

**A Green Flaw in the Crystal Glass:
Patrick White's *Riders in the Chariot***

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As he himself averred more than once and as the critical reception recognises, Australian writer Patrick White identifies with a literary tradition that is metaphysical, romantic, and theosophical in its avenues of inquiry and its impulses. A 1969 essay by White titled "In the Making," opens with this statement: "Religion. Yes, that's behind all my books. What I am interested in is the relationship between the blundering human being and God."¹ A 1970 correspondence by White houses this comment: "I believe most people have a religious factor, but are afraid that by admitting it they will forfeit their right to be considered intellectuals."² Peter Beatson's 1976 study, *The Eye in the Mandala. Patrick White: A Vision of Man and God*, explores the metaphysical meanings of White's images and symbols;³ Carolyn Bliss's 1986 study, *Patrick White's Fiction: The Paradox of Fortunate Failure*, discusses the metaphysical aspirations of White's principal characters which, Bliss states, "White believes [the given character] obtains";⁴ and Michael Giffin's 1996 study, *Arthur's Dream: the Religious Imagination in the Fiction of Patrick White*, asserts for White a "Postmetaphysical thinking" that is firmly grounded in a theologically orthodox Judeo-Christian world view.⁵ Among, also, other recent writings: Andrew McCann's 1997 essay, "The ethics of abjection: Patrick White's *Riders in the Chariot*," acknowledges White's metaphysical themes and motifs in the

instance of the given novel's "well documented appropriation" of Judeo-Christian symbols,⁶ Veronica Brady's 1999 essay, "Towards an Ecology of Australia: Land of the Spirit," discusses White's symbolist's as opposed to the realist's use of language;⁷ Helen Verity Hewitt's monograph, *Patrick White, Painter Manque: Paintings, painters and their influences on his writing*, published in 2000, discusses, in the words of Brian Kiernan, the "innate romanticism" in the middle to late novels (the writing that includes *Riders in the Chariot*);⁸ and James Bulman-May's monograph *Patrick White and Alchemy*, published in 2001, locates a theosophy in White's fiction, "especially as this pertains to alchemical manifestations, Jungian philosophy and mandalic images."⁹ As Brady summarizes, White's fiction (similar to the work of two other Australian writers, David Malouf and Judith Wright), gives to us a world that is more than "physical fact."¹⁰

What is salutary about White's metaphysical leanings is that he consistently undercuts notions of transcendence as these entail the human condescension to the nonhuman world, i.e., the nonhuman ecogenic or nonhuman-designed, so-called natural world as opposed to the anthropogenic, human-devised world. The metaphysical speculations of White's writings articulate an ecologic, a thinking that does not as a matter of course elevate the interests of the human ecogenic subject-object above the interests of the nonhuman ecogenic subject-object. In doing so, White's writings confront a trenchant anthropocentrism, legitimized in the modern period by Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment metaphysical philosophical inquiries. These inquiries, which split or differentiate between the subject and the object, characterize both Cartesian rationalist metaphysical pursuits and anti-Cartesian, Romantic metaphysical pursuits and commonly condescend to the nonhuman subject-object. A dominant discourse of Romanticism is that the nonhuman world is not an autonomous being or subject but a product *of*, a corollary *to* the thinking (human) subject, or *consciousness*. So-called objective reality is understood to be under the aegis of the subjective reality of the human. Such thinking colours Hegel's system's consumptive claim to "totality," the Hegelian acceptance of, in the words of Theodor Adorno, "the primacy of the whole,"¹¹ and the Hegelian dismissal of objective reality as "foul existence."¹²

The more dominant strains of Cartesian rationalism, no less so than dominant Romantic anti-rationalist discourse, also disdain or reject the nonhuman ecogenic subject-object. Such identity is held to be limited or incomplete, subject-less, *without* self. Presumptively, the subject or self is synonymous with the human; any nonhuman so-called object is without subject rights. The "Cartesian illusion" of denial of existence of the object (-subject) outside of the subject (-object), i.e. outside of the "thinking [human]

subject,” underlies Edmund Husserl’s phenomenology, one of the most formidable challenges to Hegelian thought.¹³ Husserl’s phenomenology, contra Hegel, attempts to reach knowledge of the object but, nonetheless, does not let go of the Kantian and Hegelian premise that the object is superseded or transcended by the subject.

The anthropocentric distortions in Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment metaphysical philosophical speculations in effect are questioned by a later metaphysical thinker, twentieth century Frankfurt School critic and theorist Theodor Adorno. Adorno’s posthumous essay “Subject and Object” (first published in 1969) put into question the epistemological claim that all knowledge and experience was founded “exclusively by reference to subjectivity.”¹⁴ It also attacked as “false” metaphysical thinking’s “hypostasized” separation between the subject and object.¹⁵ This essay was written in a sociopolitical context, addressing, preoccupied by, human inequities. Yet, as with other writings by Adorno (and those of Adorno’s colleague Max Horkheimer), its arguments are relevant to ecocritical discourse. Read for its ecological unconscious, Adorno’s essay “Subject and Object,” points towards the anthropocentrism of modern philosophy’s separation of or differentiation between the subject and the object.

In epistemology, Adorno explains in the opening paragraphs of “Subject and Object,” the term “subject” typically refers to “the particular individual” as well as “consciousness in general” (SO497-8), and the term “object” refers to what is separated from the subject. That is to say, the concepts of subject and object “have priority before all definition,” since to define something means that “something objective, no matter what it may be in itself, is subjectively captured by means of a fixed concept” (SO498). What unnecessarily occurs, however, in the separation of subject and object is the given separation is “hypostatized” or “transformed into an invariant” when it ought to be approached as at once “real and illusory” (SO497-8). The “false” separation is “no sooner established directly, without mediation” then it becomes “ideology” (SO498). “[P]arted from the object,” the subject “reduces [the object] to its own measure” (SO498). The subject “swallows the object, forgetting how much it is an object itself” (SO498). Thus, Adorno will go on to argue, the “primacy of the object” must remain paramount (SO502). That is to say, the object cannot be conceived without the subject and is not “so thoroughly dependent on the subject as the subject is on objectivity” (SO502). The object is always the “corrective of the subjective reduction,” and the subject, while it is the “epitome of mediation,” is the “How—never the What” of the relationship or mediation (SO502).

The “false” because “hypostatized” separation between the subject and object that stamps modern philosophical inquiry, endorses and per-

petuates human history's condescension towards and dismissal of the nonhuman. It is a given that the "subject" is the human individual (the agent or agency that does the subjective capturing of "something objective"), "subjectivity" is human subjectivity or consciousness, and the "object" is any and all that it is not human. For Adorno, the relationship of subject and object if this were "in its proper place, even epistemologically" would lie in the realization of "peace among men as well as between men and their Other," i.e., in "the state of distinctness without domination" (SO500). For the environmental thinker, the relationship of the human (subject) and the nonhuman (so-called object) if it were in its "proper place," would lie in both the realization of "peace among men [the human]," and the realization of peace among the human and the nonhuman. This accord occurs when "the object's dialectical primacy" is conceded rather than mistaken for something extraneous or "residual" (SO505).

The novels of modernist Patrick White, an erstwhile contemporary of Adorno, bring to the fore what is latent in the writings of Theodor Adorno. White's ecological consciousness is hinted at in the epigraph to his novel *The Solid Mandala*.¹⁶ The words are Paul Eluard's – "there is another world but it is *in this one*" (emphasis added). White, I argue, uses these as an imperative for humans to respect the so-called subject-less object realm rather than abuse or condescend to it or treat it as human subjectivity writ large. The imperative is discernible if jejune in an early novel by White, *The Aunt's Story*, published in 1948.¹⁷ The central character Theodora Goodman speaks for the richness of the so-called object world, not only human-made or anthropogenic objects – "sensible shoes" (AS56), the "sanity" of "chairs and tables" (AS162) – but also nonhuman-made or ecogenic subject-objects: the "big pink and yellow cows cooling their heels in creek mud" (AS16) at her father's property Meroe; a red-eyed hawk; a dog who senses that Theodora will not treat him as a subordinate. White's ecologic is more pronounced in later work, including the novels that immediately follow *The Aunt's Story*: *The Tree of Man* (1955), *Voss* (1957), and *Riders in the Charriot* (1961). Stan Parker, a central human character in *The Tree of Man*, speaks for, in the words of White scholar Mark Williams, the possibility of humans "integrating into the natural world."¹⁸ Laura Trevelyan, one of the two principle human characters in *Voss*, complements, and contravenes, the metaphysical ambitions of the novel's namesake.¹⁹ The German explorer (Trevelyan's betrothed) willfully sacrifices the subject-object world in an intensively subjective metaphysical search for "Gothic splendours" (V264, 267), disparaging as weakness and self-delusion the veneration of the objective condition. His is the obsessive search by the human for a "pure, undivided light which is outside nature, not something recreated

along with grass and trees and animals but a transcendent principle which is superior to and opposed to creaturely things.”²⁰ Trevelyan, who associates with the color green (V54, 158, 198, 259), a color that has a very long and rich history as a referent for “nature” or nonhuman ecogenic identity, prevails upon her fiancé to take a more humble human stance towards the subject-object world. By implication, this includes “the immediate world” “clothed in green” of the ecogenic realm Voss explores (V198).

The argument of this paper is that Mary Hare, one of the four principal characters in a slightly later novel by White, *Riders in the Chariot*, is the most pronounced of White’s ecological avatars.²¹ She is a *green* interloper in the “glass house” (RC35) of Xanadu, an imposing estate on the outskirts of Sydney, built by Mary’s father Norbert. Norbert’s metaphysical pretensions, like the metaphysical pursuits of Voss, are deeply anthropocentric and blind him to the ecogenic subject of the ecogenic environment around him. He exploits it or disregards it in his design of Xanadu. The ecocritical content of *Riders in the Chariot*, and of White’s writing as a whole, hardly has been spoken to by scholars. I argue this is central to any discussion of White and, further, that this content is central to White’s metaphysical themes.

Riders in the Chariot’s Mary Hare loves the estate she inherits from her father Norbert Hare – its “great, tatty, brilliant rooms” (RC96), its “voices of marble and gold” (RC42), its “gilded mirrors,” “marble staircase,” and “malachite urns” (RC21); its “golden walls of stone” (RC17), its frills of “iron lace” (RC16), and its “dome of faintly amethyst glass” (RC16). However, she does little to upkeep the place during her incumbency. Eventually she abandons this “grandest gesture” and “building of his [Norbert’s] folly” (RC15). Xanadu—“His [Norbert’s] Pleasure Dome, he called it” (RC15)—alludes to the “stately pleasure dome” of Coleridge’s poem “Kubla Kahn” and to the figure of Coleridge himself, a powerful spokesperson for the British Romantics *and the most metaphysical of this generation of poets*.²² As eco-scholar Laurence Coupe points out, the British Romantics strenuously challenged callous Enlightenment approaches to the natural world, the “dead universe” of Newtonian physics that treated the nonhuman world as subject-less object or non-being.²³ But the anti-Enlightenment Romantic imagination also would frequently endorse and promulgate, no less so than the Enlightenment mind, human condescension towards the natural world.²⁴ Norbert Hare is a Coleridgean Romantic figure that treats the natural world either as interference or as an imperfect state that has meaning only in relation to the human. Coleridge himself was at the very least ambivalent towards natural phenomena.²⁵ He frequently endorsed the Hegelian notion that nature, so-called objective reality, was illusory or mere sup-

plement.²⁶ In contrast with the “entrenched literal-mindedness” of his colleague William Wordsworth, his thinking was confirmedly transcendental and “symbolic,” dismissing the primacy of the objective world.²⁷ Such thinking is manifest in a seminal writing, “The Subjective & Objective”.²⁸ Coleridge distinguishes between the so-called objective condition, or “the sum of all that is merely objective,” and the so-called subjective condition, or “the sum of all that is subjective” (S21). He names the objective condition “Nature” and the subjective condition the “Self or Intelligence” (S21). “Nature” he states, is “without consciousness”; the “Self or Intelligence,” he states, “is conscious” (S21). “Nature” is “exclusively represented”; the “Self or Intelligence” is “exclusively representative” (S21). Coleridge goes on to assert that neither the subjective condition defines the objective condition nor the objective condition trumps the subjective condition, but then he resolves this “apparent contradiction” by asserting that the objective condition is “unconsciously involved in the latter” and is “not only coherent but *identical, and one and the same thing with our own immediate self consciousness*” (S22) [emphasis added]. Further, this credo must be “the office and object” of the “Transcendental philosopher” (S22).

Coleridge’s essay turns the wheels of his century’s anthropocentrism. In this period “Self or Intelligence” is commonly considered to be synonymous with the human or God and “Nature” to be any state or being *without* the human, *without consciousness*, or non-essential, a mere corollary to the human, even godless. Yet, if Coleridge accepted and promulgated the split between the putative insubstantial, nonhuman, subject-less object of “Nature” and the primordial anthropomorphic “Self” or “Intelligence,” he never fully reconciled himself to this. The poem “Kubla Kahn” betrays his anxiety about his and the metaphysical philosopher’s subordination of the objective condition to the subjective condition. King Kubla Kahn’s palace Xanadu, “... a miracle of rare device, /A sunny pleasure dome with caves of ice!”²⁹ is a perilously unstable, disembodied, intensely subjective state unanchored by objective reality. The sense of radical instability is augmented by the shape of the poem itself – its unevenness and disjointedness – not less by the subtitle that follows the titular “Kubla Kahn”: “Or, A Vision in a Dream. A Fragment.” Xanadu does not materialize in the poem and the poem’s efforts to come to it, to arrive at it, provoke violent, even apocalyptic, upheaval. Only the so-called external, non-essential, secondary, physical features of this realm are given to us – its “walls and towers ... girdled round,” its “gardens bright with sinuous rills, /Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree,” its “green hill athwart a cedarn cover” . “Kubla Kahn” is both paean to and critique of the romantic imagination, of the “deep romantic chasm” of the subjective realm torn apart from the ob-

jective realm.

Riders in the Chariot's recurrent images of shattering glass and splintering stone, allude to Coleridge's "Kubla Kahn's" Xanadu and the Romantic metaphysical imagination that erects false, anthropocentric conceits in blatant disregard of the ecogenic subject-object world. Norbert Hare's Xanadu, situated on a parcel of property on the edges of the suburbs of Sarsaparilla and Barranugli, bespeaks its human designer Norbert Hare's ambitious evasion of and deep condescension to the so-called objective condition of the ecogenic realm. The anthropogenic, highly reified structure is imposing, audacious, adamant. Built mostly out of relatively stable, inorganic ecogenic materials, the semi-precious stone and glass estate symbolizes Hare's desire for transcendence, for a preternatural, irrefragable, eternal, *unnatural* state. Yet, the narrative sets this figure up as a tragic, doomed, ill-fated entity, the collapse of which is engendered by its own (human) maker, Norbert Hare. When Mary is still a young girl, Norbert, in a fit of rage over a supper of slaughtered "cold fowl" spoiled for him by a swarm of "flying-ants" (RC36), fires a pistol at Xanadu's prize possession, a crystal chandelier "imported from some dismembered European house" (RC37) that hangs in the drawing room of the mansion. The shattering of the "crystal fruit" (RC37) presages the demise of the estate as a whole, functioning as a critique of the hubris of the human. (It is also worth noting, I think, that the figure of the crystal chandelier carries allusions to the spectacular nineteenth-century Crystal Palace, which symbolized humans' domination over nature and the modern tools of that dominion, science and technology).

In contrast with Norbert Hare and his conceit Xanadu, Mary Hare, characterized by Edgar L. Chapman and Patricia A. Morley as a "nature mystic"³⁰ and by Thelma Herring as an "earth goddess,"³¹ is the antithesis of both the Cartesian Enlightenment conviction and the post-Cartesian Romantic conviction that consciousness, or "intelligence," "self," and "the sum of all that is subjective," is split from matter, from "the sum of all that is *merely* objective" (emphasis added). Mary Hare speaks for the faith that the human subject-object self is dependent upon the nonhuman subject-object self and also for the belief that the human is not superior to the nonhuman ecogenic subject-object. She is not particularly distinguishable from the Australian native surrounds. She is "[s]peckled and dappled, like any wild thing native to the place" (RC16). She "[loses] her identity in "trees, bushes, inanimate objects." She "enter[s] into the minds of animals" (RC91). She "never approach[es] her legal property by following the official road to the gates" (RC13) but takes a "tunnel" through the native vegetation (which she has allowed to overtake her father's landscape park (RC16)). She tells her

housekeeper Mrs. Jolley that people “cannot live together unless they respect each other’s habits” and that she has done so “by painful degrees” in her “relationships with birds and animals” (RC59). She tells Mordecai Himmelfarb, a recent newcomer to Sarsaparilla, that “the earth is wonderful. It is all we have” (RC 172). When Himmelfarb questions Hare’s ecocentricity, asking “And at the end? When the earth can no longer raise you up?,” she answers him: “I shall sink into it [the earth]...and the grass will grow out of me” (RC172). She attends the bush instead of church on a Sunday (RC69). It is natural for her to “adopt a kneeling position in the act of worship” of the earth, in particular when she is knee-deep in the “good, soft loam, and velvet patches of leaf mold [...] from which [...] rise the scent of fungus and future growth” (RC13). Her richest “companions” are “sticks, pebbles, skeleton leaves, birds, insects” and the “hollows of trees” (RC24).

As an ecogenic figure, or a “country beauty,” “botched and brown and quickly gone” (RC61), Hare’s character speaks for the ecological values of decomposition and excrement in contrast with the non-ecological values of permanence and purity, represented by the reputedly perdurable Xanadu.³² Also, Mary does not interfere with Xanadu’s disintegration. She does not caulk the cracks in its walls: “lizards [run] in and out of [them]” (RC40). She does not paste up the fallen, “drunken brown festoons” (RC86) of its imported silk wallpapers. Leaves and other flora become residents of the palace. They “plap” and “hesitate,” “advance” and “retreat” in “whispers and explosions of green” (RC326). “[O]ld birds’ nests” lie “on the Aubusson, or what had become, rather, a carpet of twigs, dust, mildew and the chrysalides of insects” (RC46). “On one side of the dining room” an elm “enter[s] in” (RC46). Its “early leaves [pierce] the more passive colors of human refinement like a knife” (RC46). In the gaps in the walls and roof, “little rags of blue sky [flicker] and [flap] drunkenly” (RC46). In other places “rain [has] gushed” and in others again it has “trickled down the walls, and over marble, now the colour of rotten teeth” (RC46). (Indeed, as the narrative tells us, Xanadu itself “enter[s] into a conspiracy” (RC325) with the flora and fauna, and with Mary’s tacit approval long before the heir incumbent defects from her father’s house.)

The figures of Mary Hare and her fellow organic flora and fauna bespeak relatively gentle, repeatable acts of license and transgression – the insurgency of the carnival as opposed to the unrepeatable act of apocalypse. The figures of Xanadu and also the figures of “light” and “time” function as quasi-irreversible states. These states describe humans’ desire for permanent, absolute, universal, fixed conditions. Paradoxically, these brilliant, beautiful agents comment on the radically unstable, violent, even treacherous nature of the desire for permanence. Light is “crumbling gold,”

“slips of elusive feldspar,” “deposits of porphyry and agate” (RC449). It “[finishes] the job” of the disintegration of Xanadu where “time” has not already “slashed” the halls and rooms (RC46) of the “wild and tumbledown beauty” of Xanadu.³³ The mansion’s “golden walls of stone” (RC17) are “split by sun and fire” (RC40); “[c]abinets and little frivolous tables seem to splinter at a blow”; and “Even solid pieces in marquetry and the buhl octopus” are “stunned” (RC46) by the *metaphysical, quasi-immortal* figures of light and time.

If Mary Hare represents a “green” flaw, a mortal “brown” spot in the Romantic metaphysical conceit of the “crystal glass” of Norbert’s Xanadu and if she is atypical of the human community in her self-identification with the ecogenic realm, she is not conscious of this ecocentricity. Moreover, when she disappears from or abandons Xanadu, she does not make any environmental provisions for the land or the flora and fauna that have been slowly reclaiming the estate. Instead, some years before her disappearance she bequeaths Xanadu to a cousin she hardly knows. This “legatee and relative” Eustace Cleugh promptly sells the property to a real estate developer who no less expediently “demolish[es] and subdivide[s]” (RC519) the estate. *Riders in the Chariot*, as with the writings that precede it, *The Aunt’s Story*, *The Tree of Man*, and *Voss*, refuses to give us a character capable of effecting an ecologic on a level broad enough to have significant social and political impact. The given vision remains trapped in the “hopelessly-isolated individual”,³⁴ doomed to remain unrealized by larger society. Scholars have persuasively and eloquently criticized White’s modernist’s defense of the alienated individual subject which they argue merely reinforces the status quo.³⁵ But characters such as Mary Hare also inspire political and social change. Hare is a model for ecocentric as opposed to anthropocentric values. Ruth Godbold, Mary’s peer and another of the novel’s four so-called luminaries or visionaries, is another such figure.

Similar to Mary Hare, and Theodora Goodman in the novel *The Aunt’s Story*, individuals who “have not the ... vanity” of the intellectual or the artist (AS56), Godbold is unprepossessing, hardly noticed by the human members of her community. The narrative nonetheless makes clear that she is a figure to be reckoned with. (Even Mary, because she is not without “arrogance” (RC72), pales a little in comparison to Ruth Godbold.) To the townspeople of Sarsaparilla, Godbold is a *persona non grata*, a woman who lives in “a shed” below the Sarsaparilla post office and “takes in washing” (RC70). To the reader, Godbold is the least “isolated and inward looking,”³⁶ the most humble, the most plebian, “the most positive evidence of good” (RC72) of her community. She is touched by “wings of love and charity” (RC549). She does not hold herself above or separate from any other

being in her community, either human or nonhuman. She respects all “Living Creatures,” both those she has known and those she has not (RC551-2). She shows “love and respect” for the most “common objects and trivial acts” (RC536). She “goes about” such labor as planting a row of beans, like the much more celebrated eco-visionary Henry David Thoreau, or admiring a row of cabbages, like Patrick White at Castle Hill, “as if she were learning a secret of immense importance, over and over” (RC536). When she “indulge[s] herself at all in her almost vegetable existence,” it is “to walk and look [...] at the ground” (RC536-7). Indeed, the novel introduces Godbold as a person who does not seek to transcend objective reality, including the ecogenic realm of objective reality. Instead she is a figure who seeks intimate contact with it. When she walks, she does not look skyward, *transcendentally*, but downwards and “smile[s] at the ground” (RC8). To her fellow townspeople, Godbold is hardly a conscious subject, more a subject-less, unfeeling object: she is “[p]hysically [...] too massive [...] too coarse, too flat of face, thick-armed, big of breast, waxy-skinned, the large pores opened by the steam from the copper” (RC72). To the reader, Godbold is a gray-eyed Athena, a goddess of wisdom and moral strength: “Nobody could deny Mrs Godbold her breadth of brow. She wore her hair in thick and glistening coils, and her eyes were a steady grey” (RC72). And, it is through Ruth Godbold that we see the ecogenic subject that Norbert Hare and Hare’s colonial forbears had dispossessed in the nineteenth century and early part of the twentieth century, now betrayed yet again, by a post-World War Two postcolonial order. Real estate developers have “shaved” (RC545) Xanadu’s “green hill” down to a “bald, red, rudimentary hill” (RC545). Rows of semi-prefabricated “fibro homes” now stand where Xanadu was (RC545). *Riders in the Chariot* exposes the more ugly aspects of the Australian suburb and of the Australian middleclass suburban imagination. This “anti-suburbanism” has been commented upon by critics.³⁷ Yet, if *Riders in the Chariot* takes a stab at the anti-environmentalism of Australia’s middle classes and their suburbs, the novel also criticizes the anti-environmental imagination of an older ruling class symbolized by the figure of Norbert Hare and the family he marries into.

Aldo Leopold, author of the twentieth-century environmental literary classic *Sand County Almanac*, states in this book that ethics is based on the belief that “the individual” is a member of a community of “interdependent parts,” “community” includes the human and nonhuman biota, and it is wrong to deliberately destroy the “integrity, stability, and beauty” of this community.³⁸ The characters of Mary Hare and Ruth Godbold in the novel *Riders in the Chariot* represent such an ethics. They are human ecogenic subject-objects sensitive to the rights of nonhuman ecogenic subject-

objects. Their modes of being reflect an ethics that includes within the definition of “individual” and “subject,” the nonhuman individual and subject, and within the definition of “community,” nonhuman communities. White scholar Carolyn Bliss argues in her study, *Patrick White’s Fiction: The Paradox of Fortunate Failure*, that principal characters in White’s novels are figures of failure. Expressed in ecocritical language, such characters constitute two types: those that fail in spectacular terms and demonstrate indifference or imperviousness or hostility towards the ecogenic subject-object world (the so-called natural world) and those that default under relatively unremarkable, undistinguished circumstances but express humility in their relations with the ecogenic subject-object world. Theodora Goodman in *The Aunt’s Story*, Stan Parker in *The Tree of Man*, Laura Trevelyan in *Voss* and Mary Hare and Ruth Godbold in *Riders in the Chariot* are of the second type. Peter Beatson argues in *The Eye in the Mandala. Patrick White: A Vision of Man and God* that White’s principal characters have “a living, organic relationship with the sensuous world that surrounds them,” that there is a sense of principal characters “being there in the phenomenal world,” that principal characters manifest “an openness to the pulsations and emanations of places and things [...], and that their “Dialogue with the things of the material world is a means to, and a proof of, election.”³⁹ Framed ecocritically, this “proof of election” is conditioned upon reverence for the natural world. One of the most “remarkable qualities” of White’s writing, this awareness and sensitivity bespeak an ecologic, a thinking that promotes respect for the nonhuman ecogenic being belief that the latter is equal to not less than the human ecogenic being.⁴⁰

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NOTES

¹ Patrick White, “In the Making” , *Patrick White Speaks* (Sydney: Primavera Press, 1989), pp. 19-23.

² White, “Letter to Dr. Clem Semmler dated 10 May, 1970”, quoted. in Peter Beatson, *The Eye in the Mandala, Patrick White: A Vision of Man and God* (London: Elek Books, 1976), p. 167. See also the following essay by White, “Australians in a Nuclear War” , *White Speaks* (Sydney: Primavera Press, 1989), pp. 113-26, which evidences White’s theosophy (see in particular p. 116).

³ Beatson, *Eye in the Mandala*.

⁴ Carolyn Bliss, *Patrick White’s Fiction: The Paradox of Fortunate Failure* (London: Macmillan, 1986), p. 11.

- ⁵ Michael Giffin, *Arthur's Dream: the Religious Imagination in the Fiction of Patrick White* (Paddington, New South Wales: Spaniel Books, 1996), p. 5.
- ⁶ McCann, "The ethics of abjection: Patrick White's *Riders in the Chariot*", *Australian Literary Studies*, 18 (1997), pp. 145-55.
- ⁷ Veronica Brady, "Towards an Ecology of Australia: Land of the Spirit", *Worldviews: Environment Culture Religion*, 3 (1999), pp. 139-55. See also Brian Kiernan's discussion of White's Romantic-Symbolist language, a language that is inseparable from White's identity as a modernist: Brian Kiernan, "The Novelist and the Modern World", *Prophet from the Desert: Critical Essays on Patrick White*, ed. John McLaren (Melbourne: Red Hill Press, 1995), pp. 1-23.
- ⁸ Kiernan, "Coloring in White" (Book Review), p. 196, *Southerly*, 63 (2003), pp. 194-8. See Helen Verity Hewitt, *Patrick White, Painter Manque: Paintings, Painters and their Influence on his Writing* (Melbourne: Miegunyah Press, 2000).
- ⁹ Kiernan, "Coloring in White" (Book Review), p. 196. See James Bulman-May, *Patrick White and Alchemy* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2001).
- ¹⁰ Brady, "Towards an Ecology of Australia," p. 148.
- ¹¹ Theodor Adorno, "Dedication", in trans. E. F. N. Jephcott, *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life* (London: NLB, 1978), pp. 15-8; reprinted in ed. Brian O'Connor, *The Adorno Reader* (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), pp. 81, 83. I do not intend to suggest that Adorno is antagonistic towards Hegel. Adorno's esteem for Hegel ought not to be underestimated. However, Adorno questioned Hegel's logic, which was "'fastened' to the transcendental subject" outside of the so-called objective condition of history (human and nonhuman) (Adorno, "Introduction", in trans. Willis Domingo, *Against Epistemology: A Metacritique* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982), pp. 3-29; reprinted in *The Adorno Reader*, p. 114.)
- ¹² Hegel quoted in Susan Buck-Morss, *The Origins of Negative Dialectics: Theodor W. Adorno, Walter Benjamin, and the Frankfurt Institute* (New York: The Free Press, 1977), p. 72.
- ¹³ Adorno, "Introduction", *Against Epistemology: A Metacritique*, in trans. Willis Domingo (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982), pp. 3-29; reprinted in *The Adorno Reader*, pp. 114-36.
- ¹⁴ Brian O'Connor, *The Adorno Reader*, p. 113.
- ¹⁵ Adorno, "Subject and Object", in eds. Andrew Arato and Eike Gebhardt, *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader* (New York: The Continuum Publishing Company, 1978), pp. 497-511. In-text parenthetical references starting with SO refer to page numbers within this.
- ¹⁶ White, *The Solid Mandala* (New York: Viking Press, 1966).
- ¹⁷ White, *The Aunt's Story* (New York: Viking Press, 1948). In-text parenthetical references starting with AS refer to page numbers within this.
- ¹⁸ Mark Williams, *Patrick White* (London: Macmillan Press, 1993), p. 53.
- ¹⁹ White, *Voss* (New York: Penguin, 1961). (Note: the first English edition of the novel was published in 1957). In-text parenthetical references starting with V refer

to page numbers within this.

- ²⁰ Williams, *Patrick White*, p. 67. Williams does not make an environmental argument for White. Nonetheless, his insights, like those of other critics mentioned herein, point towards such an argument. It is significant I think that both he and Carolyn Bliss include in their brief introductions to their studies of White, White's active environmental opposition in the 1960s and 1970s to Australia's nuclear industry. See Bliss, *Patrick White's Fiction*, p. xi, Williams, *Patrick White*, p. 6.
- ²¹ White, *Riders in the Chariot* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1961). In-text parenthetical references starting with RC refer to page numbers within this.
- ²² Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "Kubla Kahn", in gen. ed. M. H. Abrams *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, 6th ed., vol. 2 (New York: W. W. Norton, 1993), pp. 346-9.
- ²³ ed. Laurence Coupe, *The Green Studies Reader: From Romanticism to Ecocriticism* (New York: Routledge, 2000), p. 13.
- ²⁴ See Richard Caddel, "Secretaries of Nature: Towards a Theory of Modernist Ecology", in ed. William Pratt, *Ezra Pound. Nature and Myth* (New York: AMS Press, 2002), pp. 139-50. Human condescension towards the nonhuman-made so-called natural world is found in nineteenth-century Romantic-Symbolist literature in a stock literary trope, the pathetic fallacy. This literary device attributes human traits to the nonhuman world and describes a world in which the human communicates with the nonhuman in the language of the human. Caddel points to some "straightforward examples" of the pathetic fallacy in Wordsworth's poetry and discusses the "Romantic exception" of John Clare, the "peasant poet' of Helpston" (141). Unlike his contemporaries, Clare did not "literally, Romanticise" the nonhuman world but instead represented an ecology that was based on "real observation, as opposed to spectator status," and allowed "no separation between the 'human' and 'natural' world" and "no concept of eternity" (143). See, also, J. Scott Bryson, "Introduction", in ed. J. Scott Bryson, *Ecopoetry: A Critical Introduction* (Salt Lake City, Utah: The University of Utah Press, 2002), pp. 1-13. Bryson discusses the pathetic fallacy and the rejection of this trope in the context of an AngloAmerican, twentieth-century, "anti-romantic" literary tradition.
- ²⁵ See Norman Fruman, "Coleridge's rejection of nature and the natural man", in Lucy Newlyn, "'Radical Difference': Coleridge and Wordsworth, 1802," in eds. Richard Gravil, Lucy Newlyn, and Nicholas Roe, *Coleridge's Imagination. Essays in Memory of Pete Laver* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 117-28; and Richard Gravil, "Imagining Wordsworth: 1797-1807-1817", *Coleridge's Imagination*, pp. 129-42.
- ²⁶ Fruman argues that in the period between the writing of the "awed, pantheistic reverences" of the poems "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison" (published 1797) and "Frost at Midnight" (published 1798) (the period when Coleridge also was writing "Kubla Kahn"), Coleridge came to regard nature with "fitful s[k]epticism" (71) and distrust "the pleasures that derived from the senses (73). He no longer had "spontaneous joy in the natural world" and could no longer accept "meanings in nature which were not projections from within" (73).
- ²⁷ Newlyn, "Radical Difference," p. 127.

- ²⁸ Coleridge, "The Subjective & Objective" (1817), in ed. J. Shawcross *Biographia Literaria* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1907); reprinted in ed. Laurence Coupe, *The Green Studies Reader: From Romanticism to Ecocriticism* (New York: Routledge, 2000), pp. 21-2. In-text parenthetical references starting with S refer to page numbers within this.
- ²⁹ Coleridge, "Kubla Kahn," p. 347.
- ³⁰ Chapman, "The Mandala Design," p. 112. Morley quoted in Williams, *Patrick White*, p. 77. Chapman, "The Mandala Design of Patrick White's *Riders in the Chariot*", in ed. Peter Wolfe, *Critical Essays on Patrick White* (Boston, Massachusetts: G. K. Hall & Co., 1979), pp. 107-22; Patricia A. Morley, *The Mystery of Unity: Theme and Technique in the Novels of Patrick White* (Montreal, Canada: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1972), p. 158.
- ³¹ Herring, "Self and Shadow," p. 78. Thelma Herring, "Self and Shadow: The Quest for Totality in *The Solid Mandala*", *Southerly* 3 (1966); reprinted in ed. G. A. Wilkes, *Ten Essays on Patrick White Selected from Southerly (1964-1967)* (Melbourne and Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1970), pp. 78.
- ³² When Mrs. Jolley slanders Mordecai, calling him "dirty Jew!" (331), the anger that "rises" in Mary is "green" anger (331). "Then I am offal, offal [too]! Green, putrefying [...]" (331), she hurls at Mrs. Jolley. The "brown word," "plaster[s]" her offender Mrs. Jolley's back (332). Mary's rebuke of Mrs. Jolley reflects her character's identification with the ecogenic nonhuman maligned by humans as well as her character's identification with a human subject reviled by another human subject. Essentially a figure for the 'green' world marginalized by her father's colonial order, Hare is the green analogue to Alf Dubbo, the marginalized Aboriginal person and the alienated artist figure; Ruth Godbold, the working class individual that the middle and upper middle class individual condescends to as unintelligent, hardly sensate, mere 'dumb beast'; and Mordecai Himmelfarb, another social pariah, a Jew crucified by a World War II era, neo-colonial, suburban, Anglo-Australian order (represented in the novel by the figures of Mrs. Jolley and her coconspirator Mrs. Flack).
- ³³ J. F. Burrows, "Archetypes and Stereotypes: *Riders in the Chariot*", *Southerly*, 1 (1965); reprinted in ed. G. A. Wilkes, *Ten Essays on Patrick White. Selected from Southerly (1964-1967)* (Melbourne and Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1970), pp. 61.
- ³⁴ Jack Lindsay, "The Alienated Australian Intellectual"; reprinted in *Decay and Renewal: Critical Essays on Twentieth Century Writing* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1976), pp. 258.
- ³⁵ Lindsay's early influential essay (cited in the previous footnote) makes the argument that White succumbs to the pitfall of "unconsciousness of his own relation to the world he condemns" (257). Thereby, Lindsay claims, White cannot "oppose effectively the thing that he so sincerely and fiercely hates" (258). See also Michael Wilding, "The Politics of Modernism", in ed. John McLaren, *Prophet from the Desert: Critical Essays on Patrick White* (Melbourne: Red Hill Press, 1995), pp. 24-33.
- ³⁶ Williams, *Patrick White*, p. 83.
- ³⁷ See Kinnane's essay on the anti-suburban theme in White's writings. Gary Kin-

nane, "Shopping at last!: History, fiction and the anti-suburban tradition", *Australian Literary Studies*, 18 (1998), pp. 41-55. See also McCann's discussion of White's "vehemently anti-suburban" themes ("Decomposing Suburbia", p. 59) and "paranoid fear of suburbia" ("The Ethics of Abjection", p. 145). Andrew McCann, "The Ethics of Abjection: Patrick White's *Riders in the Chariot*", *Australian Literary Studies*, 18 (1997), pp. 145-55; "Decomposing suburbia: Patrick White's perversity," *Australian Literary Studies*, 18 (1998), pp. 56-71.

³⁸ Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac with Essays on Conservation from Round River* (Oxford: Ballantine Books by arrangement with The Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1966 (c. 1949)), pp. 239, 262.

³⁹ Beatson, *Eye in the Mandala*, p. 133.

⁴⁰ Beatson, *Eye in the Mandala*, p. 133.