephant Man. James Dickey's poem 'The Sheep Child'¹² reveals a subterranean primordial fear that gave rise to the myth that the person who was deformed was a hybridised result of human-animal copulation.¹³

¹⁰ Katharine Susannah Prichard, *Haxby's Circus* (London, 1930; rpt. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1973), p. 29. All subsequent references are to this edition.

¹¹ Jonathan Holmes, 'The Anzart-in-Hobart Art Encounter, Hobart, May 1983: An Introduction', supplement to *Island Magazine*, 16 (Spring 1983), p. 5.

¹² James Dickey, *Poems: 1957-1967* (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1968), pp. 252-253.

¹³ Leslie Fiedler, *Freaks: Myths and Images of the Secret Self* (New York: Simon and

This association of deformity with animalism continues in literature, as in Louis Nowra's *The Misery of Beauty* (1976)¹⁴ a parodic novel self-consciously effusive with the myths of deformity, in which the dwarfish central character is named Frogman. The human-animal analogy linking the dwarf¹⁵ with the frog recurs in the description of Billy Kwan in C. J. Koch's *The Year of Living Dangerously* (1978)¹⁶; and the dwarf is known as 'Hop-Frog' in the Edgar Allan Poe story of the same name.¹⁷ In everyday speech common metaphors which combine disability with fault and animal characteristics include 'blind as a bat'; 'stubborn as a mule'; 'sly as a fox'; and 'slow as a turtle'.¹⁸

Some of these examples are extreme; some are questionably finicky; but when Livneh asks rhetorically: 'What is the common element shared by all of these unfortunate, real, and fictional characters', his answer is that 'clearly, it must be their subordination into an infrahuman status' (p. 281). As the Infanta says of the Dwarf who dies at the sight of himself in a mirror: 'he is almost as good as the puppets, only, of course, not quite so natural'.¹⁹ From this brief overview we have seen how deformity has lent itself as a ready metaphor for sin and retribution (Thurer, p. 12); as 'phenomenologically associated with death' (Livneh, p. 281); and as representative of the uncivilised, whose existence is closer to the animal

Schuster, 1978), p. 231.

¹⁴ Louis Nowra, *The Misery of Beauty* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1976). All subsequent references are to this edition.

¹⁵ This study acknowledges the existence of the term 'little people' which eliminates the fairytale connotations of 'dwarf'. For the purposes of this study the terms used are those employed in the novel being discussed.

¹⁶ C. J. Koch, *The Year of Living Dangerously* (1978; rpt. Melbourne: Thomas Nelson, 1979). All subsequent references are to this edition.

¹⁷ Edgar Allan Poe, 'Hop-Frog', in *The Complete Tales and Poems: Edgar Allan Poe* (1938; rpt. New York: Vintage Books, 1975), pp. 502-509.

¹⁸ Hanoch Livneh, 'Disability and Monstrosity: Further Comments', *Rehabilitation Literature*, 41 (Nov-Dec 1980), 282.

¹⁹ Oscar Wilde, 'The Birthday of the Infanta', in *Complete Works of Oscar Wilde*, gen. introd., Vyvyan Holland, Vol. 1 (1948; rpt. London: Heron Books, 1966), pp. 234-247.

world. In this context the deformed provoke primordial fears and serve as an uncomfortable reminder of our lower origins. The deformed have provided a Darwinian representation of 'ontogeny recapitulating phylogeny': this sub-text of deformity became an open-text spiel in a travelling show during the 1880s when the misshapen Indo-chinese female Krao was billed as 'Darwin's missing link' (Fiedler, p. 164). The existence of the deformed-being challenges the tenuous order of the present, since it simultaneously evokes images of what lies in a not-so-distant past (the primordial origins) and of what is to come in a not-so-distant future (death).

The iconography of deformity is immense. It would be incorrect to conclude that in our vast literary and filmic inheritance the deformed-being is a metaphor for only the above; in *Ragged Owlet* (1979)²⁰ an epileptic female is told:

'... You are different now, and always will be different.' He said it gently, as to an equal, and his eyes crinkled up in a sad smile. Nevertheless his words had a suggestion of doom about them which baffled me. (p. 8)

What has been concluded by fiction writers and Rehabilitation Counsellors alike is that the physically deformed convey the message of 'difference' (Livneh, p. 281). It is a word that lends itself to the ambiguities implicit in the word 'special', as in being 'special', or going to a 'special school'; it is used in Frederick Drimmer's *Very Special People* (1973)²¹ and reaches hyperbolic proportions when Drimmer divides his chapters into 'very special people' and 'very, very special people'. But whatever the given connotations, 'the point is that physical deformity in literature and art is almost never unencumbered by the trappings of metaphor. There are almost no average or

²⁰ Sue Cooke, *Ragged Owlet* (London: Arrow Books, 1979). All subsequent references are to this edition.

²¹ Frederick Drimmer, *Very Special People* (1973; rpt. New York: Bantam, 1976).

ordinary and "by the way" physically aberrant characters' (Thurer, p. 12). Although the major character, an unnamed dwarf, in Pär Lagerkvist's *The Dwarf* (1945), states: 'I am a dwarf and nothing but a dwarf' he is revealed as a metaphor for the barely repressed dark side of the self.²²

Yet none would argue that Quasimodo in Victor Hugo's *Notre Dame de Paris* (1831) is in fact less monstrous than the archdeacon, Claude Frollo; though Quasimodo's extreme physical distortion is still an exteriorisation of Frollo's psychological evil and sexual malevolence. Again, in Edmond Rostand's play *Cyrano de Bergerac* (1897) Cyrano is not evil. Nevertheless, these characters' deformities are important as device because of the fictions and *expectations* they bring with them: as Thurer points out, 'there exists a powerful irony in its inversion' since the assumption is that 'physical defectiveness precludes virtue' (p. 13). In her article on literature's treatment of the disabled and deformed Thurer states that her aim:

is not a condemnation of art and literature for insensitivity to the handicapped, but rather to elucidate the use of physical disability as a symbol of monstrosity. My contention is that disability is not a symbol, and that the most honest way of regarding a physical handicap, the most rehabilitative way, is one purified of symbolic associations. (Thurer, p. 13)

The final sentence indicates Thurer's primary allegiance to her field of Rehabilitation Counselling. Within that framework Thurer's contention is an acceptable one, if somewhat idealistic. There are problems in applying these same guidelines within the framework of literature; to begin with, they are reductive. Thurer's article begins by demonstrating that disability is a symbol: Captain Hook's prosthesis is symbolic of his villainy; conversely, the archetypal Snow White is blessed. To wish to dispose of *all* the symbolism that deformity carries with it (Thurer speaks specifically - and

²² Pär Lagerkvist, *The Dwarf*, trans. Alexandra Dick (1945; rpt. New York: Hill and Wang, 1987), p. 5.

symbolically - of 'negative stigma') is, however well-intended, wishful thinking. Such symbolism is a systematised imaginative artistic activity which recognises and interprets the human need to attach conceptual and emotive value to objects; able-bodied characters also bear the burden of signification: they achieve meaning through a variety of means including race, colour, gender, religion, occupation, accent, and action. It would seem that the only way, in Thurer's terms, to purify deformity of symbolic associations in literature, is to exorcise the literature of such characters from the literature; the implausibility of such an action is obvious since it is in itself discriminatory and would condemn the already marginalised deformed into imaginative non-existence.

Where the objectives of this study are in agreement with Thurer's is in wishing to 'elucidate the use of physical disability'; though not solely as 'a symbol of monstrosity', for deformity is more than that. This study makes a critical enquiry into how deformity is used as a device within the text; it undertakes to explore how much the deformed are utilised as a literary 'device': that is, as a contrivance, a method of deception, or as an illuminator of the literary work. It therefore acknowledges that deformity *is* symbolic and that as a consequence there are few 'by the way' deformed characters. As well as providing entry into the text, by elucidating the use of physical disability this study aims to alert the reader to the sub-texts that are in operation when the deformed-being is presented on the page. Such an explicatory process is necessary if, as Thurer suspects, 'the metaphoric use of disability is so entrenched that it is not noticed' (p. 12). If the sub-text of deformity and of *its* fictions becomes familiar to readers in general, and if deformity is then discovered to be a stagnant metaphor, or undeviatingly stigmatic, then that most flawed of all characters (disabled or able-bodied) -

the stereotype - will make itself know by the unoriginality of the artifice. In a sense, it is the *symbol* that will be 'purified'.

One of the writers on the subject that Thurer credits with sensitivity towards disability is Leslie Fiedler.²³ Among his many books is one dealing with real-life 'freaks' (his word) as well as with their portrayal in literature; yet his position on the validity of deformity as a metaphor is partially summarised in the title of his book, *Freaks: Myths and Images of the Secret Self* (1978). Fiedler prefers to use the term 'freak' since it has a traditional use and it also has a contemporary use which recognises and allows 'normals' to become freaks. He defines the experiencing of the Freak this way:

The true Freak . . . stirs both supernatural terror and natural sympathy, since, unlike the fabulous monsters, he is one of us, the human child of human parents, however altered by forces we do not understand into something mythic and mysterious, as no mere cripple ever is. (Fiedler, p. 24)

Two important points emerge: first, through the use of the words 'supernatural' and 'natural' Fiedler has located a disturbing ambiguity in how we perceive the Freak; second, the sensitivity that Thurer credits him with is obviously selective since Fiedler dismisses 'mere' cripples. This selectivity arises from his interest in the abnormal body as a mythological grid, or as an exteriorisation of primordial fears. Fiedler's book covers a range of physical deviancy from beings of unusual size, hermaphrodites, and Siamese Twins, to extreme congenital malformation. The particulars of their physical deformity allow Fiedler to provide interpretation on a literal as well as metaphorical level:

Only the true Freak challenges the conventional boundaries between male and female, sexed and sexless, animal and human, large and small, self and other, and consequently between reality and illusion, experience and fantasy, fact and myth. (Fiedler, p. 24)

²³ The other is Susan Sontag.

Fiedler appears more interested in extreme congenital abnormality, in which the freak is not an authentic self, but an extension of the myths, (secret) wishes, and (secret) fears of the able-bodied. Whereas Thurer challenges the use of deformity as a symbol, Fiedler perpetuates the use of deformity as a metaphor.

One of the points emerging from the Thurer and Fiedler positions outlined above is that there are distinctions to be made between the expectations that particular abnormalities incite. In the literature Thurer cites the disabled-persons ('mere cripples' ?) are Captain Hook, Captain Ahab, and Long John Silver; all are victims of bodily harm *after* birth. None were born maimed; all experienced life in the order of perfection before imperfection, which is also the case with the characters Richard Miller in C. J. Koch's *The Doubleman* (1985)²⁴ and Purdy Smith in Henry Handel Richardson's *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony* (1930) in Australian literature. Within the novels in which these characters appear, deformity is symbolic; and its symbolism is tempered by the source of the disability: in *The Doubleman* Richard Miller's leg is disabled through disease; in *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony* Purdy Smith's leg is disabled through human intervention. As far as it is possible to know, it appears that in Elizabeth Jolley's *The Well* (1986)²⁵ Hester Harper's lameness is a congenital abnormality. In this study congenital abnormality (present at birth whether inherited or not) is referred to as *in utero* manifestation, in order to indicate that deformity occurred 'unseen'.

The distinction has a note of the sinister. These types of deformities are, as Fiedler notes, frequently metaphors for primordial fears. Because they

²⁴ C. J. Koch, *The Doubleman* (1985; rpt. London: Triad Grafton, 1986). All subsequent references are to this edition.

²⁵ Elizabeth Jolley, *The Well* (Ringwood: Penguin, 1986). All subsequent references are to this edition.

occur 'unseen' they invite a cause-effect speculation about unseen forces; the result is that they frequently become an epiphenomenal device in a discourse about the supernatural. Though Fiedler interprets severe congenital malformation as something perceived through a pre-existent mythological grid, what has emerged in this study is that the fictions accompanying *in utero* abnormalities (the hunchback Jonah; the dwarf-hunchback Rhoda) are indeed accompanied by pre-existent mythologies (of Pan and Pythia respectively), which are beyond the folk-myths of deformity. These additional metaphoric burdens are nevertheless integral to the structure and theme of the novels in which they appear.

It is precisely this long-standing association of deformity with the Other that the critic Susan McKernan takes issue with in an article in which she considers the novels of Christopher Koch. Her argument appears to be with Koch's artistic ability rather than with any absolute disagreement about the use of deformity as a general literary device. McKernan states:

The difficulty with Koch's view of good and evil as states of psychic health is that it seems to propose normality as a good. To be physically deformed, to have a 'foreign' face, to be homosexual - to be Other in any way - is to be associated in Koch's novels with evil and corruption.²⁶

By now it should be apparent that the association of deformity with evil is not unprecedented. McKernan is not alone in her attack: the infrequency in literature of deformed characters who are fully-realised characters has drawn criticism from Thurer, Leonard Kriegel, Livneh, and individual contributors to the text *Images of the Disabled, Disabling Images* (1987).²⁷ They are concerned with negative caricature of people, such as Des who is: 'almost a dwarf, with a club foot. He is dark and surly. He doesn't like anyone . . .

²⁶ Susan McKernan, 'C. J. Koch's Two-Faced Vision', *Meanjin*, 44, No. 4 (1985), 438.

²⁷ *Images of the Disabled, Disabling Images*, ed. Alan Gartner and Tom Joe (New York: Praeger, 1987).

and he's going to show them that dwarfs work harder than anyone else. Crack the whip. Snarl!';²⁸ and again in the portrayal of the 'little cripple' photographer: 'his liver-spotted hands curiously knotted; one hideously deformed foot dragged behind him' who *lures* people into his Electric Studio.²⁹

However, when McKernan states elsewhere that 'Koch's use of exotic places, the female face and human deformity set him up for charges of racism, sexism and general inhumanity'³⁰ (p. 439); and that 'Koch's characters must bear physical signs of their spiritual states because he refuses to explore their inner lives' (p. 438) she is at once recognising the negative symbolic and potential metaphoric content of 'deformity'. Two of Koch's novels are discussed in this study; and the finding is contrary to McKernan's. But McKernan is quite possibly one of the first Australian literary critics to recognise 'deformity' as a locus for discrimination, thereby recognising and validating the existence of the abnormal being within and outside the novel. Her argument suggests a position which is that when depicting marginal characters a writer has a responsibility not only to his or her art, but to the external realities of his or her characters. In his article 'The New Heresy Hunters' Koch countered the McKernan article by saying that:

[McKernan's] next charge is that I portray crippled people: Billy Kwan; Richard Miller. This is bad; and I am seen to link physical deformity with "evil and corruption". That this is simply untrue can be proved by a simple check of my texts . . . We have also entered the special world of the heresy hunter, where there are many Forbidden Subjects. (*The Hunchback of Notre Dame* ³¹

²⁸ Amanda Lohrey, 'Free Way' in *Expressway*, ed., Helen Daniel (Ringwood: Penguin, 1989), p. 262.

²⁹ Barbara Hanrahan, *Dove* (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1982), p. 167. All subsequent references are to this edition.

³⁰ Rather than using 'general inhumanity' as an expression of discrimination against the person who is deformed, this study will use the term 'ableism', which means 'oppression of those with physical or mental disabilities by those who consider themselves able-bodied'. See Lisa Tuttle, *Encyclopedia of Feminism* (London: Arrow Books, 1987), p. 9.

should be banned, perhaps).³²

Koch has located a source of discomfort that exists in the world of realities beyond the novel when 'normal' people deal with abnormal people by applying the etiquette of polite society, which is to not notice the difference and very often the existence of the deformed-being: this comes under his label 'Forbidden Subjects'. The McKernan and Koch disagreement occurs inside their general *agreement* that deformity exists in both the material *and* the imaginative world. There are very real problems when a literature portrays disability or deformity as a negative stigma: for the reader it reinforces cultural stereotypes; for the deformed-being, as reader or as the perceived, it can have an obverse effect. Thurer gives this example:

No individual could remain impervious to such an avalanche of prejudice, especially as it is conveyed in such a respected medium as our literature. What can the pockmarked woman feel when she is endlessly portrayed as noxious; or the dwarfed man, who is forever debased? In fact, in my experience, and this is well validated in the literature, patients often attribute their affliction to some supposed misdeed, and frequently feel themselves to be abhorrent, disgusting, sinful, and / or morally unfit. A few, therefore, derive masochistic gratification from their disability and resist efforts for rehabilitation. (Thurer, p. 14)

Life imitates fiction or at least myth; and this is the dilemma, for the artist has a responsibility to art, and to art as a representation of life. This study is based on several assumptions: it recognises that the deformed-being has an existence in the world and in the novel; it recognises that in both the world and the novel the deformed-being has borne a negative stigma. This study also recognises that a literature reflects its culture, as must the characters who exist within that literature. As Harry Heseltine states succinctly: 'No writer invents his metaphors *ex nihilo*; in the long run he finds them somewhere in the range of possibility that his culture makes available to him'.³³ This study

³¹ Koch uses the film title.

³² C. J. Koch, 'The New Heresy Hunters', *Overland*, 102 (April 1986), 45.

asks: can that most marginalised of all characters, the deformed-being, provide any revelations about him or her self, about the novel, the reader of the novel, and the culture within which all exist? The answer is an unequivocal yes.

³³ Harry Heseltine, *The Uncertain Self* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 176.



Arthur Boyd, Dog (Wolf) Devouring Cripple, 1943-1944
Bequest of John and Sunday Reed, 1982
Collection Heide Park and Art Gallery
Photograph, Terence Bogue

Chapter One

Metaphors and Myths of Deformity: A General Survey

A metamorphosis is underway in Australian literary history. Chiefly through re-examination and re-assessment of minority groups a 'new literary history' is emerging. Recent publications, such as *The Penguin New Literary History of Australia* (1988)¹, express the notion of literature as the image of the society which produces it. As such it is an expression of the need to challenge received versions of history through recognition of the roles played by previously submerged minority groups such as blacks, women, and convicts.

The persons who are disabled and deformed are no less a submerged minority. They form a minority group that extends beyond racial and gender boundaries, and warrants no less of a critical appraisal of its role in Australian literature. This submerged minority is also frequently the source of a multiplicity of submerged metaphors and of a combination of culturally specific myths. The burdens of the metaphor may so weigh down the character in fiction that the identity of the character might be said at times to become literally submerged by the device. As we saw in the arguments put forward by Thurer and Livneh their aim is for the evolution of an identity for the deformed individual beyond that which is produced by the icon of deformity. The person who is deformed is forced to wear a *persona* when that person is identified by the particular of the physical deformity: that is, the

¹ *The Penguin New Literary History of Australia*, gen. ed. Laurie Hergenhan (Ringwood, Victoria: Penguin, 1988).

person is named as a dwarf, a hunchback, a cripple, and so on. It is a process in which an adjective - descriptive trope - becomes the noun, or thing. The deformed person is thus subsumed and interpreted not *generally* as man, or woman, but is made known by the particular. When an author includes in a work of fiction a character who is deformed, the flag being waved is a conscious semaphore urging the reader's subconscious into play in the recognition of a meaning-full symbol. It could be said that for the person who is deformed the *propria persona*, or one's own person, is lost to the fixed *persona* as projected by a culture. The *persona* renders as impersonal the abnormal-being and assists the observer who, faced by the threat of the unfamiliar, turns to the subfictions of deformity as a means of turning the unfamiliar into what is thought to be known. This in effect discharges the felt threat. In other words, the persons who are deformed are placed in a position where they are expected to *impersonate* particular cultural projections.

Having to behave in an expected manner in order to provide normals with a familiar base of reference is termed 'emblem fatigue' by the Scottish giant, Angus McAskill (1825-1863) in Susan Swan's fictional historical-biography, *The Biggest Modern Woman of the World* (1983).² It is worth noting here that of all the portrayals of the abnormal human the giant's *persona* is the most ill-fitting. Leslie Fiedler writes:

No matter how like such storybook creatures they appear, they totally lack their legendary ferocity, being in fact the gentlest of Freaks. When not actually feeble-minded, they tend to be melancholy and hypochondriac, and with good reason, since they move through their brief lives crippled by the tug of gravity, which dooms their bodies sooner or later to buckle and break. (p. 106)

The particular physical guise of the deformed being - for instance, as giant, or hunchback, or dwarf - obscures the underlying self. How can the observer

² Susan Swan, *The Biggest Modern Woman of the World* (Toronto, Ontario: Lester & Orpen Denys, 1983), p. 139. All subsequent references are to this edition.

get behind the prejudices of the culturally affixed mask of deformity with its accompanying fictions? The difficulty is succinctly expressed in *Haxby's Circus* when the doctor, Heathcote, is surprised at meeting a 'cultured' dwarf, Billy (Guglielmo) Rocca: 'Amused, he looked down on the dwarf. It seemed absurd to take him seriously. The little man looked so absurd in his dignity. Then ashamed of his amusement, Heathcote saw something of the man behind his mask' (p. 59).

In the *commedia dell'arte* grotesque masks can be donned and doffed at will; they are a guise for the audience, and a dis-guise for the actor. The human who is deformed cannot shed the fixed mask when the show is over; he or she must continue to wear a fiction that subsumes the factual character. How many of us know the identity of *L'Homme au Masque de Fer*, imprisoned at Pignerol, then the Bastille, in 1679? So effectively did the anomaly of a (velvet, not iron) mask cover and re-claim the identity of the wearer, that the identity of the man is 'The Man in the Iron Mask'; he is known for what makes him different. Of course, the Man in the Iron Mask (presumed to be a diplomatic agent, named Matthioli³) assumed the mask specifically to obliterate identity; the persons who are deformed do not assume the mask voluntarily but are nevertheless subjected to the same effect of obliteration. In the movie *Mask* (1985)⁴ which is based on the true story of Rocky Dennis, the boy with the disfigured lionsque face is seen by others as wearing a mask; only his blind girlfriend is capable of 'seeing' beyond the mask.

As the identity of the deformed has been subsumed by the mask projected by cultural expectations, so metaphorically the Australian socio-cultural identity has been subsumed by a colonial mask. Australia, like other

³ 'Masque de Fer, L'Homme au' in *The Oxford Companion to French Literature*, ed. Sir Paul Harvey and J. E. Heseltine (1959; rpt. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), p. 460.

⁴ Peter Bogdanovich, dir., *Mask*, with Cher, and Eric Stoltz, Universal Pictures, 1985.

Commonwealth countries, has had to live with fictions imposed on it by its Northern Hemisphere observers. In *The Biggest Modern Woman of the World* the body of the giant Anna Swan (1846-1888) takes on the significance of the body politic where 'in the world of normals she is transformed into an allegorical being who exceeds both sexual and national boundaries'.⁵ It is significant that the man with whom Anna Swan experiences sexual passion is the Australian, Apollo Ingalls. It is posited that the reason for the Australian's success in this odd post-colonial relationship is because the Australian:

eradicates the differences between freakish otherness and normal behaviour; a character who translates his displaced condition in America and in great Britain into a pool of energy, he seems to be unmarked by the imperial and colonial forces. (p. 110)

The critic's use of 'seems' is rightly cautious; I doubt whether in actuality the Australian experience, as depicted allegorically through Apollo, could be interpreted as 'unmarked by the imperial and colonial forces'. For that matter, Patrick White, marginalised on the edge of two cultures, has stated that his very *Australianness* was his deformity.⁶ Ingalls does move easily between boundaries, and yet, run over by wagon wheels, he dies literally and metaphorically cut in half: a man born in Tasmania, the smallest state in Australia, burdened with its own myths of isolation and horror, Apollo is buried in Texas, the largest state in the U.S.A. - mythologically, if not in fact. Although the Canadian giantess has intercourse with a Canadian giant and an American giant, and rebukes the dwarfish British monarchy, it is her relationship with the short Australian, Apollo Ingalls, which brings her sexual and, however limited, biological fulfilment. Allegorically, it is only the

⁵ Smaro Kamboureli, ' "The Biggest Modern Woman in [sic: of] the World": Canada as the Absent Spouse', *Australian-Canadian Studies*, 6, No. 1 (1988), 107.

⁶ Patrick White, *Flaws in the Glass* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1981), p. 13.

Australian who can cohabit normally with the abnormal.

The sheer joy and madness of a land that is purportedly one of reversal and inversion - is recorded in Richard Brome's play *The Antipodes* (1636). As the Doctor tells the dupe Peregrine: 'I ha' seen one sheep worry a dozen foxes / By moonshine in a morning before day. / They hunt train-scents with oxen, and plow with dogs (I.vi; lines 155-157).⁷ Margaret Scott's title-poem in *The Black Swans* (1988)⁸ translates the experience into emblems of paradox:

In Jonson's day the wits
made comic mirrors called "Antipodes",
mocking the times with virtuous whores, white crows,
ascetic drunks, and black swans, nesting in walking trees.
Even now these birds surprise. Emblems
of paradox . . . (p. 33)

Historically, the association of abnormality and a newly-founded white Australia is suggested by the character Hunter, Governor of the newly-settled colony, in Eleanor Dark's *The Timeless Land* (1941).⁹ Hunter speculates on the future of what he perceives as the anomalism of Australia:

But the middle and immortal head of the Hydra was, he suspected, merely the fact that the mother country herself did not quite know what kind of maturity she desired for this embarrassing and increasingly obstreperous infant which she had almost accidentally produced. (*The Timeless Land*, p. 535)

Australia's mis-conception is further extended to its transported inhabitants or its mis-creants, sprung up, if we are to retain Hunter's analogy, from the uncauterised wound of the Hydra.¹⁰ In the same novel, the character Governor Phillips observes:

⁷ Richard Brome, *The Antipodes*, ed. Ann Haaker (1636; rpt. London: Edward Arnold, 1967), p. 32.

⁸ Margaret Scott, *The Black Swans* (North Ryde: Angus & Robertson, 1988).

⁹ Eleanor Dark, *The Timeless Land* (1941; rpt. Melbourne: Fontana-Collins, 1980). All subsequent references are to this edition.

¹⁰ The mention of the mythological Hydra in this context is chronologically fortuitous: in the first deliberate attempt to create terata, Abraham Trembly produced multiheaded hydras in 1774. See Fiedler, p. 249.

He was speaking to people hardened in an anti-social mould. In their malleable childhood circumstances had shaped them to an ugly pattern; life and the years had set them in it too firmly for any sudden re-moulding - too firmly, in many cases, for any re-moulding at all. (p. 110)

Phillips is expressing a belief that the external body reflects the internal character of the individual, be it morally or spiritually, and the story of Australia's miscreants has been popularised into a convict mythology. As the above extract indicates, it is a mythology which has many parallels with the myth of deformity, since both myths have as their central ideal the notion of deviation from the norm - one socially, the other, physically.¹¹ There is, however, one important distinction between these deviants, despite the fictional Phillips's observations regarding the re-moulding of convicts: persons who are deformed can never discard their outer appearance and be assimilated into 'normal' society. If we are to maintain the incarceration analogy it could be said that they are forever imprisoned within the fixed mask of deformity. In the eyes of the observer persons who are deformed must suffer - to borrow legalistic terms - perpetual punishment without due process. And to extend the analogy further, the fleshy mass of the ever-expanding Lilian Singer in *Lilian's Story* (1986) takes on significance and overpowering proportions when she remarks: 'History is not the past, but the present made flesh'.¹² Taken in an Australian context the metaphor of deformity is, like Phillips's multi-headed hydra, multiple and productive, since curiously what is emerging is an identification with deformity as the inescapable and the unalterable, and therefore as a truthful depiction of what was. Australia was colonised as a land of exiles.

¹¹ Cheryl Rogers, 'The Employment Dilemma for Disabled Persons', in *Images of the Disabled, Disabling Images*, ed. Alan Gartner and Tom Joe (New York: Praeger, 1987), p. 119.

¹² Kate Grenville, *Lilian's Story* (1986; rpt. Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1987), p. 192.

In Randolph Stow's *The Bystander* (1957) Keith Farnham, Diana Rivers, and Patrick Leighton form a triad epitomising the de-parented, the dispossessed, and the disabled; deformity is often the red-letter entry, or rubric, identifying an exempted person. In the story of Cain and Abel, Cain was marked as a sign of his sin and criminality; and yet the mark also protected the exiled murderer from a death sentence as he travelled dispossessed through the land of others. The story of Cain and Abel encompasses the ambiguities of the fictions of deformity: the deformed are 'touched' by God: they are both cursed and blessed, therianthropic projections: beast and god, with attributes ranging from the sub-human to the super-human. But they are nevertheless exempted, set apart, marginalised: as the epileptic would-be-priest, Brother Hannigan discovers in John Hanrahan's *O Excellent Virgin* (1990), the blemished are excluded from holy orders: 'Christ could cure the halt, the lame, the blind and the cripples but he could not, well, would not, ordain them his priests'.¹³ The references can be found in the Old Testament: 'Whosoever he be of thy seed in their generations that hath any blemish, let him not approach to offer the bread of his God' (Leviticus 21: 17-18). To be deformed is to exist in a state that ensures perpetual exilic status; the uniqueness of the individual form stands apart from the aggregate body of society. This apartness, coupled with the wish to belong, is explored in Chapter Two, 'Joseph "Jonah" Jones'.

'Suffering as Self' permeated the precepts of the nationalists who created the popular landscape mythology in which the individual battled against nature and a hostile environment in 'a drama of suffering out of which a sense of identity has come'.¹⁴ I need not digress here into a list of

¹³ John Hanrahan, *O Excellent Virgin* (Melbourne: William Heinemann Australia, 1990), p. 50.

¹⁴ John Barnes, ' "Bush with no Horizon": Nationalist Images of Australia' in *Colonisations*, ed. X. Pons and M. Rocard (Toulouse: Universite de Toulouse-le Mirail, 1985), p. 40.

examples of deformity as a drama of suffering: television has long made use of suffering and sentiment in doctor-drama shows. But another, less heroic sense prevailed in earlier responses to the Australian environment: a sense of acknowledgement of the unusual rather than of the unusual as a trial, as expressed by Marcus Clarke:

In Australia alone is to be found the Grotesque, the Weird, the strange scribblings of nature learning how to write. Some see no beauty in our trees without shade, our flowers without perfume, our birds who cannot fly, and our beasts who have not yet learned to walk on all fours. But the dweller in the wilderness acknowledges the Subtle charm of this fantastic land of monstrosities.¹⁵

Judith Wright calls this 'making emotional capital of the sheer strangeness and weirdness of the new continent'. She goes on: 'The unknown is always threatening, and Australia was felt to be both treacherous and bleakly unattractive';¹⁶ though she herself has stressed the inescapable psychological connection between topography and national character, since for its new inhabitants: '[the landscape] has been the outer equivalent of an inner reality; first, and persistently, the reality of exile; second, though perhaps we now tend to forget this, the reality of newness and freedom'.¹⁷

But metaphor or phenomenal reality, from out of this double aspect the landscape gave birth to its child. The comment that 'the Australian landscape as mirror to the soul reflects the grotesque and the desolate rather than the beautiful and the tranquil'¹⁸ shows how particularly apt in Australian literature is the notion of a deformed hero whose soul and body are often perceived as reflections of each other. The deformed body becomes a

¹⁵ Marcus Clarke, *Intro.*, *Poems*, by Adam Lindsay Gordon (Melbourne: A. H. Massina, 1910), p. xi.

¹⁶ Judith Wright, 'Australian Poetry to 1920', in *The Literature of Australia*, ed. Geoffrey Dutton (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1964), p. 55.

¹⁷ Judith Wright, 'Australia's Double Aspect', in her *Preoccupations in Australian Poetry* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. xi.

¹⁸ Graeme Turner, *National Fictions* (North Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1986), pp. 31-32.

metaphysical referent and is not so far removed from identification with the land, as both are locations of alterability. This concept of the analogy between the visible and the invisible world (material and spiritual) again suggests that there is room for a symbolist dialectic to provide the unfolding of some of the meanings and metaphors of the deformed person in literature.

This study recognises deformity as a literary device which provides revelations about the culture within which it exists. It is by no means advocating the belief that in the real world the body reflects an internal distortion; what it does acknowledge is that such a belief exists, or has existed. This study, like *The New Literary History of Australia*, looks to literature as an expression of and an image of the society that produced it. As one would expect, Australia is not the only nation whose literature depicts deformity, since deformity after all extends beyond national boundaries. Works from Europe, Canada, and the United States have already been cited; what has emerged in this study is that in the Australian context deformity is not overwhelmingly negatively stigmatic. Although in terms of the arguments posed in the Introduction this does not make the characters any more fully-realised than stereotypical characters branded by myths ranging from the pathetic to the pernicious, it does allow cultural analogies.

One of the most pernicious labels affixed to the icon of deformity must surely be that of sub-human status. Historically, the physical deformed and non-whites have been labelled as sub-human, and their bodies regarded as insentient forms housing a questionable spirit. During the nineteenth century both were regarded as objects of scientific enquiry. It was not uncommon for the freak exhibited in circuses to be exhumed for medical experimentation. The body of the bearded Julia Pastrana and her child were mummified and condemned to the public gaze by Julia's manager and husband (Fiedler, pp.

145-147). Once billed as the 'Ugliest Woman in the World', she is memorialised in Thomas Shapcott's poem 'The Litanies of Julia Pastrana (1837-1860)', which tells of her stark recognition of her gifts and curses: 'the Lord has / made for me to be a wonder to the learned physicans / of London'.¹⁹ In another case, the English surgeon John Hunter was determined to have the body of 'The Irish Giant', James Byrne. Apart from conceptual allusions to size there are no giants in this study, but the fate of this particular giant's body has a correspondingly hideous comparison to a heinous episode in our own past. John Hunter had Byrne followed by a 'resurrection' man (a grave-robber): 'scared out of his scant wits by the malign presence, who sat patiently at each of his shows, like a living *memento mori* among the merely curious onlookers, Byrne made careful plans'. Byrne's plans included burial in a leaded coffin to be sunk out at sea by friends. But Byrne's coffin was made of sterner stuff than his friends: when the coffin was sunk it contained only Byrne's clothes. Byrne's thighbone can be seen on the wall behind the portrait of John Hunter by Sir Joshua Reynolds (Fiedler, pp. 112-113). For Byrne, there was no escape: after a lifetime of exhibition, he is forever fixed in the public gaze.

If the giant's plight - the theft of the body and subsequent boiling down of his body for bones in the interest of science - strikes a familiar chord it is because it is a tale that resonates in our own history, as depicted in Robert Drewe's *The Savage Crows* (1976),²⁰ in which two centuries of 'different deaths' (p. 260) illustrate an historical and inescapable tie with disease and deformity. While the gradual decimation of the Tasmanian aborigines through disease is graphically described, there is a lesser parallel to be found in the

¹⁹ Thomas Shapcott, *Selected Poems 1956-1988* (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1989), p. 3.

²⁰ Robert Drewe, *The Savage Crows* (1976; rpt. Sydney: Collins, 1978). All subsequent references are to this edition.

events surrounding the narrator George Augustus Robinson, who, constantly plagued with pustules, loses his own child to disease while he is on his mission to round up and relocate the Tasmanian aborigines. In the novel, scarification as a barbaric tribal rite is held up for comparison with the white-settler mutilation of Billy Lanney (also known, historically, as William Lanne, died 1869, whose skull is to be returned to Tasmania from Edinburgh early this decade), and of Truganini (died 1876). Both corpses were dismembered in the name of science.

Lanney's corpse, the perceived repository of historical memory, is secreted away in a wheelbarrow, exuding 'blood and grease' (p. 19). The image of Lanney's ebullient corpse transported in a wheelbarrow exuding youthful and cultural vitality, finds a twentieth-century inverse comparison in the dried-up white-aged who queue up at the Caltex station, 'seven identical wheelchairs carrying nodding grey geriatrics and chronic invalids in checked dressing gowns' (p. 226), to wheel their now-inflated chairs back to the home. While disease and death form an infamous part of Tasmania's history, Drewe indicates, in a parodic vein, that it is very much a part of every era and that, one way or another mortality claims all:

The papers told fascinating tales of disease and death. Surveys of complete towns carried out by anxious heart researchers on grants showed that 83 per cent of males over the age of twelve had unattractive cholesterol levels. Coffee and bacon regularly consumed together at the one meal predisposed the breakfaster to one of the nastier cancers. . . . Two people had been found suffering from a new clinical disorder called metageria or premature ageing. Both had 'a bird-like appearance', were tall and thin, with prominent hooked noses. Their skin was mottled and pigmented. (p. 223)

There is a sense of the irreverent in the white-settler's concern with mortality as revealed in the description of the man who 'put a rifle to his head because he couldn't live with his own hare-lip. Even though he was God, said so in court, he still couldn't live with his hare-lip because of childhood teasing and

sexual rebuffs' (pp. 231-232). But there is an anxious undertone that is addressed more cautiously: Stephen Crisp has survived meningitis; his daughter Wendy suffers from chronic asthma; their bodies are constant reminders of mortality. Sickness, death, and deformity link the periods: the nineteenth-century aborigine character Billy Lanney is 'wall-eyed' (p. 233), but so too, is the twentieth-century aborigine character 'Simon-with-the-wall-eye' (p. 259).

A little more than half a century after the attempted eradication of the Tasmanian aborigines, eradication of other ethnic groups was taken in earnest: along with Jews and gypsies, 'dwarfs were favourite targets' of Hitler's liquidation scheme (Fiedler, p. 255). Seemingly minor infringements of bodily perfection were euphemistically treated under 'The Law for the Prevention of Progeny Suffering from Hereditary Disease' (*Gesetz zur Verhütung erkrankten Nachwuchses*): 'the law provided death or sterilization for "hereditary diseases" . . . women could also be sterilized for colour blindness.'²¹

What these examples of racial and religious genocide indicate is that in order for it to occur, the dominant power had to perceive its potential victims as sub-human, sub-sensory, and alien: basically, as animals. Regardless of race, colour, creed, or gender, the deformed person has been denied independent existence.²² Being too unfamiliar, they could only be perceived in connection with less unfamiliar but equally alien groups. Feminist critics have to some extent assumed the icon of deformity by describing their gender in terms of deformity, thereby de-individualising the physically abnormal being (who is just as likely to be a male). It has become a convenient

²¹ Robert G. L. Waite, *The Psychopathic God: Adolf Hitler* (New York: Basic Books, 1977), p. 255.

²² The sentence proves the case: deformity is various. There is no homogeneous group of deformed persons.

metaphor for persecution and alienation.

So far we have briefly explored deformity in relation to the Australian landscape, convictism, and racism, all of which have been placed within the context of the 'sub-human', at one time or another. It is obvious that the metaphors of deformity are abundant; but metaphors are only gradually grasped. They are formed from intersecting images and motifs, and their beauty emerges from the slow realisation of their existence. What gives the literature immediate force is the manipulative power allowed the author who includes characters who are deformed. The author can manipulate the prejudices and sub-fictions already in place in the reader's mind; equally importantly, the author has immediate power to manipulate instinctual forces. As this study intends to show it is a force whose power is gained through conflict; a conflict apparently born of opposite intensities that simultaneously propel and repel the reader. Hanoch Livneh identifies this response as the 'approach-avoidance conflict' (p. 280), in terms of the real world in which the observer sees the deformed. When this response is translated into the realm of literature, the deformed character nurtures a literal tropism. For instance, who could put down a book in which the opening sentence reads: 'The giantess was buried in the cemetery by the Lutheran church'? This is how Barbara Hanrahan's *Dove* begins; but then 'Miss Scholz, the German Giantess, who weighed thirty stone' (p. 3) sinks from view, having served a purpose by providing an alluring opening line. The reader turns instinctively towards characters who provoke aversion and fear and who initially propel our curiosity. In fact, the so-called freaks of the Victorian Age were referred to as 'curiosities', a word memorialised in the title of Charles Dickens' *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1840-41), which has been called his most Freak-obsessed work (Fiedler, p. 15). They present a conflict in the observer

between what Arthur Koestler calls primitive and civilised responses, in *The Act of Creation* (1964).²³ According to Koestler, the primitive reaction of the observer of the deformed ranges from distrust of the perceived *inhuman* within the being, to a comic response, or wonder, and horror: though Koestler feels that, children excepted, 'we have become too civilized for that kind of thing' (p. 75). He identifies the civilising process as the modifier of reaction towards the physically different: 'to the civilized man, a dwarf is comic only if he struts about pretending to be tall, which he is not; in the primitive's eye the dwarf is comic because he pretends to be human, which he is not' (p. 76).

Despite Koestler's belief in the power of the civilising process, the reaction exhibited by Koestler's primitives is one that survives in much contemporary literature. In fact Shari Thurer suggests that the disabled characters in literature are not full human beings: 'they are devices portrayed only because of their incapacity, and because of the standardized associations such incapacity is able to engender in the audience' (p. 14).

If one doubts Thurer's observations about the attitude towards the deformed in literature I offer for examination the attitude put forward in the teaching manual *Childhood and Adolescence* (1968)²⁴ which advises the inclusion of handicapped persons along with non-handicapped children in pre-school activity. The text implicitly recognises - teaches, even - that the abnormal individual is an object lesson, or tool, exciting predictable negative associations in the physically normal child. The text states:

It also seems desirable to include, as the opportunity presents itself, some proportion of handicapped children - those with motor or with sensory disabilities like impaired vision and hearing - for their own

²³ Arthur Koestler, *The Act of Creation* (London: Pan Books, 1966).

²⁴ L. Joseph Stone and Joseph Church, *Childhood and Adolescence: A Psychology of the Growing Person* (1957; rpt. New York: Random House, 1968).

sake and for the sake of the physically normal children who may thus learn early to accept the handicapped *as fellow human beings*. There is evidence, as from a recent study by Chesler . . . that the handicapped constitute a minority group against which the majority is prejudiced. However, lack of prejudice is not an automatic consequence of early exposure; careful explanations are needed, and active intermixing of the children *to help the normal child* overcome any spontaneous distaste and also any vulnerabilities that get stirred up by the sight of abnormalities. (pp. 334-336; my italics)

For our purposes it is important to note that within the text cited we see an acknowledgement that the handicapped might be perceived as less than human; the text makes no bones about the handicapped serving as an object lesson for physically normal children, in order to help them 'overcome spontaneous distaste'; this exposure to the physically deformed individual appears to be part of the training process described by Koestler in which the physically normal child becomes more human by learning the civilised response; in other words exposure to the sub-human makes us (the 'normal') more human, and arguably closer to God. Christina Stead (herself once a teacher of handicapped children) has said:

Whatever else you may think about Spain, they have this extraordinary attitude to the feeble-minded and the village idiot and all those people, people who go about twisted like this [gesticulates]. They feel they were sent by God to call on your compassion.²⁵

The Spanish attitude indicates the evolution of the deformed as culturally-specific symbols. The presumption in all these cases seems to be that we must be taught to overcome a natural, primitive response of fear of the deformed. In *The Year of Living Dangerously* (1973)²⁶ the civilised response described by Koestler is seen by the novel's narrator, Cookie, as a superficial response in 'our age of conformist tolerance' (p. 67). In the novel, the dwarf Billy Kwan also recognises the superficiality of such a response; he is fully

²⁵ Joan Lidoff, *Christina Stead* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing, 1982), p. 214.

²⁶ C. J. Koch, *The Year of Living Dangerously* (1973; rpt. Melbourne: Thomas Nelson, 1978). All subsequent references are to this edition.

aware of the predetermined response to the icon of deformity:

At first delighted with this intellectually brilliant human symbol with whom [his fellow guests] could prove their hearts were in the right place (one who was not only racially but physically underprivileged), they must then watch the symbol dissolving before their eyes to become a sharp-tongued iconoclast. (p. 67)

Billy becomes the great manipulator, since he is aware of the conflicts that deformity inspires: we must not stare, we want to stare. In Tim Winton's short story 'The Strong One'²⁷ curtains provide the screen that enables the curious response towards the deformed to surface:

He was a short, dark man. In his fifties, she guessed, with a strangely-turned foot. It seemed that every caravan park they stayed in was run by lame men. Rachel wondered how it must be for him to gimp (*sic*) across the grass every morning knowing that from behind curtains in caravans all around, people were watching, discussing. (p. 97)

The Koch and Winton examples suggest that the instinct for curiosity is still with us and uttered in our literature. The novel channels public (or civilised) response into a medium that, through the reader, is internalised and made private. It provides a curtain or screen for the reader, since certain public expectations towards the person who is deformed do not need to be met when confronting the deformed character in literature.

Researchers studying the frequency of physical disability in literature from 1550 to 1949 have found that with the recent advent of film and television alcoholism is portrayed in those mediums more frequently than physical disability; whereas their study found a higher frequency of physical disability than of alcoholism in literature. They suggest that this may be due to:

the high visibility associated with many physical disabilities, compared with the essentially hidden nature of alcoholism. Physical disabilities can be dealt with in literature, in which readers can conjure up their own image of a particular disability, perhaps minimizing its less attractive nature.²⁸

²⁷ Tim Winton, *Minimum of Two* (Ringwood: Penguin, 1987).

The researchers' use of the word 'perhaps' has a distinctively non-committal though hopeful vein about it; it is a conclusion I strongly disagree with. Had an author intended a reader to minimise the 'less attractive nature' of the physical deformity, it seems unlikely it would have been used in the first place.

Simply, there is a conflicting impulse: an urge to avert one's eyes, and an equally strong urge to stare. In Thomas Shapcott's poem 'Near the School For Handicapped Children', the observer of a handicapped male says: 'I am hurt by my wholeness / I cannot take my eyes from him / I fear my daughter may be watching' (p. 177). Many of us will remember the urging by overly officious parents 'not to stare' at deformed individuals. This invective has the effect of making the deformed invisible and marginalising them to the point of non-existence. The in-built inhibitor which 'un-sees' the deformed is a central device in Russell Braddon's murder mystery, *End Play* (1972),²⁹ set in England. In the novel, a murdered woman is disposed of by leaving her in a cinema in a wheelchair. One of the characters, Robbie Thomson, a paraplegic, states that 'people deliberately don't look at the face of anyone being pushed in a wheelchair' (p. 66). This is confirmed by the police officer in charge investigating the murder: 'nose reddened with lipstick, her front teeth blackened with insulating tape and in her hair a ludicrous bow', a female police-officer is wheeled around town:

For the next half hour he pushed her round Aylesbury; and observed that oncomers invariable looked at anything but Iris's eyecatching face.

'She could have had leprosy and a hole in her head,' he advised his sergeant when they returned. 'She could've been dead! No one would have noticed.' (p. 111)

²⁸ Keith Byrd, Windell Williamson, Dianne Byrd, 'Literary Characters Who Are Disabled', *Rehabilitation Counseling Bulletin*, 30 (Sept. 1986), p. 59.

²⁹ Russell Braddon, *End Play* (1972; rpt. West Melbourne: Thomas Nelson, 1975). All subsequent references are to this edition.

Civilised restraint and primitive curiosity compel the reader when confronted with the deformed. The device of deformity either becomes the point from which fantasy emanates, or it becomes the anchor in the real, ostensibly defying the fantastic. It is a fascination with the irrational evident since the beginning of human culture and society.

Not until the 1930s and 40s was there an earnest attempt to upset the old beliefs and replace them with a new mythology, that of eugenics. It offered eradication of the sub-human, and with it the attendant stigmas: among them criminality and racial inferiority. In Australia the eugenic preference was for sameness - in a land which took pride in difference as the mark of the individual. For some, eugenics meant a scientifically-possible Utopia in which biology became their theology; and in which deformity had no place. The new mythology is recorded in *Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow* (1983; first published in an abridged form as *Tomorrow and Tomorrow* in 1947)³⁰ in which Ullil is a victim:

I'm just an outlaw. I mustn't have children because one of my lungs is - unorthodox. I could have all the defects of character there are and it wouldn't matter. . . . But you don't know what it's like to be cast out, no one does till it happens to them. You are outside what everyone else shares or could share. You haven't decided it for yourself, it has been decided for you'. (p. 427)

Ullil states that 'Sick people are criminals, aren't they'. It is immediately apparent that what is appealing about eugenic birth-control is the notion that future criminality can be located through cellular deviancy and thus prevented; the Utopian ideal of a crimeless society would read roughly 'no deformity - no criminality'. Deviation could be eliminated at the chromosomal level, as Detective Chief Superintendent Cheadle concludes in regard to the paraplegic

³⁰ M. Barnard Eldershaw, *Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow* (London: Virago Press, 1983). All subsequent references are to this edition.

murderer, Robbie, in Braddon's *End Play*: 'His father, sir was XYY. . . . so probably your [adopted] brother didn't have much of a chance' (*End Play*, p. 159). Cheadle's remark is intended as serious commentary, though it is difficult to take seriously the simplicity behind the need to locate and isolate human behaviour into some form of predictable parcel. In *St. Urbain's Horseman* (1966)³¹ Mordecai Richler takes those assumptions and uses them irreverently and entertainingly through a television programme guide:

Today's TV

2:30 p.m. (12) Medicine and the Bible. Modern endocrinology used to interpret the scriptural events. Could Esau have been suffering from low blood sugar and that's why he sold his birthright? Could Goliath have had a pituitary gland imbalance? Dr. Robert Greenblatt, author of *Search the Scriptures*, offers some of his theories. (p. 144)

Richler's is a light-hearted comment on cause and effect in which deformity is the indicator. But serious implications remain: if deformity as a reminder of our *sub*-human origins can be erased, then no-deformity is an indication of *supra*-human possibilities.

Deformity seen as a result of miscegenation between human and animal could sometimes be understood to include that between human (that is to say, civilised) and primitive, since primitives were regarded as the missing link between humans and apes. In this context the existence of the deformed indicates a step backwards into the animal world, and by implication, a step in the wrong direction, a step away from a celestial other. Eugenics offered the opportunity to obliterate these living suggestions of a recapitulation of the evolutionary experience. It meant being able to cut these links with the animal world, and if not to be God, then to play God in the game of life and death: for the eugenicist would be able to chose *who* would be allowed to live. Within the novels selected in this study in which eugenics is discussed, a concern is voiced that the deformed and the feeble-minded (as the mentally

³¹ Mordecai Richler, *St. Urbain's Horseman* (London: Weidenenfeld and Nicolson, 1966).

retarded were often called in the period setting of the novels) should not procreate. In the psychiatric ward that provides the setting for *Gabriel Comes to 24* (1958)³² one of the characters suggests a permanent solution to the problem of inadequate beings:

'Lewis thinks everyone in 24 should be put to sleep.'
'Only sensible thing to do,' Green responded. 'Can't have people like that procreating. Put 'em to sleep.' (p. 89)

That the comment is made by a schizophrenic, Lewis Green, suggests the conflicts and contradictions that solutions to the so-called problem of the deformed inspire; this discussion is continued in Chapter Ten.

The preceding has attempted to place the metaphors and myths of deformity alongside more familiar metaphors and myths, as a means of providing background to the ideas that will be presented in the following chapters. It is hoped that the reader has been alerted to the possibilities of the many and varied overt and subsumed fictions and identities implicit in the icon of deformity. What follows now is a continuation of the general survey, but has an emphasis on clarifying particular aspects of the use of deformity: these include beauty and deformity; the artist and deformity; disease and deformity; and the use of language in describing the deformed. In the following discussion deformity is held up in comparison with, or as analogous to, something else which might or might not set the parameters by which some judgement might take place.

Just as the sub-human and the supra-human seem to be polar opposites, so 'beauty' and 'deformity' would appear to be antinomies in literature, if not in life. But in the didactics of symbolism where the visible and invisible worlds provide a tension between opposites to produce meaning, we find that

³² Russell Braddon, *Gabriel Comes to 24* (London: Hutchinson, 1958). All subsequent references are to this edition.

beauty, too, finds its place amongst the literature of the abnormal being as outcast. Beauty is often spoken of as disabling, and similarly portrayed as a form of imprisonment. In his short story 'Requiescat in Pace', one of Peter Goldsworthy's male characters observes: 'Beauty was a prison, she told me: a handicap far more devastating than any cleft-lip or club-foot. The genes that determined beauty controlled destiny, inexorably: her face had been her bad fortune'.³³ The idea that beauty is more disabling than deformity finds an unsympathetic audience within, and outside the novel; especially when it is set up in relationship to its other half, deformity. In order for Goldsworthy's character's statement to have meaning, we must imagine the condition of deformity described: the beautiful woman becomes at once superficial and untruthful. The extract above is followed by the comment that 'It was her own high version of the starlet's complaint: No-one Takes Me Seriously'.

In Louis Nowra's *The Misery of Beauty* the identities of beauty and deformity are brought directly into a unity of contradiction. Narrated by the deformed Frogman, it is the ugliness of normals - the beautiful, the pseudo-beautiful and the once-beautiful - whose misery is in question. To that extent the grotesque character serves a similar function to that found in the short stories of Flannery O'Connor and Eudora Welty. Frogman's existence is a projected parody of all that is associated with deformity, as discussed in the Introduction. The mythological association of dwarfs with intelligence and sexual potency, yet to be discussed, exists in Nowra's novel, along with deformity as a projection of death, as evidenced in Frogman's coffin act; deformity as scatological (p. 33; p. 111); and the continual references to animal characteristics beyond that of 'Frogman' such as seal, mouse, rabbit. The human-animal hybridisation for entertainment is consistent with the

³³ Peter Goldsworthy, 'Requiescat in Pace', in *Bleak Rooms* (Adelaide: The Wakefield Press, 1988), p. 7. All subsequent references are to this edition.

carnival atmosphere of a novel inhabited by carnival characters; their *en masse* exposure occurs in middle-class nightclubs which are the side-shows of the normals: at Laurie's Studio the submerged abnormal, or 'second' self, is given an explicit entrance. The side-show of the civilised is opened with a cockfight; this is followed with an act by the club owner, Laurie, who 'is in perfect physical shape' (p. 50): he picks up the remaining bird, grips its head, then 'opens his mouth' (p. 52). In the language of the side-show, Laurie is the geek.³⁴ Ugliness and abnormality are manifested through action and condoned. The assumption is that one voluntarily assumes the role of ugliness because one is, in truth, ugly. As Fiedler notes, the geek

seems these days to be coming into his own, precisely because he is a fictional Freak, not merely perceived through a pre-existent mythological grid like Giants and Dwarfs and the Lion-faced Man, but invented to satisfy psychic needs bred by infantile traumas or unquiet ancestral memories. (Fiedler, p. 342)

In Nowra's novel, the clientele of the nightclub 'The Analyst's Couch' is incited into group ugliness as Earl, the Master of Illusion who is also Frogman's manager, holds Frogman up for scrutiny. Frogman is the totem, unwillingly inciting a mass approach-avoidance response as the patrons, in recognition of their inner ugliness and their own true grotesque nature, shout: 'Where's my true inner self? Cast off my false exterior' (p. 72). Frogman's experiences with normals in the novel is blatantly emblematic of the wry, parodic aside expressed by Charlie Citrine in Saul Bellow's *Humboldt's Gift* (1975), when he speaks about 'one of the powerful theories of the modern world being that for self-realization it's necessary to embrace the deformity and absurdity of the inmost being'.³⁵

In *The Misery of Beauty*, Earl, the 'Master of Illusion', turns his

³⁴ The word 'geek' occurs in the text (p. 76; p. 140).

³⁵ Saul Bellow, *Humboldt's Gift* (1975; rpt. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984), p. 48.

lover, the artificially beautiful singer Sister Rose, into the bearded woman, a hermaphrodite, a freak (p. 171), and a geek: Frogman records that she had 'a four-day old beard', that she was 'naked, and becoming more like a man every day', and that Frogman would 'watch her wolf down her lukewarm meal, holding the pieces of meat with her dirty fingers. As she did so, one saw her unlaquered fingernails which had been broken in the many fights with her keeper' (p. 170). Nowra's novel exemplifies Fiedler's assertion that the secret self of the normal is the freak, exteriorised by the geek who 'represents not degradation but a mystery which transcends the very possibility of degradation' in which the restraints on not being a freak are relinquished:

Here is the final freak-out, the assumption of a monstrous role which, precisely because it has long been associated with sham, can be carried off not just in metaphor or at the rock concert or on the TV talk shows, but in the Ten-in-One itself, where marks pay to see only what they believe is real. No normal can become a Giant, a dwarf, a Siamese Twin, even an intersex. But anyone, merely by altering consciousness, can become a Geek, become for others the Freak he has always felt himself to be. (Fiedler, p. 346)

'Frogman' exists as a mirror-character to reveal the freakishness lurking within normals. The abnormal body becomes an inverse referent: the deformed Frogman acts as a type of moralistic barometer; in this novel physical abnormality is a 'true' image of the ugly interior self. Whereas the abnormal being is less driven to grotesque acts in search for self-actualisation, the normal being is continually struggling to express the suppressed abnormal self.

Written nearly half-a century earlier than *The Misery of Beauty*, Prichard's social-realist novel *Haxby's Circus* contains a similar affirmation of the inner grotesqueness of the normal self in the world while affirming the abnormal-being as a truer-being. At the beginning of *Haxby's Circus* the

dwarf, Billy Rocca, is the circus clown and the embodiment of the *lusus naturae*: 'He was Life's joke at itself, he believed. His mind as fine and straight as the bodies of these people. Their minds as deformed, childish, undeveloped, paddling soft and helpless as his limbs' (p. 48). In contrast to the acts of many normals in the novel, Rocca the dwarf is kind, generous, and honourable. The novel ends with the hunchbacked Gina Haxby, who is described as 'the most perfect soul' (p. 342), having successfully assumed the role of mother, father, and circus manager, finally assuming the role she is made for, that of the clown:

she waddled into the ring and tumbled about, making herself grotesque and hideous, to get the brittle crashing merriment of the crowd that could hurt her no more, in whose laughter she could join, at the order and harmony of a world to which the circus held the dim surface of its mirror. (p. 350)

Although vastly different stylistically, both novels employ deformity, and characters who are deformed, as a strategy to reflect life's grotesqueness. Alky Jack in David Ireland's *The Glass Canoe* (1976)³⁶ summarises ugliness as honesty this way:

It's no wonder men come to prefer ugliness, the nasty things of life, the bizarre, the grossly sensual, the degrading. At least ugliness is honest. The monster on our backs pretends to be kindness and goodness and justice and beauty and freedom. And all the time we see its arse, which is ugliness unredeemed, cruelty. Absurd, gross, degrading. (p. 119)

Beauty as a prison, which is how Goldsworthy's character chooses to see it, suggests an exterior false to the freakish inner self; and this is not a much different proclamation to that of Nowra's novel, in which 'the beautiful and the ugly, the miserable and the happy, break down as distinctions'.³⁷

Similarity between the two extremities of abnormality can be found: to be perceived as beautiful or deformed implies a judgement of worth on the

³⁶ David Ireland, *The Glass Canoe* (1976; rpt. Ringwood: Penguin, 1982).

³⁷ Carl Harrison-Ford, 'Structural Strictures: Some Recent Fiction Considered', *Meanjin*, 36 (Winter 1977), 249.

part of the observer. In literature, abnormal physical characteristics (abnormally beautiful or deformed), appear to lock the individual inside the external self. Another example of the 'abnormally' beautiful being is found in Jessica Anderson's character Isobel Purdy in *An Ordinary Lunacy* (1963).³⁸ Isobel Purdy does, in fact, become a victim of her physiognomy. In a conversation with her fiance, she is told:

'That's the way you were born,' he pointed out. 'We're all stuck with something, and you're stuck with that, and all its consequences.' It suddenly struck him as so funny that he should be consoling a woman for her beauty that a burst of laughter escaped him, and she looked at him quickly, puzzled and ready to be angry. 'Look,' he reasoned, 'any woman would give ten years of her life 'They had much better keep them, those ten years,' she flashed out. 'A gift of the Gods!' he exclaimed incredulously. 'An accident of Nature,' she returned. (pp. 172-173)

The extract concludes on a note that opens up the discussion on physiology as a natural or supernatural determinancy, which is discussed in the chapter on eugenics. But for our immediate purposes we see from the above that if acceptable abnormality of beauty causes conflict between and within persons, then unacceptable abnormality would seem to intensify the conflict.

At the beginning of this chapter I spoke of the process of turning what is unfamiliar into what is felt to be known. This process is opposite to the artistic process as described by the formalist critic Victor Shklovsky, in which the artist strives to defamiliarise or to 'make strange'; Shklovsky uses the word *ostraneniye*.³⁹ Deformity appears to be all that is made strange in life and in art, and so provides a device for challenging the familiar, as well as providing metaphors of suffering. Hal Porter, in one of his autobiographies,

³⁸ Jessica Anderson, *An Ordinary Lunacy* (1963; rpt. London: Penguin, 1987). All subsequent references are to this edition.

³⁹ Victor Shklovsky, 'Art as Technique', in *Russian Formalist Criticism: Four Essays*, trans. Lee T. Lemon and Marion J. Reis (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965), p. 4.

revels in the analogies:

Poems, like children, are no more than an announcement of folly committed, of vanity and intemperance, and, like children, are a vengeance on losing one's head: that club-footed poofter's your son, that squinting sonnet's your latest child.⁴⁰

He is even more explicit when drawing comparisons between freaks and the professional writer:

Professional writer! One of those who, like cripples in the shameless countries of the Earth, like midgets, Fat Ladies, female impersonators, Siamese twins, and Jo Jo the dog-faced boy, display their special abnormalities for money. (Porter, p. 48)

Whereas Shklovsky held that the artist strove to defamiliarise by making strange, Porter's comments imply that, by analogy, the artist *is* strange and that freaks are an apt metaphor for the estrangement. Deformity as a device is often to be found burrowing deep into the heart of the *kunstlerroman*, in which the deformed are often a distorted reflection of the artist-genius as sufferer and outcast. In Patrick White's *The Vivisector* (1970)⁴¹ the hunchback, Rhoda Courtney, tells her artist brother, Hurtle Duffield, that cripple and artist can be conjoined victims of shared parental preference for normality:

I know parents sometimes grow to resent their children if they're in any way transcendent - as much as if they were ugly or stunted. What so many of them really look for is a healthy, normal, biddable child who will flatter their complacency like glass. (p. 509)

For the Romantics of the late nineteenth century there was no more appropriate *doppelganger* for the patho-narcissism of the artist than the diseased and deformed, where *pathos* provided the common ground. Certainly, an optimism of sorts existed during the early nineteenth century,

⁴⁰ Hal Porter, *The Extra* (Melbourne: Thomas Nelson, 1975), p. 44. All subsequent references are to this edition.

⁴¹ Patrick White, *The Vivisector* (1970; rpt. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981). All subsequent references are to this edition.

when British Romantic literature interpreted disease in terms of the ancient Greek paradox in which 'the disease was fearful and marked the end of one's life, but it bestowed privileged perceptions upon the poet-victim and was seen as a spur to creativity'.⁴² Jeffrey Meyers has examined the use of disease in the novel, in particular syphilis, and tuberculosis, thought by Byron to make one look 'interesting' (Meyers, p. 5); and has looked at the views of many of the writers of the Romantic period who exalted the aesthetics of disease. The aesthetic sentiment is expressed by Patrick White's crypto-victim Christiana McBeath, who in a letter tells Hurtle Duffield, the artist: 'I have ventured to run on Mr Duffield because I believe the afflicted to be united in the same purpose, and you of course as an artist and the worst afflicted through your art can see farther than us who are mere human diseased' (*The Vivisector*, p. 613).

Myers sees the twentieth century as an age characterised by its lost faith, an age when 'disease replaced hell and became one of the most horrible punishments imaginable' (Myers, p. 12). In a guardedly optimistic essay about disease and its historicity, Susan Sontag discusses the common metaphors of disease as punishment and plagues as judgement; in which Philoctetes with his stinking wound is held as analogous in the 'literature of antiquity to the modern sense of a shunning, isolated disease'.⁴³ This study is only concerned with the fictions of disease where that disease has transcended mortality and been transformed into a living deformity. This occurs in the case of Richard Miller (*The Doubleman*), where poliomyelitis results in lameness. Thus a middle ground exists; where disease and deformity meet, and where deformity is the permanent physical testament to

⁴² Jeffrey Meyers, *Disease and the Novel, 1880-1960* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985), p. 5.

⁴³ Susan Sontag, 'AIDS and Its Metaphors', *The New York Review* (27 October 1988), p. 89.

the visitation of disease. But between them and their usage in literature there is an important distinction: deformity is a life-sentence of physical abnormality, which reflects mortality; whereas terminal disease is a death-sentence, the forced acknowledgement of one's mortality.

Disease and deformity have long been linked with the supernatural. Mutilation as punishment for breaking taboos appears pandemic in the folklore of various nationalities.⁴⁴ For instance, deformity as punishment ranges from the mild to extreme where there is thirst, loss of strength, dried-up breasts, sores, plagues, blinding, paralysis, mouths expanded, arms shortened, noses cut off, and heads shattered, lungs ripped out, and livers snatched out. Many of the ancient beliefs placed faith in healing divinities and demons of disease. Indeed: 'from the earliest times, all morbid conditions of the mind and body - except such as were regarded as divine vengeance - were believed to result from attacks or possession of evil spirits which surrounded man on every side'.⁴⁵

The above is an oversimplification, but it serves as a useful example, for it expresses a persistent universality: the linking of deformity with the Supernatural. Euchrid Eucrow, a mute in Nick Cave's *And the Ass Saw the Angel* (1989)⁴⁶ tells us that 'Ah was corrupted by hate. Ah was monstrous. Ah was diabolical' (p. 56) and we are given no reason to doubt it. He becomes a diabolical messiah, literally stigmatised with periodic bleedings, and focussing the abuses and deformities of the Ukulites, a fundamental sect. His mutism is coterminous with his abominations: 'By divine appointment ah was God's snitch. Ah mean, no one can keep a secret

⁴⁴ A good information source for deformity and disease in folklore of all nationalities is the six volumes of Stith Thompson, *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1958).

⁴⁵ Walter Addison Jayne, M.D. *The Healing Gods of Ancient Civilization* (1925; rpt. New Hyde Park, New York: University Books, 1962), p. 145.

⁴⁶ Nick Cave, *And the Ass Saw the Angel* (1989; rpt. Ringwood: Penguin, 1990). All subsequent references are to this edition.

better than a mute' (p. 71). The novel is a nightmare portrayal of an unredeemable humanity, even with Euchrid's occasional self-parodies:

You would think that being born dumb - stricken of tongue and bereft of the faculty of exchange - would've sufficed. You would think that the burdens of muteness would weigh heavily enough upon the head of a child. O no! Whoever was dealing out the bum breaks, whoever was spooning out the woe, must've seen me and up-ended the whole fucken can because ah was dripping in the stuff - hard luck and ill fortune. (p. 152)

In the end, we sink with Euchrid into the swamp of human pollution. The Symbolists cite instances when deformity is not always an *imago diaboli* since some maimed beings had the 'magic power to cure disease, bring rain, and so on'.⁴⁷ Cirlot suggests that in one rite of sacrifice involving the abnormal being the sacrifice offers an illustration of the inverted function of the victim (deformed) since it shows how 'the inferior creature could be sublimated into a superior being' (p. 155). On the other end of the scale in which deformity is weighed up as a supernatural manifestation we find abnormality as prophetic. Jin-Yee in *Flawless Jade* (1989)⁴⁸ lists examples:

A small little finger, a small space between nose and mouth, pointy ears without lobes - all these things meant a shorter life, and Mother had always worried about me because I had them. And Second Sister had hardly any chin so she'd have to watch out for her future years, too; and Big Sister would spend money carelessly because of her big nose. Mother said her own nose was not nice, either - its nostrils tilted up on the side, and made it a nose that didn't mean much money. And Father's mouth was no good. It went sort of downwards and meant you couldn't keep your luck. (p. 12)

In ancient times, disease meant anything disabling, anything that manifested itself in a bodily abnormality, from a fever, or smallpox, to ophthalmia, to epilepsy, and paralysis. Disabling disease, whose cause was not visible, was attributed to supernatural interference. In many cultures, the deformed body

⁴⁷ J. E. Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, trans. Jack Sage (New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962), pp. 1-2.

⁴⁸ Barbara Hanrahan, *Flawless Jade* (St. Lucia: Queensland University Press, 1989).

appears to have been interpreted as a simple earthly artifact that bore the imprint of spiritual intervention. In the Christian tradition, disability has often been interpreted as punishment for a sin committed. Simply, and circularly, 'Considering illness as a punishment is the oldest idea of what causes illness' (Sontag, p. 89). In Peter Carey's *Oscar and Lucinda* (1988)⁴⁹ this type of cause and effect is comically exposed by the kitchen cook, who attempts an understanding of Theophilus Hopkins's belief that: 'if you were sick or injured, if you broke a leg, for instance, it was to punish you for a sin. He had heard the Damn God and seen the cut, but he had the order of events quite wrong and thought the cause was the effect and vice versa' (p. 62).

Hopkins's beliefs about the causality by sin of punishment are seen as primitive even by the nineteenth-century kitchen cook; but it is a belief that has found a place in some twentieth-century Australian literature. For example, in Tim Winton's *In The Winter Dark* (1988),⁵⁰ where guilt and demons lurk in the shadows, Ida Stubbs asks why she and her husband, Maurice, have no sons:

'You think we've done something?' she asked. 'Like "the sins of the fathers" and everything?'
He stopped the car. Right there. Right then.
'Ida, I've tried to tell you. The answer is yes.' (p. 112)

Although it is Maurice's brother who is disabled (blinded by gunshot) the blinding sets off a chain of events that causes Maurice to believe in the age-old connection between sin and punishment.

The distorted-body - distorted-spirit correlation can be found with few variations in the beliefs of the ancient Iranians, Indians, Egyptians, Babylonians, Assyrians, Greeks and Celts. The universality of the archetype

⁴⁹ Peter Carey, *Oscar & Lucinda* (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1988). All subsequent references are to this edition.

⁵⁰ Tim Winton, *In The Winter Dark* (Melbourne: McPhee Gribble, 1988). All subsequent references are to this edition.

confirms the principle in question. Such an archetype is perpetuated in contemporary literature, which often utilises particular mythologies and their cognates (such as those found in Arthurian Romance) to depict deformity.

The Irish tradition in Australia is acknowledged in many of the contemporary texts to be discussed. This Hibernicism has, naturally enough, meant a preponderant reliance on the Biblical, and the traditional European mythologies, Greek, Roman, and Celtic, above all others. Consequently, the portrayal of disability is a combination of the Hellenistic idea of disease or disability as punishment, and the Celtic response of terror. In Scandinavian, Scottish, and Celtic superstition, there are supernatural beings (usually the fairies) who are also deformed. In one strand of the many beliefs it is the deformity that identifies the person as supernatural. The defect is the signifier that betrays the 'human' as inhuman, though the fairy abnormalities were unusual by human standards (webbed feet, nasal defects). What is more important is that deformity de-humanised the deformed: they were characterised as fairies, believed to be fallen angels or closely related to the devil.⁵¹

In ancient Greek mythology metamorphosis and physical abnormality are common. Argus has a hundred eyes, the Cyclops but one; the Harpies blind with their claws. The Gorgon's stare turns beholders to stone. There are the monstrous Minotaur - half-bull, half-man; and the Satyrs - immortal goat-men. More obviously quasi-human is Hephaestus, whose over-reactive mother, Hera, displeased at the sight of his lameness, tossed out the imperfection that was her new-born son. In this account, an innocent child is punished. Another account attributes Hephaestus's lameness to the wrath of his father, Zeus, who threw him out of heaven for siding with his mother. Hephaestus was crippled as a consequence of his fall on to the Island of

⁵¹ Katharine Briggs, *A Dictionary of Fairies* (London: Penguin, 1976), p. 93.

Lemnos. In this account, a rebellious child is punished. The first account of Hephaestus's tale of lameness (where Hera disposes of her son) indicates metaphorically the familiar scriptural understanding that imperfection has no place in heaven. In the second account, physical imperfection is a direct consequence of *the fall from heaven* due to punishment by the father of heaven. Both accounts explicitly indicate the familiar understanding of disability as a result of divine punishment. In the first case, punishment is brought upon an innocent victim, and in the second, it is a result of disobedience. Deformity, sin, and criminality are once more conjoined.

The language of the aberrant body is discussed here to provide a further example of how particular usages in literature can further marginalise the deformed. Language, of course, comes from social experience; it is the encoding of a society coming to terms with nature, the un-natural, and the super-natural. Within the word 'teratology' we find encoded ideas such as 'marvel, prodigy, monster' (OED). Implicit in the definition is ambivalence toward the abnormal. The word monster has further linguistic links to the supernatural, for 'whether it derives from *moneo*, meaning to warn, or *monstro*, meaning to show forth, the implication is the same: human abnormalities are the products not of a whim of nature but of the design of Providence' (Fiedler, p. 20).

The language used in every culture to describe the deformed is similar enough to support a concept of polygenetic cultural primacy. The very contradictions and ambiguities with which we face the deformed are ingrained in the language we use. 'Teratology' is one example; 'stigma' another. Stigma can refer to a brand or mark, such as those resembling the wounds on the crucified body of Christ, and those thought to be supernaturally impressed on the bodies of certain devout persons (OED). But the stigmata can also

refer to the *marks* of the deformed, or the 'ill-favoured'. The latter is cognate with 'evil-favoured', both meaning to have a repulsive appearance, aspect, or features (OED). A more common example of a trope and its direct signification of 'worth' is encapsulated in the use of the word 'in-valid'. This is directly acknowledged in *The Transit of Venus* (1980)⁵²: 'At the foot of the bed [Sefton Thrale's] wife stood listening to the doctor: "There is some slight impairment." As if he were a damaged object in a shop, his value now reduced.' (p. 172; my italics). The doctor reduces bodily injury to a verbal, non-sentient idiom. The type of language used by the doctor in Shirley Hazzard's novel is attacked by Leslie Fiedler, who comments that the medical community: 'prefers words like "psychosocial management" and "growth problems," which demystify and euphemize human anomaly, to those like "freak" and "midget," which keep faith with its ambiguity and wonder so prized by poets' (Fiedler, p. 257).

Fiedler's attack on the language of the medical profession is made from a concern not with how the deformed human is perceived but with the threatened loss of subjects - the freak and midget - which when couched in organic language, provide a literary device available for myth-making by poets and, one would assume, by Fiedler himself. Fiedler is acknowledging the existence, emphasis, and ambiguity of a language which describes deformity; and the doctor in *The Transit of Venus* does in fact address deformity with euphemism. It is almost as though to confront the bodily damage is to affront the taboo.

A revision of the language used to describe the deformed might occur only when a re-vision of the images of the deformed has taken place, since any replacement quickly assumes similar negative associations. For instance,

⁵² Shirley Hazzard, *The Transit of Venus* (London: MacMillan London Ltd., 1980). All subsequent references are to this edition.

the term 'the disabled' is now rarely used; the usage of 'disabled person' is viewed as furthering a negative stereotype; the term 'differently-abled' already has its critics;⁵³ then there is 'that ultimately idiotic euphemism, adopted after long heartsearching discussions at the last Democratic Presidential Nominating Convention. . . the "challenged"'.⁵⁴ And while the phrase 'person with a disability' is coming into more frequent usage⁵⁵ it seems that until a more profound re-vision occurs, name-changing is only smoke-screening.

Finally, a particular perception is also implied by the *type* of language used. The language used to describe persons who are deformed further reveals the ambigenal attitude the deformed provoke. The two most general types of language used can be discussed in terms of Alan Watts' distinctions between 'factual' and 'organic' language.⁵⁶ The use of 'factual' language imparts a sense of truth or reality which is achieved through the authority of an implied detached observer. A sense of reality is achieved through the absence of the supernatural. An example of factual language is to be found in the description of Richard Miller's polio in *The Doubleman*. The damage caused by the polio virus is described as a result of 'the motor nerve cells in the spinal cord having been destroyed' (p. 20). Through the use of factual language description resembles statement, and as such implies the practical and the observably true. What is more important, it implies the normal in the face of abnormality. The sense imparted by the author who chooses to use

⁵³ Alan Gartner and Tom Joe, 'Conclusions' in *Images of the Disabled, Disabling Images*, p. 206.

⁵⁴ Leslie Fiedler, 'Pity and Fear: Images of the Disabled in Literature and the Popular Arts Old and New', in *Pity and Fear: Myths and Images of the Disabled in Literature Old and New*, Proceedings of a literary symposium sponsored by the International Center for the Disabled in collaboration with the United Nations (October 27, 1981), p. 7.

⁵⁵ Jeanne Boland Patterson, 'Disabling Language: Fact or Fiction?' *Journal of Applied Rehabilitation Counseling*, 19 (Spring 1988), 30.

⁵⁶ Alan W. Watts, *The Two Hands of God* (New York: Collier, 1975).

factual language in describing the deformed is one of recognition - that disability is an explicable phenomenon, not a supernatural one.

However, the presumed clear-eyed perception of the presumed detached observer disappears when descriptions of the deformed are couched in 'organic' language. Organic language is integrative language. It accepts the presence of opposites, of the concrete and of the implied. The onset of Richard Miller's polio is described as a 'Pain [which] struck [him] in the back like a great silver club' (*The Doubleman*, p. 19). In the same novel paralysis is personified as an 'intruder' (p. 18), with an expressed similarity to a Mr. Punch whose smile 'wished [Miller] nothing but ill' (p. 20). This is the language of myth, of poetry, and of artistry. It functions in a way that takes the reader beyond the normal experience of normal surroundings into a psychophysical involvement with the environment (Watts, p. 4). Simply put: 'the difference between poetic [organic] and factual language is of course that the former is associative and the latter dissociative' (Watts, p. 4). What then of the text that interprets deformity in factual *and* organic language? Combining both factual and organic language creates opposing tensions in the reader - an imbalance which is simultaneously feeding the rational and primitive responses. The rational is that which is observable and scientifically explicable; the primitive, a form of archetypal impulse which seeks to explain through imagination. It has been observed that the language of the image is organic language, which is the language of myth (Watts, p. 15). In many of the texts to be discussed, myth (and organic language) and social realism (and factual language) co-exist. The effect is this: having (through factual language) introduced the reader to the normal and the sane, the reader then becomes familiar (through organic language which is the language of image) with a sense of 'evil': 'evil is sensed pre-eminently, then, in what is strangely

alien - not sheer chaos and nonsense, but in profoundly odd and unnerving disturbances of the normal. (Watts, p. 34).

The deformed characters within the text serve as literal translations of all that is 'profoundly odd and unnerving', and are living examples of 'disturbances of the normal'. The semiotics of the deformed is, at base, a fascination with the irrational. Deformity carries with it its own fictions, and provides the language for a rich sub-text. It is not only the general physiology of 'being deformed' that provides a sub-text, but also the particular of the deformity (whether it is hunchback, dwarf, lameness, and so on) which carries with it additional fictions. We are interested in what these fictions are, and how they function within the narrative.



Chapter Two

Joseph 'Jonah' Jones

Louis Stone's *Jonah* (1911)¹ opens up a discussion on the role of congenital deformity as a device. What has arisen in this study is that deformity is often portrayed in close association with established mythologies, usually European, and that it is apparent that much that is going on in these novels is in fact a remythologising not only of the established myths but also of the myths surrounding deformity.

The following three chapters contain characters whose deformity is an *in utero* manifestation: born deformed, they have never experienced any other physical form. Joseph 'Jonah' Jones, the first character to be discussed, is a man with a hunchback whose nick-name brands him as a bringer of bad luck. Although there is no particular mythology associated with the 'hunchback', Jonah's surrogate father, Hans Paasch, acknowledges a vestigial connection between the deformed and the devil (p. 83). But even as Jonah rises above this archaic association by others of deformity with the underworld, his movement away from such associations mimics the movement away from the medieval idea that the antipodes was the lower hemisphere, and thus the underworld.² Jonah rises in a land that was at that time attempting to mould an Utopian identity. The contradictions present themselves from the outset, since the underworld would be antinomous to the paradisaal state, or Hy-Brasil. *Jonah* was published during the nationalist period when the 'Ideal of

¹ Louis Stone, *Jonah* (1911; rpt. Melbourne: Angus & Robertson, 1979). All subsequent references are to this edition.

² Roger Sherman Loomis, *Celtic Myth and Arthurian Romance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1927), p. 197.

an Australian Utopia' was at its strongest - a celebration of the 'rise of the common man [who] was at long last to come into his own'.³ In this novel we see, superficially at least, a fulfilment of the utopian idea of the common man coming to roost. But the common man of Jonah's type is antithetical to the utopian ideals put forward in Eleanor Dark's *Prelude to Christopher* (1941).⁴ Dark's novel explores the possibilities of eradicating the abnormal (and so, eradicating elements of the underworld) in favour of a paradisaal state achieved through a 'scientific' gene-pool of normals. Jonah's struggle is for self-creation; the world proposed by Dark's characters is in favour of controlled creation.

As well as the understanding of the word 'underworld' in a supernatural context, there is also the secular context of the criminal underworld. Stone further re-mythologises the connection between the criminal (Jonah is described as a larrikin) and the deformed. In Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516) robbers are marked by cropping their ears so that they are permanently marked as criminals: deformity is made the inescapable and outward symbol of some past transgression.⁵ Jonah, the social and physical deviant that the criminal and the deformed epitomise, inverts assumptions regarding the outward as a reflection of the inward.

In a cultural context, Jonah's inner re-moulding reflects a humanistic optimism that moral and social change is possible, and is not ultimately determined by outward appearance; on the other hand, the impossibility of outer re-moulding - Jonah's hunchback, and possibly even his Australian-ness - suggests a forced acknowledgement of the circumstances of his

³ T. Inglis Moore, *Social Patterns in Australian Literature* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1971), pp. 274-275.

⁴ Eleanor Dark, *Prelude to Christopher* (1934; rpt. Adelaide: Rigby Ltd., 1961). All subsequent references are to this edition.

⁵ Thomas More, 'Utopia', in *More's 'Utopia' and Its Critics*, ed. Ligeia Gallagher (Chicago: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1964), p. 12.

existence, rather than a pathological obsession or denial, all of which are *then put behind him*. Jonah is marked, but re-markable; deformed and capable of reforming; he is in fact, self-created.

The primitive response that associates the deformed with the supernatural - either other-world or other-wordly - is acknowledged in the novel. Jonah is seen as a 'misshapen devil with glittering eyes' (p. 37), and a 'misshapen devil . . . with snarling lips' (p. 43); he is as 'crafty as a devil' (p. 12); Jonah and Chook are referred to as 'the devil an' 'is 'oof!' (p. 23). Although the word 'devil' is used to refer to other characters in the novel, it is in their case simply a hypocorism. As this study hopes to demonstrate, one of the myths of deformity, and one which is perpetuated in Australian literature, is that when an *in utero* deformed person is portrayed in literature, part of the baggage that accompanies the icon of deformity is that the deformed person is associated in some way with otherness, understood not only in terms of not being the same, as object rather than subject, but also in a metaphysical sense. As we saw in the Introduction, deformity as an epiphenomenon of the supernatural is a construction of the mythopoeic imagination, by which the icon of deformity is presumed to reflect a distorted spirit. It is this assumption that causes fear and dread in the heart of Jonah's former employer, Hans Paasch, who:

[experiences] the vague, primeval distrust and suspicion of the deformed that lurks in the normal man, a survival of the ancient hostility that in olden times consigned them to the stake as servants of the Evil One. (p. 83)

Paasch compares Jonah to a servant of the Evil One; later he 'always spoke of Jonah with a vague terror in his blue eyes, convinced that he had once employed Satan as an errand-boy' (p. 106). Paasch, an immigrant from the Old World, voices the atavistic response to the deformed in which the icon of

deformity produces an identification with an otherness, in this case the Evil One.

The object of Jonah's unrequited love, Clara Grimes, comes to identify him with another entity: 'She frowned in an effort to think what the strange figure reminded her of, and suddenly she remembered. It was the god Pan, the goat-footed lord of rivers and woods, sitting beside her' (pp. 182-183). Clara's comparison of Jonah with Pan is intriguing, since the iconography of the deformed is interpreted as an ambivalent mixture of the human and inhuman; Jonah's hump is thought by her to be 'monstrous and inhuman' (p. 111). Pan's body is a composite of the divine and chthonic: he is a vague deity whose body is half-human and half-beast. As god of Arcadia, lover of music and the dance, god of woods and fields, Pan has also been interpreted as representative of all the old gods and, as such, of heathenism itself. In *A History of the Devil* (1973)⁶, William Woods lists a host of gods, Pan included, who 'have almost all at different periods been both gods and devils, depending on the observer's point of view' (p. 21). Woods attributes a changing morality brought about by Christian theology as the reason why several hundred years after the birth of Christianity Pan 'was to wake up as Satan' (89). The ambivalent attitudes towards Pan which constructed him as an antithesis is reflected in the hunchback character, Joseph Jones. Stone sets up other analogies between the two characters: Jonah, too, lives outside the moral law, and can charm with his modern-day syrinx, the mouth-organ, since Ada Yabsley 'listened spellbound' (p. 17). But the strongest connection between Pan and Jonah is their ambivalent identity, or iconic identity, which associates them with both good and evil.

Beyond the identification of the main character with this mythic figure, the language of myth itself functions in the structuring of the novel. Chapter

⁶ William Woods, *A History of the Devil* (London: W. H. Allen, 1973). All subsequent references are to this edition.

Nineteen, 'The Pipes of Pan', is a fusion of myth and fairytale, which together provide the framework of *Jonah*. By marrying the mythographic with fairytale, Stone leans on a traditional discourse which is specifically poetic. He takes a familiar European mythological character (Pan), and he takes the props, plot, and characters of a familiar fairytale ('Cinderella'), and then twists and re-shapes a New World protagonist out of Old-World structures. The contorting of the physical self of the principal character (Stone objected to the use of 'hero')⁷ is part of Stone's remoulding of European myths into an original, culturally specific Australian context. In a sense, it could be said that the deformed body of the main character informs the body of the text.

Although myths and fairytales 'speak to us in the language of symbols representing unconscious content', Bruno Bettelheim suggests that their appeal 'is simultaneously to our conscious and unconscious mind, to all three of its aspects - id, ego, and superego - and to our need for ego-ideals as well'.⁸ Bettelheim makes a distinction between the responses that the tales of myth and fairytales provoke: there is the unconscious *pessimistic* response that determines myth, and the *optimistic* response that fairytale demands (Bettelheim, p. 35). At the beginning of the novel Stone chooses to represent a deformed protagonist who is overwhelmingly identified with the dark image of paganism (as opposed to Pan's originally Arcadian identity). This appears calculated to elicit a negative unconscious response within the other characters, and within the reader.

On the other hand, Jonah's profession as a *shoemaker* is one that is well represented in fairytale and folktale. Two popular examples are *The*

⁷ John Ladeveze, 'The Writer of "Jonah"', *The Sydney Mail* (17 July 1912), p. 20.

⁸ Bruno Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979), p. 36. All subsequent references are to this edition.

Elves and the Shoemaker, of the Brothers Grimm, and *The Adventures of Pinocchio*, by Carlo Collodi. (Consistent with the punishing attitude to deformity, Pinocchio's nose is made abnormally long as punishment for his lies). But Jonah does not rely on elves, or on luck, to make his fortune. He relies on 'ard graft' (p. 119). Rather than carving out a son, as Geppeto does, Jonah carves out a career in order to 'exhibit' (p. 43) his son. The novel takes up the motif of the shoe and presents us with a transformed 'Cinderella'. In this novel in which myth and fairytale are in juxtaposition, the pessimistic response of myth is counteracted by the optimistic response of fairytale. Stone is aware of the prejudices that the portrayal of a deformed character can invoke consciously or unconsciously. By having Hans Paasch articulate the unthinkable (in civilised terms) about the deformed - the 'vague, primeval distrust and suspicion of the deformed that lurks in the normal man' - Stone has exacerbated, then disarmed, reader-response. It is by such paradoxical juxtaposition that Stone is able to convert the pessimism of prejudices against deformity into an expression of optimism.

Jonah is the analogue of Pan. Like Pan who ruled in the forests, he inspires *panic* in those who wander his domain at night. Jonah, the larrikin, rules as leader of the Push, which is described as a 'terror to the neighbourhood' (p. 4). He, too, is a leader of flocks, not a follower. But where Pan is in his element in the pagan Arcadia, Jonah rules and triumphs in near-barbaric inner-city Waterloo. When he succeeds in business, his triumph is an inversion of the defeat implied by Waterloo's name.

On the minuscule battleground of Waterloo, Jonah succeeds not in spite of his deformity, but because of it. His deformity re-forms him. When the Push beats up a bricklayer and almost causes his death, Jonah is made aware of how deformity creates for him a high visibility. He regrets his part in the assault because 'his hunchback made him conspicuous' (p. 42). The liaison

between Jonah and Clara is reduced to sneaking secrecy because 'Jonah's conspicuous figure made recognition very likely in the streets and parks of the city' (p. 185). Jonah bears the mark that defies invisibility. The abnormal body can never assume the same invisibility that allows the normal body to be subsumed and disappear into the aggregate body of society. The deformity, as an icon, ensures that the deformed individual will retain a separate and distinct identity. Jonah comes closer to portraying the image of Pan so often invoked by many other Australian writers⁹ in which Pan is a literary symbol of man's primal impulses, where 'will, effort, and action' are expressed through 'earth-vigour' (Moore, p. 292). Jonah's view of women 'was purely animal' (p. 29); the Push, moving in on a victim, feel 'the ancestral desire to kill, the wild beast within them licking his lips at the thought of the coming feast' (p. 35); they are 'drunk with the primeval instinct to destroy' (p. 38); and even the children of Cardigan Street sing nursery rhymes 'handed down from one generation to another as savages preserve tribal rites' (p. 20).

On the very first page of the novel, the Jonah-Pan association comes alive through descriptions of the carnage that maintains human existence. The original meaning of 'pan' (from the Greek meaning 'the nourisher' ¹⁰) is gruesomely invoked: sheep are 'skewered like victims for sacrifice'; a pig hangs 'pallid as a corpse'; butchers hack at meat for their customers who stand 'sniffing the odour of dead flesh, hungry and brutal - carnivora seeking their prey'.

Jonah's 'Arcadia' is an incongruous 'brutal pastoral'. The incongruity is a necessary part of the language of the novel, just as 'Newgate pastoral' is part of the language of John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera*, in which the

⁹ These writers include Kenneth Slessor, Dorothea Mackeller, William Baylebridge; and the artist Norman Lindsay, with whom Stone was personally acquainted.

¹⁰ Earnest Klein, *Klein's Comprehensive Etymological Dictionary of the English Language* (New York: Elsevier, 1971).

principal characters are pickpockets and highwaymen. Jonah's land is one whose creatures are continually in conflict, and whose inhabitants are dispassionately likened to various animals and insects. Jonah's environment is not the forest but what one might call the urban *landscape*: the ugly and the unnatural, of which Jonah is emblematic. For the settler Australian, the Australian landscape has its own myth that includes a perverse fascination with hostility, extremity, and inversions (for instance, as of the seasons). As Graeme Turner suggests: 'it is just these most harsh and bizarre aspects of the land which we perversely enshrine in our image of national character'.¹¹ Jonah's physique takes Turner's statements to their literal conclusion. But whereas Jonah's exterior self can never be changed, Jonah is capable of an interior change. Jonah's potential for change is a disruption of the icon of deformity which presumes the deformed body to be a reflection of a distorted spirit. The possibility of interior change is evidenced in Jonah's response to the landscape when he is sitting with Clara Grimes. His response indicates untapped riches within the man:

Ferry-boats were crossing the harbour, jewelled and glittering with electric bulbs, moving in the distance without visible effort with the motion of swans, the throb of engines and the swirl of water lost in the distance. It was a symphony in light, each detached gleam on the sombre shore hanging

Like a rich jewel in an Ethiop's ear.

Between the moon and the eye the water lay like a sheet of frosted glass; elsewhere the water rippled without life or colour, treacherous and menacing in the night.

Jonah turned and looked at the woman beside him. (p. 200)

Jonah must live with his external self; but his response to the landscape indicates that his inner self is capable of transforming the ordinary into the extraordinary. And though words such as 'treacherous and menacing' would

¹¹ Graeme Turner, *National Fictions* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1986), p. 36.

seem to indicate a residual hostile element, Jonah's general response shows that he is capable of transforming himself from a 'devil' into a morally positive being. Jonah's body embodies the characteristics of the land he lives in, though at the time the novel was published 'the kind of national type suggested by Jonah was hardly likely to be popular'.¹²

The extent to which it is possible to see Jonah as a national character, portrayed through myth that has been inverted to articulate the particular structure of Australian culture and its colonial roots, can be seen in the notion of the de-parented, which is an important concept in post-colonial literature in terms of discussing an emergent national, rather than colonial, identity. Jonah's status is as 'orphan'. His parentage is unknown, his parents having rid themselves of his 'unwelcome presence' (p. 31). As for the cultural specificity of myths, it is worthwhile noting that Pan is held to have been fathered by Hermes, patron of rogues, vagabonds and thieves. Jonah's imposed *Pan persona* supports, in part, the theory that the pessimistic response that determines myth stems from character action based on superego demands (Bettelheim, p. 31).

For Jonah, it is Paasch, a shoemaker and fiddler, who provides the shadowy presence of a surrogate father. His suitability for the role is accented by his abnormal fascination with the unwanted of his trade. His shop contains a 'half a dozen pairs of misfits', the pride of which is a 'monstrous abortion of a boot, made for a clubfoot'.¹³ Paasch clings to the boot 'with the affection of a mother for her deformed offspring' (p. 83). This statement of affection is inexplicable, an inversion of expectations and, indeed, of fact, given our knowledge of Jonah's abandonment by his parents in the novel, and, outside the novel, given the commonly held belief that

¹² Dorothy Green, 'Louis Stone's *Jonah: A Cinematic Novel*', *Australian Literary Studies*, 2 (June 1965), 20.

¹³ In E. C. Stedman's poem, 'Pan on Wall Street,' published in *The Blameless Prince* (1869) Pan is represented as club-footed, not cloven-hooved.

abnormal offspring experience hostility in the animal world in general, though this is in fact not true: negative reactions towards the deformed are more preponderant in tribes and societies.¹⁴ But as a collector of the unwanted of his trade, Paasch is the ideal surrogate parent. Indeed it is not until he realises he is facing ruin through Jonah that the compassionate Paasch experiences even 'suspicion of the deformed' (p. 83).

In business, Paasch (like the Paschal Lamb) becomes Jonah's 'first victim' (p. 105). Through Paasch, Jonah has 'inherited' his livelihood, a means to independence, and so a means to move away from 'the father'. A message common to fairytale and myth, and one in operation here, is that for maturation to occur, the parent must be defeated. Paasch's defeat comes with the opening of Jonah's shoe shop: Paasch 'swallowed hastily, with the choking sensation of a parent whose child has at last revolted' (pp. 82-83).

Jonah is no longer the child: he is the father. From the supposedly chthonic Jonah springs the autochthonic son. It is on seeing his son for the first time that Jonah changes, and not because he is 'a sentimental bloke after all' and 'admits to his feeling'.¹⁵ Stone is far too conscious a writer to string his story on so feeble a thread.

Jonah's change is an interior change, the only change that is possible, since the deformed are condemned to bear their exterior selves for life. Jonah has so far acted as he is expected to act in his role as outcast and misfit. The interior change occurs when Jonah rejoices that out of his grotesque body with its back 'thrust outwards in a hideous lump' he has created his son's 'straight back and shapely limbs'. His son, Ray, is perfection sprung from

¹⁴ Beatrice Wright, *Physical Disability: A Psychological Approach* (New York: Harper Bros., 1960), pp. 253-255: as quoted by Hanoch Livneh, 'Disability and Monstrosity: Further Comments', *Rehabilitation Literature*, 41 (Nov-Dec 1980), 280-283.

¹⁵ Adrian Mitchell, 'Fictions', in *The Oxford History of Australian Literature*, ed. Leonie Kramer (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 99.

imperfection. Jonah has created the proof that his physicality is not the result of devilish interference, but of chance:

His eye caught his shadow on the wall, grotesque and forbidding; the large head, bunched beneath the square shoulders, thrust outwards in a hideous lump. Monster and out-cast was he? Well, he would show them that only an accident separated the hunchback from his fellows. He thought with a fierce joy of his son's straight back and shapely limbs. This was his child, that he could claim and exhibit to the world. (p. 43)

After Jonah acknowledges his son Ray, his motivations are the clear-headed motivations of the self-serving, not the sentimental. To use an obvious simile: through his son, Jonah is able to shake from his back the burden of collective prejudices; for Ray is without blemish. Ray is the catalyst in Jonah's metamorphosis from 'devil' to 'human'. As Jonah observes, 'it broke on him slowly that he was taking his place among his fellows, outcast and outlaw no longer' (p. 45). Jonah moves from his larrikin identity towards maturity and financial success as a twentieth-century mark of 'respectability': 'He would have thrown up the sponge there and then, but for the thought of the *straight-limbed* child in Cardigan Street, for whom he wanted *money* - money to feed and clothe him for the world to *admire*'. (p. 84; my italics)

Jonah's love of Ray is that for *property*, an 'exhibit' for others to 'admire'. He caresses the then-unacknowledged child 'by stealth as a miser runs to his hoard' (p. 44). It is a love that is little different from Jonah's love of the shop he will open to make his fortune, the Silver Shoe: as far as Jonah is concerned: 'His son and his shop, he had fathered both' (p. 107). Ray provides the motivation; the Silver Shoe provides the means. Both are 'Currency'.¹⁶

Jonah's success is gained through using his son, and 'the father'

¹⁶ The common colonial term for children born in the colony was that they were 'The Currency'. See *The Australian National Dictionary*, ed. W. S. Ramson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

Paasch. When the roles are reversed and Paasch, now in financial difficulties, has grown 'childish in his distress' (p. 196), Jonah intervenes; but not because he is sentimental, as is so frequently argued. Neither does his intervention seem to be a wish to impress Clara with a philanthropic gesture. Rather, Jonah is a superstitious businessman, protecting his own interests. When Paasch tells Jonah with 'prophetic fury' that 'The great gods shall mock at you' (p. 197), Clara senses some primitive power behind his curse. She tells Jonah: 'if he dies, his blood will be on your head, and your luck will turn' (p. 197). Jonah needs no prompting, for 'Paash's words had struck a superstitious chord in Jonah, and he went out of his way to find a plan for relieving the old man without showing his hand' (p. 198). By offering money, he hopes to dispel Paasch's 'prophetic fury' and propitiate the gods. It could be that Paasch's 'prophetic fury' is part of the mythological pattern in operation here, for the 'Furies' were avenging spirits of retributive justice whose punishment is said to have extended to those who had 'defrauded the friends who trusted them, or who, having grown rich, kept their money to themselves, and gave no share to others'.¹⁷ It is this same sense of superstition that fuels Jonah's antagonism towards Paasch, who, he says, 'is no friend of mine. 'E told everybody on the Road that I went shares with the Devil' (p. 197).

Jonah moves away from identification with Paasch and his misfits. He moves away from associations of 'clubfoot boot' to 'silver shoe.' The shoe is central to the novel. Many allusions may be at work here, contributing to a rich texture through implicit allusion. In Greek mythology the lame Hephaestus made golden shoes that trod on air and water, just as Jonah's silver shoe 'trod securely on air' (p. 103). And this reader notes, without

¹⁷ Thomas Bulfinch, 'Stories of Gods and Heroes' in *Bulfinch's Mythology*, ('The Age of Fable': 1855; 'The Age of Chivalry': 1858; 'Legends of Charlemagne': 1863; New York: Avenel-Crown, 1978 edition), p. 270.

suggesting authorial intention, that the choice of a *silver* shoe is suggestive, since the so-called Silver Age of mythology was the age that through Pandora saw the appearance of women and bodily imperfection.¹⁸

Apart from its sexual significance, to which we shall return, the shoe in this novel also represents an important move into the world of fairytale. It is a move into an imaginative form that represents the process of positive human development. Not only does Jonah reach self-realisation (through financial independence, moral maturity, and the establishment of a positive, albeit limited, marital relationship), but the process of positive human development is extended beyond the text, by the form that the text takes. Through fairytale (the 'Cinderella' narrative), the reader is taken from identification with the overtly explicated prejudices against the deformed (explicated through the mythological allusions), to an acceptance of Jonah.

We are introduced to Jonah in terminology that suggests the unnatural and supernatural. But our introduction to the hunchback is also an invitation by Louis Stone to look beyond what is obvious:

A first glance surprised the eye, for he was a hunchback, with the uncanny look of the deformed - the head, large and powerful, wedged between the shoulders as if a giant's hand had pressed it down, the hump projecting behind, monstrous and inhuman. (p. 5)

The words 'a first glance' warn the reader to look beyond the physical, or the icon of the deformed. Further, the word 'uncanny' (that is, the familiar rendered unfamiliar; and also meaning the unnatural, or inciting superstitious fear in the beholder) places all deformed beings, including Jonah, in the 'other' realm with 'other' beings.

Stone's word choice appears to be a recognition on his part of one of the basic premises underlying the myth of deformity, that deformity is often

¹⁸ Charles Mills Gayley, *The Classic Myths in English Literature and in Art* (1893; rpt. Boston: Ginn and Co., 1911), pp. 10-11.

perceived as an epiphenomenon of the supernatural. Additionally, deformity provides a convenient system of signs, or an iconography, where a character's *in utero* physical abnormality will provoke predictable associations in the reader's mind. This gives the writer the choice of either exploiting or contradicting the predictable. In Eleanor Dark's *Prelude to Christopher*, there is a hunchback named Paul Hamlin. The portrayal of the Hamlin hunchback is an example of a writer's choosing to exploit the predictable. Through Gothic evocation, Dark uses the formal discourse and portrays the hunchback as thoroughly evil; he even has a laboratory in which to plot destruction. It is such a predictable use of the iconography of deformity that it risks trivialising the text, primarily because the 'character' is reduced to stereotype. Dark uses deformity to emphasise an automatic response of identifying deformity with evil. She capitalises on the premise that deformity defines an identity determined by the icon of deformity: it is too convenient a ready-made symbol; and falls into cliché.

A similar use of the icon of deformity exists in Arthur Morrison's *A Child of the Jago* (1894)¹⁹, a social-realist novel²⁰ set in the East End of London among street gangs and rival families, where the sinister presence of the hunchbacked Roper boy finally materialises into malevolent force. Probably the most famous of all hunchbacked characters (Shakespeare's *Richard III* included) would be Quasimodo in Victor Hugo's *Notre Dame de Paris* (1831). The presence of the hunchback is made all the more powerful by the inversion of the reader's expectations of deformity. Conversely Peter Zouche the hunchback in William le Queux's *The Hunchback of Westminster* (1904) 'had all that petty spite, that malevolence, that ache for sinister mischief

¹⁹ Arthur Morrison, *A Child of the Jago* (1894; rpt. Suffolk: Bookmarks-Boyden and Brewer, 1982).

²⁰ Arthur Morrison, like Stone, declined to call himself a realist novelist: Arthur Morrison, 'Preface to the Third Edition', in *A Child of the Jago* (1894; rpt. Suffolk: Bookmarks-Boyden and Brewer, 1982), p. 37.

that somehow one almost always finds with people who have been deformed from birth'.²¹

It is inevitable that the reader, and characters within the novel, will respond to the deformity before meeting and responding to the individual. The deformity precedes the character. In Stone's novel, Jonah the man is obscured by his *kyphosis* (the clinical term for 'hump'). 'Jonah' is subsumed and then identified and defined by his deformity: Ada dances not for Jonah, but 'before the hunchback' (p. 17); Clara sees a 'misshapen hunchback' (p. 111); Paasch sees 'the familiar figure of the hunchback' (p. 82); the piano salesman glances at 'the hunchback' (p. 123). Ray, says Jonah, 'is the only livin' creature that looks at me without seein' my hump' (p. 47). Though the Canon at Jonah's wedding 'seemed not to notice Jonah's deformity' (p. 53), the community reads the iconography rather than the individuality. The 'man' is identified by his defect. When deformity is used as an automatic icon it excludes the person who is deformed from personal identity. Deformity defines identity: what is seen is judged without trial. Aware of this natural response to the unnatural, Stone invokes the response, and then asks us to go beyond 'first glance'.

Primarily, *Jonah* is a peculiarly Australian version of the countless versions of 'Cinderella'. The fairytale structure of *Jonah* acts as an important counterbalance to the expectations that the mythological elements have provoked. The shoe and the foot motif are central to the Cinderella tale. In it, the prince gains possession of a tiny shoe, and searches for a tiny foot. The happy Freudian conclusion seems to be that if the shoe fits the foot, conjugal bliss is anticipated. Each of the many 'Cinderella' versions is faithful to the understanding that the 'unrivalled tiny foot size [is] a mark of

²¹ William le Queux, *The Hunchback of Westminster* (1904; rpt. London: Methuen, 1921), p. 37.

extraordinary virtue, distinction, and beauty' (Bettelheim, p. 236). The size of Jonah's Silver Shoe, which is fifteen feet long, would suggest that it represents a Cinderella without the 'extraordinary virtue, distinction, and beauty', and without the sexuality. The phrase *ex pede Herculem*²² serves aptly here. The very symbol of his shop, a large and empty shoe, suggests the division between love and riches.

Jonah's shop, filled with cut-price shoes for working girls, seems to introduce a 'Cinderella' motif. Children flock to the sound of hammering, and then 'precisely on the stroke of seven, the electric lights flashed out, the curtains were withdrawn, and the shop stood smiling like a coquette at her first ball' (p. 103). This is the fairytale of the street - the heroine is a coquette, not an innocent. Stone lays the foundation for his faulty Cinderella, Clara Grimes, who struggles in the midst of genteel poverty, and wrestles with the conflict between being attracted to money and repulsed by deformity.

The name 'Clara Grimes' would appear to be an oxymoron, fashioning yet another ambivalent identity. 'Clara' is from the Latin *clar-us*, 'clear' (OED), but more importantly the name 'Clara' is taken from an actual person.²³ 'Grimes' finds synonyms in words such as soot, smut, and coal-dust. Here is an example of Stone's style which liberally intersperses fact with fantasy. (A general genealogy of fantasy places fairytale as its progenitor, and myth as the all-encompassing ancestor.) There is no one central mode in this Sydney tale of the street, in which Clara Grimes is a namesake of her well-known folktale archetype, Cinderella the Ash-sitter.

When Clara enters the Silver Shoe, her apologies rekindle the Pan mythology, as her voice falls like the sound of 'harps and flutes on Jonah's

²² 'By the foot judge Hercules', or 'From the part judge the whole'.

²³ 'How I Wrote "Jonah"', typescript in the Australian Manuscripts Collection, La Trobe Library, State Library of Victoria, p. 2. That Stone actually knew a Clara indicates the combination of fact and fiction which takes form in this tale of 'luck', 'chance', and 'accidents'.

ear'. She exclaims 'my feet are rather a nuisance' (p. 109), and 'she had an abnormally high instep, and could only be fitted by one brand of shoe' (p. 110). She presents her foot with its 'high instep [which] was a distinguished mark of beauty among the larrikins, adored by them with a Chinese reverence' (p. 110).²⁴ But there is an important distinction, a warning, and a wonderful inversion: Jonah, the potential 'King of the Push' (p. 46) turned 'boot king' (p. 118) has the foot of his princess but not the shoe.

When Jonah meets Clara he is married to Ada. Hovering in the background is Mary Giltinan, the shop assistant. These are the three women with whom Jonah has some sort of 'romantic' encounter. Ada Yabsley is the mythic dryad of Jonah's larrikin youth. Jonah 'struck by her skill in dancing . . . courted her in the larrikin fashion' (p. 11). Ada's 'only talent lay in her feet' (p. 17). Ada is a pitiful creature who stirs 'no sentiment' in Jonah (p. 29). Though Jonah voices the familiar male fear of entrapment during their courtship, it is Ada who is trapped within a set of predetermined responses. The death of her mother, Mrs Yabsley, 'had removed the only moral barrier that stood between her and hereditary impulse' (p. 166). The suggestion is that Ada is following in her dead father's footsteps, for he 'scorning old age, had preferred to die of drink in his prime' (p. 11). Through loneliness and limited vision, she must turn away from Jonah, a 'misshapen devil'; and turns towards the substitute warmth offered by The Angel pub, with its 'unwinking stare like an evil spirit' (p. 34).

After Ada's death, it is Mary Giltinan, a shop assistant at the Silver Shoe, with whom Jonah settles down. Stone's wry joke is that Mary and

²⁴ There is speculation that 'Cinderella' was originally a tale from China, where mutilation in the form of foot-binding was once common, though the Chinese are not alone in their regard for feet. See William Graham Sumner, *Folkways* (1906; rpt. Boston, Massachusetts: Mentor Books, 1940), pp. 367-368.

Joseph are made for each other: Mary Giltinan and Joseph 'Jonah' Jones are the entrepreneurs of urban Australian. The name 'Giltinan' has many interesting meanings. The most obvious application is that she is guilty, or that she is merely 'gilt', a layer of gold, and not the real thing; then there is the suggestion of 'thief' (OED), both in her role as saleswoman, where 'customers were like clay in her hands' (p. 109), and in her role as usurper in her eventual triumph over her two predecessors, Ada and Clara. Mary's and Jonah's relationship is a marriage not of romance, but of the entrepreneurial spirit: Mary reaps the rewards because she is 'a born saleswoman' (p. 109), as in business 'Jonah the hunchback had found his vocation' (p. 88).

If a Cinderella can be found in this odd, new-world retelling of an old tale, it is Mary: 'For she worshipped [Jonah] in secret, grateful to him for lifting her out of the gutter, and regarded him as the arbiter of her destiny' (p. 111). Jonah marries Mary 'chiefly on account of Ray, who was growing unmanageable' (p. 216). Yet this seemingly sterile marriage is productive in a business sense: the second Mrs Jones inspects 'the suburban branches of the Silver Shoe which Jonah had opened under her direction' (p. 216). The shoemaker who searched to 'unearth the golden pile' (p. 66) of Mrs Yabsley's fortune is now opening 'suburban branches'. It can be concluded that having achieved financial success, Jonah too, lives 'happily ever after'.

One generally expects to find a loving couple at the end of a fairytale, and they are to be found in the sub-plot of Chook and Pinkey, who experience 'a rare kind of human relationship. Theirs is the success story' (Green, p. 19). The appeal of successful love above business success has led at least one writer to wish that Pinkey had 'been the heroine of the book and not a subsidiary character'.²⁵ While I agree that the interlacing of the two

²⁵ Ronald McCuaig, *Introd., Jonah*, by Louis Stone (1911; rpt. Melbourne: Angus & Robertson, 1979), p. xii.

plots is important in demonstrating the superiority of love above riches, it is the plot of Jonah and his deformity as a device with which this chapter is primarily concerned, since the iconic Jonah is central to the novel's structure. Jonah's failure to achieve a successful loving relationship is foreshadowed by Paasch, who prophesies: 'Money you shall have in plenty while I starve, but never your heart's desire' (p. 197). Hunchbacks have not always been excluded from romance: through the magic of love in Perrault's fairytale 'Riquet with the Tuft' Riquet's 'hump on his back seemed merely the natural stance of a man of the world, and the dreadful limp . . . no more than a slight, attractive stoop';²⁶ the hunchback Archibald Craven in *The Secret Garden* (1910-1911)²⁷ also finds love, though possibly through the magic of money: the now-deceased mistress of Misselthwaite Manor is thought to have married him for his money (p. 16). Jonah will have to settle for money as his heart's desire. As Clara's mother, the Duchess, succinctly comments: 'I have heard of your *romantic career*' (p. 119; my italics).

For Jonah, Clara the false Cinderella is the 'second passion of his life' (p. 175) after Ray; but in the context of Jonah's drive to achieve some degree of normality and respectability, she is a dangerous woman capable of making Jonah 'forget his business instincts for a minute' (p. 111), and later, of transforming Jonah into 'the old-time larrikin' (p. 215). The scene in the sitting-room after Ada's funeral is important for what it reveals about Jonah's moral maturation, and his recognition that the impoverished Clara is morally bankrupt. In the final paragraph of the novel, Clara's power to destroy the essence of a man who has shown himself capable of 'doing the right thing' is depleted by her having married. The temptation to substitute money for love is expressed by this false Cinderella: 'The slight sense of physical repugnance

²⁶ Perrault, 'Riquet with the Tuft', in *Perrault's Classic French Fairy Tales*, trans. copyright, Jonathan Cape Ltd. (1697; rpt. New York: Meredith Press, 1967), p. 116.

²⁷ Frances Hodgson Burnett, *The Secret Garden*, ed. Dennis Butts (1910-1911; rpt. The American Magazine. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).

to the hunchback had vanished since his declaration. He and his shop stood for power and success. What else mattered?' (p. 205) Jonah's reaction to Clara similarly equates love with money. On first meeting her 'He felt he must keep her at any cost' (p. 10).

Clara, enamoured of the Silver Shoe, learns its history with astonishment: it is 'like a *fairy-tale* that happened to be *real*' (p. 180; my italics). In the chapter 'The Pipes of Pan', the text is an interlacing of the mythic, fairytale, and the real. As Jonah and Clara discuss the Silver Shoe, they are 'surprised by a sudden change in the light' (p. 180). With the change of light comes a change in the language, as fantasy transforms the real: 'The buildings floated in a liquid veil with the unreality of things seen in a dream' (p. 180). The surrounding landscape is also transformed:

On the left lay low hills softly outlined against the pearly sky; hills of fairyland that might dissolve and disappear with the falling night; hills on the borderland of fantasy and old romance.

And as they watched, surprised out of themselves by this magic play of light, the sun's rim dipped below the skyline, a level lake of blood, and the fantastic city melted like a dream. The pearly haze was withdrawn like a net of gossamer, and the magic city had vanished at a touch. The familiar towers and spires of Sydney reappeared. . . . (pp. 180-181)

The couple are described as having been 'touched for a moment with the glamour of a dream' (p. 181). 'Glamour' is an interesting word here, since in faery it was the magic that fairies cast over the senses so that things were perceived as the enchanter wished.²⁸ The spell is broken by the wail of a cornet from a Manly steamer, but is re-cast when Jonah plays his mouth-organ. This chapter best illustrates the marrying of fairytale and mythology: when Jonah takes out his mouth-organ, a modern-day syrinx or Pan-Pipe, he captures momentarily the elusiveness of love as he charms Clara, significantly

²⁸ Katharine Briggs, *A Dictionary of Fairies* (1976; rpt. London: Allen Lane, 1977), p. 191.

enough, by the river:

He was no longer ridiculous. The large head, wedged beneath the shoulders, the projecting hump, monstrous and inhuman, and the music breathed into the reeds set him apart as a sinister, uncanny being. She frowned in an effort to think what the strange figure reminded her of, and suddenly she remembered. It was the god Pan, the goat-footed lord of rivers and woods, sitting beside her, who blew into his pipes and stirred the blood of men and women to frenzies of joy and fear. (pp. 182-183)

Clara is 'hypnotized' and 'a pagan voluptuousness spread through her limbs' (p. 183), before the spell is broken and she stumbles back to the ferry at Cremorne Point. Stone's use of precise location and authenticity of dialect imparts a verisimilitude unusual in fairytales. But as with Stone's warning on seeing Jonah, one must not be deceived by a first glance. Stone's description of the street that 'glittered like a brilliant eruption with the light from a row of shops' (p. 3) is interspersed with a description of the flesh-hungry inhabitants. They are no more real simply because they are brutal. Stone warns us, through Jonah, to look beyond what meets the eye. Stone has said that he 'haunted the markets for weeks . . . [until he] got the real atmosphere'.²⁹ It is indeed atmosphere which Stone attempts to evoke, and this is precisely what he achieves through incorporating fairytale and mythology. What we call atmosphere is an intangible; it is an experience or perception of substance - it does not attempt to *be* that substance. And yet *Jonah* has been condemned for not being precisely what it does not intend to be: 'Its realism is only superficial. The characters, for example, are presented in clear outline, but not substantially; distinguished only by the exaggerated features of their personality' (Mitchell, p. 99). As this comment omits to mention Jonah's hunchback, I assume that the writer felt that deformity was of little if any semiotic importance, or perhaps that the hunchback is merely an 'exaggerated feature'. Such criticism of the novel's 'unreality' stems from

²⁹ H. J. Oliver, 'Louis Stone', *Australian Writers and Their Work Series* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 8.

basic misunderstanding of the main protagonist, and the novel itself. It is folly to look at mythology and fairytale as veridical accounts of common reality; but prudent to recognize that truth can arise through these forms.

Dorothy Green makes a case for realism as the essential mode in terms of seeing *Jonah* dramatically, as a cinematic novel (Green, p. 31). She acknowledges that this perhaps was not Stone's intention, yet cautiously proposes a possibility that Stone had knowledge of the cinematic process. The comment suggests that Green also feels that other things, or other processes, are going on in Stone's novel³⁰; and her article is an attempt to pinpoint a possible 'other thing'. She counters A. G. Stephens' criticism that *Jonah* is a succession of scenes by asking: 'But supposing that was what Stone intended it to be?'³¹ Understandably, there are bound to be problems and anachronisms in attempting to define one art-form by comparing it with another. It is not necessary to digress into a history of film, for Green's case for *Jonah* as a cinematic novel is an admirable one. But her case for *realism* in the novel *Jonah*, based on a comparison with the art of cinematography, needs to be clarified and taken an extra step.

Vachel Lindsay and Hugo Munsterberg, Formative film-theorists in the U.S.A. around the time of *Jonah*'s publication, saw film not as 'a mere record of motion but as an organized record of the way *the mind* creates a meaningful reality'³² (my italics). Their dictum was that film was the medium not of the world but of the mind. Film theorists of the time argued against 'reality', which they defined as characterised by time, space, and causality. What film did, or as these theorists would say what the photoplay

³⁰ Dorothy Green has verified this. Personal communication from Dorothy Green, dated 24th November 1989.

³¹ Dorothy Green, 'Louis Stone's "Jonah": A Cinematic Novel', *Australian Literary Studies*, 2 (June 1965), 21.

³² J. Andrew Dudley, *The Major Film Theories: An Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), p. 19.

did, was to tell a story by overcoming the characteristics of time, space, and causality; in other words, the realities of the outer world. Indeed, for the Formative theorists, the cinematic experience was closer to the world of dreams. Even Andre Bazin, a later film-theorist in the Realist tradition, likened audience-response to cinema as a 'window on their dreams' (Dudley, p. 148); and Hollywood is often spoken of as 'the dream factory'.

And here we have the connection between what Green rightly conceives as a cinematic novel - not in terms of linking *reality* with cinema, but in terms of linking *dream* with cinema. Dream is what links cinema, *Jonah*, and the fairytale. Unlike the individual dream shaped by the individual unconscious mind, the cinematic and fairytale offer, like myth, a controlled collective dream:

[the] result of common conscious and unconscious content having been shaped by the conscious mind, not of a particular person, but the consensus of many in regard to what they view as universal human problems, and what they accept as desirable solutions. (Bettelheim, p. 36).

Green's vision of *Jonah* as a cinematic novel is so keenly expressed that she interprets as good camera-direction one of Stone's more overt fairytale (and mythic) links - that of giants and Circular Quay. Since it appears 'like a bite from a slice of bread' (p. 174), it cannot merely, as has been proposed, be seen as being presented 'like a moving picture'.³³

Giants provide an example of exemplary figures that exist both in myth and in fairytale, and they are a pervasive force in the novel. Jonah's deformity is described in terms which imply a giant as its cause; Jonah's head, wedged between his shoulders, looks 'as if a giant's hand had pressed it down' (p. 5). Again, the image of the giant is evoked, for instance, when children, 'fascinated by this monster of a boot, [wish] to see it again in dreams on the

³³ Green, p. 25.

feet of horrid giants' (p. 81). The organ in the church where Jonah is married is described as 'the plaything of a giant' (p. 53).

In this novel, Time is measured in 'strokes'; it is a place where 'the larrikin never grows old' (p. 4). The words 'accident' and 'luck' occur frequently. Jonah's deformity is 'only an accident' (p. 43); Ada's pregnancy is similarly dismissed - 'accidents were common' (p. 13); meeting Clara is 'an accident' (p. 195); and Ada's death occurs in Chapter Twenty-Two which is titled 'A Fatal Accident'. It is 'by great good luck' for Jonah that a cab comes and whisks the crippled bricklayer who is close to death off to hospital (p. 40); Jonah's mouth-organ was 'won in a shilling raffle' (p. 16). As for Jonah's flourishing business, he tells the Duchess: "Some people think it's luck, but I tell 'em it's 'ard graft" (p. 119).

The primitive response of others towards 'Jonah the larrikin, a hunchback, crafty as the devil, monstrous to the sight' (p. 12), prompts Jonah to think to himself that others now see him as a successful hunchback shoemaker, though his business etiquette is little different from his street etiquette:

Everything that he touched turned to gold. Outsiders confused his fortune with the luck of the man who draws the first prize in a sweep, enriched without effort by a chance turn of Fortune's wrist. They were blind to the unresting labour, the ruthless devices that left his rivals gaping, and the fixed idea that shaped everything to its needs. In five years he had fought his way down the Road, his line of march dotted with disabled rivals. (p. 105)

Here, **expressed** in unsentimental language, is the victim of disability disabling others - physically and economically. From his early days of illegal and the violent methods of kicking his rivals (carefully wiping the bricklayer's blood from his tan boots 'of which he was very proud' (p. 41)), Jonah now has a legal stranglehold on his economic rivals in which the Silver Shoe is itself a means of putting the boot in. In fairytale it is often the one who is least

equipped who is lucky, and Jonah has not born his nick-name lightly. In *Tales from Eternity* Rosemary Haughton suggests that the ordinary protagonist is one who occupies 'the psychological equivalent of a lowly social position'.³⁴ Jonah's lowly social position is unquestionable in his role as larrikin; his moral and physical being deformed. Stone places Jonah the hunchback in the midst of a distorted Eden, a displaced Arcadia; where food is rank, where human beings are likened to their animal quarry, and have such habits as thieves 'sniffing the odour of dead flesh, hungry and brutal - carnivora seeking prey' (p.3). Recognisable here is the author's juxtaposition of factual language with the organic language of myth. By combining the two, Stone has created a sense of pull rather than imbalance in the reader. The factual language creates a sense so *un-fairytale-like* that it is understandable that many have tried to apply the simple tag of realism to the novel.

Stone points out in the opening line of description of his primary character that what we see is deceptive. It is necessary to go beyond what *seems* real. Stone admitted freely that in writing *Jonah* he looked to actual experience for inspiration. Actual experience, as we have seen, has revealed many happy coincidences in the world of fact, by which luck and chance occur gratuitously. Characters in Stone's novel had real shadows in Stone's world.³⁵ Stone had worked as a bootmaker in Regent Street; he had in fact seen a hunchbacked shoemaker at work; he modelled his characters on relatives, acquaintances, and chance encounters; allegedly had himself smuggled into a two-up school; and physically haunted Paddy's Market in an attempt to capture 'the real atmosphere'.³⁶ But in an interview a year after *Jonah's* publication Stone made it quite clear that he objected to being termed

³⁴ Rosemary Haughton, *Tales from Eternity* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1973), p. 21.

³⁵ 'How I Wrote "Jonah"' typescript (pp. 1-3).

³⁶ 'How I Wrote "Jonah"' typescript (p. 3).

a 'realist,' and that he considered realism to be totally opposed to his interpretation of life (Ladeveze, p. 20). The interviewer persisted with the claim that the character of Mrs Yabsley was 'a distinct excursion into realism', and in her case Stone capitulated, but with significant reservation: 'I stripped myself of my knowledge of art, music, and literature, and presented my readers with the portrait of the illiterate washerwoman, myself in disguise' (Ladeveze, p. 20).

Characters in fairytales are, by the very nature of the story-telling, 'types' insisting on their own artifice. The word 'yabber', meaning to 'talk incessantly',³⁷ shows that Mrs Yabsley too is a 'type', for 'there was no tongue like hers within a mile' (p. 12). Green's statement that Stone 'can make an assertion without resorting to symbolic names' (Green, p. 30) may be correct, but in fact Stone uses symbolic names profusely (though perhaps without *resorting*). Jonah is a 'type': he is the central device in a complex re-working of old forms that are bent, twisted, renewed. Consider Jonah's mythographic relation with 'Paasch' (one of meanings of the word *Paasch* is 'Easter', OED), and the paradoxical reciprocity of 'the father' as the sacrificial victim who is overthrown while the son rises. This sort of cross-complexity within the novel explains why it cannot be slotted into any one neat formula. Consider Chook, 'the cock of Cardigan Street' (p. 78), and the alliance between Fowles and Partridge; consider Mrs Partridge with her rapid, irregular flight from house to house (and whose hat and its drooping plumage is her undoing); Mrs Swadling, and Mrs Yabsley; and consider Clara 'Grimes', who encounters her distorted prince in a shoe-store where finding no shoe to fit the proffered foot, the 'boot king' manufactures one.

To look only for realism is to misunderstand Stone's intent. According to Bettelheim, mythology communicates a feeling of one's uniqueness, a

³⁷ *English Dialect Dictionary*, ed. Joseph Wright (London: Oxford University Press, 1961).

sense that awe-inspiring events happen to unordinary mortals, including surely the deformed; while events in fairytales ~~are~~ are often unusual and most improbable, they are always presented as ordinary, something that could happen to you or me or the person next door when out on a walk in the woods. Even the most remarkable encounters are related in casual, everyday ways in fairy tales' (Bettelheim, p. 37)

The over-enthusiastic case for realism, and criticism of the novel for *lack* of realism, both show an oversight in understanding the basic device of myth and fairytale as offering a system of allusion which enables the reader to enter into the text. As Mrs Yabsley says to Jonah about love, 'I tell yer the best things in life are them yer can't see at all, an' that's the feelin's' (p. 46). She tells no one in particular, and everyone in general, her views about life on the streets and life in a book:

I never see any play equal ter wot 'appens in this street, if yer only keeps yer eyes open. I see people as wears spectacles readin' books. I don't wonder. If their eyesight was good, they'd be able ter see fer themselves instead of readin' about it in a book. (p. 19)

Stone has said of Mrs Yabsley that 'Her remarks, wise or otherwise you must credit to me'.³⁸

The novel intersperses and juxtaposes myth and fairytale. The mythic creates an unconscious pessimistic response that is counteracted by the optimistic response of fairytale. Both forms are made culturally specific within the context of an urban Australia. There is even an Australian version of the Joseph and Mary Christian family, one who is creating a future of competitive self-reliance, while throwing hand-outs to a superseded, moribund 'parent'. Stone's wry wit is evident in the distortion of the mythologies, in the twisting of a fairytale, and in Jonah, who is a wry comment on the nature of the Australian hero - a peculiar combination of beast

³⁸ 'How I Wrote "Jonah" ' typescript (p. 1).

and prince.

Ronald McCuaig describes Jonah as 'the larrikin magnified into a businessman, a well-marked Australian type' (McCuaig, p. viii); this identification of Jonah as a 'well-marked Australian type' seems to put emphasis on Jonah's larrikin status and ignore his deformity as 'marked'. It appears that McCuaig finds criminality preferable to deformity, though both have been linked historically.³⁹ In literature, 'disability has often been used as a melodramatic device. . . . Among the most persistent is the association of disability with malevolence.⁴⁰ Paul Longmore goes on to cite examples of such characters: Doctor No, Doctor Strangelove, and the one-armed murderer in the television series 'The Fugitive'. Jonah overcomes these stereotypes and prejudices, and he survives. Dorothy Green's comment that the national type suggested by Jonah 'was hardly likely to be popular' comes closer to recognising a reader-resistance to the physically-marginalised. De-parented, marginalised, unloved, but with the capacity to love, Jonah is a product of self-creation.

³⁹ Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, trans. Richard Howard (1967; rpt. Vintage Books: New York, 1973).

⁴⁰ Paul K. Longmore, 'Screening Stereotypes: Images of Disabled People in Television and Motion Pictures', in *Images of the Disabled, Disabling Images*, ed. Alan Gartner and Tom Joe (New York: Praeger, 1987), p. 66.



Scene from the ABC-TV 1982 Production of Louis Stone's **Jonah**

Courtesy of Victoria Hollick, Stills Co-Ordinator ABC-TV

Chapter Three

John Luke Hanna: 'Jackie'

Although *Swords and Crowns and Rings* ¹ won the Miles Franklin award for 1977 it has received little critical attention.² Perhaps because of the novel's occasional lapses into the sentimental it has been allocated the status of 'popular novel'; but there is much within it that deserves critical attention, particularly when the novel is examined through one of its major characters, a dwarf named Jackie Hanna.

Of the physically abnormal characters discussed in this study dwarfs predominate³. Mythologically, dwarfs have played a significant part in the history of the antipodes: in his book on Arthurian dwarfs Harward devotes a chapter to 'Bilis, King of the Antipodes';⁴ Loomis cites examples of twelfth-century works in which in the Celtic tradition the dwarf Belin was king of the Antipodes.⁵ Belin had a giant brother, Brien: and the dualistic configuration of the dwarf and giant is consistent with the fiction of the dwarf as an incomplete Other who finds a symmetry in relationship with a giant. The dwarf-giant relationship is acknowledged in the social-realist novels *Swords and Crowns and Rings*; C. J. Koch's *The Year of Living Dangerously*; and

¹ Ruth Park, *Swords and Crowns and Rings* (1977; rpt. Melbourne: Thomas Nelson, 1986). All subsequent references are to this edition.

² Possible reasons for the general lack of criticism are discussed in F. C. Molloy, "Hearts of Gold and a Happy Ending": The Appeal of "The Harp in the South", *Australian Literary Studies*, 14, No. 3 (May 1990), pp. 316-324.

³ Park uses the plural form of 'dwarfs' throughout, which for the sake of consistency is repeated here and throughout this study.

⁴ Vernon J. Harward, Jr., *The Dwarfs of Arthurian Romance and Celtic Tradition* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1958).

⁵ Roger Sherman Loomis, *Celtic Myth and Arthurian Romance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1927), p. 197.

James McQueen's *Hook's Mountain*.

Jackie Hanna is only one of the many physically unusual characters in *Swords and Crowns and Rings* who resist conformity and de-individualisation, and whose deformity signals a resistance to moulding. This is metaphorically portrayed through a reference to the mythic Procrustes who physically stretched or shortened his victims in order to make them fit one of his two beds. It is possible to entertain the notion of Procrustes as the mythological anticipator of genetic cloning, which seeks also to create unvarying identical products by rendering individual difference obsolete. Park invokes the Procrustean ideal while simultaneously populating the novel with abnormals and deviants.

Eccentric characters, however minor, populate many of Park's novels. For instance, in *Pink Flannel* (1955)⁶ Cocky Cuskelly is accompanied by the easily recognisable baggage of deformity myths: he is a dwarf 'with the face of a mischievous old fairy, and a two-storey head' (p. 9). His special intelligence is implied, for though he never went to school: 'Cocky was keen as a whip and could read, write, and figure much better than his parents' (p. 9). Children are reluctant to play with Cocky: 'their instincts put a brake on their charity' (p. 10); and Cocky's inhuman status is implied in the comment that 'the only weakness in the inhuman little creature's makeup was his queer deformed head' (p. 10). Cocky, the *lusus naturae*, finally joins the circus and breaks his neck. Written more than twenty years later, *Swords and Crowns and Rings* presents Jackie Hanna, a more fully-realised character; what the Cocky Cuskelly sketch reveals is that Park was well aware of some of the myths and responses that deformity and dwarfism inspire.

⁶ Ruth Park, *Dear Hearts and Gentle People* (originally titled *Pink Flannel*, Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1955; rpt. Ringwood: Penguin, 1986). All subsequent references are to this edition.

The primary concern of *Swords and Crowns and Rings* is with Australia and its politics in the years 1907-1932, with particular emphasis on the depression era. The blood, sweat, tears, and struggle of that era are summed up in the opening sentence which describes the birth of Jackie Hanna: 'In a red weeping dawn the child was born at last' (p. 3). In addition to the fictions attached to deformity (sin, criminality, punishment) dwarfism is accompanied by a variety of particular fictions. As Fiedler notes: 'every child knows what a Dwarf is long before he has met one, and it therefore remains hard for all of us ever to really see past the images first encountered in stories'.⁷ Jackie's dwarfism is imperative as a figurative device: the dwarf, already well established in fairy- and folk-tale, and yet existing also in the real world, reflects the novel's attempt to incorporate legend with a social-realist economic and political thesis. That the days of merely digging for gold in the ground are over is expressed in Park's invoking the legend that dwarfs are 'the finest goldsmiths and jewellers in the world' (p. 7), and that 'dwarfs dig gold' (p. 17); and then showing Jackie failing in his quest to locate other dwarfs and gold. What he does (unwittingly) find on the fringe of the old gold town of Kingsland are prospector's graves; it is this same location that is to become a camp for the unemployed during the depression. There is an element of irony evident in placing a dwarf, with the accompanying dwarf-fictions of bejewelled riches, in a depression-era setting. *Swords and Crowns and Rings* is informed by an interchange of myth and social realism, with dwarfism providing the connection.

At Jackie's birth the almost comical reaction of Walter Hanna to his son's dwarfism reveals the myth of deformity that has linked it with the fault of women at least since the Silver Age and the errors of Pandora: Walter

⁷ Leslie Fiedler, *Freaks: Myths and Images of the Secret Self* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978), p. 39.

'belted his wife across the face. "You did it, you sow. It's your fault, smoking like a chimney all the time you were carrying him, I told you, I told you every day" '. (p. 4) Hanna is convinced that his child's deformity is a punishment. After dismissing the possibility of his own personal fault he reaches an unsure conclusion, again concerning Peggy:

After the birth of Jackie he had an endlessly busy conviction that he had done something wrong. He thought the child's deformation a judgment. But why?

It seemed to him that his life had been blameless, indeed, exemplary He'd never laid a hand on [Peggy] in a place that Father Link would not approve. He was, in fact, undersexed almost to the point of impotence, and had found distasteful the warm-blooded Peggy's passionate disposition as disclosed in the marriage bed.

Could that be the reason for the mishap with the child? It wasn't natural for a woman to be the way Peggy was, was it? (p. 5)

Peggy's reaction - that she will rectify the 'mess God Almighty had made of her son' (p. 6) - is a denial of individual fault and an affirmation of divine fallibility, not divine punishment. Peggy's attitude towards dwarfism is one of three presented: the doctor's comment that 'there have been plenty of dwarfs that have led natural happy lives, married full-sized people and produced full-sized children' (p. 6) implies a belief that happiness can be achieved in the context of some association with average height. Since the possibility of an alliance with another dwarf is never considered, the assumption is an ableistic one, in which 'normal' height is desirable. Whereas the doctor looks to Jackie's future, Walter Hanna can only look to the past and the treatment of dwarfs historically. When he is handed books on dwarfs:

[he] turned the pages, bitterly eyeing the paintings of pale-eyed, potato-nosed Flemish dwarfs; arrogant, richly clad diminutive women who belonged to queens and duchesses; Italian feasts, all lanterns and shadows and flushed revellers, gathered about a jolly little monster who sprang from an ornamented pie.⁸ With a cry of outrage he slammed shut the book. (p. 7)

⁸ This could be a reference to the young dwarf Jeffery Hudson. He was later portrayed by Sir Walter Scott, in *Peveril of the Peak*. See Fiedler, p. 56.

Rage is the sound of what cannot be articulated: and his outrage is understandable. The dwarfs are portrayed as possessions: they are dolls and curiosities who compete with the family pet, with which they are frequently portrayed, as if to suggest a further ambiguity regarding their human status (Fiedler p. 76). Walter Hanna's view is limited to what is presented to him on the page: and the father refuses to patronise. For Walter there can be no dignity in being merely cute or a possession. Peggy comes to terms with dwarfism by mixing sentiment with brutality:

[she] slapped Jackie as she recited the list of his blessings, his good eyesight, his strength, his home, his ability to be like those other heroic little people in the books. She slapped him to make him remember and wept stormily because she had to. (pp. 7-8)

The notion that 'little people' are somehow 'heroic' is a sentimental one; but Peggy punctuates sentimental clauses with the reality of pain in preparation for Jackie's own later expression of rage, which echoes his father's: 'It was rage at life, fate, whatever it was that had distorted him in the womb and made all his life dependent upon that fact, no matter what hopeful lies his parents had told him' (p. 273). Leonard Kriegel traces an evolution of three types of cripples (to use Kriegel's terminology) in North American literature: The Demonic, The Victim, and The Survivor. We recognise Jackie in the role of The Victim Cripple in Kriegel's following description of the type: 'Rage though he will, he must learn to accept the idea that what has been taken has also been given. He is the debtor indebted to himself, filled with the need to affirm and deny at the same time'.⁹ It is when Jackie is 'stripped of all the world held valuable, job, roof, wife, son, human love' (p. 429) that his rage gives way to acceptance. Jackie moves from Victim to Survivor status, described as occurring when one 'gets by without the expectation of any other

⁹ Leonard Kriegel, 'The Wolf in the Pit in the Zoo' in *Social Policy*, 13 (Fall 1982), 22.

reward than that of getting by' (Kriegel, p. 23).

Childhood and fairytales are compatible; but once Jackie has left the comparative anonymity of childhood where his size is close to average and makes his dwarfism appear invisible, he will be forced to acknowledge the reality of his dwarfism through the experience of denial, and rage; and then, acceptance: of 'the large, muscular calves and thighs, the pot belly, and the backside that curved out as if to balance it. The angular deformity above and below the knee-joint was now very pronounced' (p. 387).

Jackie's inner-growth process is marked by his journey out of Kingsland to three major locations. The first is High Valley. Unlike his counterpart in name, Jack from 'Jack and the Bean-Stalk', all normals are giants for Jackie Hanna; when Jackie enters High Valley, the shadowy, imperceptive existence of the Linzes suggests that these ogres are not entirely real, or normal. The father of Maida (Jackie's introduction to the corporeal) is likened to some 'dread mythical creature' who looms like a 'smoke-genie' (p. 87) in Jackie's mind. Although Martin Linz, the grandfather, 'seemed like a figure from a fairytale', (p. 71) Jackie's lesson at the Old World Linzes is that fairytales are inadequate preparation for the 'real' world. This period in Jackie's life could be termed 'the un-making' of many of the dwarf myths instilled by his mother, Peggy Hanna.

After Jackie marries Maida he moves to the second significant location, Morgan's Crossing. By moving to Morgan's Crossing and removing himself from conspicuousness Jackie is lulled into ordinariness and slips into a brief period of invisibility where his dwarfism is de-emphasised. In fact, that Jackie 'was a dwarf passed completely from Jackie's mind. He was Jack Hanna of Morgan's Clearing, Lufa's mate' (p. 228). His is an unearned invisibility since he has removed 'the dwarf' from the curious gaze of the

aggregate body. By consciously removing himself from the gaze of others he has admitted difference as the determinant of his life. With the fateful arrival of Maida's mother, Jackie must acknowledge self-deception: 'Now [he] began once again to be self-conscious about his lack of height and uneasily avoid standing next to Mrs Linz, lest she should say he was a little button, or ask could she reach something down from the shelf for him' (p. 246).

Forced out into the world after the fatal fire and inquest, Jackie loses his invisibility, and relearns that deformity defines identity: that the deformity 'comes to be seen as the whole person'.¹⁰ Jackie's adult dwarfism makes him a marked man. When riding the rails Jerry and Jackie are warned about the tyrant Big Owen by the guard, who 'wouldn't like to see the kid stop a clout' (p. 325). On discovering 'the kid' is a dwarf, Jackie is identified immediately as Jack Hanna, alleged family murderer, and is then betrayed. His dwarfism guarantees him high visibility as a suspected criminal, offering perpetual punishment for the fatalities at Morgan's Crossing - until he reaches Sydney, the third and final destination. There, 'It struck him then that it was a long time now since he had remembered he was a dwarf' (p. 429). It is here that Jackie achieves the invisibility that comes from 'fitting in', and it is an *earned* invisibility: he has grown into a sense of himself beyond that dictated to him by his physical size. On discovering a 'paper-boy' who is actually an old dwarf 'even smaller than himself' and who ignores Jackie, Jackie feels 'he had in effect become invisible. He was just part of a Sydney crowd' (p. 376).

The act of melding or of being moulded, or fitting in, which is in a sense the act of becoming invisible, is all part of belonging to and conforming to the *aggregate body* of society. Metaphorically, invisibility suggests

¹⁰ *Images of the Disabled, Disabling Images*, ed. Alan Gartner and Tom Joe (New York: Praeger, 1987), p. 205.

normality: when observers of the deformed glance away it is a signal that the person who is deformed is normalised because difference has not been seen, though unfortunately the entire person is often encompassed in the obliterating glance. In reality, the person who is deformed has a high degree of visibility, and is by nature distinctive. Jackie's journey from the past of the fictional 'Kingsland' to the actual place and actual present of 'Sydney' is a journey towards self-actualisation, realised in the paradox of invisibility.

In dwarf mythology a dwarf can achieve invisibility by wearing a Tarnkappe, or 'red cap'.¹¹ The red cap was necessary if dwarfs wanted to surface in the daytime, because they were considered too ugly to be seen except under cover of darkness. In the fairytale 'Dwarf's Caps' a child tells his brother: 'When you put on one of these caps you become invisible. That's a fine thing, dear brother! Then you can avoid those who don't care for you and never throw you a kind word'.¹² Jackie has progressed beyond the fairytale necessity of having to withdraw from sight and from life: his invisibility suggests that he has finally arrived as person and has shed the *persona*. Also in the dwarf mythology the dwarf is commonly associated with giants.¹³ The legendary dwarf-giant relationship is briefly referred to in the form of the 'giant' Blind Hof, who advises, cares for, and protects Jackie (pp. 124; 129; 132; and 213).¹⁴ The dwarf in mythology (Teutonic, Celtic, Norse, Indian) enjoys ambiguity and paradox. In myth, dwarfs are favoured by the gods, and yet must inhabit the underworld. They are both chthonic and

¹¹ H. A. Guerber, *Myths of the Norsemen* (1908; rpt. London: George G. Harrap & Co, 1948), p. 240. All subsequent references are to this edition.

¹² Ludwig Bechstein, 'Dwarf's Caps', in *Fairy Tales of Ludwig Bechstein*, trans. Anthea Bell (London: Abelard-Schuman, 1967), p. 19.

¹³ See 'The Truculent Dwarf and His Giant Kinsman' in Harwood.

¹⁴ The relationship of the dwarf and giant is perpetuated in a factual account by Nancy Keesing: she relates that her parents 'shared a table with the tall man and the dwarf' from Wirths Circus. She describes them as 'the fabulous pair'. Nancy Keesing, *Riding the Elephant* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1988), p. 2.

semi-divine: dwarfs are considered 'dark, treacherous, and cunning by nature', as well as helpful and kind (Guerber, p. 10). One finds in the various mythologies that the dwarf presents us with a multi-variant personality. He is an epiphany, as indicated by the manifestation of the dwarf Vamana in Hindu mythology;¹⁵ he is also a fool; a *lusus naturae* - a joke of nature; he is a cave-dweller; skilled; powerful; cunning; *un*-commonly homely; and one who (according to Norse mythology) has been made highly intelligent by the gods: 'Although less powerful than the gods, [the dwarfs] were far more intelligent than men, and as their knowledge was boundless and extended even to the future, gods and men were equally anxious to question them' (Guerber, p. 239).

Park capitalises on the superhuman intelligence of the dwarfs in order to bring together her main character and her final treatise on Langian politics. Lang is the primary character who is 'anxious to question' the dwarf. Jackie's superior intelligence is established early: 'Even as a child, hiding in his tree-house, Jackie felt older and wiser than [the revellers]' (p. 54). The doctor comments on Jackie's potential superhuman intelligence, though it is removed from the world of legend and translated into the realm of possibility: 'If brain weight is important, and many scientists think it is, Jackie's is about one-nineteenth of his body weight. Mine is only one-thirty-second; yet it's served me well enough' (p. 7).

Park manifests the dwarf propensity to explore, and directs it into a gradual exploration of knowledge: 'through books he discovered that the world of the mind was almost without limits, and that a determined traveller might cover a great deal of it before he died' (p. 64). A university education is denied him because of poverty. That the dwarf is uneducated but wise is

¹⁵ Vassilis G. Vitsaxis, *Hindu Epics, Myths and Legends* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 21.

consistent with the mythic traditions of the dwarf's boundless knowledge, but it seems more likely that Jackie is kept humble in order better to epitomise Park's concerns with the economic welfare of the under-privileged citizen. Jackie spends his spare time studying, and his choice of study is consistent with the social-realist - fairytale parallels: by the end of the novel he has completed night school, furthered his former education in accountancy, and accumulated books on economics. Jerry McNunn cannot understand why Jackie should be so interested in economics, which he sees only as 'witch-doctor stuff' (p. 386). Jackie's answer that 'there'll be something' hints at the denouement. His ultimate destiny is to find Cushie Moy and to work with her setting up a refuge for destitute men in the 'immense forsaken caverns' aptly named the Jackaman Shelters, significantly described as 'a hollow place where riches once had been' (p. 413).

Jackie's 'seeing through' fairytales about dwarfs represents, on the one hand, his growing knowledge of the world around him; but on the other hand, it is an index of growing self-awareness. This awareness is represented by gradual suppression in the text of the fairytale element, and a growing emphasis on social-realism as Jackie deals with the privations of the Depression. However, it becomes apparent that artistic form is being shaped by political purpose. There is a serious difference between Park's conscious deployment of dwarf mythology (and its associated fairytale elements) in the early sections of the novel, in what is an essentially realist-illusionist mode, and something that in this context is perhaps better described as the 'socialist-realism'¹⁶ of her proletarian polemic in the later sections of the novel. Observations are made that could not possibly have been made by Jackie Hanna, or, for that matter, any other character in the novel. Jackie ceases to

¹⁶ David Carter, 'Documenting Society', in *The Penguin New Literary History of Australia*, ed. Laurie Hergenhan (Ringwood: Penguin, 1988), p. 381.

be an indicator in the world of the novel; we find ourselves dealing with the author's didacticism:

It was a critical time for the Labor Premier. The oldest, most heavily industrialised State, New South Wales had always had a reputation for intransigence. Now people spoke openly of secession, even civil war. For more than six months the State had defied the Commonwealth Government, a Labor Government that had come to office two days before the Wall Street crash in 1929: to inherit the consequences of the witless extravagances, the lack of foresight, of its predecessors.

Its leader, the dedicated and honest James Scullin, had when in Opposition consistently condemned the rash borrowing of the then Government. He was a prophet destroyed by the authenticity of his prophecies.

The terrible task confronting the Prime Minister was complicated by a powerful and obdurate Opposition Senate, which defeated and delayed all attempts to ameliorate the desperate condition of the Australian people. As well, Scullin had to suffer this Old Man of the Sea, the demagogue Lang, a lone mutineer, formidable, impossible to intimidate, who uttered blasphemous strictures against the Mother Country of a kind hitherto heard only from bolsbies.

At the Premiers' conference earlier that year, Lang's motion to postpone the payment of interest to bondholders had been received with consternation. One member of the Opposition, whose destiny it was to become Prime Minister and an elder statesman, announced that he would rather see every man, woman, and child in Australia starve to death than have a single British bondholder wait for his money. (pp. 390-391)

Once one has been alerted to the novel's elaboration of dwarf mythology, one could perhaps be forgiven for feeling that this polemical moment betrays the mythological potential of the novel. But however clumsy it appears, the movement from the fairytale element into socialist-realism is accomplished in order to suggest an overall 'awaking' to reality. It is an imbalance that anticipates the tilting to the other extreme which occurs in the ending of the novel.

Park extends the metaphor of the abnormal body beyond dwarfism: Jackie's dwarfism is represented as an *inherited* deformity, coupled with perfect health. Jackie's health appears to be an anomaly in this novel, with its overwhelming number of *acquired* disabilities: Walter Hanna nurses a

rupture; Peggy Hanna has her emphysema; Olywn Moy her bronchitis; Jerry MacNunn his shrapnelled leg. The Linzes share in this bag of afflictions: there is the giant Blind Hof with his Cyclopan eye, and bad back; Ellie with his deformed foot; Kurtie with his crotch wound; Theo with a silver plate in his head. Then there are ancillary characters such as the scarred Iris; the mutilated Milly, and the pregnant prostitute with dermatitis and a cast in her eye (the etiology of which is unknown).

If the list surprises because of its extensiveness, it might do to ask oneself why the numerous disabilities were not noticed during the reading. Longmore asks a similar question about representations of the disabled in the electronic media: 'why do television and film so frequently screen disabled characters for us to see, and why do we usually screen them out of our consciousness even as we absorb those images?'¹⁷ Longmore suggests these images allow us to address our 'social problems' (Longmore's quotation marks) without a deep examination, since 'what we fear, we often stigmatize and shun and sometimes seek to destroy' (p. 66). If we accept this interpretation as extendable from the viewer to the reader, then the reader-response is to pay marginal attention to the presence of disabled characters in the novel.

Yet the character of Jackie cannot be screened out and made 'invisible', since the writer has focussed the reader's attention on him. For Park, this population of the deformed and diseased functions as a metaphor for a type of anti-Procrustean character, in her overriding concern with the politics of the First World War through to the Depression in Australia. Misfits assembled, Park provides a twentieth-century scenario of outcasts in their own country. Jackie exemplifies Displaced Person status as he (along with thousands of

¹⁷ Paul K. Longmore, 'Screening Stereotypes: Images of Disabled People in Television and Motion Pictures', in *Images of the Disabled, Disabling Images*, ed. Alan Gartner and Tom Joe (New York: Praeger, 1987), p. 65.

others) is forced to wander the land as a vagrant or forfeit government subsistence during the depression. The mutilated, blinded, and disabled civilians are simply an extended version of a very specific condition which Park sees in Australia: 'Out of the young country's population of scarcely six millions, sixty thousand of her fittest and ablest young men were dead, and three times as many mutilated, blinded, disabled' (p. 40).

It is clear from the above that Park has chosen Jackie as a deformed yet vitally healthy and youthful character to epitomise the post-war character of the country. These marked individuals are polymorphous symbols of resistance against a Procrustean de-individualisation that Jackie's sweetheart, Cushie Moy, specifically senses: she remarks that she feels as though she has been 'conditioned' with 'feet and hands chopped off so that she'd fit into some Procrustean bed' (p. 409). The concept of the body as a metaphor for political economy is expanded by Park's choice of dwarfism and the associated cast of disabled persons. The deformed are misfits in a world that would have them conform; their very abnormality decrees resistance to their being considered invisible adjuncts to the land of the 'British bondholder' (p. 391). Kingsland, Jackie's birthplace, and indeed his ancestral birthplace of King's County, Ireland (p. 286), evoke both the mythic idea of 'how dwarfs should behave', and the myth of how Australian subjects, living on the King's land, should behave; since: 'Families endeavoured to present a dignified front to the world; it was not good form to lament sons and brothers sacrificed for King and Country' (p. 40).

Jackie's growing disillusionment with the myth, both the national and the legendary, is reflected in his altering relationship with Kingsland. While living at Morgan's Crossing, he visits the town to see his mother: 'The Jackie who had left the little town was a boy; the one who returned was a man. Yet

he was uneasy. He was afraid that Kingsland would reassert itself' (p. 238). After the events of the fire destroy his family, Jackie again returns to Kingsland - to hostility and displacement. The accompanying abrupt shift in narrative tone towards socialist-realism unbalances the novel, but Park's decision to strip Jackie of his fairytale qualities is a metaphorical divesting of illusions about the old country. King and Country are two separate entities for an Australian neo-nationalist like Jackie: this is made clear in the interchange between Jack Hanna and Jack Lang, regarding the 'proportion of British loans at high interest [which] were made to equip and support the AIF so that Australian soldiers should be able to fight Britain's war in far-away countries' (p. 392). The technique of melding the real and the fantastic, evident in Louis Stone's *Jonah*, also presents itself in the interchange between the two Jacks, one fictional and one historical. In placing Jack Hanna on a podium with Jack Lang, Park has entwined the two methods of narrative persuasion, myth and socialist-realism. Although drawn from life within the history of Australian politics, Lang, who stood 193 centimetres (6' 4"), is nevertheless a 'giant', not only in nickname (he was popularly known as 'the Big Fella'¹⁸), but in surname, since 'lang' is Scottish for 'long' (SND). It is an adventitious but actual semantic link in the fulfilment of the giant and the dwarf partnership, which occurs in this meeting of the fictional and the factual. Lang is factually and conceptually 'long': 'Jack looked up at the enormous height of Lang' (p. 390); and later Jack thinks of Lang as 'the Big Fellow' (p. 432). The soapbox scene provides a prime example of Park's creative use of fact and of the gratuitous, in which she is faithful to the mythos of the dwarf, while yet remaining within the boundaries of detailed data imposed by social-realism. There is an implicit understanding between the two men about the icon of

¹⁸ Frank Farrell, 'Dealing with the Communists, 1923-36', in *Jack Lang*, ed. Heather Radi and Peter Spearritt (Neutral Bay, NSW: Hale & Iremonger, 1977), p. 65.

dwarfism. Jack stands on the platform with the Premier, and they shift into each other's place: as Jack later explains to Jerry 'He knew I'd ask the right questions. So that he could give the right answers Like a comedian and his straight man' (p. 393).

Park returns to the suggestion of ancient mythologies when Jackie has matured and has his eyes wide open. Sydney becomes the final destination and fulfilment of what are by now the concurrent texts of economics and the story of Jackie the dwarf:

The city had spoken to him, and he did not know how or why. There was nothing seductive about it. Its haggard Victorian dilapidation was not picturesque. With a native hardihood, it sprang from its cruel past with an unquenchable joy. This was its charm for him. (pp. 383-384)

The reaction of Jackie's step-father Jerry is one we might expect from a so-called normal person: 'the air reminded him of heated dirty metal' (p. 374); in contrast, Jackie experiences a 'sense of identification with the city's sturdy vulgarity, its rough beauty' (p. 431). He is lifted from the fairytale dwarf's fantastic underworld of gemstones and darkness, away from Old World fantasies, towards a real world of promise and eventual enlightenment:

The lights fascinated him, the topaz and diamonds, the red glare and the foggy pearl. There were lights high up in the air as if they were on poles or mountains, and lights deep down in the valleys As far as he could see there was no darkness ungemmed by windows (pp. 375-376)

Here then is the mine of treasure and jewels he cannot find as a child; here is the graspable domain, Sydney, which is a city 'unlike anything he had ever known and yet uncannily familiar' (p. 377). Jackie's acceptance of his Self is presented within the context of the fictions of the past and the 'bone-shaking' realities of the present:

It struck him then that it was a long time now since he had remembered he was a dwarf. When he had, it was about as important as remembering that he had black hair.

In this bone-shaker tram, built like a wooden ship or railway-carriage of the previous century, he realised at last that what his mother had planned for him had come to pass. (p. 429)

In this version of what is known in modern fantasy literature as the 'motif of circularity',¹⁹ Jackie returns to thoughts of his childhood but with the knowledge of a man. He has gained a new and *earned* invisibility in his acceptance of himself and the fact, not the fictions, of his dwarfism. In Sydney, Towser wishes to exploit the distinctiveness of dwarfism so as to further the cause of the Unemployed Workers Movement. Towser's wish is prevented by the far-sighted Jock, who realises that 'The rest of us have a chance of not being identified' (p. 421). Jock's and Towser's responses are powerful indicators of their individual perceptions of dwarfism: Jock's response is to see Jackie as human; Towser's response indicates a perception of Jackie as totem. Because Jackie's dwarfism makes him a marked man, Jackie cannot indulge in lawlessness and get away with it to the extent that the normal (paradoxically, invisible) being could perhaps do. Jackie's confrontation with law enforcement presents a situation similar to that of Jonah (Jonah). Naively, Jackie's understanding of Towser's motives is that 'as part of a public persona, dwarfism was irresistible; people couldn't help looking, listening, half-amused, half-admiring that big ideas could come out of so small a body' (p. 432).

The physique of the dwarf traditionally elicits responses of humour, pathos, and irony, much of which stems from the perception that dwarfism is a condition in which the adult is trapped within the child's body. For instance Hurtle Duffield (*The Vivisector*) at first mistakes the identity of his hunchback-dwarf sister when he reacts to seeing her with 'For God's sake, not another child' (p. 436); for Billy Kwan (*The Year of Living*

¹⁹ C. N. Manlove, *The Impulse of Fantasy Literature* (Kent, Ohio: The Kent State University Press, 1983), pp. 70-71.

Dangerously), the comparison of the dwarf with the child is used throughout the novel - at one point, Guy Hamilton states that 'At first he thought it was a child - then Billy Kwan stepped into the room' (p. 31). Such a perception is not simply one of size. It encapsulates the ambiguities of a child-adult combination, which imparts the same sense of amusement and discomfort that is felt on confronting an extremely precocious child: Jackie's request for clothes from a Christian Brother results in a schoolboy's uniform, which when made to fit, paradoxically, makes Jack feel like 'a new man' (p. 387).

Along with the child-adult jokes are the 'half a man' jokes: when Jackie and Cockie give notice at the Linz's farm after Jackie's brutal treatment, Cockie says 'if I was half a man I'd go this minute' (p. 97). There are numerous versions of these dwarf-specific jokes which allow that quality of irony that H. M. Green suggests is a national characteristic. More cautiously, irony has been described as the predominant form of Australian humour;²⁰ and less cautiously, as 'the most important distinguishing characteristic of [Australian] humour'.²¹ Irony, as the most effective weapon of satire, allows the humorist to 'focus attention on abuses and deformities in society of which, blunted by habit, we were no longer aware'.²² Though the text never becomes, nor is intended to become, a satire, the abuses and deformities of Australian politics and economics are nevertheless highlighted by focussing on abuses of the deformed.

Irony and comedy are systematically written into the circumstances of Jackie's deformity. His very first words in what is to be a virtually unrelenting tale of misadventure are '[the Nun] says I'm a luck child'. As

²⁰ Dorothy Jones and Barry Andrews, 'Australian Humour' in *The Penguin New Literary History of Australia*, ed. Laurie Hargrehan (Ringwood: Penguin, 1988), p. 60.

²¹ Jones and Andrews, p. 73.

²² Arthur Koester, *The Act of Creation* (London: Pan Books, 1966), pp. 73-74.

children, Cushie and Jackie (who can never grow up) swear adults won't prevent their marriage because 'They won't be able to stop us when we're big' (p. 53). In turn, the young Jackie adopts the familiar *persona* of the dwarf as clown: 'It was to let people know that dwarfs didn't mind being as they were, that there was no real disability in being under four feet high' (p. 66). Jackie im-*persona*-tes the fictions of his deformity; and he draws a distinction between deformity and disability: Jackie the dwarf, and Jonah the hunchback, are cap-able, not dis-abled. Their body and mind functions are not disrupted.

The role of the comic is one to which real-life dwarfs have long been assigned (Harward, pp. 21-27). But when Mrs. Moy perceives her daughter, Cushie, as 'a baby princess playing with the court jester', (p. 12) the 'jester' should not be confused with the court dwarf. In symbolist dialectic the jester is not an expression of the comic but of duality. This aspect of the jester is consistent with Jackie's nationalist bent, and with his striving to escape the ties that inspire such sentiments as 'it was not good form to lament sons and brothers sacrificed for King and Country' (p. 40). It is also significant that in pagan times the jester appeared 'as the symbolic inversion of the king . . . [and] in association with the sacrificial victim'. Cirlot continues: 'Certain deformed or abnormal beings, such as dwarfs, are closely related to, and even identical with, the figure of the jester' (Cirlot, p. 155). The deformed person, usually a dwarf, was expected to take upon himself (the source mentions only males) the evils which afflicted the community. Part of the ritual involved the beating of the dwarf's genitals. He was afterwards burned and his ashes thrown into the sea. Jackie is the inverted King in the would-be independent inverted country: in his Kingsland he is, as in the Arthurian legend, the dwarf king of the antipodes (Loomis, p. 197).

When Jackie resists the role of 'court fool' at the Linzes, it results in a near fatality which is significant in terms of symbolist dialectic: Jackie's genitals are wrapped with flypaper and doused in kerosene, and his drowning is only narrowly averted. He is saved by the old man Martin Linz, a man admired by Jackie because 'he knows how to be a king' (p.114). It is only with his conscious decision to utilise the perceived *persona* of the court fool that Jackie accepts the role of comedian and later, through his public repartee with J. T. Lang, that he demonstrates a transition to the time-honoured role of the wise fool.²³

Hanna's physical status allows Park to exploit the irony of misperception - the Nun's uncomfortable monologue regarding Jackie's sexual unsuitability comes at a time when Jackie is bedding two females. This misperception is also evident during his search for employment, when he is rebuffed for his 'delicate health'. The scene expresses the popular notion of the able-bodied as the economically viable-bodied; or the familiar notion of the invalid as in-valid. The thought that he might never *earn* a living strikes Jackie with 'frigid horror, as though a doctor had told him he had some terminal disease' (p. 59):

Maybe he did, as far as the labour market was concerned. What did his brains matter, his energy or industry? All they saw was a funny little sawn-off fellow they felt they couldn't cope with. His body was odd, freakish, so his mind and abilities had to be the same way.²⁴

The income-earner is a culturally-perceived independent and responsible being, and one which a paternalistic society has traditionally defined as male. Jackie's no-job status would in effect condemn him to a dependent, child-like status for ever. When Jackie encounters this ableism he counters it by turning

²³ The dwarf Billy Kwan (*The Year of Living Dangerously*) offers this explanation for the existence and toleration of the wise court 'fool': 'There's one great advantage in being a wise dwarf, you see - you can be wiser than other people, but no one will envy you' (p. 95).

²⁴ The crypto-dwarf Arthur Blackberry expresses a similar sentiment: 'they all think I'm simple-minded just because I look like I do' (*Hook's Mountain*, p. 24).

the world of normality on its head as he rationalises the prospective employer's reaction to his physique: 'Ah, God, for mediocrity, ordinariness, legs the same length as everyone else's, a head that would fit in a felt hat, a brain to match! (p. 59). His being perceived as having 'delicate health' is an ironic observation given the general physical state of the ancillary characters. Further, Park's combination of social-realism and the mythic allows us a little insight into the irony of the just quoted statement, as the strength of the dwarf is proclaimed in myth - an obvious example is to be found in the Norse legend where the four dwarfs Nordri, Sudri, Austri, and Westri support the heavenly vault (Guerber, p. 7).

The dwarf in mythology exists in the shaded area of the semi-divine, in conjunction with the half-daimonic. The dwarf is always part of a dualistic system which takes a cruel and comic form in the 'half a man' joke, which itself indicates the sense that dwarfs are somehow incomplete. Jackie is to find a completeness, through maturation, in Sydney: 'It seemed to [Jack] that he was carrying on as if he were his old man's father. Somehow they had swapped roles' (p. 429); his maturation comes from the knowledge that manhood has nothing to do with size (p. 431). And yet, without Cushie, Jackie is *not* complete. Cushie represents a spiritual approbation and physical complement of Jackie's grotesqueness: she is referred to as 'a goddess'; as 'perfection'; as 'the golden princess who loved him as he was' (p. 81); and together, they are as 'good as gold' (p. 24). Their relationship is best described as one that is perpetual: 'There was a transparent delicacy between them. They had always, by some unexplained empathy, each reflected the other' (p. 81). This suggests the completeness that exists in the notion of polarity, in which extremities of a single whole are related and joined. As Alan Watts puts it: 'Polar opposites are therefore inseparable opposites, like

the poles of the earth or of a magnet, or the ends of a stick or the faces of a coin' (Watts, p. 45). Or, as Jackie asks himself of Cushie: 'did she feel as he did, that they had always been two sides of one coin: she, in her physical perfection and defencelessness, like a beautiful gentle bird, he so small and grotesque, and yet hardy, full of purpose?' (p. 384).

In contrast, Jackie's pathetic relationship with Maida cannot have the same necessary symmetry, and is abortive from the start. While making love, Jackie smells 'the green fresh aroma of the varnish on [Maida's] grandfather's coffin' (p. 84). Although Jackie consoles himself with the thought that it was 'because of Maida that he had grown to be a complete man', this is not true. Immediately the thought is followed by pain: 'Pain pierced him' (p. 267). At the Linzes, Jackie is called Humpy: 'Don't call him that!' hissed Maida suddenly from behind Jackie. 'He's not a hump-back.' (p.73) The subject, and Maida's reaction stimulates images, albeit false images, of the protective fay. Her name suggests the '*m'aidez*' cry for help rather than the fay's capacity for protection; though it is Jackie who 'remembering Maida then, protectiveness rushed up in him' (p. 85). Traces of Arthurian romance filter through the novel, for although it is only alluded to here, it is more common than not in Arthurian romance to find that dwarfs are also 'humpbacks' (Harward, p. 31). More importantly, Arthurian romance developed a cognate dwarf legend in which the dwarf was a combination of the supernatural attributes of the folktale dwarf and the dwarf's counterpart in real life, the court dwarf (Harward, pp. 21-27). These combinations of the dwarf legend and real life dwarf are in play in this novel.

In Arthurian romance, the dwarf's role as lover is frequently intended as a disparagement of women, with the implication that they are perversely lecherous.²⁵ The name 'Cushie Moy' suggests *couchez-moi*, a contraction

of the familiar wartime refrain: '*Voulez-vous coucher avec moi?*' Cushie's first lover is Jackie, and, like Maida, it is she who initiates the sexual act. She exists to fulfil Jackie, to the point that she can position herself so that 'Jackie felt much taller than she' (p. 104). Arthurian allusions are less certain, but nonetheless present in their relationship. Early in the novel, Cushie is portrayed as a sorry piece of humanity, her spirit a crushed and barely flapping existence: 'She was so docile, so gentle, that when she was wounded or baffled by people, or happenings, or life itself, all she could do was to cry. As though she were an angel, or a changeling, she was ill-equipped for earth' (p. 62).

In a series of events designed to bring her down to earth, Cushie very nearly becomes the fay of Arthurian romance. In Arthurian romances, the most important fay is Morgain La Fee.²⁶ Her rancour in the face of rejection (probably due to her Celtic origins as Morrigan, a war-goddess²⁷) is contrary to the constancy and introspection of Cushie. Yet the Dame Du Lac is also an important fay, and frequently is represented as an opposing force to Morgain (Paton, p. 195). There are numerous instances in which union with a fay has resulted in the phenomenon of supernatural single-parents of the other-world (Paton, pp. 176-178), and it would appear that such a union does not necessarily offend the fay, for the child of the union is often the bond that leads the fay back to the father. Cushie is, of course, only a fay in a limited sense. When she hears of Jackie's marriage, her response is all too human: 'Jealousy sharp as a spear went through her heart' (p. 184); and she embarks

²⁵ See Harward, pp. 132-135. Billy Kwan says this of dwarf-lovers: 'Women liked us. Some of the ladies at Renaissance courts were quite indecent with us' (*The Year of Living Dangerously*, p. 95).

²⁶ In Arthurian romance, Morgain, or one of her counterparts, has a consistent kinship with a dwarf king, either as her father, brother, or son. See Harward, p. 78.

²⁷ Lucy Allen Paton, *Studies in the Fairy Mythology of Arthurian Romance* (1903; rpt. New York: Burt Franklin, 1960), p. 144.

not on revenge but on self-destruction. She is not the fay in the sense of 'faith', 'fairy', or 'fatae', but in the sense of 'fitting together, joining' (OED). At this point in the novel, where breaking from the other-world into the real world is necessary to the process of growing up, there can be no going back to the married Jackie for Cushie. She aborts. In Arthurian romance the fay's place in narrative is secondary to the hero's, yet of crucial importance, since she exists as the reward for the hero's difficult achievements: 'Insistent love is a fundamental part of her nature'; and 'however unexpectedly to the hero she appears before him, she comes always in quest of him, and for the purpose of carrying out a long-formed design of claiming his love' (Paton, p. 5). The ending of *Swords* confirms the Arthurian concept:

'Oh, Cush!' He threw aside the blanket, made a gesture of helplessness.

Her eyes said, 'I've found you.'

It was so clear a voice that he asked, 'Have you been looking?'

She nodded, sat down beside him, and put her arm round him'. (p. 434)

Her gesture is the reclaiming and protective gesture of the fay. As well, the fay has often 'guarded from infancy the mortal whom she finally takes to the other world as her beloved' (Paton, p. 5). That Jackie and Cushie are complements is suggested in their synchronous birth, and in Jackie's observation on the last page that 'He felt her heart beating. It seemed that he had always felt it beating, ever since he was born' (p. 435). Their reunion comes shortly after Jackie decides that metaphorically, dwarfism is a state of mind: 'Some fellows, six feet high, burly as bulls, were midgets inside. Kewpies. Soft little mice. But he wasn't. He was a full-sized man, and nothing could alter that any more' (p. 431). The acknowledgement comes as Jackie's body settles into the final lines that define him as belonging irrefutably to the dwarf family; Cushie sees that: 'the face was no longer

handsome; it had set in the lineaments of the dwarf family, formidably strong' (p. 434).

Until the end of the novel Park continues to combine fairy legend with political economics, in which the dwarf body equals the body politic: 'To dismiss dwarfism as a burden was one thing; but to make an asset of it was a challenge, tomorrow's challenge' (p. 432). The ending attempts to combine modern fairytale and socialist-realism: Jackie (asleep under the statue of Sir Henry Parkes, the Father of Federation) is woken by his childhood sweetheart, Cushie Moy. The romantic elements in the end of the novel, as Jackie and Cushie meet again, might perhaps rekindle the reader's engagement with non-polemical fantasy, for although a kiss is not exchanged, Cushie Moy is nonetheless 'magically transformed from girl to woman' (p. 434); and it is assumed that Cushie will take him into her world where, with money, they can make together a better world and live happily ever after in 'Rag Castle' (p. 356). And Cushie's capital worth conveniently dispenses Jackie from his need to seek employment, though he has proven himself more than capable. When Cushie says on the last page 'Dwarfs make swords and crowns and rings', the attempt to reintroduce the magic and mythological themes comes too late and too abruptly after the distractions of the political polemics. Dwarfs might make swords and crowns and rings, but they also stand on platforms and speak with politicians. The ending which demonstrates the coming together of two very different methods of narrative persuasion has led to the judgement that it is 'a book of intricate mythic love and power which dilutes into an ordinary description of Jackie, the original Aussie battler'.²⁸ Like Jackie, the reader is expected to recognise and progress beyond the fairytale, gradually replacing Old World lies with New

²⁸ Jean Bedford, 'No Wildlife in Park', *Nation Review*, 8 (Feb 9-15, 1978) 17.

World possibilities. Jackie's dwarfism has been used as a device to recruit the reader's sympathy in a process of identification which will then allow the representation of real world political rights and wrongs. What seemed to be a provocative Australian novel of character, exploiting the symbolic, intuitive, and allegoric elements of fairytale, is translated into a treatise on Australian identity and the effect of international capitalism on individual Australian lives.



Chapter Four

Billy Kwan

In *Jonah*, and *Swords and Crowns and Rings*, deformity with its metaphors of difference and subsumed identity has allowed these novels a means towards a partial discussion of an emergent post-colonial identity. The novels place as their major, and most vital, character a deformed individual who is, in one sense of the word, a miscreant living productively in a land settled for miscreants. Both novels merge the myths of deformity, and the emergent Australian post-colonial identity, with the implication that from the chthonic can spring the autochthonous. The analogue between an imposed national identity and an identity imposed on the deformed individual is one which is insistent in other novels discussed in this study, though perhaps in none so consciously as in C. J. Koch's *The Year of Living Dangerously* (1978)¹. Set in Indonesia in 1965, it is a year labelled as 'The Year of Living Dangerously' (pp. 11-12) by the president, Sukarno. (Like many other Indonesians, Sukarno has no first name.) The story is set at a time and in a place where identity is the acute issue at the individual and national level. The presence in the novel of the Australian-Chinese dwarf, Billy Kwan, brings these two identity problems into a single focus, with particular emphasis on the idea of an imposed identity.

Cookie Crane is the narrator of Kwan's memoirs; he is also privy to information about other characters, unlike Walter Dadus Pollacke, the narrator

¹ C. J. Koch, *The Year of Living Dangerously* (1978; rpt. Melbourne: Thomas Nelson, 1979). All subsequent references are to this edition.

of the memoirs of Migetina in Walter de la Mare's *Memoirs of a Midget* (1921).² Yet within Migetina's account we hear a cry, echoed by Billy:

What was my true course? Where my compass? How many times, too, have I vainly speculated what *inward* difference being a human creature of my dimensions really makes. What is - deep, deep in - at variance between Man and Midget? *You* may discover this; even if I never shall. For after all, life's beads are all on one string, however loosely threaded they may seem to be. (p. 9)

One of the conclusions reached in this study is that the deformed frequently suffer an automatic, imposed identity because of the historical fictions of the particular culture which are impressed on the individual: when this particular metaphor of deformity is extended to a national level, what occurs is an 'historical pseudomorphosis', to borrow a term coined by Oswald Spengler. The term describes a physical and temporal warp which occurs when an older culture imposes its own baggage (its culture, its traditions, its religion, its history, its existence) on a 'new' and different culture, as would occur in the case of the colonisers and the colonised. Spengler explains the phenomenon in terms of forcing 'young feelings' into 'old moulds'.³ What is produced is a pseudomorphosis, or false body, in which the external form is false to its internal form. The parallels with the icon of deformity are clear.

We have seen that the icon of deformity promotes additional imaginative levels of fiction within a work, and that certain types of deformity in literature are frequently linked with established myths and fairytales which are, primarily, those of the colonising powers. For example, when we read about the dwarf, Jackie Hanna, in *Swords and Crowns and Rings*, we bring to the novel our own awareness of the fairytale construct which places dwarfs

² Walter de la Mare, *Memoirs of a Midget* (1921; rpt. London: Faber and Faber, 1935).

³ Oswald Spengler, 'Historical Pseudomorphoses', in 'Perspectives of World-History', Vol. II of *The Decline of the West*, trans. Charles Francis Atkinson, 7th ed. (one volume edition 1932; rpt. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1971), II, p. 189.

in the mines of the underworld; we experience not just a reinterpretation of a fairytale or folk myth, but also the readerly vicarious realisation of the myth, played out in a land that was once believed to be the underworld, and ruled by a dwarf-king: the fairytales and myths are made culturally specific by reshaping them to reflect the antipodian experience. The archetypally assigned role of the dwarf is re-presented while retaining the fictions of strength, intelligence, and the comical; similarly, in *The Year of Living Dangerously*, the description of Billy Kwan rings true in its consistency with dwarf-fiction: 'his legs were comically brief; but his chest and shoulders were powerful;' and 'the disturbingly intelligent face above the comic body split into a grin' (p. 5). The fictions of strength, intelligence, and the perception of the dwarf-body as a source for the comic are clearly realised. The categorising of the deformed as infrahuman is upheld to some degree in Koch's novel: Billy is described as having a 'frog-like smile' (pp. 17; 67; and 72), though we are told that 'Billy *never* swims' (p. 50). The general principles regarding the deformed in literature are in operation from the opening sentence, which also encourages literal tropism:

There is no way, unless you have unusual self-control, of disguising the expression on your face when you first meet a dwarf. It brings out the curious child in us to encounter one of these little people. Since Billy Kwan added to his oddity by being half Chinese, it was just as well that we met in the darkness of the Wayang Bar. My attention was drawn to Kwan's arrival by Wally O'Sullivan, a correspondent for a Sydney daily. 'Hullo,' Wally said. 'Curtis is bringing in the black goblin.' (p. 3)

The passage sets the tone: the speaker acknowledges a universal struggle between primitive and civilised responses to the dwarf. As with *Dove*⁴ Koch introduces an unusual character in the opening sentence and seizes our attention; but unlike *Dove* he expands on the characterisation. In the above extract we see that socio-political realism is interwoven with dwarf myth; this

⁴ Barbara Hanrahan, *Dove* (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1982).

is evident in the meeting of a dwarf in 'darkness' (which is, incidentally, in the 'red-and-gold cave' (p. 8) of the Wayang Club), and calling him a 'black goblin'. In addition, Billy is half-Chinese, which implies that he is half something else: what is in operation is the 'half-a-man' metaphor which is a part of the dwarf iconography. B. N. Balajee has noted that the novel explores problems related to post-colonial societies and claims that Koch 'uses two basic metaphors in the novel for such a study - one is of Dwarfism symbolized by Billy Kwan and the other is of Hybrid-hybrid'.⁵ Yet rather than being separate or distinct, the hybrid metaphor is contiguous with the metaphors of dwarfism.

The dwarf icon brings with it the force of specific established precepts. As in *Swords and Crowns and Rings*, and in the reading that follows, we find that the first precept is that the dwarf generally seeks, or is found, in association with another figure. This fictional construct probably originated out of a discomfort with the asymmetry of the 'half a man' who was therefore incomplete. Frequently, a type of symmetry is achieved through the association of the dwarf with a figure who is a giant, figuratively if not literally. (The dwarf-giant configuration is consistent with Auerbach's methodology of figural interpretation which 'establishes a connection between two events or persons in such a way that the first signifies not only itself but also the second, while the second involves or fulfills the first'.⁶) As we shall see, in *The Year of Living Dangerously* the second figure of the 'giant' is fulfilled through the first (the dwarf); and he also merits discussion since he is later made lame and then disabled by partial blindness.

A second precept regarding dwarfism is related also to size: dwarfism is

⁵ B. N. Balajee, 'The Fusion of Myth and Topicality in Christopher Koch's "The Year of Living Dangerously"', *The Literary Criterion*, 23 (1988), p. 34.

⁶ Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. William Trask (1946; rpt. New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1957), p. 64.

fancifully perceived as a condition in which the adult is trapped in a child's body. We saw the adult-child motif in play in Park's treatment of Jackie Hanna when he tries on a schoolboy's uniform and feels like 'a new man' (Park, p. 387). Koch also capitalises on the device, but it is extended to describe an encompassing of time which is both historical and individual.

Besides being dualistic, both precepts stress the notion of incompleteness, and both stress the notion of asymmetric interplay found in such pairs as the giant and dwarf, large and small, child and adult, young and old. Clearly, the icon of dwarfism provides a competent device in any discussion about dualism and asymmetric interplay, or what in this novel is called 'opposite intensities' (p. 20). In this novel, the *wayang kulit*,⁷ like dwarfism, is a dramatic objectification of the idea of interplay between opposite intensities which is expressed in the shadow-show as the *wayang* of the left and the *wayang* of the right. (The Jungian pattern of archetypes, shadows, and *personae* provides a similar, Western interpretation.) Through the intervention of the *dalang*, or puppet-master, the *wayang* of the right will always be the final victor; but the *struggle* will never end, because, as Cookie notes, 'neither side is wholly good or bad' (p. 265).

In keeping faith with the ideology of the *wayang* drama, the structure of *The Year of Living Dangerously* is such that the book is divided into three sections which bear identical titles, and contain similar events, to the three sections of the Indonesian *wayang* drama. Since the novel is structured as a play, it can be assumed that the characters within the novel are performers who are enacting rehearsed parts; and as the *wayang kulit* is literally a 'shadow play' its performers must assume the shape of the shadow puppets;⁸ they can only become real within the idelect imposed on them in

⁷ 'Kulit' signals the type of play. *Wayang kulit* means it is a shadow-play.

⁸ Koch has said that each of the characters in the novel corresponds to one of the shadow

which the *wayang* notion of 'pure reality is [as] as the image of mythical reality'.⁹

The statement implies that in the actual world characters re-live the roles pre-enacted by their archetypes. In other words, nothing can again be original; it can only be an image of what was once original. One of the points that has been raised throughout this study is that the self-identity of the person who is deformed is lost to the fixed *persona* projected by a culture. The deformed person is interpreted, and expected to behave, in terms of mythological antecedents. The dwarf, consciously and subconsciously affected by the drama of imposed identity, reinforces and provides a focus for the *wayang* concept of reality as a re-enaction of the ancient myths.

Billy Kwan's corresponding shadow-puppet is Semar, who also exemplifies historical pseudomorphosis. Semar began existence in Javanese mythology as the most powerful native god, Ismaja. But with the coming of Hinduism and the imposition of a different culture and a different religion, the mythological Ismaja was deposed and transformed into a 'ludicrous dwarf, and sent to earth as a servant to the heroes'.¹⁰ Billy Kwan's dwarf iconography, compounded by his markedly Chinese features, is devised to reflect cultural displacement; though Kwan is capable of displaying 'his Western aspect' (p. 81). Billy Kwan - displaced and dwarfed - is a re-sembling of the archetypal displaced dwarf, Semar, the hybrid.

Dualism (or more specifically in the context of dwarfism: the concern with inexact halves of a whole) has found a focus in dwarf morphology and mythology. Through the characterisation of Billy Kwan, Koch has embodied

puppets in the *wayang*: C. J. Koch, 'Word and Image', English Department Colloquium, University of Tasmania, 12 February, 1990.

⁹ Milena Salvini, 'Performing Arts in Indonesia', in *The Performing Arts in Asia*, ed. James R. Brandon (Paris: Unesco, 1971), p. 50.

¹⁰ James R. Brandon, *On Thrones of Gold* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1970), p. 18.

an idea, common in his novels, of a split between two protagonists. In an interview with Koch, Michael Hulse articulates it thus: 'This split between two protagonists seems to suggest complementary parts of one total self: each, as it were, lacks something that the other has'.¹¹ This is what Kwan is referring to when he says of Sukarno 'I could have been him' (p. 99). In the beginning Kwan looks to his Asian self, Sukarno, to fulfil a need; but that need goes beyond the author's 'evident fascination with Billy's worship of power' which one source has suggested.¹² Kwan, a cultural pseudomorph, claims community with Sukarno in (mistakenly) believing that he and Sukarno have an enantiomorphic relationship, or to put it simply, a mirror-image relationship. He sees in Sukarno 'A doubleman, a man of dualities!' (p. 132), a man who has united within himself the left and right of the *wayang*. Kwan is himself a political objectification of the left, which is Partai Kommunist Indonesia (P.K.I.) and Chinese-oriented, and of the right, which is pro-western. Using astrology and mythology on which to hang his case of fraternal unity with his perceived *doppelganger*, Kwan states: 'I'm a Gemini - the same sign as Sukarno. He and I have two faces - the hard and the sentimental' (p. 83). The myth of Gemini incorporates the principle of antithetical dualism. The sign is itself 'a symbol of the necessity of nature to transmute itself into binary and contradictory aspects, [and] is presented by both white and black'.¹³ The notion that Sukarno might be part of a divine dwarf community is unconvincing. Sukarno is manifestly carnal, and he is not a dwarf. Billy's need to interpret Sukarno otherwise shows primarily his further need to belong to some such community: 'To the people of the outer

¹¹ Michael Hulse, 'Christopher Koch in Conversation with Michael Hulse in London', *Quadrant*, 29 (June 1985) 19.

¹² Veronica Brady, 'Making Connections: Art, Life, and Some Recent Novels', *Westerly*, 2 (June 1980) 70.

¹³ J. E. Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, trans., Jack Sage (New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962), p. 56.

islands, [Sukarno] is the incarnation of the god Vishnu, who sometimes comes to earth as dwarf! Are you a secret member of my race, Bung Karno? Are you, in some aspects, Dwarf Semar?' (p. 132). It is the Dwarf Semar with whom Billy also identified; and Billy refers to Sukarno not as *Bapak*, (father), but as *Bung*, 'the daring elder brother' (p. 9). A father-son relationship implies authority and subjection, in contrast to the more equable sibling relationship that Kwan chooses. But disequilibrium occurs as his 'elder brother' shows a fatal leaning towards the P.K.I - perceived as the godless left.¹⁴ This is the *wayang* swing of opposites, though it is not exclusively *wayang*: 'Jung did not fail to note, as his beloved Heraclitus had done centuries before Christ, this perennial tendency of man and their societies to swing over into their opposite. Heraclitus called it Enantiodromia'.¹⁵ Kwan's disillusionment with Sukarno causes his own enantiodromia: as Koch himself has said, Billy's 'hatred [becomes] as great as his worship has once been' (Hulse, p. 22). Kwan, the half-a-man, turns from his Eastern to his Western polar opposite: the 'giant brother' (p. 117), Guy Hamilton.

This dwarf-giant combination is a re-enactment of the origin of the split-protagonist as expressed in Arthurian myth. Cookie tells us that in Kwan's dossier: 'Kwan notes that the ancient dwarf-figure Pelles was "split into two men - a knight and his dwarf squire". And this, he says, can be traced to the fact that his ancestor Bilis, in Celtic legend, had a giant brother called Brian, or Bran.' (p. 117)¹⁶

Kwan's idea of Hamilton's giantism is not altogether fanciful, given

¹⁴ Geoffrey Lehmann, 'Indonesia's Double Face', *Quadrant*, 23 (March 1979) 69.

¹⁵ Laurens van der Post, *Jung and the Story of Our Time* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1976), pp. 138-139.

¹⁶ The Arthurian references were explored in Chapter Three. See Roger Sherman Loomis, *Celtic Myth and Arthurian Romance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1927), p. 67.

Cookie's observation that Hamilton 'had that calm, unconscious certainty of being attended to which is common to men of unusual height' (pp. 10-11). In Arthurian romances, the dwarf and giant often interchange identities, as in the instance of the traditional porter of the Otherworld who appears sometimes as a huge black giant, and sometimes as a dwarf (Loomis, p. 109); in Norse legend, the Svart-alfar, or black dwarfs, began as maggot-like creatures breeding in the flesh of the slain giant Ymir, the Norse equivalent to Chaos (Guerber, p. 10); and in Hindu legend, the tale of King Bali tells of Vamana, the dwarf avatar, who becomes a giant.¹⁷ Given the legendary connection between dwarf and giant, and Kwan's notation that the dwarf Pelles¹⁸ was 'split into two men - a knight and his dwarf squire' (p. 117) then the 'Sir Guy and the Black Dwarf' partnership (p. 44) is an inevitable device in the necessary pairing of opposites that epitomises the structure of opposites operating within the text. Billy sees Guy as what Laurie Clancy has called 'some kind of complement or fulfilment of his incomplete self',¹⁹ and functions in the novel as the embodiment of one part of a divided protagonist. When Billy's and Guy's relationship breaks down Cookie observes: 'I could think of nothing to say now to heal the rift between these two - who were, it seemed, linked so strongly that Kwan couldn't shut the door, nor Hamilton bring himself to turn away' (p. 226). The 'rift' between the two men recalls the myth of Pelles. The following extract, spoken by the narrator, Cookie, contains within it the notion of pairing, while revealing the narrator's sensitivity towards the narrative:

I had been struck by the notion that there was some elusive physical

¹⁷ Vassilis G. Vitsaxis, *Hindu Epics, Myths and Legends* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 22.

¹⁸ For a work tracing Beli and his numerous counterparts (Pelles included) from god, king, court dwarf, see Vernon J. Harward, Jr. *The Dwarfs of Arthurian Romance and Celtic Tradition* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1958).

¹⁹ Laurie Clancy, 'The Envenomed Dreams of C. J. Koch', *Island* 23 (June 1985) 57.

likeness between this utterly unlike pair. At first I could not account for it, and was about to dismiss it as a pointless fancy. Then I saw that Hamilton's sleepy-lidded eyes were exactly the same pale pea-green as Kwan's. Moreover, since his eyebrows and lank hair were black, his appearance had the same *dark-light contrast*. But there the resemblance ended; and I very much doubted whether anyone else would have noticed it. (p. 10; my italics)

This ethereal, or impalpable, and paradoxically homomorphic partnership is further emphasised through the motif of the eye. It is significant that Kwan and Hamilton have the same 'pale pea-green' eyes. The image of the eye and its relationship to the structure of opposites, is used systematically in the novel; it is discussed at the end of this section.

But rather than Guy's being Billy's *doppelgänger* (Clancy, p. 57), he is more the *negative* (Pons, p. 111). The myth of the divided self is actively pursued by Billy. He suggests that he and Guy are both (psychophysically) half-men who share a similar experience in cultural disparity: 'You're a hybrid, old man, and so am I. It shows in our physical appearance. Scots ancestry makes you a mixture of Anglo-Saxon and Celt: I'm a mixture of Anglo-Saxon and Chinese' (p. 83). Guy retaliates: 'I don't think you have it clear. I *am* English - there's no confusion about it. I'm sorry - I'd like to share your problem, but I don't ' (pp. 83-84). But Hamilton is living an assumed identity: 'I was born in England,' he said. 'But I grew up in Singapore and Australia. I travel on an Australian passport' (p. 10). The dwarf-myth of Pelles provides the metaphor for cultural disembodiment which is revived through Billy.

Kwan is characterised as half-Chinese and half-Australian (though this too is compounded by the recognition that Australian culture is European culture, a theme explored at length in *The Doubleman*). However, Billy's identity - physical and cultural - is determined by others. He is denied his chosen career as a history tutor on the grounds that '[His] appearance is

against [him]', and Hamilton wonders 'which aspect of Kwan's appearance the authorities had been referring to' (p. 19). An Asian heritage is imposed on a man who claims European heritage: the mask of his regional features betrays the professed inner self. Says Kwan: 'William was part of *my* family past, like Christianity, and the Renaissance, and Parliamentary democracy' (p. 85). Billy's pathos might be that anatomy is still destiny, for on the very first page Cookie says of Kwan: 'I didn't at first doubt that the man was a true dwarf; and I also took him for an Indonesian Chinese' (p. 3). Cookie is later told that Kwan is in fact, Australian; and he changes his mind about Kwan's dwarf status, saying 'I now saw that he was not really a dwarf in the extreme sense: that is, he was not a midget' (p. 5). The pathos of Billy Kwan lies in the denial by others of his chosen identity for one imposed on him by those who perceive only his Chinese *persona*. I use the term *persona* advisedly, since this is a novel about plays, theatre, actors, and masks. Kwan's fixed mask of racial features categorises his role, in a similar way to that in which the journalists are also marked by their *personae*: as Cookie says 'Off-stage, in these cool hours, we could be ourselves, no longer men in white masks' (p. 9). It is Kwan's lack of racial synergy or wholeness, in the Spenglerian sense of historical pseudomorphosis in which the inner self is forced to match an imposed outer mould, that renders the dwarf Kwan, psychophysically, 'half a man'. As Kwan tells Hamilton: 'It's rather a bore to be *half* something, you see, old man. There's no great problem belonging to any *one* race - but a man needs to be able to choose' (p. 85; Koch's italics).

By using the 'half-a-man' construct which is consistent with the icon of dwarfism, Koch is able to represent the individual, communal, and national, quest for identity. Dutch-colonial identity is being actively exorcised from a new multi-national consciousness, and the aim is that a multi-cultural society

will assume the single mask of 'Indonesia', though Indonesia itself possesses a 'double face' (p. 59). In keeping with the conflict inspired by the dualities of opposite intensities Kwan, a self-professed colonialist, supports Sukarno's anti-colonialist move, which is 'both defensive and an aggressive' move;²⁰ but it is also self-reflexive. By exorcising the European past of the Dutch colonialists in favour of a totally Asian identity, Indonesia is expressing the concept of identity by choice not imposition. Kwan identifies with this struggle since his own racial identity is attributed to him on the basis of his *persona*, or mask, of racial features. He wears two masks: an affixed racial identity and an identity produced by the *persona* of deformity.

In both cases, identity is allocated primarily on the *façade*, or indeed, on the *face value*. In order for Kwan to validate his identification with a particular community he turns to anatomical destiny, appearing to *choose* to belong to that 'great race of dwarf fools' (p. 94), the 'achondroplastic "race"' (p. 95). This would seem to be a contradiction of the idea of identity by choice not imposition, since obviously Kwan could not choose to be a dwarf. But he makes a case for his alliance with a European, rather than a Chinese, past by qualifying dwarfism as a racial characteristic. Kwan consciously seeks identification with the mythology of dwarfs of Celtic origin, despite his cursory acknowledgement that 'the Mongols had a dwarf sub-race too' (p. 95). He consciously denies his Chinese heritage:

Western medical science is delightfully vague. For some reason it can't explain, the long bones of the limbs in achondroplastics are stunted in the womb. The condition tends to run in families, with two short parents producing an achondroplastic. But I believe an older theory, Cookie - that there was once a dwarf race, to which we're throwbacks. You can still see vestiges of it in Europe, running in a belt from Bavaria to Wales and Ireland. Muscular little men who mined precious metals - you remember your fairy tales? The Celts said we lived underground,

²⁰ Xavier Pons, 'Oedipus in the Tropics: A Psychoanalytical Interpretation of C. J. Koch's "The Year of Living Dangerously"' in *Colonisations*, eds. Xavier Pons and M. Rocard. (Toulouse: Université de Toulouse-le Mirail, 1985), pp. 109-117.

Brownies - little people - who were there before the Celts and Saxons came, and who put the dark strain in the Celts. They're my true ancestors, Cookie. I didn't get my dwarfism from my Chinese father - I pretty certainly inherited it from my Irish-descended mother. (p. 95)

Both physical characteristics (Chinese and dwarfism) in effect determine 'what' Kwan is, but Kwan denies one characteristic while appearing to embrace the other (though he consciously uses both *personae* when it is to his advantage). An essential Jungian message, one Jung learned from the Chinese (and one which echoes throughout the text), is that to live one's life with meaning in the present, the spirits of the ancestors must be honoured in the full (van der Post, p. 207). After his death Billy is returned to his Chinese father, and so in a sense he is returned to a heritage he denied.

One must question Billy's self-claimed allegiance to the dwarf family. He employs the myth of Vishnu and the Dwarf Semar²¹ in an attempt to make 'real' some fantastic connection between himself and Sukarno. This is consistent with the *wayang* performer, who 'enters into "real" life by identifying himself with a mythical ancestor and the mythology which he embodies' (Salvini, p. 50). Kwan's supposed allegiance is not an unencumbered wish to claim community with dwarfs; his coolly detached and clinical analysis of the hunch-backed Indonesian dwarf in the Glodok shows indifference and distancing, rather than a wish to belong. The Indonesian midget is described as standing three feet high, with hair like a 'black cat's fur', with arms like 'flippers', and standing at Hamilton's side 'like a dog attending his master'; the three animal allusions make clear that the midget is too closely identifiable with the infrahuman for Kwan to want to claim community. As Cookie observes: 'compared to him, Billy Kwan (at whom I dared not look), was a normal man' (p. 91). Cookie's observation

²¹ Consistent with the punishing attitude to deformity, Semar is made deformed in order to punish him.

betrays a belief that the benchmark of normality is determined by the body.

Compare that view with Kwan's statement that 'the lower limit of normal height in a man is placed at four feet eleven' (p. 94). Kwan speaks of 'normal height'; a very different emphasis would have occurred if he had spoken of the 'height of a normal man'. Kwan's view of himself is of 'a normal man, of normal intelligence, capable of having normal children, but whose body is a joke' (p. 94). These two comments indicate the degree to which Kwan exists on the periphery of the normal and the abnormal: he is unable to share community with either. As we have seen, portrayal of the deformed in literature is portrayal of the marginalised as outcast: and Billy, at four-feet-six, is only five inches from normality. Kwan's recitation of his dwarf self as a 'normal man, of normal intelligence . . . whose body is a joke' (p. 94) echoes the Po Chü-I epigraph which describes cultural morphism, and which ends: 'A Han heart and a Han tongue set in the body of a Turk'.

Unlike Jackie Hanna (*Swords and Crowns and Rings*), who moves into the bush and removes himself from the curious gaze of others in order to become 'invisible', Billy Kwan insists on proving his normality by displaying a high degree of visibility and becoming a 'dwarf Buddha in a Hawaiian shirt' (p. 72). However, a change from the visibility to invisibility occurs after Wally O'Sullivan's party when Wally moves into his bungalow. Cookie notes:

I can see now that Billy Kwan's popularity with the members of the Wayang Club reached a sort of peak on the night of Wally's party, when he wore the *pitji* cap. He would never bathe in quite the same universal benevolence again; and his behaviour began to grow more and more strange, and to most of us, more and more unacceptable. (p. 107)

Wally claims that the black velveteen *pitji* cap, the badge of nationalism, was worn by Sukarno in bouts of love-making and was 'a magic potency cap' (p. 25). Not too much should be made of a connection between the *pitji* cap and

the Tarnkappe (the red cap of the legendary dwarfs).²² What is important is that the wearing of the Tarnkappe results in the visual dissolution of the dwarf. When Billy wears the *pitji* cap, the old Billy is shifting alliances: his doubts about his 'elder brother' Bung Kano, and his doubts about Guy and Jilly, are made clear that night. And says Cookie: 'it was that night, I'm certain, that Billy stole Wally's Sukarno cap. He simply took it home with him, and when Wally taxed him with this, he refused to admit it, or give the cap up' (pp. 104-105).

Billy begins to fade. He becomes less than a shadow in a world of shadow-performers; in becoming invisible, he fulfils one of the roles prescribed by the archetype dwarf. Cookie notes, with precision: 'Having gone to earth, Billy Kwan preoccupied us in the Wayang more than he had when he was visible' (p. 229). Just as Kwan's body has been seen as a joke, Kwan's gradual physical deterioration (and attenuation as a character) is treated as a form of amusement: 'Billy-sighting became almost a sport, in those weeks' (p. 23). Billy passes from sight as a human being and becomes an object of derision, reduced to yet another role prescribed by the icon of his deformity. Cookie tells us: 'Wally's slow burr mocked Kwan's passion; we all grinned at it - myself included, I'm afraid - as though he were performing a juggling act for our amusement' (p. 216). When Billy is cast out from the Wayang Club - a club which satisfies his need to belong to a physically normal community, and one which is a prestigiously western one - Cookie concludes:

We were all Billy's murderers We should not have barred him from the Wayang whatever had happened to Billy, I said, had happened because he had been made outcast from the Wayang Club - the only community to which he had ever really belonged. (p. 252)

²² H. A. Guerber, *Myths of the Norsemen* (1908; rpt. London: George C. Harrap, 1948), p. 240.

And just as Billy's alliance swings away from Sukarno and then towards Guy, his rejection from the Club is followed by an Asian rejection: Ibu and her daughter desert Billy at a time when he had come to think that 'this is my family' (p. 239). Unlike most other Australian narratives in which there are deformed characters, this one does not allow the deformed character a final acceptance into the community. Rather, Billy remains the outcast of the novel: Cookie notes that 'by exiling himself, he had moved outside normal standards' (p. 230). In the other works discussed, the deformed are survivors and frequently achievers: Kwan is the only deformed character examined in this study who dies. (In James McQueen's *Hook's Mountain* the violent death of the dwarf is an implied, future, happening.) But keeping in mind the device of dwarfism in use here (where Billy, as symbol, is only one part of a whole, a 'split between two protagonists' (Hulse, p. 19)), the final transformation of Hamilton, the second part of the total self, is a measurable success.

Billy's relationship with Hamilton through size is established early in the novel: 'As he came with Kwan towards the round bar, Hamilton's tallness was fantastically exaggerated. The spiky head only just reached his elbow; it was as though the new man walked with a strange child' (p. 7). As indicated at the beginning of this chapter, a second precept regarding dwarfism is that it is fancifully perceived in terms of paradox, as an embodiment of opposites, in which an adult is trapped in a child's body. Koch has consciously drawn on this perception (Hulse, p. 21), and indeed, Kwan is described as 'a man imprisoned in a child's body' (p. 130).

In the sense that birth is a continuation of all that has ever been, dwarfism personifies the notion of the collective unconscious through the image of the adult-child that is associated with dwarfism. The fiction

accompanying this particular deformity presents the paradox of the neoteric child who is in fact ancient, being a continuation of all that has gone before. Billy's particular type of dwarfism is unlike the infantile state of the proportionate ateliotic dwarf²³ (popularly known as the midget, which is derived from 'midge', a small gnat or fly (OED)); in fact, for years the picture of an ateliotic dwarf named Franz Ebert appeared on baby food and baby powder.²⁴ The disproportionate achondroplast is perceived in direct contrast to the ateliotic, since the achondroplastic dwarf 'appears to have been born old' (Fiedler, p. 45). Billy's achondroplastic dwarfism is suggestive of an embodiment of atavistic *a-priori* knowledge in action. The Machiavellian ateliotic dwarf in Pär Lagerkvist's *The Dwarf* states that the dwarf is the archetype: 'I have heard tell that we dwarfs are descended from a race older than that which now populates the world, and therefore we are old as soon as we are born. I do not know if this is true, but in that case we must be the original beings'.²⁵

It has been observed that through the 'subtle reference to legendary or mythological antecedents to the characters', contemporary characters 'come to represent more than their contemporary selves, living inside and outside time'.²⁶ The image of Billy Kwan compiling his dossiers dramatises the words of Heraclitus, inscribed by Jung at Bollingen: 'Time is a child - playing like a child - playing a board game - the kingdom of the child'; but it is perhaps the so-called autonomously inspired inscription on the third face of the stone at Bollingen that better illustrates the Jungian principles at work in

²³ The best known example of an ateliotic dwarf is Charles Sherwood Stratton, alias General Tom Thumb, who reached a height of forty inches. McWhirter, Norris, and Ross, *Guinness Book of Records* (New York: Sterling, 1972), p. 12.

²⁴ Leslie Fiedler, *Freaks: Myths and Images of the Secret Self* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978), p. 59.

²⁵ Pär Lagerkvist, *The Dwarf*, trans. Alexandra Dick (1945; rpt. New York: Hill and Wang, 1987), p. 6.

²⁶ Andrew Sant, 'Expanding Otherworld', *The Age Monthly Review*, 5 (June 1985) 6.

the novel, with the dwarf as device: 'I am an orphan, alone; nevertheless I am found everywhere. I am one, but opposed to myself. I am youth and an old man at one and the same time'.²⁷

Xavier Pons claims that Billy 'has been unable to grow up, as his physical deformity signifies in symbolic manner' (Pons, p. 111); but Billy, the born-old achondroplast, reflects a complex notion of time. The associated images of the child and the past are plentiful in Koch's novels (Hulse, p. 24), and hypocorism: 'to play the child' (OED) persists throughout the novel for even grown men own pet-names, such as 'Ham' and 'Cookie'. In this novel, characters must, by definition, appear childlike when placed in comparison to the timelessness of archetypes. (Frank Kermode uses the term *aevum* to describe duration which is: 'neither temporal nor eternal, but, as Aquinas said, participating in both the temporal and the eternal . . . [it] is a mode in which things can be perpetual without being eternal'.²⁸) These characters, named and described in child-like terms, re-live and re-enact the past, as when Gillian Bryant ('Jillie') and Guy Henderson are shown acting in shadows of another time: 'Through an anachronism of history, Indonesia's campaign against Britain had flung them back into the days of the Empire: they were living though a sort of Indian Mutiny on a petty scale, and half enjoying it' (p. 48).

The nineteenth century casts its shadows on other characters in order that the characters can shadow-play the past: Condon's activities remind Billy Kwan of those of the 'lecherous Victorian gentlemen' (p. 55), and Wally looks like 'a Somerset Maugham character, perhaps' (p. 60). Guy is described by Cookie as having 'an almost Edwardian strain of romanticism'

²⁷ C. G. Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, ed. Aniela Jaffé (1961; rpt. New York: Pantheon Books, 1973), p. 227.

²⁸ Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 72.

(p. 65). And Guy says: 'Sometimes I feel I was born too late' (p. 65). Indeed 'Sir Guy' (p. 56), drinking in the 'circular chamber' with its round bar' (p. 3) could be likened to an intemperate Sir Guyon of *The Faerie Queene* (1596). This is a novel within which 'Maha-Kali dances: she of many names, all of which mean Time' (p. 293). In an article comparing Koch's use of time and history in this novel with that of Robert Drewe, Veronica Brady says:

history for Koch is the "larger story" in which his characters are involved and even if he also pays tribute to an absolute puppet master pulling the strings of puppets who play their part in this story, his imagination does not really range beyond history. This means that, having no recourse to anything beyond it, people are ultimately subject to its determinism, become mere puppets in the story in which they have a part. (Brady, p. 73)

The claim that 'people become mere puppets in a story in which they have a part' seems to suggest that Koch is unable to draw full-bodied characters, but only ciphers, or 'mere puppets'. But this is an entirely conscious process: *The Year of Living Dangerously* is one novel for which one cannot think of the puppet as a suitable analogy for a simple character. Brady appears to not recognise that the novel uses the conceit of 'people as puppets': this is the '*wajang orang*', literally '*human wajang*' (Brandon, p. 396), in play in a novel structured and informed by the *wayang* theatre and its relationship to time and the universe. The relationship of characters to time is inextricably bound to the beliefs of the *wayang kulit*, which is a theatre where 'real' life is entered into when performers embody and identify themselves with mythical ancestors and their mythologies (Salvini, p. 50). The drama of the novel is played out within what Koch specifically means us to understand as a theatre of impending war, where even the combined military force of the *wayang* of the Left is 'code-named after characters in the *wayang kulit*' (p. 269); where

'even the mosques were like flats on a stage; it was all two-dimensional' (p. 97); and the journalists play their roles in the 'daily theatre of the palace press conference' (p. 25). Koch's use of time and puppets constitute an integrated and intentional artistic device.

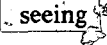
With the intercession of the *dalang*, these mythological antecedents play themselves out according to mythological determinates: Jill and Guy 'Dark and fair in their lit frame . . . had ceased for a moment to be themselves, and resembled the human shadows of universal wish' (p. 104). And Cookie might well have been thinking about the myth of Romantic love when he observed of Jill and Guy that 'sometimes two people seem to live that myth and fill it full of sap again, as though it has never been debauched' (p. 248); but it is not the only myth that is being pumped full of sap. Billy's death is also in accordance with mythological determinates²⁹: 'Bilis' has as its root the syllable *bel*, meaning 'to die'.³⁰ And as well as the giant-dwarf antecedent, Billy's action is patterned after the semi-supernatural character, Billy Blin.³¹ Though this is not expressly stated in the novel, Billy is nevertheless referred to as a 'black goblin' (p. 3); Cookie wonders vaguely whether Billy had been imitating 'hobgoblins' (p. 231); and according to the journalist-character, Harold Sloane, Billy becomes a 'bloody vicious midget' (p. 213) when he is consumed by bitterness and anger at his rejection.

His state of health after his rejection is increasingly at risk: he is called a 'hypo' (p. 77); he admits to frequent bouts of dysentery; there is the ominous description of Billy's 'large ivory face . . . unnatural in the terminal illness of

²⁹ The thorough Kochian delight in making past and present connections continues when Billy refers to the legend of Bilis, king of the Antipodes (p. 109). During the classical and early medieval periods, some authors confused the true Antipodes with the land of the dead: see Harward, p. 34.

³⁰ Charles Squire, *Celtic Myth and Legend* (London: The Gresham Publishing Company, n.d.)

³¹ Personal correspondence with C. J. Koch, February 8th, 1989. Koch says of this hobgoblin character: 'Billy attaches himself to a household and protects the master against deception by his wife ... he is helpful, but mischievous and becomes angry if rejected'.

the light' (p. 226), followed by Cookie's observation that 'the poor bugger's sick'; and he earns the nick-name 'the Dying Typhoon' (p. 230). These authorial hints prepare us for the ending. When Hamilton confronts Billy in an alleyway, the lexical ambiguity is obvious: 'the place was filled with a stench remarkable *even* for Jakarta: overflowing drains *perhaps*' (p. 234; my italics); when Hamilton grabs Billy's arms he notices that 'the intense, completely unknown stench filled his nose: its *majestic* foulness distracted him' (p. 234; my italics). The word 'majestic' is an unusual adjective in the literal context but in its mythic context it is revealing: Hamilton is admitting partial awareness of the deterioration of the self-proclaimed antipodean king. On  Kwan earlier dressed in a black shirt and black slacks, Hamilton had asked: 'And why are you dressed as an undertaker?' (p. 117) Billy, the self-styled dwarf-king Bilis, appears to be on a course of self-destruction. Kwan's actions are in accordance with the notion of perpetual re-enactment within a micro-cosmos and micro-chaos. Billy and Hamilton are playing prescribed roles:

Some of [the Europeans and Japanese] stared curiously as the big man and his dwarfish companion passed, Kwan's busy sandals clapping on the blue-figured tiles. Anywhere else, Hamilton might have been embarrassed, but his new acquaintance's oddity seemed a pre-ordained part of his first night in Indonesia. (p. 14)

Cookie notes that in Kwan's dossiers on the dwarf that 'there is an essay dealing with what he sees as his own destined role in life' (p. 109). The layering and flattening of time is incorporated in the roles that Billy and other characters play. Billy's is a predestined role: beyond the *wayang* philosophy of reality as image of mythic reality obtainable through re-enactment of roles played by archetypes, since Billy - for that matter, any deformed person - is forced to revivify the fictions and expectations thrust upon him by the culture

within which he exists. His attempt to utilise *selected* fictions of archetypal dwarfs is an attempt to assume some control over his perceived identity, and to counter at least some that are imposed by the icon of deformity.

Billy is acutely aware of the patronising responses of others to his deformity. Cookie summarises: 'No one wanted to dismiss a dwarfish half-caste Chinese in our age of conformist tolerance' (p. 67). It was noted in the Introduction that there are primarily two categories of responses towards the deformed: the civilised response, and the primitive response. According to Koestler, the civilised response of 'tolerant acceptance' predominates in Western society; tolerant acceptance comes from an empathy which recognises the *human* in the disabled. Although in terms of Koestler's whole thesis this is only a small point, it serves as an apt point for further discussion. Koestler claims that:

The tolerant acceptance of physical or mental malformations in our fellow creatures, though of relatively recent origin, has become deeply engrained in Western society; we are no longer aware of the fact that it requires a certain imagination and a good deal of empathy to recognize in a dwarf, or a 'thick-lipped Blackamoor', a human being *which* [sic], though different in appearance, exists and feels as oneself does. In the small child this kind of projective mechanism is absent or rudimentary.³² (my italics)

Unfortunately, Koestler's choice of pronoun ('which' not 'who') betrays the degree to which the statement of tolerant acceptance holds true for the speaker. Be that as it may, Koestler contends that the poorly developed empathetic projective mechanism of the child is similarly rudimentary in tribal or parochial societies. There, the general feeling appears to be that 'the creature who does not "belong" to the tribe, clan, caste, or parish is not really human' (Koestler, p. 76). In other words, 'belonging' to a group means being human: normal, not abnormal. That is why Billy's eventual banishment from the Wayang Club ('the only community to which he had ever really

³² Arthur Koestler, *The Act of Creation* (London: Pan Books, 1966), pp. 75-76.

belonged' (p. 252)) has a devastating impact on him.

To put it simply, the civilised response of tolerant acceptance seems to be no more than a mutual pact declaring the deformity as invisible. For the observer and the observed the dilemma is two-fold: deformity is a part of the self; if deformity is declared invisible, part of the self is declared *persona non grata*. Furthermore, the deformed are often 'seen' as their deformity: just as one sees 'the dwarf' or 'the quadraplegic' coming down the street. Tolerant acceptance becomes a conscious community enactment, eradicating the necessity of dealing with the unfamiliar: consciously, deformity is un-seen, but sub-consciously its fictions are etched on the inner eye. Koestler's premise regarding the existence of a primitive response is in use in Koch's novel; but whereas Koestler contends that the primitive response is present only in the child (or in primitive peoples), Koch's use acknowledges its presence in the so-called civilised adult. As the narrator, Cookie, observes: seeing a dwarf brings out the 'curious child in us'. (p. 3) The comment also reinforces the theme of time and history as continuously present and made real, through re-enactment.

Cookie's next response is to categorise Billy Kwan 'simply as a remarkably short man - wishing abnormality away' (p. 5). As I proposed in the Introduction, literature has found a psychologically crucial use of deformity as a manipulative device by which it can provoke primitive responses through a civilised medium, and engage both primitive and civilised responses in the reader. Jung looked to the polygenesis of myth as the foundation on which to base his theory of a collective unconscious; had he had a mind to he might well have reached a similar conclusion based on the ubiquitous response towards the deformed. Billy's child-like size represents the contemporary re-enactment of an ancient role; he is an extension of the

metaphor, for which the *dalang* and the *wayang* stand, of the mono-plot of life under the dictates of some 'other'. The mono-plot of life, to use Watts's term, means eternal re-enactment in accordance with atavistic consciousness (p. 13). The concept of time and re-enaction, or of the *wayang* concept of the mythological universe in replay, is directly linked to the collective unconscious and to deformity by Guy Hamilton when he wonders:

What creates such obsessions in us, so that we wait for the appearance of a particular face, strange and yet known before? What turns such defects as a recessed lower lip and a slight cast in one eye into haunting and precious attractions, which tantalise the mind? Perhaps we do seek our ancestors - or loves from another life? (pp. 194-195)

Furthermore, Kwan is aware of *his* role as dwarf, and of the psychological dissonance created in the observers of his deformity. His manipulative power rests in his recognising and utilising the response; this enables him to become a conscious iconoclast, destroying the images produced by others when they respond a-historically to the icon of deformity:

Although only a stringer cameraman, he was invited to most embassy receptions. He was safe from rejection and snubs, and he knew it. No one wanted to dismiss a dwarfish half-caste Chinese in our age of conformist tolerance, and he would force his way in, with his brash, frog-like smile, and then tell stories in the Wayang later of just how far he had tested that tolerance with his eccentricities. Radical academics, conservative diplomats and liberal journalists were particularly good targets; they had to suffer a rude frankness from Billy *they would never have put up with from anyone else*. At first delighted with this intellectually brilliant *human symbol* with whom they could prove their hearts were in the right place (one who was not only racially but physically underprivileged), they must then watch the symbol dissolving before their eyes to become a sharp-tongued iconoclast. To conservatives, he exhibited a worrying radicalism; while his way of tormenting unctuous radicals was to strike the attitudes of a racist! (p. 67; my italics)

By definition, the re-actions of Billy's embassy associates are the acts of *hypokrites* (as the Greeks called the actor). By testing the so-called civilised response of tolerant acceptance, Billy uncovers the inverse

discrimination to which he is subjected. Cookie states: 'Civilisation is based on what's called hypocrisy, whether we like it or not' (p. 131). 'Civilisation' refers to a particular stage of human society; since Billy is a 'human *symbol*' he is excluded from being part of civilisation. There is a distinction to be drawn between those actors entering into reality through re-enactment of archetypal situations, and those actors who perform social conventions. This is why, in all senses of the word, Cookie can say of Billy: 'I don't see him as a hypocrite' (p. 130). The so-called 'real' characters in the novel are performing a *wajang orang*, literally a 'human wayang': they are performing the original mythological plays. In the *wayang* philosophy, normals also re-enact the fictions of the archetype; just as the abnormal being who, regardless of race, colour, or sex, is destined to carry the fictions of deformity.

Kwan is not, as Veronica Brady claims, 'mere image' (p. 67). Koch draws on the mythos of the dwarf; and, as symbol, the 'excessive' burdens 'placed upon his character in the shape of his mixed parentage, his undue intelligence and an unusual religiosity' (Brady, p. 67) become not excessive, but integrative: the device of Kwan's mixed parentage, that is, his dual heritage, is consistent with the 'half-a-man' and the adult-child dichotomous dwarf. Veronica Brady questions Kwan's 'undue intelligence'; whereas since this is a novel whose idiolect is contained within the re-enactment of myth, it is consistent with mythological determinants that make dwarfs 'far more intelligent than men' (Guerber, p. 239). What Brady calls Kwan's 'unusual religiosity' is consistent with his semi-divine mythological determinate, by which he is bound, and that he constantly tries out different religions is a further indication of his place as outcast; according to Christian tradition dwarfs are excluded from priestly service: 'For whatsoever man he be that hath a blemish, he shall not approach [to offer the bread of his God]: a blind

man, or a lame, or he that hath a flat nose, or anything superfluous, or a man that is brokenfooted, or brokenhanded, or crookbackt, or a dwarf' (Leviticus 22: 18-20).³³ Strength and religiosity are suggested early in the novel, in connection with his occupation: 'had he not had this physique . . . he couldn't have managed the heavy sound camera on its brace, the cinecameraman's cross' (p. 5). (Brady's objections do raise the question of overkill, since it is clear from her objections and the above explanations that when deformity is used as a device there is always the possibility of the metaphor submerging the character.)

In keeping with Heraclitus' notion of 'enantiodromia', or the Jungian 'conversion into the opposite',³⁴ the novel switches emphasis from dwarf to giant when the dwarf is killed. 'Deformity' has a seemingly minor manifestation in the giant in this novel, Guy Hamilton. As a consequence of the deformities that are inflicted on him, he too becomes the pathological embodiment of the *wayang*, which is primarily a theatrical objectification of the political issues in the novel. In the early confrontation with the People's Youth, Guy is described as a 'Gulliver' dealing with bodies which are 'dwarfed by his own'. Hamilton's limp, earned in confrontation, may be called a *chota hazri* (Hindi: 'small breakfast') in this feast of images. His egocentric preoccupation with external appearance - 'It's nothing - just a cut. What I mind about is the [torn] slacks' (p. 77) - shows his vanity, not his bravery; it also reveals his inability to 'see' potentially volatile situation although he is a trained observer. Hamilton is later in danger of losing the sight of an eye as a result of similar blundering into unfamiliar territory.

The eye is a *leitmotif* in the novel. It is used to suggest a supernatural link between Guy and Kwan, who have the same 'pale pea-green' eyes. We

³³ The New English Bible substitutes the term 'stunted' for dwarf.

³⁴ C. G. Jung, 'Psychotherapists or the Clergy', in *Psychology and Religion: West and East*, trans. R. F. C. Hull (1958; rpt. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), p. 342.

are told that Billy had promised to be 'Hamilton's eyes' (p. 72); so that his loss of the use of one eye is significant in that he loses it after the death of his split protagonist Billy; in fact Hamilton says about Billy's demise that 'a part of himself now seemed damaged by this death' (p. 286). The eye is also used to suggest the existence of a satanic side in voyeurism. The eye and sexuality are graphically associated in a specifically Freudian context when the generals of the Right fall into the hands of the Gerwani of the Left, who 'will torment the generals sexually, and then castrate them; they will cut out their eyes with razor blades' (p. 270). Kwan's Bell and Howell camera is itself an inanimate eye, recording the drama of life to be played on an electronic wayang screen. It is Kwan the cameraman who vocalises a connection between journalism and spying and sexuality, believing the journalist to be 'nothing but a Peeping Tom' (p. 237). This is not a far-fetched notion, given that 'each of the journalists in the Wayang has some kind of sexual perversion' (Clancy, p. 57); and that in the structure of opposites those perversions lean towards the dark side of the godless left.

Sexuality is the tragic actor-in-man in this novel of actors: it is the recurrent, perpetual, primal force; by necessity it must be re-enacted, and is done so by actors capable of re-interpreting, diverting, and mutating its life-affirming primacy into a non-affirmation. Disequilibrium is apparent in the all-male fraternity of the appropriately named Wayang Club: this is witnessed in Condon's voyeuristic photography expeditions; Curtis's cemetery excursions and his obsessive recourse to its prostitutes with its whiff of necrophilia; Wally's paederastic homosexuality; and Guy's initially enforced celibacy; while Kwan, who unlike the sexually-fulfilled Jackie Hanna, falls into the category of disabled males, who in real life have reportedly found that 'disability has deprived them of an essential part of their humanness: their

identities as sexual beings. More than one male character with a disability refers to himself as "only half a man".³⁵

The various means of sexual gratification among the characters indicate a further tilting towards an extreme, which is undesirable in the philosophy of the *wayang kulit*. The sexual obsessions exhibited are essentially auto-erotic and even self-abusing. Pete Curtis's nocturnal visits to the cemetery provide an obvious link between sexuality and the chthonic spirit. In the words of Jung: 'Sexuality is of the greatest importance as the expression of the chthonic spirit. That spirit is "the other face of God," the dark side of the God-image'.³⁶ Jung's interpretation provides us with a Western interpretation of Durga's darkness: Durga is 'the Black One, the dancer in the burial ground' (p. 179). Her image is perpetuated through the descriptions of the prostitutes in the cemetery, who are themselves a useful metaphor for the death-in-life that Koch himself says he sees as an expression of the current 'masturbatory society' (Hulse, p. 22). Guy is subject to a personal enantiodromia through his experiences at the cemetery; and with the underground Russian agent, Vera, he swings to the Left, the symbol of rebellion against order (Pons, p. 116). The loss of order is evident in Cookie's observation that 'Billy Kwan was right: Sir Guy had been invaded, since his trip to Tugu, by 'Durga's darkness', by a mysterious lust'; and that 'there must have been a breaking down of his usual scruples' (p.181).

The Javanese term *Meta Kelap* means 'the Dark Eye'. Guy's loss of control is symbolised by the blinding of his eye. It is no coincidence that the 'darkening of the eye' takes place in the section of the novel titled 'Patet

³⁵ Paul K. Longmore, 'Screening Stereotypes: Images of Disabled People in Television and Motion Pictures', in *Disabling Images / Images of the Disabled*, ed. Alan Gartner and Tom Joe (New York: Praeger, 1987), p. 73.

³⁶ C. G. Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, trans. Richard and Clara Winston, ed. Aniela Jaffé (1961; rpt. New York: Pantheon Books, 1973), p. 168.

Manjura: Amok'.³⁷ The Javanese idea behind the *Meta Kelap* is that 'the eye of the man who ran *amok* thus had suddenly darkened' (van der Post, p. 28). Further, the implied loss of Guy's left eye is a dramatic objectification of a nation run *amok*. The swing to the Left is a national enantiodromia, a fulfilment of one of Sukarno's catch-phrases: 'A time had come, he said to "swing the steering wheel over": a time of *banting-stir*, which means "absolute change" ' (p. 223).

For Hamilton, the coup at Merdeka Timur is ironically to provide the 'metaphysical [yearning], for that vast, ultimate event which would change everything' (p. 274). At Merdeka Timur, the political struggle between Left and Right becomes a spiritual battlefield played out on a metaphorical *wayang* screen the moment that Guy Hamilton's eye is damaged. It is then that there is a 'yellow fog: it lies in a thick screen across his eye: light comes through it, but no images' (p. 278). The eye now takes on an external political and cultural morphology, while simultaneously reflecting the inner battlefield of the man.

Hamilton's loss of sight is more than the Oedipal penalty of 'partial castration' for an innocuous 'transgression' which Pons claims, though it is symbolically a 'limited mutilation which is the price to pay to reach maturity, that is the capacity to love' (Pons, p. 111). Guy's case is more hopeful than that of Oedipus. To begin with, Guy loses the use of only one eye - the left; and in this novel of opposite intensities, that is symbolic. Hamilton, the egocentric, has rejected the un-familiar, since 'others' have no place in the 'me' world of the egocentric. For him to become familial, he must grow out of his childishness and grow beyond the egocentric. Blinded by his bandages, Guy nevertheless gains the enlightenment of the seer: he sees that not to grow

³⁷ The title and action in this part of the novel correspond to Part Three of the *wayang kulit*, which contains a major battle scene and the overthrow of the king's mission.

will mean the death of his child through abortion, making him partially responsible for the ultimate death-in-life action. In addition, he will be partially responsible for the abuse of a female 'other', in the form of Jill; he gains empathy with Billy whom he saw previously as a 'joke' (p. 286); and he gains empathy with the Javanese. In so doing he acknowledges his found ability to commit himself 'genuinely to another human being' (Pons, p. 109). As Claremont points out, through his blinding Hamilton is able 'to accept imperfection in others and recognise it in himself' (p. 28).

As in Oscar Wilde's Christian parable 'The Selfish Giant' the tiniest child humanises and reforms the giant.³⁸ Billy focuses the concerns of the novel while acting as a primary force in the humanisation of Hamilton. Left with only his 'good' eye, Hamilton's situation is a fulfilment of Billy's wish that he should 'know what light is, and what darkness is' (p. 235); which is interpreted by Billy as meaning the capacity of sensing the light and dark sides of the self (p. 236). The second figure of a split protagonist has fulfilled the first; when Hamilton leaves Jakarta, it is during the year that Sukarno has labelled 'the Year of Self Reliance' (p. 221).

³⁸ Oscar Wilde, 'The Selfish Giant', in *The Collected Oscar Wilde*, Vol. I. of *Stories*, ed. J. B. Foreman (1948; rpt. London: Heron-William Collins, 1966), pp. 297-300.



Peter Booth, Painting 1982
Collection Riddoch Art Gallery, Mount Gambier.
Purchased with the assistance of the Visual Arts Board of the Australia
Council, 1982.

Chapter Five

Rhoda Courtney

Rhoda Courtney in *The Vivisector*¹ is the first female to be discussed in this study, and she is by far the most deformed person: she is a dwarf, and hunchbacked, and she bears a disfiguring birthmark on her neck. Traditionally, gender has imposed on her more clearly defined and more severely limited levels of acceptable physical deviance than on males. In Joseph Furphy's *Such is Life* (1903) Tom Collins elaborates the theme in a conversation with the disfigured Nosey Alf:

"Did the British think less of Nelson - Did Lady Hamilton think less of him, if it comes to that - for the loss of his arm and his eye? Why, even the conceited German students value scars on the face more than academic honours. Believe me, Alf, while a man merely conducts himself as a man, his scars needn't cost him a thought: but if he is an artist, as you are, what might otherwise be a disfigurement becomes the highest claim to respect and sympathy. It's pure effeminacy to brood over such things, for that's just where we have the advantage of women. 'A woman's first duty', says the proverb, 'is to be beautiful'. If Lady Hamilton had been minus an eye and an arm, she would scarcely have attained her unfortunate celebrity".²

Despite the irony of the situation (unknown to Collins, Nosey Alf is a woman), it would seem that in literature to be portrayed as severely deformed and female is to intensify physical 'dreadfulness'; which suggests that any lasting romantic relationship is out of the question. The sentiment is expressed in Stefan Zweig's *Beware of Pity* (1939)³ by the young 'Leutnant

¹ Patrick White, *The Vivisector* (1970; rpt. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981). All subsequent references are to this edition.

² Joseph Furphy, *Such is Life*, in *The Portable Joseph Furphy*, ed. and introd. John Barnes (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1981), p. 259

Hofmiller' when the crippled Edith von Kekesfalva grabs and kisses him passionately from her sick bed: 'Never had I, even in my wildest dreams, imagined that invalids, cripples, the immature, the prematurely aged, the despised and rejected, the pariahs among human beings, *dared* to love' (p. 205). A similar incident occurs in *The Vivisector* when the young Hurtle Duffield is tricked by Rhoda into coming close to her bed: 'he was so close she threw her arms around him: to kiss' (p. 119). We are told that 'he was disgusted' (p. 120). Whether he is disgusted by her body or by the quality of his own emotional response is a question addressed later in this chapter.

Because of her undeniable physical difference, Rhoda's body commands attention, but her sexuality is dismissed: she fulfils the stereotype of the disabled woman as a sexually unfit partner. The resulting forced celibacy is seen as a mixed blessing in the eyes of the fecund, wedded and bedded Ma Duffield, who notes: 'That little girl of Mrs Courtney's with the funny back, at least she'll never suffer this part' (p. 54); and while Rhoda confirms the fact of her sexual exclusion when she says that: 'men were never interested' (p. 550), Hurtle notes her interest: 'she had got drunk on the smell of strong men' (p. 565). Although deformed women remain single in the Australian fictions studied here, real-life counterparts such as the 'ape-woman', Julia Pastrana (billed as 'the Ugliest Woman in the World') and Grace McDaniels (billed as 'the Mule Woman') did marry; and the character of the 'Burmese Hairy Woman', Ma Phoon (who, even though this is expressed in a highly *complimentary* manner, nevertheless is likened to a dog), also marries:

Long ago had her husband considered himself fortunate in his furry wife, and her children, accustomed from birth to bury their own smooth cheeks in the silken tangle of hers, had only thought how much more comfortable was their mother than any other.⁴

⁴ F. Tennyson Jesse, *The Lacquer Lady* (1929; rpt. London: Virago, 1979), p. 239.

On the contrary, the factual John Merrick (the 'Elephant Man') found no beauty for his beast,⁵ unlike the majority of the male fictional characters in this study.

Ape, mule, dog, and elephant are words used to describe the deformed human; and they are words that perpetuate the myth that 'freaks' are iconic for 'infrahuman'. Rhoda is referred to as a white ant (p. 91); an octopus (p. 314); a rat (p. 441); as the Cat Woman (p. 439); and a monkey (pp. 151; 279; 526; 527). The mutations that Rhoda undergoes in Duffield's 'Pythoness' paintings put one in mind of the ultimate, and so called 'vivisector' in literature, Dr. Moreau, in H. G. Wells *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (1896).⁶ Moreau vivisected beasts in order to create 'humanized animals' (p. 68); but when Charles Prendick returns to civilisation he is made aware of the beast in man: 'I could not persuade myself that the men and women I met were not also another, still passably human, Beast People, animals half-wrought into the outward image of human souls, and that they would presently begin to revert, to show first this bestial mark and then that' (p. 126). The supposed existence of animal characteristics in the human is a feature of White's work; further, vivisection was not solely the domain of the scientist, since certain dwarfs and cripples were once a deliberate artistic product: Moreau tells of 'the operations of those medieval practitioners who made dwarfs and beggar cripples and show-monsters; some vestiges of whose art still remain in the preliminary manipulation of the young mountebank or contortionist' (p. 69).

In Duffield's paintings Rhoda's mutations symbolise more than the further mutation of the dwarf, or the overtly infrahuman or the scatological: as

⁵ Leslie Fiedler, *Freaks: Myths and Images of the Secret Self* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978), p. 177.

⁶ H. G. Wells, *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (1896; rpt. New York: Berkley Highland, 1973).

the subject of Hurtle's painting, 'Pythoness at Tripod', she evokes the eschatological through the myth of Pythia at Delphi, in which the god Apollo destroyed the Python in order to institute his own priestess and oracle.⁷ The Delphic Oracle, represented by the priestess called the Pythoness, was seated upon a tripod, adorned with laurel leaves, and inhaled the fumes of prophesy.⁸ Rhoda is referred to as an 'oracle' (pp. 270; 339; 495), and the dualistic attributes of 'dwarfism' are again in play, since 'Pythoness at Tripod' encapsulates the eschatological and the scatological: the 'tripod' in the painting was inspired by an iron-legged bidet (p. 131), whilst its subject-matter is a hunchbacked dwarf. In literature, deformity and scatology are often associated.

This can be seen in Louis Nowra's *The Misery of Beauty*, when the dwarf, Frogman, is cornered by Earl in the toilet; Earl: 'picks up a [turd] the size of a frankfurter and examines it. 'This is you, Frogman,' he says'⁹; the dwarf Arthur Blackberry is given the job of emptying the shit-can in *Hook's Mountain*; and Hurtle's first full sentence to Rhoda is 'you're a little turd' (p. 63). In *The Vivisector*, the scatological-eschatological is expressed through Rhoda and Hurtle, in their representations as dwarf and artist, in the familiar Whitean-expressed theophany that *dreck* (p. 392) can illuminate and define the divine. The artist is portrayed in the tradition of the late nineteenth-century Romantics of the *fin de siècle*, in which the dynamic relation between disease and the artist is revealed in the Rimbaud epigraph that prefaces White's novel: 'He becomes beyond all others the great Invalid, the great Criminal, the great Accursed One - and the Supreme Knower. For he reaches the unknown'.

⁷ Joseph Fontenrose, *Python: A Study of Delphic Myth and its Origins* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1959), p. 1.

⁸ Thomas Bulfinch, 'Stories of Gods and Heroes' in *Bulfinch's Mythology*, ('The Age of Fable': 1855; 'The Age of Chivalry': 1858; 'Legends of Charlemagne': 1863; New York: Avenel Books, 1978 edition), p. 297.

⁹ Louis Nowra, *The Misery of Beauty* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1976), p. 111.

But another deformity-artist tradition surfaces which gives added insight into seemingly disparate personalities: though the dwarf-character disappears from the narrative in the middle of the novel, the painting inspired by 'Rhoda's Cranach figure standing beside the iron-legged bidet' (p. 233) ensures her continued presence.

The Cranachs - the Elder, and the Younger - were, of course, Renaissance artists. It was during that period that the dwarf-artist relationship was established as implicitly antagonistic. As Fiedler has noted: 'to "change the image" of Dwarfs is no easy matter, since that image is rooted not just in mythology and popular culture but in high art as well' (p. 69). This is the high art of the European monarchs when both the court dwarf and the court artist served the same master or mistress, since both were in the employ of the court. But in painting the portraits of the court-dwarfs the social standing of the artist was ambiguous: was he now subservient to the dwarf, a court-fool?

The frequency with which dwarfs are portrayed alongside animals, particularly dogs and apes, leads Fiedler to conclude that the artist was simultaneously declaring an association between animals and the supposedly inhuman dwarf, while strongly declaring a disassociation from the dwarf, and that he was declaring it 'sometimes quite viciously' (Fiedler, p. 72). The viciousness, evinced for instance by the anonymous portrait 'Dwarf of Heidelberg', has led Fiedler to state that 'no wonder some [dwarfs] have come to think of artists and Dwarfs as eternal enemies or polar opposites' (Fiedler, p. 79). (Fiedler's observation of dwarfs as one part of a polar opposite is entirely in keeping with the fictional device which exploits dualism and dwarfism, as discussed in the previous two chapters.)

But if portraying the dwarf with an ape was intended as an act of derision, it also created a dilemma for the artist who during the Renaissance

was more than familiar with the phrase *ars simia naturae*, 'art is the ape of nature' (Fiedler, p. 73). Through a projected phenotype, the motif of the ape, the artist was placed once more in relationship with the dwarf. The artist's dilemma appears to be two-fold: one interpretation of his 'profession' (since he was in the employ of the court) links him with the infrahuman - he only apes nature; and yet there existed the belief that his inspiration derived from the creative power of God. When Duffield dies, he is flanked by representatives of the two-fold dilemma: the dwarf-fool, whom he has called his 'lilac clown' (p. 537), and his 'rose clown' (p. 586); and Don Lethbridge - the servitor-acolyte - whom the elderly Duffield describes as having 'long yellow hair, visible pelvis and saucered buttocks [which] were a mod re reen - Renaissance!' (p. 554). On a symbolic level, the dwarf acts as a projection of death, since one of the myths of deformity is that the deformed are harbingers of death (and Rhoda 'kept her nose on the Deaths' (p. 610)); while Lethbridge is the promise of rebirth.

It is a visually explicit *tableau vivant* in the final moments of Duffield's life, and it is one which began when he was brought to live at the Courtneys. In typical Whitean word-play, 'Field' is brought to the 'Court', and the budding artist is placed in relationship with Rhoda, a dwarf: a 'monkey-mascot, [who] to improve her performance, was pointing her toes and holding out her skirt in a little step-dance' (p. 151). Consistent with the seemingly antipathetic bonds that bind them, prior to transferring to the Courtneys the young Hurtle must first demonstrate *his* ability to perform. As he notes of himself: 'Sitting upright, anxious to perform, you might have been wearing the paper frill you had seen round the monkey's neck' (p. 59); Duffield becomes the source of amusement and entertainment when Maman shows the servants a portrait he has done: we are told that 'they turned him

into a real dwarf' (p. 94). They are historically bound. Although Hurtle regards Rhoda with 'disgust' (p. 36), and says she makes him 'sick' (p. 81), they are united against a common enemy, the governess Miss Gibbons, whom Rhoda the dwarf turns into the fool (p. 84). Hurtle muses that 'he ought to have liked Miss Gibbons more, seeing as neither of them belonged to Courtneys' (p. 89); but neither Rhoda nor Hurtle wish to side with the 'ape'; teachers, perhaps, represent the least inspired of life's interpreters, and the gibbon is classified as the least intelligent of all apes.¹⁰ The children's rebellion is united in their refusal to eat 'Brains' for supper; and though, traditionally, the dwarf-artist relationship has been antagonistic, appearing irreconcilable, the novel demonstrates their evolution from out of a shared status as outsiders, and as human performers, each 'aping' the other.

It has been noted that 'the opposition of very different children' is one of White's favourite character-groupings,¹¹ though I am arguing that the dividing line between Rhoda and Hurtle is more a hairline crack than a seismic fault: the similarity of this artist-dwarf situation, in which Hurtle is sold to the Courtneys for five-hundred pounds, is echoed by the dwarf in Pär Lagerkvist's *The Dwarf* (1945):

We dwarfs have no homeland, no parents; we allow ourselves to be born of strangers, anywhere, in secret, among the poorest and most wretched, so that our race should not die out. And when these stranger parents discover that they have begotten a creature of our tribe they sell us to powerful princes that we may amuse them with our mis-shapen bodies and be their jester.¹²

The buying and selling of the dwarf describes Hurtle's own experience; and just as the dwarf experiences social anomie and familial mis-fitting, Hurtle recognises his situation as similar, when he tells Kathy Volkov:

¹⁰ 'George G. Goodwin, 'Gibbon', *Merit Students Encyclopedia* (New York: MacMillan Educational Corporation), 1978 ed.

¹¹ Karin Hansson, *The Warped Universe* (Lund: C. W. K. Gleerup, 1984), p. 93.

¹² Pär Lagerkvist, *The Dwarf*, trans. Alexandra Dick (1945; rpt. New York: Hill and Wang, 1987), p. 15.

'It's very fortunate if you can feel close to your parents. So often one isn't really theirs . . . I mean one can be so remote in spirit from one's actual father - or mother - it's as though one doesn't belong to them. 'Spiritually,' he declared, 'one can be someone else's child'. (p. 424)

Together, Rhoda's and Hurtle's exterior selves represent White's thesis of dualistic opposites: seemingly opposed, yet united. They are a way of bringing the antinomies of excrement or *dreck* and illumination into dynamic relation, in a novel that explores Hurtle's struggle to understand a world in which he discovers that the Creator is also the Destroyer. This is delicately expressed in the image of the dead bee imprisoned in a tin of honey 'which had both nourished and killed' (p. 306). Because Rhoda has been *created deformed* she stands as physical evidence of the Creator-Destroyer; subconsciously Hurtle perceives her as a possible source for his achieving understanding: from the scatological will come truth - the eschatological. In a sense, before meeting Rhoda he knows her - he tells the Duffield family who are suspicious of her name: 'It's in the Bible' (p. 20). And just as the biblical Rhoda knew Peter's voice while others doubted his existence (Acts xii, 13), the older Hurtle admits that 'proof that he existed for others was what he guiltily hankered after' (p. 237). His paintings are an exterior representation of an interior and psychological struggle with theology.

As demonstrated, Rhoda and Hurtle are linked metaphysically, even though they are genetically unrelated. They share another bi-partite relationship in terms of 'conception', or more precisely 'mis-conception', since both share teratological beginnings. Rhoda constitutes a miscarriage of nature within the womb; Hurtle (not the 'Hertel' that was intended) is born of human error during his christening. Conception, both physical and intellectual, finds its importance here in a creative sense. As Carolyn Bliss notes: 'Since artistic creation has been imaged in the novel as childbirth, it is appropriate that

teratology, abortion or miscarriage should supply the imagery'.¹³

Teratology, its meaning encompassing such ideas as 'marvel, prodigy, monster' (OED), is pertinent to Hurtle who is told he is 'a prodigy' (p. 62); White's verbal specificity is evident in puns on 'monster': Hurtle experiences meaningful encounters beneath the *monstera* *deliciosa* (p. 153); he refers to his penis as the 'Delicious Monster' (p. 185); and receives telegrams wishing 'All Praise to the Delicious Monster' (p. 576). But in Rhoda's case, her association with *terata* is undebatable. Whereas the physically attractive Hurtle mumbles 'I don't want to be like anybody else', Rhoda responds 'I'd like to be like other people' (p. 86). Her wish is futile - her difference is marked and unalterable; Hurtle's wish to be different appears self-conscious and forced by comparison; and yet the comparisons exist. The inhuman status of his 'brute-sister' (p. 516) finds analogy in the comment that Nance makes to Hurtle: 'you aren't a human being' (p. 224); and in his feeling that he is perceived as 'pseudosewage' (p. 548). On the tram ride to the furrier's, the elderly Duffield articulates his wish to be different ~~to~~ other people:

he hated the prudent faces of the powdered ladies; he hated them for their discretion towards his hunchbacked sister, and at least one of them for her stupid admiration of what she saw was elegance of him: when he too, if they had known, was a freak, an artist. (p. 475)

At Kathy's concert, there is what might even be called a note of jealousy of Rhoda's markedness, evident in his observation that: 'at least in the motley of students, many of them still little girls and in fancy dress, [Rhoda] wouldn't look such a glaring exotic. He was the freak: he couldn't narrow himself in his chair to hide enough of his freakishness' (p. 501). Rhoda's apparent suffering is so markedly obvious it invites a form of envy.

The late Romantic idea of suffering as an acceptable and even a

¹³ Carolyn Bliss, *Patrick White's Fiction* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986), p. 120.

preferable' state of being is assumed by many of the characters, who readily assume metaphorical humps to be signifiers of inner anguish, and in so doing the ersatz-sufferers 'ape' reality: the girls at Rhoda's party 'performed acts of kindness' then reached down 'as though they too had developed humps' (p. 147); Maman, her drunken kiss repulsed, leaves 'hunching up her back' (p. 166); less ersatz perhaps, is Hero with 'her shoulders slightly hunched' (p. 313); and Hurtle, who slid out of bed, 'hunched' (p. 408). Rhoda is generous in applying the terms of the metaphorical hump of suffering when she includes 'liars, and buggers, and hysterics, and Scottish prigs' (p. 613) as part of humanity's pain, in which 'almost everyone carries a hump, not always visible, and not always of the same shape' (p. 469). But as in *The Year of Living Dangerously*, where the Glodok dwarf is too near the infrahuman for Billy Kwan to identify with, so the company Rhoda cites is too near the non-negotiable fringe for Duffield, who at first seems to prefer the comparative company of the 'transparent' (pp. 586; 596) 'cryptovictim' (p. 591) Mrs Volkov, the 'true' Christiana McBeath; her appeal is to an exclusive suffering community. In her letter to him she says: 'As Mr Cutbush remarked who has more Education, we was all perhaps *stroked by God*. This is what I sensed in the bus, of the two of us at least.' Exclusive and deified, he acknowledges the 'limping army into which Christiana McBeath had conscripted him' (p. 613). She goes on: 'I have ventured to run on Mr Duffield because I believe the afflicted to be united in the same purpose, and you of course as an artist and the worst afflicted through your art you can see farther than us who are mere human diseased' (p. 613).

What an appeal, what an invitation to a self-confessed egomaniac who has shouted 'I am what matters' (p. 303). Rhoda is excluded from this coterie of sufferers, though in McBeath's postscript she concedes that Rhoda 'must

have suffered most inhumanly, but Miss Courtney is of the earth she is *strong* and would carry us all on her back - or so I would say - to the end' (p. 613). Nevertheless, Duffield himself begins to have doubts about the crypto-victim's elect and the depth of her professed friendship with Rhoda.

Suffering is a component of living for White's characters, with their long list of ailments and abnormalities: Grannie Duffield is a consumptive (p. 10); Dolly Burgess, Julian Boileau, and an un-named comedian, have eye-complaints (pp. 46; 175; and 206); Ian has a wall-eye (p. 413); the lift-man has a hook instead of a right hand (p. 137); the art-shop owner has one testicle (p. 191); George Collins has a hernia, and his wife is an invalid (p. 206); Helenore is blind (p. 207); Caldicot has a limp, neuralgia and arthritis (pp. 218, 219, and 240); Nance's mother has a hare-lip (p. 246); Nance's business acquaintance, Mick Rafferty, has one lung (p. 191); Cosmos Pavloussis has gallbladder trouble (p. 296); Mothersole's sister is a polio victim (p. 399); Sid Cupples has a bent leg (p. 480); Mrs O'Hara has a hairy raspberry on one nose (p. 559); there are too Mrs Angrove's 'hip' (p. 410), Mrs Mortimer's thyroid throat (p. 411), Mary Challard's anemia, and Mrs Cutbush, who is 'highly strung'.

The list illustrates two points: the first being on a general level related to the deformed on the issue raised by Longmore as quoted in Chapter Three of this study, that the disabled are pushed to the margins of our attention¹⁴; second, that being condemned to life is not a paradox in White's fiction.¹⁵ In this novel the *kyphosis* becomes a metaphor for the burden of life. Duffield tells Boo Davenport, 'the life you lead - you don't lead it - it gets thrust on you, and carries you in a direction it's difficult to alter' (p. 292).

¹⁴ Paul K. Longmore, 'Screening Stereotypes: Images of Disabled People in Television and Motion Pictures', in *Images of the Disabled, Disabling Images*, ed. Alan Gartner and Tom Joe (New York: Praeger, 1987), p. 65.

¹⁵ It becomes a literal statement in his depiction of the penal colony in *A Fringe of Leaves* (1976).

Metaphorical humps are socially acceptable.

Actual humps are more difficult to deal with. Born of handsome and wealthy parents, the hunchback dwarf is a confirmation that deformity has no boundaries - racial, gender, or social. It can be a shocking confirmation of boundary-breaking: as the new housemaid in Stefan Zweig's *Beware of Pity* exclaims of Edith: ' "Lord Jesus, such a rich, distinguished young lady . . . being a cripple!" ' (p. 67). Rhoda functions within the Courtney family as a dramatic paradox: beauty *can* beget 'foulness'. She is told by her mother that she must subject her back to the board, in order to straighten her 'slight curvature' (p. 33). If she refuses she risks being treated like an animal and whipped 'with the riding crop' (p. 63). Rhoda's refusal to do her board-exercises is a refusal to become what is generally understood as socially acceptable. She is an authentic self. Her refusal indicates her level of self-awareness - to submit to the board would be in fact, to distort her natural self. Rhoda admits that there was a time when she looked to art in order to ape her brother, and in order to re-create a socially acceptable self:

When I was younger I wanted badly to be some kind of artist, in imitation of my brother: I think I was hoping to offer people something more acceptable than myself. Now I realize I shall never be anything but that, and must try to make it a truthful work. (p. 175)

The truthful work Rhoda offers is a deformed creation. It belies the humanity of the creator in much the same way as the artist belies the divine in the human. And Rhoda has remained the whole, the individual; not the social member or appendage, of society. John Docker, however, has linked Rhoda with Mrs Courtney and Olivia Davenport as a member 'in a dangerous chain of false being. By their social surface and moral stance they repress themselves'.¹⁶ Docker also claims: 'In general, women are too caught up in

¹⁶ John Docker, 'Patrick White and Romanticism: The Vivisector' in *Southerly*, 33 (1973), p. 51.

social values of personality' (Docker, p. 56). The comment is applicable to Maman and Olivia, but not to Rhoda. Although Rhoda is born into a family with all the trimmings of social privilege, her physical being stands in rebellion against social finesse. As her refusal of the board demonstrates, she cannot be 'moulded' into the aggregate body that is society. Her body defies encasement: it bursts from the seams of its rose dress (p. 591); from its dressing-gown (p. 525); and from its coat of squirrel - which incidently is a rodent (p. 527). She maintains her element of individuality and innocence as expressed in the dwarf-child construct where she must wear the shoes of a child; a 'girl-woman's nightie' (p. 480); sleep in a child's cot, and bathe in a child's hip-bath (p. 604); and consistently with the dwarf-child construct, she is ancient: as she tells her mother on the matter of a birthday-party:

'I am not a little girl!'

She wasn't, either, you could see.

'Not in my soul!' Rhoda was quivering white with her own daring.

(p. 146)

Her outrage indicates a rebellious spirit; Rhoda's rejection of the board that will 'correct' her spinal curvature is a rejection of an imposed socially acceptable self in preference for her true self; and finally, in the matter of Docker's claim, surely one of the most dramatic images in the novel is also the most socially unacceptable image - that of the hunchbacked dwarf pulling a stinking offal-cart through the streets of Sydney in order to satisfy the hunger of a stray feline population. When Duffield ('a man of distinguished head') is reunited with Rhoda in the street he experiences a social fall, from artist to metho-artist: 'It was no wonder decent people left the two derelicts plenty of room to pass; drunks, or more probably, metho artists, didn't enter into their substantial, working lives' (p. 439). Rhoda is the begum in Hurtle's transitory and sometimes self-destructive harem. She cannot be dismissed, or

included among 'women in general'.

Unlike the other women, she is present throughout the novel, even if at times only as a trait. Her deformity exposes the falsity in observers: the Koestler model of primitive and civilised response towards the deformed is put to the test in this novel which shows that the art of civilised response is highly developed: the young girls with whom Rhoda studies are 'companions trained to ignore anything that might seem odd or repulsive' (p. 147); and when the older Hurtle and Rhoda take a tram-ride to the furrier's Hurtle notes that:

they must have looked and sounded odd, seated side by side on the tram bench, fatally belonging to each other while not owning to it. Most of the passengers were too refined to stare: only the children did, fish-mouthed, in one case picking his nose; the children looked right inside. (p. 475)

And later, Hurtle says spitefully to Rhoda: ' "Don't you know - you who read the papers" - he couldn't resist, "we're living in the age of 'compassion, tenderness and warmth'?" ' (p. 526) Docker's comment that Rhoda is part of 'a dangerous chain of false being' fails to recognise that her existence illuminates rather than represses, precisely because it reveals what he has called the 'social surface and moral stance' (Docker, p. 51) of others.

It has been noted that in White's fiction the body is 'the starting-point in the achievement of knowledge' (Hansson, p. 230). Though Rhoda is very aware of herself, she is thought to have little self-knowledge since 'although she had lived close to life, her affliction had kept her aloof from it' (p. 468). As with many of Duffield's observations, this comment is undone as soon as said, for when Rhoda casually mentions Cutbush's sexual preferences, it is Duffield, the great observer of human beings, who, surprised, 'just prevented the bottle from toppling' (p. 468). His unreliability as an observer surfaces in

his doubts about Rhoda's capacity to draw, an issue brought to light by Boo Hollingrake's remark that she had seen Rhoda's drawings (p. 586); and just as 'he didn't believe Rhoda could have thought of a soufflé, let alone made one', this is undermined later when he discovers something that looks like 'a collapsed bathing cap, or - Rhoda's soufflé' (p. 615).

His unreliability as a synthesiser of feelings and information extends to his concept of life, which Hurtle is constantly adjusting. About the Duffield family, he thinks: 'He should have loved them, He did of course' (p. 74); Hurtle 'loved' the governess, Miss Gibbons (p. 83), but then, 'on the whole he despised, he didn't love, the tall young woman' (p. 84). When he is at the front, Hurtle thinks: 'he must write to Our Father and tell him he loved and understood him, better even than before his fall from omnipotence' (pp. 173-174). The philosophical-religious ambiguity expressed is linked more directly when he washes dishes in Paris at 'Le Rat a L'oeil ouvert'; his resistance to love is linked to religion: 'total love must be resisted: it is overwhelming, like religion. He certainly wasn't religious: he was an artist. But didn't this reduce him to the status of little pink-eyed Rhoda nibbling round the edges?' (p. 177). Like a litany, Rhoda's name appears throughout the text especially in the context of 'love', with all that the word connotes.

His declarations of love for Rhoda are refuted, retracted, and redressed as soon as offered. Throughout the novel, Duffield's feelings for Rhoda vary widely; 'he hated Rhoda', yet (in the same paragraph) 'he did, of course, love her, because she was his sister: or he would learn to' (p. 303); his love for her becomes an identification with himself: 'there were moments when Rhoda became so recognisably himself, together they blotted out the twin nightmares of war and misunderstanding' (p. 176); and 'If he hadn't been able to love Rhoda, he couldn't love his own parti-coloured soul, which at best he took

for granted; at worst, it frightened him' (p. 339). When he is Rhoda's newly acquired brother, Hurtle notes that:

She was closest to him of all his 'family'. Once he was moved to embrace her, but was just as suddenly repelled by the idea: he saved himself in time. You couldn't trust her, anyway. Not that he could always trust himself. This, again, made them sort of related'. (p. 92)

Sentence by sentence the paragraph reveals an interior struggle. What has he 'saved himself' from? And the ambiguity surrounding the word 'trust' is suggestive, especially given the play on the word 'related'. It carries an implication of incest, while re-inforcing the dwarf-artist connections. The ambiguity is heightened with the young Rhoda's kiss which awakens a passion that is taboo. After the kiss, Hurtle tells himself: 'He was disgusted. In his own room, he had to remind himself Rhoda was his sister' (p. 120). The disgust, whether at an unexpected passion or her homeliness, seems intentionally ambiguous. Assuming reader-prejudice against the deformed has been established, then the reader might be expected to assume that Hurtle's disgust is due to the latter reason (homeliness) rather than suspect an interior psychological disgust felt by Hurtle at his *attraction* to Rhoda. This ambiguity is further demonstrated during a salient conversation at the young Rhoda's birthday party: 'The girls rocked, for here was their monkey, their mascot, standing naked for their entertainment while still dressed in her broderie anglaise. Hurtle gushed sweat the other side of the hydrangea clumps' (p. 151). Duffield's reactions are less coyly expressed in his painting of Rhoda, which demonstrates a release and realisation of his repressed love:

It was curiously weightless relief: to draw his sister Rhoda Courtney standing beside the bidet on its iron tripod in the hotel bedroom at St Yves de Trégor. If he had betrayed a timid, wizened tenderness by raucously breaking open the door protecting her nakedness, the drawings were at least a kind of formal expiation: Rhoda's hump sat for moments on his own shoulders. As his resistance of years collapsed, he knew how he should convey the iron in crippled bones;

he saw the mesh of light, the drops of moisture in the Thermogene tuft.
(p. 269)

The 'Pythoness' painting assures Rhoda's function throughout as a 'trait' - artistic and literary. Artistically, she is the trait (as in its etymological meaning of a line or stroke) that through Duffield's constant re-working of her reveals his need of her: she exemplifies what is real and distorted in natural creation. Furthermore, Rhoda's presence as a literary trait or a 'distinguishing character' ensures that she is a constant, not episodic force in Duffield's life.

For instance, during his first sexual intercourse with Nance Lightfoot 'he experienced a shock when Rhoda was projected for a moment in amongst the other slides: the pink shadow in her little legs' (p. 185); while with Olivia: 'He could have fucked Olivia Davenport, and risen from their crunching bed still in a splatter to give the last touch to Rhoda Courtney's salt-cellars' (p. 290); with Hero, Duffield feels 'he was falling in love with Hero Pavloussi. It had begun, he thought, as they stood in front of the Pythoness Olivia Davenport owned' (p. 322). After his first meeting with Kathy Volkov, he thinks of Rhoda: 'there were few children with whom he had been intimately acquainted: only himself - and Rhoda, each of whom was born old' (p. 411); his youthful encounter with Boo Hollingrake occurs under the *monstera deliciosa* - the same location where he and Rhoda had declared to each other that neither had ever been in love (p. 87). 'Pythoness' is an expression of love that acknowledges Rhoda as a motivating force in his life; as he concedes:

If he had had a sister Rose of creamy pork flesh enormous Karl Druschki bubs he might have committed comfortable incest and painted a pagan goddess instead of looking for a god - a *God* - in every heap of rusty tins amongst the wormeaten furniture out the window in the dunny of brown blowies and unfinished inscriptions. (p. 561)

The passage acknowledges an incestuous wish; and Rhoda is in fact 'Rose' in the last moments of Hurtle's life. Their *sub rosa* relationship answers and

satisfies his query made to Nancy: ' "Isn't it possible for two human beings to inspire and comfort each other simply by being close together?" He wanted that; otherwise the outlook was hopeless' (p. 205). When Hurtle discovers Rhoda again, pulling her horseflesh-cart through the streets of Sydney, he invites her back to his house. There, she is confronted by an early, recognisable 'Pythoiness at Tripod':

He heard Rhoda's voice. 'I was born vivisected. I couldn't bear to be strapped to the table again'.

'I can't help it,' he apologized, 'if I turned out to be an artist.'
There was little else he could say. (p. 445)

Duffield's response has an element of untruth about it. He deflects an individual fault or moral responsibility by alleging vocational determinism. Simultaneously, he is making a connection between himself and Rhoda in claiming that neither is responsible for the form of their being- he as an artist, she as deformed. The dwarf¹⁷ in Lagerkvist's *The Dwarf* discovers the 'incredibly curious' (p. 36) artist Bernardo dissecting the body of Franceso; shortly afterwards, Bernardo forcibly undresses the dwarf in order to paint a portrait. The dwarf confides in his diary: 'I stood there defenseless, naked, incapable of action, though I was foaming with rage. And he stood some distance away from me, quite unmoved, and examined me, scrutinizing my shame with a cold and merciless gaze' (p. 45).

At the beginning of this discussion of *The Vivisector*, it was noted that art-istic and hystero-istic¹⁸ creativity are closely allied, for each has the capacity to create, and to deform. And as we have seen, Hurtle and Rhoda, male and female, artist and cripple, share teratological beginnings. In a crucial sense, both are acquainted with horror and suffering, and both are

¹⁷ This dwarf is never named; he is instead a metaphor for malicious unspoken intentions and joylessness; and is finally chained in the dungeon, eternally waiting release.

¹⁸ If the coinage is permissible, to make clear the etymological force here: of the womb.

outcasts. Such artistic empathy and identification with suffering, that find a physiological location in disease, are realised in the scene at Boo Davenport's house when a young female guest, Muriel Devereux, has a seizure. Duffield shares what he calls an 'ectoplasmic' knowledge with her: 'For an instant the possessed one glanced at the only other of her kind, and they were swept up and united by sheet lightning, as they could never have been in the accepted place' (p. 299).

Muriel's affliction is 'abnormal excitement', or 'hysteria', from the Greek *hystera*, meaning 'womb'. The woman is the metaphor for the distorted womb. Duffield returns to his studio and combines such womb-induced suffering with the portrait of the hunchbacked 'Pythoness', now seen as octopus. Duffield makes significant the idea of the womb as source of creation and of distortion. The conception of the painting is itself a distortion of all that is natural: the male artist is the receptacle for the seed that 'Hero Pavloussi had sown in him the night of the party' (p. 339).

By combining the two 'elements' of Muriel (the womb) and Rhoda (the deformity) Duffield is exploring the notion that one is born to suffer, for life and suffering begin in the womb where the process of birth is itself an act of vivisection, in which the child is dissected, through the cutting of the living tissue of the umbilical cord, from the parent. Through his art Duffield expresses the terror of uncertainty: 'nothing develops as conceived: the pure soul, for example; the innocent child, already deformed, or putrefying, in the womb' (p. 349). When Olivia Davenport sees this 'last and figurative and probably final version of 'The Pythoness at Tripod' (p. 303), she recognises that Rhoda and Muriel (or rather, their afflictions) have merged 'to suit [Duffield's] own purposes' (p. 303). Olivia understands that what began as a depiction of Rhoda has now become 'too hysterical in feeling' (p. 303). The

painting now expresses Duffield's own transformation. Cut off from life because of his vocation and because of his gender, he combines artistic and hystero-istic creativity to give birth. It is an expression of his attempt to become the ultimate creator, to create life. Olivia, still in front of the 'Pythoness', proceeds to inform Duffield why the painting is no longer 'Rhoda':

'Well, we know Rhoda was hysterical,' Olivia went on. 'But she was always conscious of the reasons for hysteria. That was her great virtue - and why you hated her. She was never a human cow driven by something she couldn't see or understand.'

'What do you mean - hysterical - a human cow?' Of course he understood, but that didn't prevent him trying to laugh it off; he resented her intuition. (p. 303)

'Intuition' is the word that allows us to accept Olivia's statement as 'truth'. The painting is of course, Duffield's expression of what he does not understand - and in his relationship with Kathy Volkov, he is indeed likened to a human cow, not bull: 'he heard the sounds he was uttering: amorphous, thick-lipped, instinctively tender - cow sounds' (p. 481). Duffield's hermaphroditic, or bi-sexual, fantasies continue in his association with Kathy, who was 'digging into his maternal, his creative entrails' (p. 465), in which Duffield becomes the perfect androgyne - the 'womb-man', to coin a phrase. Duffield recognises this sexual ambiguity, this longing, need, and exclusion, in the bi-sexual Mothersole, and Cutbush (both married men); for 'such "wombs" in males are the compassionate female halves of their androgynous sensibilities' (Docker, p. 49).

John Docker writes that White 'conceives of the authentic self in Jungian-type terms, as androgynous' (p. 49); where 'imagination represents the masculine principle', while the feminine principle is symbolised in the receiving and life-giving qualities of the womb' (Docker, p. 49). Yet

Beatrice Faust excludes White from her list of authors exhibiting the androgynous mind:¹⁹ these are authors, she says, whose work sits comfortably with either gender. White is excluded because Faust sees his work as misanthropic, and because she feels White confuses homo-erotic preference with androgyny. White has said that he sees himself as 'a mind possessed by the spirit of man or woman according to actual situations or the characters I become in my writing'.²⁰ For Duffield, imagination is certainly based on a masculo-feminine principle.

Mothersole and Cutbush have been seen by critics as spiritually enlightened, whereas Rhoda is seen 'as an unexpected revealer of truths' (Hansson, p. 57). Given our knowledge of the myth of deformity, and the exploitation of the deformity in Duffield's 'Pythoness' paintings, Rhoda now appears as a far less unexpected revealer of truths. Indeed, she is consistent with the Whitean elect who 'succeed in experiencing anew the mythic archetypes of suffering and redemption'.²¹ Rhoda is Duffield's crippled *doppelganger*: she is one part of their enantiomorphic relationship, and is described as his mirror: 'at the end he recognized himself in the glass she was holding up to him' (p. 603). Her 'large birthmark the colour of milk chocolate' (p. 31), on the side of her neck, reflects Duffield's flaw, like the flaw in the glass described in White's own literary self-portrait, in which he mentions 'the mirror in the bathroom at 'Dogwoods' [which] had a flaw in it like a faint birthmark' (*Flaws in the Glass*, p. 142). Rhoda is the necessary alternative self: perceived as female, the corporeal, the *dreck*. Through her deformity, she is connected with the supernatural, a device in White's

¹⁹ Beatrice Faust 'Sex and the Australian Writer', *Island*, 25/26 (Summer-Autumn, 1986), p. 46.

²⁰ Patrick White, *Flaws in the Glass* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1981) p. 81.

²¹ Hilary Heltay, 'The Novels of Patrick White', trans. Dr. John B. Beston *Southerly*, 33 (1973), p. 92.

continuing theme (and a motivational force for Duffield) of a supernatural force which both blesses and destroys. Despite Duffield's comment above, we have seen that he needs Rhoda; he uses her, sets traps to make her stay with him, contrives to make her his conscience (as Maman did with Hurtle), wrongly assuming that she will intervene and 'save' him from his affair with the schoolgirl Kathy, for 'no woman who had carried a hump through life would surely be able to resist snarling at a man's last attempt to enter an earthly paradise' (*The Vivisector*, p. 451). The fact that this assumption is incorrect indicates his lack of knowledge of Rhoda.

In a moment of cross-identification Hurtle admits that: 'Rhoda frightened him most. She understood him so little after all, he began to wonder whether he understood Rhoda, whether he might catch sight of a different person standing naked in the ruins of the conservatory' (p. 562). The image of Rhoda's nakedness suggests two things: her deformity is a projection of death: ape-like, she is the primate surfacing from out of a primeval soup, presumably soul-less, and therefore representative of the finality of death. Rhoda's nakedness is a projection of the newborn, which subconsciously evokes terror through the possibility of death-in-life; a terror that has motivated Duffield ever since his first encounter with Rhoda's nakedness at St Yves de Trégor. She is a death-in-life signifier of 'the innocent child, already deformed, or putrefying, in the womb' (p. 349). As for Hurtle admitting that 'Rhoda frightened him most', the dwarf in Lagerkvist's novel explains fear thus:

I have noticed that sometimes I frighten people; what they really fear is themselves. They think it is I who scare them but it is the dwarf within them, the ape-faced manlike being who sticks up its head from the depths of their souls. (pp. 29-30)

Such fear is associated with threatening evil, impending pain, in essence, it is

fear of the unknown, particularly of the greatest unknown, death - and the deformed and the disabled are perceived as presages of death. After his stroke, Hurtle:

recognized at once, in the eyes of strangers closest to him, his own fear disguised as pity. They were glad of this excuse to pity, because it made them feel virtuous again: and wouldn't this demi-corpse, standing between themselves and death, act as proxy for them? (p. 569)

Hurtle experiences what Rhoda, as a significantly deformed person, experiences. He stands in Rhoda's place; and both the artist and the dwarf become the freak under the public gaze. The mutual interchange is dramatised in the Retrospect which Duffield abandons. Rhoda tells him what happened:

'Mr. Honeysett found me and took me up on the dais. I sat in a leather chair. While the speech was made. But I didn't hear it. Everybody looked interested to see the painter's sister. We were photographed for television. They wanted me to speak. But I couldn't. Not even when they asked me questions. Because I wasn't sure what you would have wanted me to answer, Hurtle.' (p. 600)

The dwarf has aped the artist and provided the freakish body that satisfies the curious gaze. Hurtle refuses to watch the recorded film of the Retrospect because it would be like watching 'a funeral without a corpse'; to which Rhoda replies 'I stood in for the corpse' (p. 600).

Two words are commonly used to describe the reactions of observers of the deformed in literature: they are fear, as discussed above, and pity.²² Pity is compassion for the weak and unfortunate; to be pitied is to be placed in a position of inequality. So, it is pity that Rhoda fears. For the deformed, pity is a false emotion, provoked by the mere sight of the deformed, and so denying any exploration beyond the *kyphosis* to the self. In *Beware of Pity*, two kinds of pity are defined:

One, the weak and sentimental kind, which is really no more than the heart's impatience to be rid as quickly as possible of the painful emotion

²² The Proceedings of a literary symposium sponsored by the International Center for the Disabled in Collaboration with the United Nations are, in fact, titled *Pity and Fear: Myths and Images of the Disabled in Literature Old and New*, 27 October, 1981.

aroused by the sight of another's unhappiness, that pity which is not compassion, but only an instinctive desire to fortify one's own soul against the sufferings of another; and the other, the only kind that counts, the unsentimental but creative kind, which knows what it is about and is determined to hold out, in patience and forbearance, to the very limit of its strength and even beyond. (p. vi)

To inspire the first, sentimental type of pity is to be possessed of an unhealthy state; it is one which few deformed wish to enter. Hurtle though, the quester for truth, is not above a last-ditch effort for low-grade affection. On preparing to go to Katherine Volkov's concert he surmises that 'perhaps, if She smelled the smell She would be reminded of invalids and treat him kindly. So he dashed eau de Cologne at his armpits' (p. 525). Kathy Volkov recognises the power of pity when she writes to Duffield saying 'If I were a polio victim as well [as a pianist], I'd be seven times more their idol, but I hope they will never get the chance to take advantage of me to that extent' (p. 539). On the other hand, the young Rhoda defies Duffield to see her hump as defined above: 'she looked at him and dared him to see, but knew that he did' (p. 127). Later, after a cat-and-mouse conversation about Kathy Volkov, Rhoda trips over her dressing-gown; Duffield voices a concern 'as genuinely as he could', but it is recognised for what it is: upset, Rhoda cries 'I thought I'd managed to escape pity while we were children' (p. 526). Then there is the following attempt by Hurtle at 'honesty':

To be honest: he had failed to love Rhoda. Pity is another matter: his 'Pythoress at Tripod' had expressed a brilliant, objective pity for an injured cryptic soul and a body only malice could have created. But pity is half-hearted love. (p. 614)

But the statement of pity, prefaced by 'to be honest', is self-undercut. Duffield had observed earlier that 'He had never been altogether dishonest; nor yet entirely honest; because that isn't possible' (p. 235).

At least one critic suggests that 'Except perhaps at the moment of his

death . . . he fails to love [Rhoda] truly' (Bliss, p. 125). But surely this is the point: that it is precisely at the moment of death that Duffield is able to love what he has been striving, throughout the novel, to understand? And it fulfils his acquiescence with Nance's view that one must love someone 'In the end' (p. 202). He experiences love, but under specific conditions; witness Hurtle's reaction on realising that the woman with the offal-cart is his sister:

It was only through his intuition that he could feel her spirit reaching out, in spite of her, to embrace his; while he, as always, fluctuated; half exhilarated to identify the sister of his conscience, half disgusted to know he would always have to overcome a repulsion; *he had only ever been able to love Rhoda at moments of leavetaking, or unusual stress*, as now in their grotesque and strained reunion. (p. 437; my italics)

Hurtle *says* he fluctuates; what he does is *to run* after Rhoda to bring her back: 'because he needed her - he suddenly realized how desperately - he must use every means to trap her' (p. 439). Rhoda is no less reticent when expressing her love - apart from the childhood cannibalistic kiss. Her love exists, but under certain conditions; and we learn the limits of those conditions from the young Rhoda's letter to Duffield during the war:

Our Father is dead. . . . He could never forgive me because he made me. I loved him, and couldn't have shown him even if I had been allowed. I think it is never possible to show those we love - *only to try to pick them up after they have fallen*. (p. 176; my italics)

Duffield's death is the ultimate moment of 'leavetaking, or unusual stress'; he dies, his 'body crashing. Dumped' from the block, off the board. Duffield's final ability to love Rhoda indicates he is redeemed: for 'Only love redeems'.²³ His love indicates his final acceptance and embracing of a world in which light and *dreck* are created and coexist. Hurtle's professed incapacity to love is humorously parodied: Rhoda sends him out to *buy* a heart; while doing so Hurtle, flat on his back from a stroke, encounters 'the

²³ *Flaws in the Glass*, p. 251.

extra indigo, sky', and tells himself to 'hang on to the last and first secret indigo' (p. 549).

The reference to 'first and last' suggests 'Alpha and Omega' which in the Christian Church is used to denote God's eternity, and which derives from the Hebrew 'truth'.²⁴ Much has been made of Duffield's final descent into cryptogrammatic language; from the variations on the name Lethbridge to the final 'INDIGO', anagrammatically 'God in I', or as A.P. Riemer has suggested, 'I in God';²⁵ why not indeed both? Hurtle's regression into a childlike state, in which he is paradoxically to be received into death, is articulated through his increasingly distorted language, or logopathy (the morbid affection of speech). The distorted child-dwarf Rhoda is part of the language of the text. The dwarf-construct ensures perpetual child-like status for Rhoda; since psychologically dwarfism represents the paradox of the neototeric child who in Jungian terms is, in fact, ancient (birth is seen as the continuation of all that has ever been). Duffield 'gradually becomes more childlike' (Hansson, p. 143). His mirror, the distorted Rhoda, reflects the childlike, which is further emphasised in his increasingly distorted language. In his final moments before death, Hurtle speaks of 'Rhoda's mouse'.²⁶ Apart from its symbolic association with female sexuality,²⁷ the transposing of the 's' for 'th', ('mouth' becoming 'mouse') is linguistically common in the language of infants²⁸ - and of course following strokes or other brain-damage. Thus, in death, he does 'tie the end of [his] life to the beginning' (p.

²⁴ 'Alpha and Omega', *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, eds. F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone, 2nd ed. (1974), p. 39.

²⁵ A. P. Riemer, 'The Eye of the Needle: Patrick White's Recent Novels', *Southerly*, 34 (1974), pp. 253-254.

²⁶ In his role as mouse-Apollo he is worshipped as god of medicine, for mice were associated with disease and cure. The curative mouse was worn for his emblem. See Robert Graves *The Greek Myths: 1* (1955; rpt. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977), pp. 56-57.

²⁷ Beryl Rowland, *Animals with Human Faces* (Knoxville, Tennessee: University of Tennessee Press, 1973), p. 127.

²⁸ Charles Van Riper & John V. Irwin, *Voice and Articulation* (London: Pitman Medical Publishing, 1959), pp. 18-19.

450). It is proposed here that the struggle for understanding is of more importance than the final answer. And this Hurtle recognises when, at the moment of death, his fabricated Oracle of Mouse-Apollo cannot have the final answer, for 'answers weren't showering on Rhoda's mouse. God won't be conned' (p. 617).

The same 'half-a-man' device is in operation in *The Vivisector* as was used in *Swords and Crowns and Rings* and *The Year of Living Dangerously*, though the evidence of a dwarf-giant pact is slight. Although Duffield does observe 'how small Rhoda had remained, how downright deformed she was beside his swaying tower' (p. 169), the spiritual significance of the construct is of greater importance; and the spiritual paradoxes implicit in the exploration of a belief in a bi-polar deity are made visually significant through the use of the Renaissance dwarf-artist device, itself entirely in keeping with the form and content of a *kunstlerroman*. Rhoda, as 'the rose', tests the unlimited boundaries of love, since the rose is the flower of love. Additionally, 'throughout the Teutonic area the rose belongs to the dwarfs or fairies and is under their protection. In many places it is customary to ask permission of their king before picking one lest one lose a hand or foot'.²⁹ Hurtle, of course, loses the use of his hand and his foot. All this only indicates the textual depth of White's novel. Rhoda's importance as a deformed person rests predominantly in her projection of the myths of deformity which link her primarily with scatology and with animalism.

²⁹ 'Dwarfs', *Funk and Wagnall Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology and Legend*, ed. Maria Leach (1949; rpt. London: New English Library-Times Mirror, One Vol. Edn. 1975), p. 956.