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‘YOU ARE WHAT YOU READ’: INTERTEXTUAL RELATIONS IN PATRICK WHITE’S *THE SOLID MANDALA*

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“The greatest part of a writer’s time is spent in reading in order to write. A man will turn over half a library to make a book”.

Samuel Johnson, *Life of Johnson*

RESUMO

Este trabalho apresenta uma análise intertextual do romance *The Solid Mandala*, do escritor australiano, ganhador do prêmio Nobel, Patrick White, publicado em 1966, como parte de um esforço para estimular estudos sobre sua obra no Brasil e para investigar por que sua fortuna crítica tem passado por uma fase negativa recentemente. Primeiro, mostramos brevemente sua biografia e as condições relacionadas à produção e publicação de *The Solid Mandala*. Em seguida, apresentamos o contexto histórico do romance. As relações de conflito e complementação envolvendo os irmãos gêmeos Waldo e Arthur Brown na narrativa são analisadas, com destaque para a relação deles com a literatura (um tema importante no romance), retratando o papel das personagens como leitores e escritores na história, apreendendo, assim, seus sentimentos, suas visões de mundo e filosofia de vida (Waldo aspira à uma carreira de escritor e Arthur de fato compõe um poema). Os estudos de Gérard Genette sobre Narratologia são utilizados para embasar a análise, particularmente na relação intertextual entre *The Solid Mandala* e *The Brothers Karamazov*, do escritor F. Dostoyevsky, que é o título que chama a atenção de Arthur. Na busca pelo todo de sua vida, Arthur incorpora vários elementos (centrados em um único ponto, suas mandalas) e consegue criar sua própria filosofia. No final vemos que Arthur transcende sua realidade ao usar a leitura do romance russo como um instrumento. Esse estudo destaca a pertinência de revisitar a obra de Patrick White (uma vez que ela prova estar em sintonia com as questões filosóficas sendo discutidas atualmente) e coloca *The Solid Mandala* no contexto da literatura mundial.

Palavras-chave:
Literatura Australiana – Patrick White – *The Solid Mandala* – Reavaliação da Fortuna Crítica – Intertextualidade – *The Brothers Karamazov*

ABSTRACT

This work performs an intertextual analysis of the Nobel Prize winning Australian novelist Patrick White's *The Solid Mandala*, published in 1966, as part of an effort to boost studies of his novels in Brazil and to investigate why his critical fortune has been undergoing a negative phase recently. First, we briefly present his biography and the conditions surrounding the writing and publication of *The Solid Mandala*. Later on, we present the historical context of the novel. The relations of conflict and complementation involving the twin brothers Waldo and Arthur Brown in the narrative are analysed, but we focus on their relation to literature (which is an important theme in the novel), depicting their roles as readers and writers in the story, thus, apprehending their feelings towards each other, worldviews and outlook on life (Waldo aspires to become a great writer, and Arthur actually produces a poem). Gérard Genette's studies on Narratology are used to support our analysis, particularly in the intertextual relation between *The Solid Mandala* and F. Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, which is the title that calls Arthur's attention. In his pursue to find the whole of his life, Arthur incorporates various elements (centred at just one point, his mandalas) and is able to create his own philosophy. At the end we see that Arthur transcends his reality by using the reading of the Russian novel as an instrument. This study enlightens the pertinence of revisiting Patrick White's oeuvre (since it proves to be so well tuned in to the current philosophical issues being discussed), and places *The Solid Mandala* in the context of worldwide literature.

Keywords:
Australian Literature – Patrick White – *The Solid Mandala* – Revaluation of Critical Fortune – Intertextuality – *The Brothers Karamazov*

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INTRODUCTION

Patrick White won the Nobel Prize in 1973, being the only Australian writer to be awarded with such an honour, so far. However, why should we focus on his oeuvre nowadays? If we consider him as one of the most important writers of the literature written in English then we would agree that he deserves more attention in academic circles around the world. Certainly the fact that we are about to celebrate his centenary (he was born in 1912, in London) is something to be taken into account. But perhaps we should value his literary work also for being timeless, for showing a human touch which is not so common in modern writing, for revealing a mix of feelings and influences acquired during very hard times (though he did not witness war himself at its cruelest moments, working as a RAF Intelligence Officer, he felt what his family was suffering with relatives and friends involved in the conflicts). His chronic asthma attacks were one more challenge for him, while developing the plots. Added to that, his sexual inclination (repressed since the beginning, even by Australian society at that time) and his desire to become an artist in a family in which arts were not really treasured, all made him a man who mulled over dreams, desires and rebelliousness and then threw his thoughts and the mixture of those feelings on to his writing.

The novel chosen to be analysed is *The Solid Mandala*, published in 1966, when White was already a renowned writer, enjoying the fruits of previous books, such as *Voss* (published in 1957) and *The Tree of Man* (released in 1955). Thus, it is interesting to observe the evolution (maturation) of his writing, whose heyday can be seen in *The Solid Mandala.*

This thesis starts by presenting an overview of Patrick White's life, in the chapter *Why Patrick White?,* showing some important facts which helped shape his literary activity and

also justifying the choice of his name for a thesis. After that we consider the importance of the novel *The Solid Mandala,* and analyse its historical context, which is crucial to understand the intertextual relations. The translation of the *The Brothers Karamazov* used in this thesis was done by Constance Garnett in 1912, which probably was the edition burnt by George Brown and torn up by Arthur in the Sydney Municipal Library. The discussion extends to the other books mentioned throughout the story, and which can contribute to the understanding of the characters involved.

As part of the title of this thesis I would like to call attention to the sentence 'you are what you read'. This was the slogan used in the 47th edition of the Book Fair[1] in Porto Alegre, in 2001, and I decided to transform it into a somewhat interesting question, as usually literature students do not stop to think of literature in this way. Mainly when thinking of classics, such as Dostoyevsky (in this case), why should Arthur, the mentally challenged character, pursue to understand it? This led me to think of his reaction (turning out the pages of the edition he had to read at the library, given the one his family had was no longer available – his father had burnt it). If you are what you read, then this pursuit of understanding would come from Waldo, the character depicted as the intellectual, who seemingly enjoys reading the classics, and who is portrayed with extreme rationality (paradoxically to the point of not being able to translate his feelings into writing – that is, collecting words, since he was the character who kept lists of words), but being unable to use them to convey feelings. Given we have literature being portrayed in an active way in *The Solid Mandala* (the character's literary preferences are present in their descriptions, thereby, this would be an indicative that what they read may tell more about their behaviour and psychological construction).

The first chapter, entitled *Why Patrick White*, introduces his oeuvre and some relevant episodes of his life, which might have contributed to form his style of writing. As a subchapter, we present first "Who is Patrick White", in which the reader becomes familiar with White's origins. After that, we have another subchapter, entitled "Why *The Solid Mandala*", justifying the choice of this novel and highlighting some events which show that even Patrick White (who was hard on himself and his works, even refusing to reread his novels after publication) thinks it was the novel in which he said everything that he wanted.

[1] The Book Fair in Porto Alegre is a traditional event which takes place yearly (typically between the end of October and the middle of November). Its first edition was held in 1955, aiming at popularising books and creating a feasible market for them (at the time the fair was conceived, bookstores were considered elitist). Nowadays, in addition to the trading of books, a number of cultural events occur simultaneously.

In the second chapter we talk about the historical context of the novel, trying to make a connection to what White considered 'the blackness of those times'. Thereby, some events which might have contributed to that denomination are presented, as well as their relation to the lives of the characters of Sarsaparilla, the fictional suburb of Sydney made up by Patrick White.

In the third chapter, we turn to the question 'are you what you read?', trying to see how it can be applied to the characters, showing their reading preferences as well as how they behave towards literature (for example, Bill Poulter completely ignores literature). The twins are the focus of this work, thus, they deserve subchapters to describe their literary habits, not only as readers, but also as writers. Therefore, we can say *The Solid Mandala* is a metaliterary novel, depicting the struggle of the main characters to produce a literary piece of work, with some criticism to the Romantics: literature is 99% work and effort, and 1% inspiration, that is, you need to write and rewrite a number of excerpts to get the desired final result, a process also followed by Patrick White.

In the fourth chapter, we focus on intertextuality, with our main theoretical support being revealed: the French theoretician Gérard Genette, and his concepts of transtextuality and paratextuality. Given *The Solid Mandala* presents interesting examples, corroborating what Genette proposes in terms of classification (and his own examples of how intertextual references can appear in a literary text), the idea was to match those elements. In the chapter we develop the argument that it was not by chance that *The Brothers Karamazov* was chosen by Patrick White to compose a novel in which he says everything that he wanted. Therefore, it is with this idea in mind that we relate excerpts extracted from White's *The Solid Mandala* to excerpts taken from Dostoyesvky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, establishing some parallels. The first one is that, from the question Arthur asks (who is The Grand Inquisitor?), we start to view him in his spiritual search, trying to define himself in terms of faith and divinity (he himself incorporates Christ in the mandala dance). However, during his search, he is confronted with the idea that The Grand Inquisitor is possibly right (and all the comments made by Ivan, the atheist character, referring to the seemingly useless power of God, who decided to make humanity suffer when he actually had all the means to save humanity). Arthur's doubts and questions also lead the reader to reflect upon such issues. After that, we have another parallel: suffering, a very important aspect not only to Patrick White, but also to

Dostoyesvky (and we compare how the characters in both novels deal with and react to that). A third parallel is love, and we analyse how the concept of love adopted by Arthur in *The Solid Mandala* is quite similar to that practiced by Alyosha, the monk in *The Brothers Karamazov*.

The last chapter describes the search for the whole, that is, how Arthur, after uniting all these elements in the mandala dance, is able to find out his whole self, and share this discovery with his soul mates, namely Dulcie and Mrs Poulter. Thus, we can say that the discovery of *The Brothers Karamazov*, besides being an important intertextual reference, is an instrument, which makes him see things and connect loose ends he saw in his life and solve some puzzles, such as the reason why his family fails to face reality and the demons (word used by the father, George Brown, to refer to the characters of the Russian novel) present in *The Brothers Karamazov* (who, in fact, share some of their anxieties).

Three questions have motivated this thesis: 1) why *The Brothers Karamazov*?, 2) what does this title do in Patrick White's novel?, 3) does the reading of *The Brothers Karamazov* deepen the reading of *The Solid Mandala*? Throughout this thesis we tend to develop these subjects, in order to propose answers to those questions.

1 WHY PATRICK WHITE?

When we think of Patrick White today, immediately the first thing that comes to our mind is the fact that he won the Nobel Prize in 1973. However, is that enough? A number of authors won the Nobel Prize, many of whom are forgotten, with their literary works covered in dust in the libraries around the world. In the case of Patrick White, his centenary will be celebrated in 2012, certainly a good reason for students to start rereading his oeuvre. Nevertheless, this is still not enough for, after all, many authors already celebrated their 100th birthday and, again, their books remain covered with dust in the libraries.

Given that Literature is an abstract field of study which raises so many questions regarding the complex task of evaluating authors' literary skills, how could we 'qualify' Patrick White in the 21st century? A very interesting experience was carried out when the Australian novelist and commentator David Malouf sent an excerpt written by White (wisely, using the suggestive anagram of Wraith Picket) to publishing-houses and agents in Australia. The result was surprising: some thought that his style had a 'certain flair of language but found it confusing, overwritten and in need of the sort of editing that no publisher these days could afford' (MALOUF, 2007, p. 1), and others simply did not accept the manuscripts. That article, published in the Australian newspaper *The Age*, brings up the possible reasons for Patrick White's neglect. One of them is that White, following James Joyce, William Faulkner, Virginia Woolf, and D. H. Lawrence would be a representative of the High Modernist movement, presenting a set of 'stylistic rules' that would be hard (or no-one would be really willing) to follow nowadays. For the Realist writers, he was considered a 'bourgeois formalist' (MALOUF, 2007, p. 2). And for the publishing-houses, Patrick White would be just a fashion that has passed, therefore, not a perennial best-selling author.

The New Zealander Peter Beatson, one of the first scholars to have studied Patrick White at the academic level, says it was a hard task to convince the professors at the University of Cambridge to accept his doctorate project, forty-four years ago. Beatson even spent some time with his idol, everything for the sake of White's recognition as a great writer (and, of course, intending to achieve good academic work). As a result, his book *The Eye in the Mandala: Patrick White A Vision of Man and God* was published in 1976, being cited in many later works. It is important to note that at the time Beatson was doing his research, Patrick White had not yet been awarded the Nobel Prize.

However, before we go on, it is appropriate to know a little more about the life of this man, who used his skill in writing to kindle emotions, present psychologically complex characters (such as Voss, Laura Trevelyan, Stan Parker, the twin brothers Waldo and Arthur Brown, Catherine Standish, and so on) and for 'introducing a new continent into the world of literature'[2], as the Nobel Committee stated.

Thus, why Patrick White? Because he produced great novels, still worth reading nowadays, created a great aesthetic, and why not emotional, experience, offering a profound interpretation of his society.

1.1 Who is Patrick White?

Patrick Victor Martindale White was born in London on 28 May 1912 while his parents (the father, Victor, was a landowner and the mother, Ruth, came from a wealthy family) were enjoying an extended honeymoon - or, as Patrick White himself states in his self-portrait: 'the best part of two years travelling in Europe and the Middle East' (WHITE, 1983, p. 9). Calling him an Australian would not sound strange, since his birth in the metropolis seemingly is not something to be taken seriously into account, as he went back to Australia with his parents six months later. Nevertheless, for him, this had an effect: 'I am an anachronism, something left over from that period when people were no longer English and

[2] MARR, David. *Patrick White: A Life*. Sydney: Vintage, 1992.

not yet indigenous' (MARR, 1992, p. 11). Hence, we have to agree with his biographer, David Marr, that Patrick White 'was a child of the Empire' (p. 11). It is interesting to call attention to the idea of empire presented in that situation. Unlike the meaning the word 'empire' might suggest in the Brazilian context (with negative, oppressive and unjust connotations), in the case of Patrick White's country and generation, the ideas raised are positive. For example, Australia's political freedoms, system of government, etc., were given by the Empire, not taken by force from it. Australians were proud to be part of the Empire, and that lasted until the Second World War. As David Marr states in the Patrick White biography:

> The definition of Australian had been narrowing since his childhood. Australia still aped the British, gave only British honours, and expected citizens to stand for the British national anthem even at the local pictures. But by the early 1950s Australia had lost its sense of being, at the same time, part of an international Empire. The experience of men like White, as at home in London as they were in Sydney, was once taken for granted as a privileged but Australian way of life. After the war, the country had turned in on itself, licking its wounds. White was of a generation and class brought up to despise the narrow loyalties now being demanded. To be torn between Australia and London as he always was, had come to seem in his homeland indecisive, even disloyal. Australia was growing chauvinistic in a way it had never been before. White never wavered from the view that 'Chauvinism is bad'. Appeals to this chauvinism masked the second rate in writing, music and politics. And what place was there in 1950 for a poofter, ex-grazier's son and sometime Modernist in the official image of the Australian man? (MARR, 1992, p. 276-277)

In White's self-portrait entitled *Flaws in the Glass* (launched in 1981), his bitterness is evident, mainly towards his parents. In fact, one of the most important events of his life was his 'prison sentence' (as he himself called it), when at the age of 13 he was sent to England, this time to study (at Cheltenham College):

> What I could not forgive was my parents' amusement at their child's attempts to express his ideas, and their conviction that what I detested was what I would like. Even more, I resented their capacity for boring me, and my mother's relentless determination to do everything for my own good, which included dumping me in a prison of a school on the other side of the world. (WHITE, 1984, p. 9)

This is an important fact, as it might be an explanation for some of his attitudes and points of view on many subjects presented in his novels. His birth in London might be

considered an accident, but his parents referred to England as home given their social position (a very common attitude at the time, not an eccentricity at all). Therefore, it would be suitable for their son to return home to improve his education, which also contributed to his feeling of alienation. This already happened when he was born, according to his biography written by David Marr:

> Australian was not the boy's first language. He learnt a little from delivery men at the back door and larrikins who pestered him through the hedge, but in the kitchens he heard more Cockney and Irish brogue: 'Nora Barnacle could have been one of the stream of Irish maids that flowed through our house'. On the other side of the baize door he spoke Ruth's proper English and she nagged her son to keep his accent and his grammar pure. Like Waldo Brown he was forbidden to use 'sloppy Australian vocabulary'. (MARR, 1992, p. 35)

Indeed, when he returned to Australia, in 1929, the language he had learnt was British English, which sounded strange to Australians, thus, separating him even more from the average Australian citizens. Something similar can be found in *The Solid Mandala*, in the following excerpt:

> Arthur and Waldo went to school only a couple of blocks away, where nobody understood them until they managed to learn the language. Even so, Waldo, then and always, preferred to speak English because, he said, it had a bigger vocabulary. Arthur did not care. Or he did. He developed the habit of speaking mostly in Australian. He wanted to trust him too. Waldo, he knew, was suspicious of men, though Waldo himself was inclined to call them Australians. (WHITE, 1969, p. 218)

Patrick White's will to become a writer actually started when he was a young boy, but it only developed into something more plausible and serious when he left university, though he had to stand some time working as a jackeroo[3] before that. In any case, his destiny was almost decided: he would certainly inherit his family's wealth. His experience as a jackeroo lasted for just two years and during this period he wrote some novels which were never published. His parents, after all, were not really the kind who admired arts. His father, as a typical landowner, was interested in horse-races and the only reading reference he had was the newspaper *The Sydney Morning Herald*. In 1932, White returned to England, now to study at

[3] "Jackeroo" refers to a white (generally young) man who is independent or English and wants to gain experience in working in a sheep or cattle station.

King's College, Cambridge. Unlike the previous educational experience, he spent a pleasant time reading history and ended up obtaining a degree in languages (German and French). This made him view the French and German literatures from beyond the English language, which might have freed White from the limitations of his local tradition. It was by this time that he was resolved to start his literary career and, against previous plans, stayed in England after his studies. Despite her small inclination for the arts, his mother perhaps was the person who was most interested in her son's career as a writer, since she was the one who read his poems and even helped him financially to publish them, with the title *The Ploughman and Other Poems*, in 1935. Intrinsically, however, this was not really her dream for her son.

His first novel, *Happy Valley*, was published in 1939, in England and in the United States. This is quite interesting for two reasons: first, it was not in Australia, as there was no market for what he wanted to do. Second, his publications occurred in the two centres of English-language culture, London and New York (with his New York publisher being his great influence). The reception was not really ideal. Having as its main setting the Australian inland, it depicts a community called Happy Valley (located in the centre of New South Wales). In this novel White starts presenting his views concerning love (using in the epigraph a quote by Gandhi) and suffering. *The Living and the Dead* appeared in 1941, telling the story of Catherine Standish and her two children, Elyot and Eden, and is the only White novel whose setting is London. After that, his literary recognition slowly began with *The Aunt's Story* (1948), showing the life of Theodora Goodman, one of White's divinely mad characters – Miss Hare in *Riders in the Chariot* and Arthur Brown, in *The Solid Mandala,* are other examples.

His participation in war (which he referred to as 'Hitler's War') is one more event which helped shape his creative process. Influenced by some of his friends, he decided to enlist and was called up in 1940, to work as a RAF Intelligence Officer first in the Middle East and in the North African desert, and afterwards in Greece. According to his words: "On getting into uniform I could see from the attitude of friends and glances from strangers in the streets that my stock had increased in value, but instead of feeling encouraged, I was embarrassed, knowing that inside the uniform I was still myself" (WHITE, 1984, p. 84). This unpleasant feeling of hierarchy is something present in *The Solid Mandala,* when Waldo talks to his friend Walter Pugh, who is going to enlist. Even though Australia is part of an Empire, the idea of hierarchy is not seen as a positive thing in the country.

The famous English proverb ‘every cloud has a silver lining’ proved true to Patrick White since it was during this period, in Alexandria, that he met Manoly Lascaris:

> So it was Charles de Menasce who introduced me to Manoly Lascaris, this small Greek of immense moral strength, who became the central mandala in my life’s hitherto messy design. Later on, regretting his gift, the Baron warned me, ‘Of course you must realise it won’t last. It never does with people like us.’ As I write, it has lasted almost forty years, and I dare believe it will outlast the two of us. (WHITE, 1984, p. 100)

Thus, one more ingredient to his career as a writer was his homosexuality. After the War, White went to London (more precisely, on 10 January 1946), but his future was not yet defined. During this period, he started developing his theatrical ambitions, with his play *Return to Abyssinia* being performed in London in 1946. In 1947, *The Ham Funeral* was written, but only staged in Australia decades later (despite having had some plays produced in Sydney earlier, in 1933, his full recognition was achieved only later). Again, there was no market for his work, and London now was unwelcoming. The only plays preserved were published in a book entitled *Four Plays* in 1965. When talking to Elizabeth Webby, academic and former head of the Australian Literature Department at the University of Sydney, the theatre director John McCallum explains that White’s plays did not become classics due to the challenge they represented for directors and actors given the mixture of dramatic forms. At this time he went on writing *The Aunt’s Story*, which would be published in 1948. This novel was to be the start of his true recognition, but not immediately after its release. Sales were not very good in Australia, nor abroad. Critics did not consider it a masterpiece, but rendered respectful comments. However, this did not make him truly happy and, at the same time he was afraid of rejection, he followed his intuition: he stayed in Australia (as in a first impulse he would probably leave the country, corroborating his strong personality).

In Sydney the fact that two men were living together caused a great deal of scandal. Still there were some examples of homosexual artists living there, such as the painter William Dobell (whose work had surprised White), that showed it was possible to survive in Sydney at that time as an artist. However, White made a quite unexpected decision, around 1949, when writing to Peggy Garland, as a result of the negative reception of *The Aunt’s Story*: ‘I feel I shall never put pen to paper again, and can’t much care’ (MARR, 1992, p. 258). In the case of

Patrick White this idea to stop his literary activity cannot be considered a writer's block since he simply decided to stop writing for a while. His feeling regarding the importance of writing is interesting:

> There are moments when I do take interest in a book I have in my head, of which I wrote a certain amount when the Poles were with us, then I succumb to the feeling of: What is the use? Since the War I cannot find any point, see any future, love my fellow men: I have gone quite sour – and it is not possible, in that condition, to be a novelist, for he does deal in human beings. (MARR, 1992, p. 280)

However, it is only after this seven-year-period that we see his mastery in writing flourish, with the publication of great novels, such as *The Tree of Man* (in 1955, which established his name as a writer internationally) and *Voss* (in 1957).

It is quite interesting to see that White was aware of his situation, when he admits he was not a 'very good publisher's investment' (BJÖRKSTÉN, 1976, p. 13). In a way, this is seen again, in an article entitled *Patrick White The Final Chapter*, written in 2008 by his biographer, David Marr, which appeared in *The Monthly* magazine website:

> White's last bestseller appeared 25 years ago at the end of an amazing final run that began with the Nobel Prize in 1973, included the mighty *Twyborn Affair* and climaxed in 1981 with the book that sold more than any other in his career, *Flaws in the Glass*. Even before his death a decade later, his reputation had begun its long, slow - but not uninterrupted - slide. These days, students and customers shy away from his novels. Alphabetical order doesn't help. He's found in bookshops on the bottom shelves. We buy him on our hands and knees[4].

What could explain White's poor reception? This question is made by many of his admirers, and David Marr tries to answer it:

> I suspect the problem runs deeper than the difficulties of his prose. More than we care to admit, we want novels to offer at least the hope of happiness. White's fiction campaigns against false hopes of happiness and the perils of seeking it in sex, power and possessions. Such ascetic restraint is truly out of fashion these days, for

[4] MARR, David. *Patrick White The Final Chapter.* Available on: <http://www.themonthly.com.au/tm/node/873> Accessed on: 28 Mar. 2009.

> the "march of material ugliness" he denounced almost from the moment he returned to Australia after World War II has all but overwhelmed us. We're calling for a truce in the pleasure wars, but White is still fighting, still absolute. For him, intense happiness is to be found in marriage, work, integrity, even purity. For those who feel no connection with this, Patrick White seems a grumpy dinosaur, a monster of reproach[5].

Nevertheless, this should not be seen as an uninspiring comment for those students who are willing to read his oeuvre. In fact, it should be one more reason to study his work for, after all, it is not because sales are low that one should not study an author. Actually this process needs to be reversed: perhaps with the appearance of more studies we can boost Patrick White readers not only in Australia, but also in South America (a continent that, so far, has not seen a considerable amount of academic works on him). In Brazil, for example, we can say there are two important works done about him: one in the state of Parana, written by Déborah Scheidt entitled *'All the difference in the World': Aspects of Alterity in Three Novels by Patrick White* (1997)[6] and *Novos Continentes: relações coloniais em O Continente e Voss*, written by the Australian Ian Alexander[7] (2006). Furthermore, Marr points out that there is an increasing interest in film rights and authorizations for translations of White's work in Australia, nowadays. One example is Judy Morris's recently finished screenplay of *The Eye of the Storm,* a film that will be directed by Fred Schepisi[8].

According to Elizabeth Webby, one of the reasons why Patrick White is suffering from neglect is because he is not a profitable writer. Nevertheless, in his case, he was lucky, as *Happy Valley* was accepted by Ben Huebsch, who was responsible for the publication of the first works by James Joyce and D.H. Lawrence. In 1964, after Huebsch's death, White affirmed: 'Ben stuck to me through the unacceptable years. He became as much a part of my writing as those other necessities, pen and ink'[9].

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[5] Ibid.
[6] SCHEIDT, Déborah. *All the difference in the World': Aspects of Alterity in Three Novels by Patrick White*. Curitiba: UFPR, 1997. Dissertação (Mestrado em Literaturas de Língua Inglesa), Faculdade de Letras, Universidade Federal do Paraná, 1997.
[7] Ian Alexander presented his Master's thesis in 2006 at PUC-RS, and presented his Doctorate's dissertation entitled *Formação nacional e cânone ocidental: Literatura e Tradição no Novo Mundo* at UFRGS in 2010. He works as a translator and proofreader.
[8] The news item covering this topic appeared on 7 April 2009 on The Australian website. Available at: <http://www.theaustraliannews.com.au/story/0,25197,25300957-5013404,00.html>. Accessed on: 10 May 2009.
[9] WEBBY, Elizabeth. Our invisible colossus. *The Australian*, Sydney, 02 May. 2007.

Another article written by David Marr, published in *The Sydney Morning Herald* in 2004, highlights the discovery of some letters and manuscripts White claimed had been burnt (in fact, this was a recommendation he made to all his friends who still kept his letters). However, to his biographer's joy (expressed in the article), and, at the same time, despair (given he could have improved his biography a great deal by having access to such valuable material), it is interesting to notice that many things which were not published (because they needed to be continued) would have become masterpieces in Australian literature:

> He kept drafts and sketches of novels, stories, plays and speeches. He kept an abandoned novel. Every word of every draft of the memoir *Flaws in the Glass* was there when he died. And 10 precious notebooks crammed with jottings, research and verse going back to the 1930s[10].

However, since we also do not have access to those data, let us deal with what is available: White's books and many works developed by his readers at a time in which information was hard to access. One can mention that, around 1956, he was not very well-known in his own country. In fact, many of the Australians who were doing some kind of research on his literary works were not sure whether he was living abroad or not. According to Ingmar Björkstén:

> *Meanjin,* the literary journal published by the University of Melbourne, noted in an editorial comment on the article "The Four novels of Patrick White" that when the article was commissioned "we assumed that he was still living overseas. Although acknowledged to be one of Australia's leading novelists, virtually nothing was known locally about the man himself. So when one of our espionage agents reported that he was living some 20 miles from Sydney, we were surprised, to put it mildly". (BJÖRKSTÉN, 1976, p. 13)

The information above helps corroborate Patrick White's sense of alienation. Nevertheless, during the 60s (more precisely, in 1964), his oeuvre was introduced in Sweden. Initially the numbers were not surprising: from 3,000 copies of the Swedish translation of *Riders in the Chariot*, only 1,900 were sold. Still, the rumours about his possible nomination

[10] MARR, David. Patrick White returns from the pit. *The Sydney Morning Herald.* Available at: <http://www.smh.com.au/news/books/patrick-whites-return-from-the-pit/2006/11/02/1162339990980.html?page=fullpage#contentSwap1>. Accessed on: 27 Mar. 2009.

for the Nobel Prize, already in 1970 (which he actually won three years later) increased the sales of the Swedish translation of *The Tree of Man*: of 2,500 copies, 2,000 were sold.

After the success of *The Tree of Man* in 1955, *Voss* appeared two years later, still probably his best known novel. If we search on Google, we will find that a number of academic articles, theses and dissertations have *Voss* as their main focus. In addition, it is the novel used by many nationalist Australian critics to corroborate their view that White writes about the country's landscape and, therefore, should be respected for that. In this novel he portrays Australian expedition, with the creation of the German character Johann Ulrich Voss based on the historical explorer, Ludwig Leichhardt. White explains what made him write this novel: 'Above all I was determined to prove that the Australian novel is not necessarily the dreary, dun-coloured offspring of journalistic realism' (BJÖRKSTÉN, 1974, p. 57). The popularity of *Voss*, rather than the novels White preferred, led him to parody the German explorer thirteen years later in *The Vivisector*, in the figure of Hurtle Duffield's grandfather, who "borrowed a mule to ride to the centre of Australia" and "died of a seizure on the Parramatta Road"[11], leaving his son to pay for the animal after it ran away.

In 1961, *Riders in the Chariot* is launched, depicting four outsiders: Mary Hare, Ruth Godbold, Mordecai Himmelfarb and Alf Dubbo, living in Sarsaparilla (a place that appears again in *The Solid Mandala*). This work already signals an important element which is going to be found later: the conflict between good and evil. There is yet another work that should be mentioned, *The Burnt Ones,* a collection of short stories published in 1964, but that are not really proof of his ability as a short-story teller.

In 1966, *The Solid Mandala* appeared, and White returns to the issue presented in *Riders in the Chariot,* this time using the twin brothers Arthur and Waldo Brown as main characters. Four years later, *The Vivisector* is presented to the public, which:

> further delayed the Nobel Prize for Literature. It would be mistaken, it was stated within the Swedish Academy, to award the prize to an author whose latest work elaborates on the not at all attractive conclusion that the artist steps over dead bodies in order to give free sway to his vision of life; that he consumes people as the raw material of his art. (BJÖRKSTÉN, 1974, p. 92)

[11] WHITE, Patrick. *The Vivisector.* London: Jonathan Cape, 1970. p. 9.

From this, one might say that the delay could have been due not to moral, but aesthetic reasons. In *The Vivisector*, White writes about 'the life of the artist'[12], in this case the painter Hurtle Duffield, portraying the struggle to express his ideas and worldviews through painting.

Some of his other works are important to mention, such as *The Eye of the* Storm. 'A major study of family and death'[13] published in 1973, it shows the last days of Elizabeth Hunter, and in a way proposes that suffering should be the path to understanding. In 1976, *A Fringe of Leaves* was launched, 'functioning as a kind of allegory of colonial Australia'[14], narrating the life of Ellen Roxburgh, raised in England, who ends up captured by Aboriginal people. Like *Voss*, the novel was based on historical events. Defined as 'the clearest examination of the multiple version of the self and another significant study of the complex nature of family relationships'[15], in 1979, *The Twyborn Affair* appeared. There are three chapters and in each one the main character appears differently (in the first two as a woman and in the last one as a man). This work was influenced by the portrait of Herbert Dyce-Murphy, an English gentleman transvestite whose image White saw in the Victorian Gallery of Melbourne. White's last work was *Memoirs of Many in One*, published in 1986, which is presented as if written by Alex Xenophon Demirjian Gray, an old demented woman, and edited by Patrick White. The narrative is 'considered confusing and not really very important at all'[16], being 'more like a stage on which the many identities and personae of Alex play out their parts'[17].

Patrick White died on 30 September 1990, at the age of 78, coinciding with the Labour Day extended holiday in New South Wales. According to Elizabeth Webby, in her article *Our invisible colossus*, published in *The Australian*, a journalist had called her on that day, indignantly saying 'Just like Patrick White to die at a time when everyone is away'[18]. This

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[12] THE VIVISECTOR on WHY BOTHER WITH PATRICK WHITE. Available at: <http://www.abc.net.au/arts/white/titles/novels/vivisector.html> Accessed on: 10 Apr. 2009.
[13] THE EYE OF THE STORM on WHY BOTHER WITH PATRICK WHITE. Available at: http://www.abc.net.au/arts/white/titles/novels/eyeofstorm.html> Accessed on: 10 Apr. 2009.
[14] A FRINGE OF LEAVES on WHY BOTHER WITH PATRICK WHITE. Available at: http://www.abc.net.au/arts/white/titles/novels/fringeofleaves.html> Accessed on: 10 Apr. 2009.
[15]THE TWYBORN AFFAIR on WHY BOTHER WITH PATRICK WHITE. Available at: http://www.abc.net.au/arts/white/titles/novels/twyborn.html Accessed on: 10 Apr. 2009.
[16] MEMOIRS OF MANY IN ONE on WHY BOTHER WITH PATRICK WHITE. Available at: http://www.abc.net.au/arts/white/titles/novels/manyinone.html> Accessed on: 10 Apr. 2009.
[17] Ibid.
[18] WEBBY, Elizabeth. Our invisible colossus. *The Australian*, Sydney, 02 May 2007.

once again shows how he was viewed by some sectors in Australia, who considered his works impossible to understand, stating that he was an elitist. Writers, on the other hand, considered him a source of inspiration, proving that if you wanted to be successful in writing you should not have to live overseas.

After having exposed his works and their subject matter, let us return to *The Solid Mandala*, which is the focus of our study.

1.2 Why *The Solid Mandala*?

This novel was published in 1966, when Patrick White was already acknowledged as a famous writer (even though he had not been awarded the Nobel Prize, yet). However, we could say *The Solid Mandala* might have played an important role in the hard process of his approval by the Swedish judges. Narrating the story of the twin brothers Arthur and Waldo Brown, who live on Terminus Road, in Sarsaparilla (a fictional suburb of Sydney), it was considered by White as one of his best novels:

> In my own opinion my three best novels are *The Solid Mandala*, *The Aunt's Story* and *The Twyborn Affair.* All three say something more than what is sacred to Aust. Lit. For this reason some of them were ignored in the beginning, some reviled and dismissed as pornography. After years two of them were accepted; it remains to be seen what will become of *The Twyborn Affair*. […] Strange to think *The Solid Mandala* was ever considered pornographic, yet an Australian professor told a friend it was the most pornographic novel he? she? had ever read. One wonders where he or she spent his or her literary life before *The Solid Mandala* appeared (WHITE, 1984, p. 145)

In our case, it sounds quite absurd to even consider the possibility of viewing *The Solid Mandala* as pornographic, a fact which appalled even its author.

Compared to the other novels, its sales are less impressive. According to data from Sweden, in 1969, when the translation of the novel by Ingergärd Martinell was published, only 600 copies had been sold out of 2,500. In terms of national acceptance, *The Solid Mandala* did not have a positive reception at all. David Marr uses the word 'ritual' to describe

the process of recognition the works written by Patrick White went through, as first they were read in the United States (often resulting in a review in *The New York Times*) and then they appeared in Australia and London. In fact, on 13 February 1966, the critic J.D. Scott wrote his review of the novel in *The New York Times*, giving it a 'C' rating. White thought it 'about the dirtiest and most personal attack so far'[19]. As a result, the sales were not good in the United States, a little more positive in Australia and London, but the figures were not superior to the copies of *Riders in the Chariot* sold.

White thought that his book would have more pages and in a way he attributes this to the incompatibility between thought and manual ability due to ageing. But it is interesting to see what he thinks of his own work right after having finished it: "'I am still too close to the book to be able to get much idea how good or bad it is', he told Marshall Best. 'I like to think my own involvement means the involvement of my future readers, and the writing of this one has certainly torn me to shreds'" (MARR, 1992, p. 454).

If the critics in the United States were not so favourable, Marshall Best, writing to Patrick White, said: 'I think it is the most concentrated and most intensely felt of all your books' (MARR, 1992, p. 454). Concerning the title, the publishing-house Eyre & Spottiswoode made an attempt to persuade White to change it, but he refused to do so, claiming that 'the title is the book and the book is the title'[20].

Is it because he shows so much bitterness and hopelessness for the human race (even though it was a book dedicated to his solid Mandala – Manoly Lascaris - and to his friends, Gwen and David Moore) that the novel raised negative reviews? David Marr says that it was the years of frustrations in the theatre that made White quite pessimistic about people (to the point that he presents positive comments concerning animals – dogs - in the novel), and, therefore, this feeling would be present in his writing, as a form of exorcising it. White says something important regarding the historical context of the novel:

> Unfortunately we live in black times with less and less that may be called good, and I suppose I must reflect the blackness of those times. I tried to write a book about saints, but saints are few and far between. If I were a saint myself I could project my saintliness, perhaps, endlessly in what I write. But I am a sensual and

[19] MARR, David. Patrick White A Life. Sydney: Vintage, 1992, p. 454.
[20] Ibid.

> irritable human being. Certainly the longer I live the less I see to like in the human beings of whom I am one. (MARR, 1992, p. 453)

Another point which needs mentioning and that might have influenced his writing of *The Solid Mandala* was his move from Dogwoods (a little farm he had established with his partner, at Castle Hill, on the outskirts of Sydney) to 20 Martin Road, Centennial Park, Sydney, on 13 October, 1963. As David Marr states, this book reflects 'transitoriness' (MARR, 1992, 453), the change of life and environment (indeed, in the story the Brown family move from England to Australia, going to live in a suburb of Sydney, in spite of the comments made by the mother, who complains that Terminus Road is too far away). In geographical terms, this is expressed in the following paragraph:

> The bus became a comfort. Even when it jumped, which it did fairly frequently, all the young girls frowning, or giggling, the bolder of them knocking the ash off their cigarettes with their mother o' pearl finger nails, and the two ladies were not unpleasantly thrown against each other. Mrs Dun perhaps benefited from it more, though Mrs Poulter, it could not be denied, enjoyed the involuntary contact with her small, dry, decent friend. (WHITE, 1969, p. 12)

According to his biography, this was the situation Patrick White had to face while living at Dogwoods: he had to go to the village, take the bus to Parramatta and then the train into the city. In *The Solid Mandala*, this necessity to commute is signalled by Waldo himself.

It is also crucial to highlight the fact that until recently *The Solid Mandala* was not easily available to readers even in Australia. In an article entitled *A paler shade of White*, published in *The Sydney Morning Herald* on 21 June 2003, Ivor Indyk makes serious remarks about this, claiming that 'At least one of his novels, *The Solid Mandala* - possibly his greatest - is out of print'[21]. In addition to that, Indyk signals one more reason why Patrick White has been abandoned by students in the academy: the repercussion of the study carried out by Simon During, in 1996, in which White is accused of not meeting the demands of post-colonialism, postmodernism, post-structuralism, feminism, queer theory, semiotics and cultural studies, being, thus, classified as 'elitist' and 'misogynist'. According to During, White was not able to offer anything relevant to the Australian reading audience due to his

[21] INDYK, Ivor. A paler shade of White. In: *The Sydney Morning Herald.* Available at: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2003/06/20/1055828480900.html> Accessed on: 10 Apr. 2009.

social alienation: being a member of a wealthy family, he knew nothing regarding the society he lived in, therefore, he could not think appropriately about social relationships. During builds his argument based on his personal considerations that the characters made up by White are all isolated individuals.

Concerning translations, the novel is available in three languages: Spanish (*Las esferas del Mandala*, translated by Silvia Pupato and Román García Azcárate in 1973), French (*Le mystérieux Mandala*, translated by Andrée-R. Picard in 1970) and Italian (*Il Mandala solido*, translated by Andrea D'Anna in 1973). Given the challenging task, translators usually had to contact Patrick White:

> Dealing with translators was always a happy chore, for White wondered darkly what 'dreadful mistakes' were being made when translators did not bother to ask him questions. His precise, patient explanations are little manuals of Australian life and language. (MARR, 1992, p. 518)

For example, when the translator Ingergärd Martinell asked a question referring to the word 'boiler', Patrick White replied: 'an old and tough fowl which can only be made eatable by boiling' (MARR, 1992, p. 518). The expressions clarified by White are crucial, in this case, not only to the Swedish translator (and even to a potential Brazilian translator), but also to the reading audience coming from other English-speaking countries, as these words might be unknown in certain contexts.

Only recently the novel received a stub on Wikipedia. There we can find comments such as: 'The book is typical of White's writing style, and is slow paced, with little considerable action, instead focusing upon the inner turmoils of the aforementioned characters'[22]. Indeed, it is a novel in which the psychological aspects of the characters are more important, and perhaps that is what makes it complex and deep (no-one would say it is a work to be read simply for entertainment, like a detective story).

Thus, why *The Solid Mandala*? Because, besides being a novel in which White said almost everything that he wanted, we see that he exposes a plea for hope, using the image of

[22] THE SOLID MANDALA. Entry on Wikipedia. Available at: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Solid_ Mandala#Reception>. Accessed on: 20 Jan. 2009.

the mandala and of the values entangled in that (the importance of uniting the elements to better understand the whole), therefore, being one of the deepest novels composed by White (and which deserves more attention nowadays). In an article in *The Australian* entitled *Firing the Canon*, Lyn Gallacher (executive producer of ABC Radio National's *Artworks* program) talks about the choice of five novels which were included in a series of radio programmes broadcast on ABC Radio National in 2010. The titles were: Marcus Clarke's *His Natural Life*, Fergus Hume's *The Mystery of A Hansom Cab*, Thea Astley's *The Multiple Effects of Rainshadow*, Xavier Herbert's *Capricornia* and, of course, Patrick White's *The Solid Mandala*. According to her words, in that novel "the story maps out a particular psychological landscape. White challenges his characters - and therefore his readers - to develop or die"[23].

Therefore, being a psychological rather than action novel, and realizing that history is not necessarily a useful subject to help elucidate questions involving its production, it is interesting to have a look at the historical events, since they are part of the world of the novel.

[23] GALLACHER, Lyn. Firing the canon. *The Australian*, Sydney, 26 Dec. 2009.

2 ‘THE BLACKNESS OF THOSE TIMES’: HISTORICAL CONTEXT

It is undoubtedly helpful to focus on the historical context of the novel, that is, the historical facts portrayed throughout the story, as it would not be enough just to reproduce the context of the year 1966, which saw its publication.

At first, it is important to consider the question: what does Patrick White mean by ‘the blackness of those times’? What does this ‘blackness’ refer to? Why does he say he was living in ‘black times’? Surely we must look for the answer not only in Australian history (given White was already living in Australia at the time he wrote *The Solid Mandala*), but also in the worldwide events that might have influenced his social and political concerns while he was writing *The Solid Mandala*.

A feature in White’s novels is that the reader cannot rely on any kind of age description, which is particularly interesting in *The Solid Mandala*. According to Ian Alexander’s calculations, the twin brothers, Waldo and Arthur Brown, were probably born in 1893, via hints that White gives us through the story (corroborating the information provided by David Marr that White is not fond of detailing ages to the readers). Thus, let us identify the passages that confirm the result:

> On his thirtieth birthday he smiled at himself in reflection, for the strangeness of it. Then he shuffled the expanding armbands up his sleeves, put on his workday coat, and went into the kitchen where she was getting his breakfast for him. […] Since Dad died in 1922, she had been dependent on him. (Arthur contributed something.). (WHITE, 1969, p. 120)

From the excerpt we can conclude that Waldo was less than 30 years old in 1922, and therefore was born no earlier than 1892. After that we have: ‘At seventeen – on his seventeenth birthday as it turned out – he had presented himself at Sydney Municipal Library, to take up the position he got thanks to Fairy Flour’ (WHITE, 1969, p. 121). It was while he was working at the library that the First World War broke out: ‘Because war was breaking, had already broken out. Waldo decided in secret that it shouldn’t concern them, though his parents’ unhappiness, viewed through the glare of yellow grass, caused him temporary doubts’ (WHITE, 1969, p. 126), meaning that he was no younger than 17 in 1914, and was therefore born no later than 1897.

A more accurate calculation can be made on the basis of other, more complex hints. On the day when Arthur buys his dog, we have: “’You were younger then, Arthur. But look at you now, an old man!’. ’Fifty-six’, Arthur said” (WHITE, 1969, p. 178), and this event leads Waldo to remember “a dialogue of the Public Library overheard six years earlier. The confirmed perfidy of Crankshaw, not to mention O’Connell, perhaps recommended the honesty of dogs” (WHITE, 1969, p. 179). Since he is 56, the dialogue he mentions occurred when he was 50 years old, and as that dialogue occurred in the context of Waldo’s transfer to the Public Library (WHITE, 1969, p. 177), this means that the transfer occurred when Waldo was 50. Finally, we discover that “The peace, he remembered, had caught up with him a couple of years after his momentous transfer to the Public Library” (WHITE, 1969, p. 182). ‘The peace’ mentioned refers to the end of the Second World War, in 1945, which means that Waldo started working at the Public Library two years earlier, in 1943. This means that he was 50 in 1943, and the twin brothers were therefore born in 1893.

It is interesting to observe the time the twin brothers migrate from England to Australia. At the beginning of the book, we have this: “’They come out from Home’, Mrs. Poulter said, ‘when the boys were bits of kids’” (WHITE, 1969, p. 15). Arthur’s chapter mentions school in Australia, but we cannot say it is something comparable with the educational system in England. This might suggest that they arrived in Australia at an age when they would start school. Another fact provided by the novel is that the people are described as ‘Australians’, which could imply that it is at least 1901, when Australia was born politically (January 1st 1901). It could possibly refer to Australia in a geographical-cultural sense, but that would be acceptable considering both before and after the Federation. Taking into account both possibilities, we can say that the twins are growing up in a brand new

country, whether they arrived before or after the Federation, or just before or after the turn of the century, between the ages of five and ten (1898-1903). Indeed, the main point is the connection of their migration to Australia with the Federation.

A curious fact (or concern, in this context), that is constantly repeated, mainly by Waldo, is the possibility of contracting syphilis. Firstly, the father, George Brown, is talking to Waldo: "O Lord. The Barranugli train bellowed like a cow in pastures not her own. 'For instance, all these diseases.' George Brown found himself looking at his own flies. He looked away." (WHITE, 1969, p.77). The father continues his explanation in the following excerpt: "'There's a bit of advice, Waldo', he was saying, 'I'd like to give any boy. You can't be too careful of those lavatory seats. I mean, the public lavatories. You can develop, well, a technique of balance. And avoid a lot of trouble. That way'". And later, Waldo exposes his thoughts: "He would have liked to shout: A pox on old lavatory seats!" (WHITE, 1969, p. 78). When Waldo celebrates his 17th birthday, he thinks:

> Pffeugh, the books! The injustice necessity had done him was proclaimed by the mirrors of many public lavatories, along with the warnings against venereal disease. He would drop in to wash his hands, though who knew if you mightn't pick up something worse from the tap. Still you had to wash your hands. There was a period when he couldn't wash them enough. (WHITE, 1969, p. 121)

We can infer, given that the year the twin brothers were born is 1893, that this preoccupation regarding syphilis (and other venereal diseases) happens during the 1910s. Another reference is found when Johnny Haynes appears at the Brown's house and he is described this way:

> Waldo was sure he had heard somewhere that huskiness of voice was an accompaniment of venereal disease. […] Again memory was taking a hand. He remembered it was that boy, that Johnny Haynes, they could have cut each other's throats, telling him behind the dunny to watch out for hoarse-voiced men and women, they were supposed to be carriers of syph. (WHITE, 1969, p. 188-189)

Since penicillin was discovered in 1928 by Alexander Fleming, in other words, before that date, we can understand the concern in regard to VDs, given there was no cure (the mass production of the substance started only in 1944).

Some years later, in 1914, the start of the First World War seemingly did not affect Patrick White's life. However, even though he did not live it himself (considering he was just two years old), it was an important event, which affected Australian society negatively. The country lost more than 60,000 soldiers from a population of only 4.5 million, which really decimated a generation. Thereby, the fact that the twins do not get married is meaningful. Drawing on Michael Giffin's idea that 'Arthur and Waldo Brown are two aspects of a whole, unable to survive without the other' (GIFFIN, 1999, p. 40), marriage would not be appropriate: this whole is dissolved only with death. As a consequence, Arthur goes insane after Waldo's death. Marriages in general are not happy events in White's novels – even the marriage of Anne Quantrell and George Brown is depicted with some pessimism. According to Michael Giffin:

> Their marriage is consistent with all marriages in White, where the wife embodies a Primitive strength that is subsumed by the pediment, under which she sits and twists her wedding ring and slices her finger while cutting the vegetables. According to the author's long-established pattern, this is an 'unnatural' marriage and that is why they have two distorted children. (GIFFIN, 1996, p. 231)

From the novel, we have the following sentence, which represents this feeling: 'What is more, Mother changed, as though the moral responsibility of protecting a marriage with a man not her social equal had at last been lifted' (WHITE, 1969, p. 161). Marriage indeed seems a burden to be lifted after the death of one of the partners (this comment is made soon after George Brown's death).

The First World War did not concern Waldo, as he frequently points to this fact, with descriptions such as this:

> So the least desirable part of his life was war and all that it implied. In particular he recoiled from those of the enlisted men who wished to make confidences, to turn out all that was most secret, personal, emotional, painful, as though they were emptying a paper bag. Naturally he disguised his feelings, because under the influence of war nobody would have believed in them, least of all those wide-open faces needing to confess, the country faces cured to bacon tints and textures, the faces of the Boys. (WHITE, 1969, p. 127)

Later, there is an interesting comment regarding the Boys, meaning the soldiers, or men in uniform, which reminds us of Patrick White's experience with the uniform in the Second World War:

> Of course everybody loved the Boys, sang to them, with them, about them. All those blouses full of bust with which the streets were suddenly filled, the cheery young matrons who presided over stalls in Martin Place, and the girls, the girls selling metal badges and paper flags – all of them loved the smell of khaki. (WHITE, 1969, p. 127)

The tone of the description shows a bit of envy, given that Waldo himself could not be one of the Boys who are admired by the population: "But Waldo hated what he could never in any way take part in. At least his physique would not have made him acceptable. If there were moral reasons for his aloofness, he had not yet thought them out" (WHITE, 1969, p. 127).

It is also significant to note the effects of the war on his friend Walter Pugh:

> He had put on weight since the declaration of war, but camp had turned the fat to meat. The pimples were gone, the movements of his buttocks were controlled, and he needed to talk less about the tarts, perhaps had even done one or two of them in the scrub before you got to Permanent Avenue. (WHITE, 1969, p. 128)

It is almost shocking the way Waldo refers to him when he dies, in the following excerpt:

> Walter Pugh was Waldo's gravest source of disturbance. Wally decided to enlist.
>
> 'Like any decent bloke had to in the end. Not that I'm holding anything against those who don't. Or not against you, Waldo. You can't be all that strong.'
>
> 'I mightn't be very good at it', Waldo answered truthfully.
>
> 'Who knows who'll be good at what?', Wally said; it was an evening of truths, and he had written poems in his day.
>
> (Wally, in fact, was so good at war that he got killed for it, and they sent a medal to Cis.). (WHITE, 1969, p.128)

With such comments it is clear why Waldo is not the character who appeals to the reader - he would represent Patrick White's 'worst half': 'Waldo is myself at my coldest and

worst'[24]. However, the comment he makes after the aforementioned passage is a paradox: "He himself was enraged and mortified, not so much by the death of his friend and colleague Walter Pugh, as by the nobler rage which eluded him" (WHITE, 1969, p. 129). One more aspect, related to Waldo's literary ambition, is that he recognises that he does not feel the rage that could be transformed into literature.

In Arthur's chapter we have other kinds of reference to the conflict of war involving mainly Leonard Saporta, Dulcie's fiancé:

> It was during the First World War that Arthur visited Mr Saporta in his shop. It must have been towards the end, for the merchant himself was there, discharged. Leonard Saporta had enlisted, gone overseas, and returned with several shrapnel wounds which he did not care to talk about. (WHITE, 1969, p. 249)

Comparing the tones, we see that Arthur is more compassionate, thoughtful to the extent of feeling it might not be suitable to ask Leonard Saporta about his wounds in the war. Right before the conflict, Dulcie writes a letter to Arthur:

> 14th April 1914
> *Es ist hier sehr nett u, freundlich bei unserer kleinen* Pension where we are staying the two of us after being suffocated amiably by relatives. It is so beautiful eating trout beside the water. *Jen e peux croire qu'il y'aura guerre* – as the know-alls promise – *il y a trop de soleil. Mio caro Arturo,* we visited a villa, a small castle, out on the lake, and the walls of one of the rooms were studded with rock-crystal! I thought of Arthur – *e tutte nostre cosi chiare conversazioni. Affetti! D.* (WHITE, 1969, p. 247)

When researching the day referred to in the letter, we did not find anything relevant, since the conflict started some months later. Fortunately, Dulcie and her mother return to Australia in time. The letter shows a mixture of languages, which Dulcie supposedly learned during her trip: German, French (both languages studied by Patrick White) and Italian. As we know, Germany, France and Italy were involved in the War. The mixture of languages might reflect a pre-war Europe, where it was not necessary to divide and take sides. It is interesting to observe the thoughts expressed by the narrator at the time (in the chapter *Arthur*):

[24] WHITE, Patrick. *Flaws in the Glass*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984, p. 146.

> When war broke out, which was important enough for those who became physically involved, it was more important that the Feinsteins should return, to the life which in fact they had never really left, in the house on the edge of the park. They came. And they appeared older. It continually amazed Arthur Brown that other people were growing older. Mrs Feinstein was older, and sadder, perhaps for this very fact of age. Dulcie was older, different, unexpected – for one thing she was unable to remember what she had written on the postcard. (WHITE, 1969, p. 247)

Thus, this might signal the effects the pre-war environment had caused on Dulcie and her mother: they had simply aged. It is noteworthy to have a look at what the narrator comments about Arthur, in relation to both wars (in the same chapter):

> He barely noticed the War even, the second one which was going on. In the First War Arthur Brown had been all fireworks and singing. He wore a patient gravity for the Second. Too much had happened down Terminus Road and in other parts. Although still a boy he went more slowly, nursing his jammed fingers, expecting the next kick in the pants. (WHITE, 1969, p. 280)

'Too much had happened down Terminus Road': Australia was more involved in the Second World War than in the First, more development could be seen (new houses were being built), Waldo joined the staff at the Public Library, and he, Arthur, started at the Allwrights'. In addition to these environmental changes, we see that Arthur is aware of the bad effects of the conflict, even being worried about the fact that people were put in ovens (as we shall see in a quotation later).

The Brown's neighbours, Mr and Mrs Poulter, building their house right in front of the Browns', arrive at Terminus Road in 1920, right before the Depression (which culminated in the 1930s). Mrs Poulter comments about the effects of the First World War on her husband:

> Mrs Poulter told Mother the War had got on Bill's nerves sort of, not that he had been gassed or shell-shocked, or gone overseas even, but from being in a camp. Afterwards he couldn't settle. That was one of several reasons why they had come to Sarsaparilla. Where she hoped to keep a few hens, and grow flowers, she loved all flowers. Bill was going to get taken on by the Shire Council. (WHITE, 1969, p. 141)

In 1922, the father, George Brown, dies. This is also the year in which Dulcie marries Leonard Saporta. In literary history, it is the year James Joyce launches *Ulysses*, in Paris, and T. S. Eliot publishes *The Waste Land*.

Some years later, we can observe that "Hitler's war" (1939-1945) has a great impact on the lives of the characters. When we imagine Waldo might be more mature to ponder about important foreign affairs, he once again tries to ignore them. Arthur, on the other hand, makes more objective comments and, because of that, does not fall into the category of alienated characters:

> Waldo couldn't help noticing a certain ferment in the streets. Arthur wouldn't have let him ignore it.
> Arthur said: 'Over in Europe they're dragging the fingernails out of all those Feinstein relatives. They're sticking whole families in ovens.'
> 'What's that to do with us? We don't put people in ovens here.'
> 'We didn't think of it', Arthur said. (WHITE, 1969, p. 174-175)

Later, we see another description, made by Waldo in relation to his creative process while writing *Tiresias a Youngish Man*, whose title appears to parody both T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (which is centred on the figure of Tiresias and represents the kind of modernism Waldo aspires to) and James Joyce's *The Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*:

> If it had not been for the insufferable mental climate occasioned by the War, and his incidental, though demanding public career – to say nothing of his ever present family problem – he might have committed to paper that metaphysical statement for which he felt himself almost prepared. One great work, no longer question of an *oeuvre*. As it was, the War killed *Tiresias a Youngish Man*. Its substance was bound to return, of course; creative regurgitation would see to that .(WHITE, 1969, p. 174)

Thus, besides killing people, the war had the power to destroy (or simply influence negatively) any creative impulse, even in Waldo, who believed he was intellectually superior. In the same chapter, *Waldo*, we have Arthur's situation during the war from a different point of view: in this chapter, what is emphasised is his naivety, for at the same time he is concerned with the others who were in the trenches, he was unable to recognise that little deeds were not allowed by the authorities:

> Arthur had a pen friend who was a soldier. He sent his friend a comb, short enough to fit inside the envelope. It began haunting Waldo, the young corporeal combing of his hair in a desert, signing *Yours* to a red sunset. The wretched Arthur would not leave anyone alone. Though of course the censor would never allow the comb to arrive. (WHITE, 1969, p. 174)

Patrick White presents the context of his country at the time he decided to return, in his self-portrait, *Flaws in the Glass*:

> At this period Australia was very hostile to new arrivals. Those of my contemporaries still around tried not to show they had difficulty making contact with me. Friends of my parents' generation were skeptical, not to say afraid, of this curious hybrid produced by my mother for their inspection. Though they knew there were novelists in the world because their wives patronised libraries, what could possibly become of an Australian male of their class who set out to be a professional author? (WHITE, 1983, p. 129)

And this feeling is incorporated in *The Solid Mandala*, when Mrs Dun talks to Mrs Poulter on the bus, at the beginning of the novel:

> Mrs. Dun shrivelled somewhat.
> 'They come out from Home,' Mrs Poulter said, 'when the boys were only bits of kids.'
> Mrs Dun was partly pacified.
> 'All these foreigners', she said, 'we are letting in nowadays. I admit the English is different.'
> 'Oh, Mr Brown senior was a gentleman,' Mrs Poulter said. 'But not any better than us'. (WHITE, 1969. p. 15)

This excerpt signals the negative reaction of some people in Australian society to the immigration flow provoked mainly by the wars. In regard to politics, we cannot say that Patrick White was a political writer, making his literary activity a way to denounce his social reality (that is, we cannot consider his art pamphletary, except perhaps in some of his plays, such as *Big Toys*). However, in *The Solid Mandala* some events might indicate his concern with important questions involving himself and his country. The already mentioned "Hitler's war" seems to affect his life as an artist, reflecting what Waldo suffers. In addition to the events portrayed in the aforementioned scenes, what can be added about the fact that Jewish characters appear quite frequently, and in important roles, in the works of Patrick White coming after *The Solid Mandala*? In *Riders in the Chariot*, written earlier, one of the four main characters is Jewish. Certainly White's relationship with his Jewish neighbours in

Australia might explain this influence. In the case of *The Solid Mandala*, is it possible to think that the presence of Dulcie Feinstein might infer the damage that the war had caused to White's life?

From 1950 to 1960, Australia was involved in the Korean War (given that it was one of the twenty-one member nations to be called to stop an invasion of South Korea by communist North Korean troops). More than 17,000 soldiers served in the conflict and the casualties were more than 1,500. In the same period, Australian troops were sent to Malaya to thwart a growing communist guerrilla insurgency, as part of a Commonwealth of Nations response. The Malayan Emergency lasted 13 years, being the longest military commitment in Australia's history. Mrs Poulter follows these events:

> It made her sit forward, holding her elbows, not exactly tense, but waiting, most of all for the *real* programmes, when they let off one of the bombs, or an aeroplane caught fire at the moment of crashing, or those guerrillas they'd collared, of course they were only Orientals, and once it showed you the bodies they'd shot. […] All the while they was firing on a mob of squealing Orientals, in Singapore, or some such place. You wouldn't believe. (WHITE, 1969, p. 299)

The excerpt presents the amazement of the people as they watch television (a technological novelty then), following the historical events 'live'. In 1962, Australia started its involvement in the Vietnam War, once again to stem communist insurgencies. During the first years of the conflict, Australia's participation was strongly supported, but when a decisive victory was unlikely, opposition started to grow. White's criticism might refer to the acceptance of conformity in mainstream Australian society (Australia sent soldiers, among other reasons, because of the political influence of the United States) and the conflict represented the greatest social and political dissent in the country since the conscription referendums in the First World War.

In political terms, after the Second World War, more precisely from 1949 to 1972, Australia had a conservative government, with the same Prime Minister from 1949 to 1966. Initially, Patrick White did not have any kind of problem with the fact, but right at the end, he changed his mind and started to support the Labor Party (represented by Gough Whitlam, who governed from 1972 to 1975).

The female character of Mrs Poulter is quite important for the story, deserving her own chapter (Mrs Poulter and the *Zeitgeist*). She makes quite an interesting historical summary, while she is disturbed by Waldo's death:

> For the clouds were building up, from beyond and over Sarsaparilla, for the armageddon of which Mrs Poulter had read and heard. She knew now. All the films, all the telly, all the black-and-white of the papers was turning real, as the great clouds, the great tanks, ground up groaning over Sarsaparilla. To lock together. Men burning in their steel prisons. Mrs Poulter went zigzagging over the ruts, along the road, along the banks, over the tussocks, to save those who need not die. But age had made her top-heavy. Hope was faint. She knew now. The flat faces of all those Chinese guerillas or Indonesians, it was the same thing, dragged out across the dreadful screen. All those Jews in ovens, that was long ago, but still burning, lying in heaps. Lone women bashed up in Mosman, Marouba, Randwick, places you went only in your sleep. Little girls held to the ground. The bleeding wombs of almost all women. (WHITE, 1969, p. 302)

It is significant that Mrs Poulter mentions that 'all the black-and-white of the papers was turning real', for this confirms the information that she reads in the newspaper (her husband says this to Waldo during a conversation). Therefore, she is able to see the black-and-white of the newspaper become colour on the television, a novelty at the time. Later, we have the confirmation: 'Mrs Poulter liked to read the paper for the deaths and ads. She did not care for books, though she owned two. She owned the Bible and Pears' Cyclopaedia'. (WHITE, 1969, p. 260). With this, another important feature of the characters is explored: their role as readers in the story.

Thus, in this section, we outlined the historical context of the novel, matching some important impressions or events experienced by the characters with the actual historical facts. Defining the 'blackness of those times' by presenting some conflicts which tarnished Australia's history (in Patrick White's point of view), such as the First and Second World Wars, the Vietnam War and the Korean War, the spread of venereal diseases, as well as many biographical episodes and views (even concerning his political side, when he showed his support for the Labor Party after the Second World War), we can see why *The Solid Mandala* was the novel in which he said perhaps almost everything that he wanted. For example, White depicts his situation when he aimed at becoming a writer, he shows some of the influences on his writing (as well as introducing some famous writers he did not like, such as Goethe), his reaction (criticism) to religious sectarianism in Australia (as well as his own position in relation to religion), his sadness (and hopelessness) in regard to Australian literary and artistic

leaders (philistines, as White called those who determined what should and should not be read, being responsible for his rejection as a playwright in his own country) and the result of his search for what could make his own life whole.

3 ARE YOU WHAT YOU READ?

The question 'Are you what you read?' is interesting since it makes us think of what kind of readers we are, and what kind of personality other people might perceive. Walter Benjamin, while unpacking his library and talking about the book collector, claims that 'on closer scrutiny he proves to be speaking only about himself[25]'. For example, a person who reads *The Brothers Karamazov* might give a different impression from another person who reads Agatha Christie's detective stories. The same happens in regard to newspapers: depending on the newspaper (and also on the country, because in some parts of the world, all the media is owned by only one person) it is possible to confirm a person's political inclinations (left, right or centre), as well as his/her favourite subjects (tabloids are quite different from broadsheets in their content). This question appears as a way to identify some characters in Patrick White's novels, too. For example, in *The Living and the Dead*, Catherine Standish is characterized by the plays and poems she reads. For example:

> Growing older, she accepted the situation and passed to more absorbing problems of her own. She began to read. She read poetry. She read the poetry of Swinburne, and William Morris, and Maurice Hewlett. She even wrote a little herself, especially on summer evenings when the ceiling of her low room felt lower, and the air sifting through the ivy leaves oppressed her with a sense of futility that was both delightful and sad. […] After all, she had read, or sat with many books. She had read Bernard Shaw. She knew what to say about Ibsen[26].

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[25] BENJAMIN, Walter. Unpacking my library. In: _____ *Illuminations*. Translated by: Harry Zohn. New York: Schocken Book, 1968, p. 59.
[26] WHITE, Patrick. *The Living and the Dead.* London: Penguin, 1941, p. 23-26.

In *The Solid Mandala*, as the main scenery involves the Public Library, the question ‘are you what you read?’ is pertinent to better describe the characters. Waldo, the twin who works at the library, seems to use the question more frequently, as a way to get to know his potential acquaintances (Waldo does not seem to have real friends, perhaps in a way following Lord Henry Wotton’s attitudes in Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, when separating his friends from his acquaintances), for example, when he starts conversation with Dulcie, at Mrs Musto’s party:

> But in this girl he might be addressing the kind of complicated human being his reading told him did exist.
> ‘Oh’, she said, ‘I like to read. I’ve just finished *The Mill on the Floss*’.
> She was looking at him again.
> ‘Maggie Tulliver’, he said, to show.
> ‘Yes!’, she said, her eyes brimming once more, so it couldn’t be with tears.
> ‘A very passionate girl, Maggie,’ said Waldo Brown, making it sound particularly precise. (WHITE, 1969, p. 93)

The scene above shows Waldo’s behaviour towards reading: he only shows off, saying the name of the main character and qualifying it generically, thus, not confirming that he actually read the book. In fact, because of his aversion to committing himself to liking anything (we do not actually see Waldo admiring anyone in literature, since he rather refer to the ones he does not like), it would not be surprising to find that Dulcie’s comment disqualified her, since he had created an expectation that she would be someone to trust and with whom he could discuss his literary tastes and attempts (he wants to become a writer). By saying that she had just finished *The Mill on the Floss*, she shows she is a reader of serious literature, perhaps featuring too much tragedy and emotion for Waldo’s rational taste. Another fact related to Waldo’s being recognized as a literary figure is when Walter Pugh dies in the war. His sister, Cis, gives the poems written by her brother to Waldo: “Oh, yes, Mrs Baker’, Waldo said, when he had been in the habit of calling her Cissie. ‘I’d take, I’d keep them,’ he said, ‘if I were you – well, for the time – wait and see” (WHITE, 1969, p. 129). Not to hurt his late friend’s sister, Waldo is tactful and simply advises her to keep the poems. However, the understatement is quite clear: these poems are not good enough to deserve publication (even though Waldo might be lying to himself, denying that the poems might have some literary quality), so, one must wait for a miracle, as it is the only option.

The father, George Brown, works for the local Bank, a middle-class position which would accept the middle-class habit of reading, considering that he is English. Dulcie's father, Mr Feinstein, when talking to Waldo about his father, comments the following: 'A man of independent ideas', said Mr Feinstein. 'The courage of his own convictions. No man today, of any intellectual honesty, could adopt any but a rationalist stand in view of politico-economic developments and the advances in scientific discovery.' (WHITE, 1969, p. 103-104). This already helps us build the impression that George Brown is 'the reader of the family', possibly achieving his convictions via his readings. Indeed, he was not a man to spend his commuting time without a book. After giving up learning Norwegian, he started reading *Thus Sparke Zarathustra*, a short philosophical work written by Friedrich Nietzsche between 1883 and 1885, and *The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table*, a collection of essays written by Oliver Wendell Holmes in 1858 (WHITE, 1969, 79). Other famous literary references which appear are Thomas Browne's *Religio Medici*, written in 1643, presenting reflections regarding many subjects, such as Christianity, Alchemy, Physiognomy and Spirituality, and John Ruskin's *Sesame and Lilies,* published in 1865, a compilation of lectures on the importance of reading. From this it is possible to say that he is quite erratic in his reading preference. George Brown, after his retirement, was glad because he would have more time to his readings (which is later expressed by Arthur, who in a way imitates his father). His asthma attacks were a problem, and reading, in this context, might be viewed as a pastime, compelling him to forget the bad things, to distract his mind.

The father becomes disappointed, while reading the Greek myths to the boys, when he observes that only Waldo asks interesting questions, while Arthur seemed oblivious to anything which was being said:

> There was an occasion when Dad put down the book and said: 'Sometimes I wonder, Arthur, whether you listen to any of this. Waldo can make an intelligent comment. But you! I've begun to ask myself if there's any character, any incident, that appeals to Arthur in any way' (WHITE, 1969, p. 223).

Arthur does not seem to care about the issues (the Greek myths and other stories George Brown might tell to his children), though he seems to grasp the meaning of things. However, in the end we find out that his real problem is not being able to formulate questions

about the issues he ponders, even though he manages to understand what could make his own life whole.

Another character mentioned in relation to his role as a reader is Bill Poulter, the Browns' neighbour. Waldo thinks Bill Poulter is 'virgin soil, so to speak. He might turn Bill into whatever he chose by cultivating his crude manliness for the best' (WHITE, 1969, p. 142). Thus, he decides to start his friendship with him by attempting to "influence their neighbour's mind and future" (WHITE, 1969, p. 142) by lending "him a book, something quite simple and primitive, Fenimore Cooper, say, they still had *The Deerslayer* in the Everyman edition" (WHITE, 1969, p. 143). However, considering Bill Poulter, *The Deerslayer*, written by James Fenimore Cooper – the first significant novelist in English outside the British Isles - in 1841, might sound a good idea, given its theme: part of the Leatherstocking Tales series, it presents the main character, Natty Bumppo, as a 'deerslayer', that is, a young frontiersman, in the conflict between France and England for control of the North-American colonies in the 18th century. Thus, the war context (that is, an adventure novel) would attract a male personality, as no psychological demands would be necessary. Another convincing reason is that, considering Mr Poulter and his wife are starting their lives at Terminus Road, Waldo tries to make a connection between Australia and the early days of America, or at least suggests this connection to Mr Poulter by offering the book.

Waldo starts his conversation with Bill, first asking him about the weather, and then going straight to the point:

> 'Ever go in for reading books?' he asked very cautiously.
> 'Nah.' Bill swung the axe, and split the knottiest chunk of wood. 'Never ever have the time.'
> 'I'd lend you a few decent books,' Waldo offered.
> Something had made him boyish.
> 'If you read the paper,' he coaxed, 'and I see you do take the *Herald*, you might find you had time for a read of a book.'
> 'Nah,' said Bill, 'Wife reads the paper. But what's the point? Don't know anybody down in Sydney.'
> Waldo's long wrists hung between his squatting thighs as he watched Bill Poulter chop.
> 'Then there's nothing I can do for you,' he said at last. (WHITE, 1969, p. 143)

From the dialogue we see that the one who reads the paper is Mrs Poulter. Her husband questions her habit by saying that they do not know anyone in Sydney, as if the paper

could only be useful as a source of information or acquaintances. It was already mentioned that she is interested also in television, but a starting point would be the title of the newspaper chosen: *The Sydney Morning Herald*. We cannot really state that there is any biographical reference (information provided by Patrick White's biography says that Dick White, his father, had as one of his favourite readings *The Sydney Morning Herald*). Nevertheless Mrs Poulter might have other reasons to prefer the newspaper to another media.

Crankshaw, Waldo's boss at the library, is also a reader, an activity his position demands:

> He had read several books, and was personally acquainted with that priest who wrote *Around the Boree Log*. Crankshaw's pet subject, however, was Numbers of Readers. Poor Turnstile Crankshaw! Would receive an obituary, anyway, as a public servant in an unassailable position. (WHITE, 1969, p. 171)

Around the Boree Log, written in 1921 by John O'Brien, is a series of poems depicting the life of Irish settlers in Australia which can indicate that familiarity/knowing the author personally seems to be a good reason to appreciate a particular literary work.

On the other hand, Anne Quantrell, the twins' mother, is not a real reader. The only reference we have to her reading habits is when she is quite old, after the death of her husband, when collecting letters became her pleasure: "In the absence of letters Mother got considerable pleasure out of prospectuses and catalogues. She collected election circulars, to fold into spills, after studying the photographs of those who had heard the call to office" (WHITE, 1969, p. 163). During her illness (which was a cancer), she started drinking and spent her last days in her room:

> How long now, he [Waldo] tried to calculate, had their mother kept to her room? He used to go in to her at night and read her *The Pickwick Papers*, which she didn't much care for, but was used to.
>
> 'It's stuck to us, hasn't it?' she said. 'That makes it all the better as a plaster.'
>
> With so much reading, and the kind of conversation they made, time passed. (WHITE, 1969, p. 170)

The Pickwick Papers, the title mentioned above, is the first novel written by Charles Dickens, in 1837, telling many stories involving the main character, Samuel Pickwick, a wealthy and kind old gentleman. It is only natural that the titles mentioned were mostly published in the 19th century, given the time in which the novel takes place.

The question 'Are you what you read' is revealing, considering that characters in *The Solid Mandala* are shown reading some kind of material or other. Thus, the titles they choose and/or come across are a good way to discover more about them. In this section, we started showing George Brown's reading preferences, since he was the reader of the family. With an erratic taste, we can see that some titles he read involved religious themes, which perhaps explains why he put *The Brothers Karamazov* on fire. Waldo shows his disregard for the poems written by his friend Walter Pugh, who ends up dead in the War. The Poulters' have different reading habits: the wife reads the newspaper, and the Bible is the book she keeps (one more religious reference); the husband is not fond of reading and, therefore, is not attracted by Waldo's offering of *The Deerslayer*. The fact that Bill Poulter was not a real reader gives the impression that he is not a cultured person. Crankshaw, Waldo's boss, was a reader, but in his opinion, it was good to be able to know the author of the book you were reading. One more religious reference is mentioned: *Around the Boree Log*. The twins' mother is not a real reader, but towards the end of her life, she seems more inclined to listen to the reading of a British classic: Charles Dickens. Given the different styles, what we can observe is that all of them have a reason to pursue those readings. Mrs Poulter had her faith and wanted to know about the events taking place in Sydney; the twins' father might have been enlightened by reading historical and theological works; the mother accepted Charles Dickens as a way to remember her origins (to maintain her class); Walter Pugh wrote poems, but he could not see in Waldo, his workmate, a 'good mirror' for his work. From these influences, we can move on to evaluate the role of the twins as readers in the story.

3.1 Waldo as a reader

Undoubtedly, Waldo is the reader of the family, even before his father's death. Although he was weaker in health terms ('He was born with his innards twisted. We had to

have the doctor to sort them out. That's why Arthur got a start on him' (WHITE, 1969, p. 32)), his intelligence and intellectuality were never threatened by his brother's, neither his 'gift for literature':

> He developed into a Promising Lad. Although weak in mathematics his gift for composition persisted as vocabulary increased to decorate it. There was some mystery of literary ambitions, which his parents scarcely mentioned, through shame or fear, or simply because they didn't believe. (Waldo began to suspect parents remain unconscious of a talent in their child unless you rub their noses to it.). (WHITE, 1969, p. 74-75)

As mentioned earlier, their father was already proud of Waldo because of the questions he asked while listening to the Greek myths; this, by its turn, also made him confident in his own ability. The term 'Promising Lad' might refer to his narcissistic personality, which is interpreted by some critics as White's own sense of superiority. Waldo states that his weak point is Maths, which, paradoxically, was the subject his brother Arthur mastered. In the excerpt there is also a blatant criticism to parents not perceiving the talent of their children. This certainly is more or less what happened to Patrick White himself, when only his mother noticed and attempted to do something relevant to encourage his son to pursue his literary career. Nevertheless, we should also keep in mind that we have just the impression that Waldo is talented, given there is no evidence, except for his own belief. In this case, if one of the brothers is interested in words, the other is able to deal with numbers.

Arthur seems more practical than Waldo when referring to words and feelings. Indeed, even though Arthur does not have the ability to manage words (as he himself admits), he seems to make up for this inability by being more accurate in understanding people. Waldo perhaps proves that the supreme ability with words is sometimes not very effective, mainly when they lack true feelings. In the following excerpt Waldo reads an essay in class and there is the indication of one of his readings:

> Waldo hated Johnny. Johnny was good at History, Geography, English. And, by arrangement, Maths. When Waldo wrote the essay *What I see on the Way to School*, and it had to be read aloud to the class, he could not get his breath because of Johnny Haynes sitting in the fourth row. Whenever he could control himself Waldo read in a prim imitation of Dad's voice, of Dad reading from an intellectual book, say, *Urn Burial* in the Everyman, which Waldo had suspected might be of interest until he found out. (WHITE, 1969, p. 43)

Urn Burial or *Hydriotaphia*, written by Thomas Browne in 1658, as the first part of a two-part work that concludes with *The Garden of Cyrus*, is mentioned in the excerpt and signals Waldo's 'second-hand literary taste', since he only considers reading it after knowing his father had read it. This work deals with man's struggle with mortality and issues regarding the uncertainty of fate. Curiously, Waldo had an expectation about the title, but soon he finds out that the work is not useful, especially since the subject is not that interesting to a child of his age.

Later, we have more references to Waldo's readings:

> But they were proud of Waldo. While remaining weak at Maths, he carried off prizes for other subjects. He had *Idylls of the King*, and *Travels with a Donkey*, and Tacitus in 2 vols. He even read them. He was always reading books, but because Dad was the reader in the family he did most of it furtively. (WHITE, 1969, p. 80-81)

Idylls of the King, written by Alfred Tennyson between 1856 and 1885, is a cycle of twelve poems retelling the legend of King Arthur, which sounds like an appropriate (since it is a poetry classic) reading for Waldo. *Travels with a Donkey,* written by Robert Louis Stevenson in 1879, is considered the precursor of the Outdoor Literature; Stevenson describes his journey through the mountains in France, while imagining the events of the Protestant versus Catholic conflict which took place in the 18th century in that region. Tacitus, on the other hand, represents Waldo's will to show off by means of his supposed classical taste, since we have the information that he read the volumes of works by this author. Tacitus, as a historian of the Roman Empire, focused his work on the analysis of the reigns of the Roman Emperors Tiberius, Claudius, Nero, and those who reigned in the Year of the Four Emperors. From this, we can conclude that Waldo shows off: he got the books he read as a gift, but he could have always rejected them, choosing other readings.

Waldo makes an important reflection concerning Wolfgang Goethe in this excerpt:

> Was he vain to have lost faith in public sculpture? Unlike some. Take Goethe, Goethe must have worn a track through the carpet leaping at his notebooks to perpetuate he thought a Great Thought. The vanity was that men believed their

> thought remained theirs once turned over to the public. All those google-eyed women reverent for their own reverence trailing past a sculpture of poetry and epigrams, and earnest young people *fingering* IMPROVING ON because it is ordained that great works of art should be exposed, becoming what they were never intended for: done-by-the-public sculpture. […] Perhaps like Goethe he was vain, but if small minds could be so obsessed by illusions of permanence, how much less convincing was his own illusion of death? (WHITE, 1969, p. 118)

Patrick White himself did not admire Goethe. In *Flaws in the Glass*, there is the following excerpt:

> Suddenly I felt at home in surroundings to which I don't belong spiritually, and in spite of my lack of sympathy with Weimar's two great poets, one a manufactory of German plastitudes, the other a genius who founders in his hypocrisy and pretensions as a human being. For me Tolstoy is the only literary genius who survives his own hypocrisy. Not Goethe. I am almost persuaded when I read Eckermann's description of his idol lying dead. Again and again in the course of the *Conversations* he almost brings it off, but at the end one realises it is the humble acolyte, himself an original and erudite mind, who has infused the padded monster with his own compassion. (Thank God for the minor characters, like Goethe's Eckermann and Willie Yeats's miraculous father, J.B.). (WHITE, 1984, p. 40)

This contemptuous dislike of Goethe is also useful to remind people that the books and authors rejected by a person are equally important. Thus, when White states that Waldo represented his worst side, we can think of his rejection of this important name in German literature as something that should be hidden, since this attitude does not follow the mainstream (perhaps this was a feature in both the character Waldo and White himself, as a person and writer – neither get on well with unanimity).

As for the life in the library and the involvement with books, it is also important to visualize Waldo's situation, when he is a little older:

> His purple hands. It was the ink-pads. He was marked from the start. But hadn't he given himself to books? *Waldo is the bookish one, takes after his father in that.* And sometimes even then, in the stacks of the Municipal Library, in the sound of dust, and the smell of decaying, aged flesh, he would open a book to dedicate himself anew. And he would stand shivering for the daring of words, their sheer ejaculation.
>
> On one occasion Waldo Brown had found:
>
> In my dry brain my spirit soon,
> Down-deepening from swoon to swoon,

> Faints like a dazzled morning moon.
> The wind sounds like a silver wire,
> And from beyond the noon a fire
> Is pour'd upon the hills, and nigher
> The skies stoop down in their desire…
>
> He shut the book so quick, so tight, the explosion might have been heard by anyone coming to catch him at something forbidden, disgraceful and which he would never dare again he could no longer resist. He looked round, but found nobody else in the stacks. Only books. A throbbing of books. He went to the lavatory to wash his hot and sticky hands. (WHITE, 1969, p. 121-122)

It is important to observe that the description of the activity of reading performed by Waldo at the library alludes to sexual activity (with words such as 'ejaculation' and 'sticky hands'). In addition, the quite unexpected reaction of Waldo when closing the book possibly indicates his fear of the content of the poem. Since Tennyson is an English classic, it would not be strange to see Waldo, as an intellectual who likes books, reading his work. However, we should focus on the entire context of the poem, entitled *Fatima*, first published in 1833, to find elements to justify Waldo's reaction.

> Fatima
>
> O Love, Love, Love, Love! O withering might!
> O sun, that from thy noonday height
> Shudderest when I strain my sight,
> Throbbing thro'all thy heat and light,
> Lo, falling from my constant mind,
> Lo, parch'd and wither'd, deaf and blind
> I whirl like leaves in roaring wind.
>
> Last night I wasted hateful hours
> Below the city's eastern towers;
> I thirsted for the brooks, the showers:
> I roll'd among the tender flowers:
> I crush'd them on my breast, my mouth;
> I look'd athwart the burning drouth
> Of that long desert to the south.
>
> Last night, when some one spoke his name,
> From my swift blood that went and came
> A thousand little shafts of flame
> Were shiver'd in my narrow frame.
> O Love, O fire! once he drew
> With one long kiss my whole soul thro'
> My lips, as sunlight drinketh dew.
>
> Before he mounts the hill, I know
> He cometh quickly: from below
> Sweet gales, as from deep gardens, blow
> Before him, striking on my brow.
> In my dry brain my spirit soon,

> Down-deepening from swoon to swoon,
> Faints like a dazzled morning moon.
>
> The wind sounds like a silver wire,
> And from beyond the noon a fire
> Is pour'd upon the hills, and nigher
> The skies stoop down in their desire;
> And, isled in sudden seas of light,
> My heart, pierced thro' with fierce delight,
> Bursts into blossom in his sight.
>
> My whole soul waiting silently,
> All naked in a sultry sky,
> Droops blinded with his shining eye:
> I will possess him or will die.
> I will grow round him in his place,
> Grow, live, die looking on his face,
> Die, dying clasp'd in his embrace[27].

Indeed, Waldo's reaction seems understandable, given the context of the poem - which makes reference to love – but it is also possible that he finds it shockingly easy to identify with the female speaker, which is something that he dreads. Waldo never fell in love (perhaps his first attempt to fall in love is when he fancies marrying Dulcie, which does not work out). Arthur once talks to him about this subject, questioning him about the fact that he never really loved anyone. Waldo, however, declares he is more worried about his professional and intellectual success, disregarding his feelings (in his opinion, these issues are not important to a writer). The lyricism presented in the poem is sublime, and Waldo is frightened by the feelings the text exudes, being compelled to close the book so abruptly and then wash his hands, for fear that the content would immediately affect not only his routine in the library, but his whole life. When Waldo is older, he reencounters the poem, but now he is more mature to grasp its lyricism:

> (As an old man Waldo Brown discovered these lines amongst his papers, and got a thrill, the 'genuine *frisson*' as it had come to be called. It was a pity he hadn't finished the thing. In the same sheaf was that other fragment of his youth scribbled on a piece of official rote-paper he must have swiped from the Librarian:
>
> > In my dry brain my spirit soon,
> > Down-deepening from swoon to swoon,
> > Faints like a dazzled morning moon…
>
> That was it! His hands trembled, and the sheet of paper gave out a stronger smell of enclosure. The light had looked different in those days, keen and expectant, at Sarsaparilla. Not even Goethe, a disagreeable, egotistical man and overrated

[27]TENNYSON, Alfred. *Fatima*. Available at: <http://www.poetryconnection.net/poets/Alfred_Lord_Tennyson/4740> Accessed on: 10 May 2009.

> writer, whom he had always detested, could have equalled Waldo Brown's *dazzled morning moon*. (WHITE, 1969, p. 129-130)

Waldo simply reproduces part of the Tennyson's poem and not only claims it as his own, but insists it is better than any piece done by Goethe (therefore showing that Waldo is even more egotistical). As a reader, Waldo believes he needs to claim to others that he read a determined canon (or a selection of titles which would qualify him as 'an intellectual'), but throughout the story we do not have enough evidence of how much he really accomplishes in terms of reading. By writing the poem and claiming it as his (which would configure plagiarism), we see that his mind did not really 'memorise' the content.

Below, another excerpt describing Waldo's attitude and preferences as a reader:

> His public life became an assurance. Nobody of his group would be expected to strip in public, unless in a purely intellectual sense. (He had to admit that recently they had caught him out over *Finnegan's Wake*, but Parslow, he knew for certain, hadn't got beyond page 10, and Miss Glasson, for all her scruples, sometimes forgot she had skipped the middle volumes of Proust.). (WHITE, 1969, p. 194)

Either there is an intellectual competition taking place in the library, or Waldo sees the conversations as a competition. Waldo, as always, tries to prove his superiority, but this is not really stated. We can say that Waldo was found out, for he was merely pretending to have read James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* entirely. In fact, it presents a very idiosyncratic language, aiming at reproducing the experience of sleep and dreams, and it certainly represents the high point (together with T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land)* of the kind of Modernism Waldo appears to admire. The title is mistyped in the novel (it does not have the apostrophe), which makes us wonder if this is intentional or simply a graphic mistake, also indicating that even Waldo did not know the right form of the title, when paradoxically he disdains his workmate for not being able to progress in his reading of the novel. Miss Glasson, on the other hand, is not an example, since she skipped the middle volumes of Proust. Again, we have the *impression* that he is collecting arguments to defend himself against potential accusations that the others had never even considered.

In terms of writing, Waldo is also recognised as the potential writer of the family. Patrick White used this character to depict his own reality at the time he was young and aiming at a professional literary career.

3.2 Waldo as a writer

Undoubtedly, Waldo wants more: to be recognised as the reader of the family was not enough, as this would simply put him at the same intellectual level as his father. Therefore, Waldo's desire to become a writer appears quite frequently in the novel, and this might help the reader to better understand Waldo's feelings and reactions towards his own family (mainly to his twin brother) and his acquaintances.

If previously the question 'are you what you read?' was an important factor, now, for this character, the desire to write is a more impressive aspect, also used to amaze or even underestimate people, as seen in this excerpt: 'What are you going to write', she [Dulcie] said, 'do you think it will be novels?' 'I haven't decided yet', he said, 'what', he said, 'what form it'll take. Sometimes I think novels, sometimes plays. It might even be some kind of philosophical work.' (WHITE, 1969, p. 93). Thus, Waldo, although his will to become a writer, knows nothing about the profession in its reality: he is not sure about the genre he is going to adopt, but he tries to appear intellectually superior by considering in an off-hand manner the possibilities for developing his art. Another curious excerpt is the following:

> Now he would have liked to look at her. He had always longed to acquire an intimate intellectual friend, with whom to exchange books, and letters written in the kind of literary style which went with such relationships. If ever it began, he would write two, or perhaps three, letters a day, to express his deepest thoughts. Then would come a pause of several days. That was the way, according to collections of correspondence, he knew it to be done. […] It would have been so much easier if he had been able to tell her: I want to, and am going to, write about *myself.* (WHITE, 1969, p. 91-92)

Indeed, it seems that the act of writing literature at that time is parodied, not specifically in Australia, but worldwide, as if the only pleasure of the author would be to

exchange letters with his own (and famous) acquaintances. Hence, the purpose of friendship for Waldo was simply to have a loyal audience to constantly applaud his ideas and 'deepest thoughts', which actually should be developed in his potential novels or plays, and not only confided to his friends.

Waldo is unable to grasp sensations and then translate them into writing, as he states in the following:

> Reality is so often less convincing, unless involvement such as Waldo was at that moment experiencing translates it into a work of art. There were many sensations, many sights he felt he might transfer to a notebook if only they would grow more distinct. (Waldo by this period had written several articles, there was the fragment of a novel, and he had joined the Fellowship of Australian Writers). He had already written in his notebook: *Death is the last of the chemical actions*, and although, like all great truths, it sounded familiar, he had no reason to believe it was the fruit of someone else's mind. (WHITE, 1969, p. 70)

In the excerpt, we see a reference to the romantic myth of the artist: that a masterpiece is 99% inspiration and 1% transpiration (modifying Thomas Eddison's quote), that is, a work is born ready from the mind of the artist. Waldo only nourishes the idea of becoming a writer, without considering the hard work required, which involves writing many drafts and refining them until they reach the final (and acceptable) form. Waldo is frustrated, as he never passes the phase of the beginning of writing something real. Patrick White mocks this, since he knew that writing was not the process the romantics used to portray.

Another female character of importance is Dulcie, the Jewish girl who steals the heart of the twins, but marries a Jewish merchant, Leonard Saporta. For Waldo, she is a possibility, if not as a reader, at least as a correspondent. However, Waldo's idealization of Dulcie as a reader is destroyed when she frankly admits: 'You won't be interested in us', said Dulcie, not particularly looking at Waldo. 'Anyway, we're not at all what you'd like us to be. We don't read books, or only occasionally – or discuss interesting topics. My parents are boring.' (WHITE, 1969, p. 101). Then, again, when referring to her personality and writing habits:

> 'Is that your room?' he asked. 'You could write up there.'
> 'But I couldn't.'
> 'Letters?'

> ‘I’m a terrible correspondent. The girls at school are always complaining’. (WHITE, 1969, p. 97)

On another visit to Dulcie, Waldo then starts to regret not having conceived a poem while she is playing the piano:

> Here was a real porcelain lavatory with mahogany seat, on which he sat down at once and gave way to the diarrhoea which had been threatening him.
>
> And now the music was flowing from unseen hands – they could only have been Dulcie Feinstein’s – though under Arthur’s influence, he feared. Waldo wished he could have conceived a poem. He had not yet, but would – it was something he had kept even from himself. If it would only come shooting out with the urgency of shit and music, muffled by perhaps several doors, provoked in him. Was Dulcie playing an *étude*? He hoped it was an *étude*. He hoped against hope the Influential Client would soon speak. Then he would walk up the hill to Feinsteins’, and present himself and say: Here I am, an intellectual, working at Sydney Municipal Library – kindness is not enough, you must respect, not my genius exactly, but at least my Australian-literary ambitions. (WHITE, 1969, p. 110)

Waldo compares the flow of writing to the flow of his diarrhoea, while Dulcie was in the room alone with Arthur. This comparison is strong, since the product of a diarrhoea is not something pleasant and it comes involuntarily, with no effort, as a symptom of a disorder or disease. His literary production perhaps would have the same quality, in a process displaying the same unpleasantness and without planning or effort. For him, writing should come unexpectedly, and one day he would be proud of his talent. His career in the Sydney Municipal Library was not achieved on merit: if his father had not talked to the ‘influential client’, Waldo probably would not have got the position. Thus, his intellectuality could be considered merely a façade. It is significant to observe the criticism in relation to ‘Australian literary ambitions’, since White, at the time he was writing *The Solid Mandala*, reveals: ‘When I hear the phrase ‘Australian writers’ a heavy brown curtain always seems to descend before my eyes’(MARR, 1992, p. 450), perhaps also referring to his bitter years as a playwright in Australia.

The most important attempt made by Waldo towards recognition is when the family is together and he comes out with this:

> ‘I’m thinking of writing a play,’ he [Waldo] announced. ‘It’s going to be a Greek tragedy.’
>
> Dad raised his head as though scenting an approach.
>
> ‘How?’ he asked. ‘You never ever saw one. Haven’t even read one.’
>
> ‘I read part of a play,’ said Waldo. ‘The one about the man on the rock.’
>
> It was difficult to tell whether Dad was annoyed or pleased.
>
> ‘You’d better learn to live first.’
>
> ‘Don’t discourage him, George,’ said Mother, enjoying the possibilities.
>
> Waldo began to sidle. He was never easily carried away.
>
> ‘I’ll write it’, he said. ‘Afterwards I’ll act it. Here on the veranda.’
>
> Then Arthur, who had come up carrying the full pail, on the way from the tether to the scullery, halted, and started gulping for words.
>
> ‘Waldo’, he said, ‘I can act in your play, can’t I? Can’t I?’ he repeated.
>
> It was suddenly too much for everybody else. They fell silent, in the light through the young quince trees. The western horizon was a thin, strangling, copper wire.
>
> Arthur put down his pail. They heard the clank when the handle fell.
>
> ‘Can’t I?’ he gulped.
>
> ‘No’, said Waldo. (WHITE, 1969, p. 38-39)

In the excerpt, Waldo is encouraged by his mother to start writing the play, while the father raises a reasonable concept: if you have never seen or read a play, how can you write one? Again, there is the idea of just ‘becoming a writer’, rather than performing the action of writing (and all its challenges). Then, Waldo says he read part of a play, and from his description (‘the one about the man on the rock’), we can infer it is related to Aeschylus’ *Prometheus Bound*. His father mentions he should learn how to live first, and this refers to the idealization he lives by, that is, he only imagines that he will become a great writer by pretending to have great ideas and writing them down, by visualizing the love of his life as an ideal reader (in this case, Dulcie), and by considering himself an important intellectual in Australia because he works at a library. His life only happens in an idealized plan, and he does not make any efforts to transform that idealization into reality.

Waldo does not really express his theatrical intentions (his mind could not present anything creative) and seeing that his non-intellectual twin is able to make an attempt (a tragedy about a cow), his disdaining comment is this:

> At least Waldo was the only one who had remained standing by. He could not help wondering how Arthur of all people had thought about that play. Ridiculous, when not frightening. Waldo would write a play, something quite different, when he had thought of one. (WHITE, 1969, p. 40)

Even the school would not help Waldo in his recognition as a prodigious writer:

> ”Sometimes when it is early or late,” Waldo’s voice came bursting, gurgling, wavering like water escaping from the bath, ”I have thought I saw the form of a man hurrying off with a basin of blood”.
>
> Here Mr Hetherington grunted in that fat way.
>
> ”Of course it is only the imagination. But I think this person, if he had existed, would have murdered the many children he lured in through the black trees.”
>
> Some of the class were laughing and hooting, but Arthur clapped, and Mr Hetherington called for order.
>
> Afterwards, in commenting on the essays, Mr Hetherington remarked that Waldo Brown displayed keen interest in botanical detail, but relied too heavily on imagination of a highly-coloured order. (WHITE, 1969, p. 43-44)

Mr Hetherington’s remarks reflect the narrator’s criticism to the educational system (possibly alluding to Patrick White’s repression while in his ‘prison sentence’ at Cheltenham). This is one more reason why Waldo never really becomes a writer, only dreaming of his success. The little imagination he had in his mind was gradually destroyed, not only by school (and his teachers), but also by his father, explaining why he fails to translate feelings into literature.

Waldo considers his writings revealing, but given the reader does not have much access to what those writings might reveal, let us state that probably his personality would exude in his unexpected words, which in turn are part of the flow of writing which was compared to the flow of his diarrhoea mentioned earlier, helping to explain Waldo’s incapacity to translate feelings into words. Thus, it is difficult to think of his writings being revealing of his sensitiveness or his feelings towards people, or his impressions on environmental aspects around him. In fact, the essay he writes at school, *What I See on the Way to School,* describes the plant species he learns from his mother and reveals his fear that inside an ‘old stone tumbledown house amongst the pear trees […] somebody might have committed a few murders’ (WHITE, 1969, p. 43). In any case, at that stage, he is already aware that ‘of course, it is just my imagination’ (WHITE, 1969, p. 44). So, his supposedly revealing writings should be hidden in a safe place, an old dress-box of his mother:

> More than anything else these dubious overtures, such an assault on his privacy, made Waldo realize the need to protect that part of him where nobody had ever been, the most secret, virgin heart of all the labyrinth. He began very seriously indeed to consider moving his private papers – the fragment of *Tiresias a Youngish Man*, the poems, the essays, most of which were still unpublished – out of the locked drawer in his desk to more of a hiding place, somewhere equal in subtlety to the

> papers it was expected to hide. Locks were too easily picked. He himself had succeeded in raping his desk, as an experiment, with one of the hairpins left by Mother. Arthur was far from dishonest, but had the kind of buffalo mind which could not restrain itself from lumbering into other people's thoughts. How much easier, more open to violation, the papers. So it became imperative at last. To find some secret, yet subtly casual, cache. (WHITE, 1969, p. 191)

While Waldo was working at the Public Library, his workmates value him, since his qualities start being noticed, though everything is due to the 'Peace' (that is, the moment when the nations decide to make peace in the Second World War), which provokes a positive reaction in Waldo: the revival of his faith in man. Because of that:

> He had the greatest hopes of what they had begun to refer to as the Peace. Remembering Miss Glasson's success with *The Bulletin* (though you could never tell; she might have been somebody's cousin or niece) Waldo almost wrote, not an article, more of an *essay*, embodying his reactions to the Peace. Searching the faces in the streets for reflexions of his own sentiments, he almost composed a poem. But men were either dull or dazed, incapable of rising to the ecstasies of abstract more-than-joy – *die Freude*, in fact – which he could not help visualizing as a great and glittering fountain-jet rising endlessly skyward – never, till then, plopping back into reality. (WHITE, 1969, p. 183-184)

Waldo's inspirational moments are frequent, but his literary output is quite poor, as seen in the previous subsection, that of the excerpt of a poem written by Alfred Tennyson. In addition to that, he does not know how to appreciate the work of others, as shown in the following paragraph:

> Walter Pugh showed Waldo three poems he had written. Waldo would have called them jingles, rather. When he had written enough of them, as he intended, Walter was going to offer them as a volume, and join the ranks of the Australian poets. Waldo's lips fairly disappeared, though he didn't comment. He knew for certain he would never show Wally anything he wrote, he would never show anyone; it was too foolish. Certainly he had confided in Dulcie Feinstein that he was going to be a writer, but then he was only – sixteen, was it? And stupid. (WHITE, 1969, p. 123)

Waldo considers the poems 'jingles', and perhaps not to hurt his friend, while protecting his own idea of himself, he would not show anything he wrote. His self-criticism leads him nowhere:

> So Waldo kept quiet. He would have to write, he supposed, although, when you came to consider, he had barely known the woman. Even so, Waldo composed several letters, none of which was suitable, one being too literary, another too matter of fact, almost bordering on the banal, a third, though addressed to the father, suggested by its tone that it was intended for the daughter. (WHITE, 1969, p. 149)

He kept writing a number of drafts and never really comes up with anything plausible and objective. Waldo would even hide his literary activity from Arthur:

> On one occasion Arthur paused in some involved, though unimportant, activity as Waldo was sitting with a sheet of paper, his hand held to protect it, like a wall.
>
> Arthur felt the need to ask: 'What are you doing, Waldo?'
>
> When he had considered long enough, Waldo answered: 'I am writing'.
>
> 'What about?' Arthur asked.
>
> 'I don't know,' Waldo answered, truthfully.
>
> But Arthur was never deterred by vagueness of any description, or absence of trust.
>
> 'I hope it will be good,' he said, and smiled.
>
> To satisfy his curiosity, the expression implied, was less important than his brother's self-fulfilment (WHITE, 1969, p. 81)

Arthur again goes straight to the point and Waldo, when facing such a simple question, truthfully answers that he does not know what he is writing about. What is the purpose of his writing, then? Again we have the impression that Waldo expects his flow of (disgusting and wasted) ideas to appear out of nowhere, as if writing were motivated by divine forces, or in this case, comparing to the image evoked by the use of the word diarrhoea earlier, being a symptom of a disease or a disorder (so, he would be able to compose poems in several situations, for example, when he was at Dulcie's house, then he would come up with a wonderful – or, in this case, disgusting as the wasted matter he expels - piece of poetry). If he does not know what he is writing about, why should he hide the 'supposed good' content of the paper? Indeed, Waldo is paralyzed by his idealization, thus exuding his simplistic and useless intellectuality.

3.3 Arthur as a reader

We can always expect something interesting from the wise fools created by Patrick White. In *The Solid Mandala*, Arthur's intellectual behaviour is frequently overshadowed by his brother's. Since the boys were children, there is a clear situation:

> Arthur had not contributed because he mostly left it to his brother who was quick at answering questions. Perhaps if things had made him angrier Arthur might have answered back more often, but he was lazy enough to leave it to Waldo. (WHITE, 1969, p. 218)

Thus, the capacity to answer questions more quickly is an important differentiating aspect in the analysis of Arthur as a reader and writer. When he is a child, the following comment made by his father calls our attention:

> There was an occasion when Dad put down the book and said: 'Sometimes I wonder, Arthur, whether you listen to any of this. Waldo can make an intelligent comment. But you! I've begun to ask myself if there's any character, any incident, that appeals to Arthur in any way.'
>
> Arthur couldn't answer Dad, or not in full.
>
> 'Tiresias', he said, to keep him quiet.
>
> 'Why on earth Tiresias?' asked Dad.
>
> And Waldo had begun to stare.
>
> But it was too difficult to explain to their father even if Arthur had wanted to. He could not explain the diversity of what he partly understood. He was too lazy. It was too long. (WHITE, 1969, p. 223-224)

Again we have the question 'are you what you read?' being asked indirectly by George Brown. This time, he shows his disappointment blatantly, and Arthur feels that reaction and retorts wisely: Tiresias is his favourite character. Is there any reason to justify that? Since nothing is by chance, the fact that Tiresias was blinded by the Gods because he said the truth, expressing an opinion that angered a goddess, is something to be taken into account. However, this comment made by Peter Beatson is revealing:

> Arthur is also interested in Tiresias, but unlike Waldo he never experiences his hermaphroditic condition as a lethal schism. Instead, he uses it to explore the true nature of both his own self and that of the other people. He is excited and fascinated whenever he comes across the phenomenon of bi-sexuality, accepts it without

> reservation or shame, and through this very acceptance achieves a unity of personality unknown to his schizoid twin. (BEATSON, 1976, p. 95)

The 'unity of personality' mentioned by Beatson in a way explains Arthur's interest in Tiresias as one more element in his search for what could make his own life whole. This discovery of Tiresias by Arthur happens many years before Waldo adopts him as the central figure of his (unwritten) novel, *Tiresias a Youngish Man*, as the following excerpt illustrates:

> They would laugh to be told how shocked he was for Tiresias when Zeus took away his sight at the age of seven – *seven* – for telling people things they shouldn't know. So Arthur kept quiet. He was only surprised they didn't notice how obviously his heart was beating when Zeus rewarded Tiresias with the gift of prophecy and a life seven times as long as the lives of ordinary men. Then there was the other bit, about being changed into a woman, if only for a short time. Time enough, though, to know he wasn't all that different (WHITE, 1969, p. 224)

'Seven' is in italics because Arthur was the same age at the time. It is only later that he starts to grasp this discovery, when reading an excerpt, written by Carl Jung (though this information is not stated) at the library: "As shadow continually follows the body of one who walks in the sun, so our hermaphroditic Adam, though he appears in the form of a male, nevertheless always carries about with him Eve, or his wife, hidden in his body" (WHITE, 1969, p. 281).

On another occasion, knowing he was not allowed to take part in Waldo's play, Arthur makes a resolution: he would write a Greek tragedy himself, so he could act all the parts. However, the subject of his play is quite bizarre: a play about a cow, signalling his disposition to fantasize about his everyday routine (it is his duty to deal with the cows in the Brown's house).

In the chapter *Arthur*, there is a good description of Arthur as a reader:

> Arthur could never take time off like his brother reading books. He would never have been able to protect Waldo if he, too, had so exposed and weakened himself. Arthur could only afford to look up a book on the sly. In time, he thought, he might, perhaps, just begin to understand (WHITE, 1969, p. 229)

Unlike Waldo, who seems to use reading as a way to show off, Arthur reveals his desire to really understand what he reads, even though Waldo thinks that an impossible task. This also reveals that Arthur does not hide inside books, but looks at life directly. Therefore, he is less vulnerable. From *The Bhagavad Gita*, the *Upanishads* and Japanese Zen to even erotological works and *Alice Through the Looking Glass*, the title which calls his attention, making him forget about his duties at the Allwright's, is *The Brothers Karamazov*[28]:

> I think he was afraid of it, said Arthur. There were the bits he understood. They were bad enough. But the bits he didn't understand were worse.
>
> All the loathing in Waldo was centred on *The Brothers Karamazov* and the glass marble in Arthur's hands.
>
> And *you* understand! he said to Arthur viciously.
>
> Arthur was unhurt.
>
> Not a lot, he said. And not The Grand Inquisitor. That's why I forgot Mrs Allwright's glasses today. Because I had to get here to read The Grand Inquisitor again. (WHITE, 1969, p. 199)

Arthur is supposed to work using his hands (to help his mother make bread, for instance) and 'preserve' his head for figures for practical and useful tasks in Mrs Allwright's warehouse. Thus, his interest in reading will increase after his retirement, when he is able to visit the Public Library more frequently. Thus, it is from this part that we start considering Dostoyevsky's role in the story.

3.4 Arthur as a writer

Unlike Waldo, Arthur does not express his wish to become a writer. He might, in fact, nurture the idea, though this is not stated in the story. Albeit he is also an active writer, his literary activity is always overshadowed by the 'intellectual' twin (it is almost certain that the Greek tragedy was expected to be written by Waldo). However, when Arthur is writing, this is interpreted as a moment of laziness, provoking Waldo's anger. Such a reaction suggests that

[28] Fiodor Dostoyevsky completed *The Brothers Karamazov* in 1880. Following Arthur's interest for works involving philosophy and religion, it portrays the life of Fyodor Pavlovich Karamazov, a man with no moral values, and his three sons: Alyosha (the 'saint'), Ivan (the 'intellectual') and Dmitri (tormented by human passions), discussing the issues involving God, freedom and morality.

Waldo might be afraid of the literary competition (a paradoxical fear, since he should not be afraid of Arthur, who is considered mad).

> He wrote his poems too, on mornings full of sun and blue dogs scratching at their fleas. Though why he wrote, or for whom, he could not have told, nor would he have shown. But sat with the pencil, the paper on his knee. He wrote the poem of the daughter he had never had, and of the wives he carried inside him. The writing of the poems was the guiltiest act he had performed since starting to look up the dictionaries, to read the books, his mind venturing through the darkened theatre in which the gods had died in the beginning.
>
> Until Waldo would stick his head out the window and shout: 'Can't you *do* something, Arthur? Haven't you an occupation? Take those dogs for a walk at least. I can't think for having you around'. (WHITE, 1969, p. 290)

For Arthur, writing is a guilty act, since the only one who is expected to do it is his brother. Arthur has the qualities to actually become a poet, but his literary activity is (at least psychologically) thwarted, since everyone considered him incapable of developing his literary talent (this, in the end, is contradicted, with the revelation of his poem).

The following dialogue occurs when the twins are older:

> Arthur was thoughtful.
>
> 'You ought to write something about Mr Saporta.'
>
> 'Whatever made you think of Saporta?'
>
> 'I saw them.'
>
> 'When?'
>
> Arthur was silent, stumbling.
>
> Arthur had begun to pout.
>
> 'Some time ago, I think.' […]
>
> Waldo went on crunching over the bush soil of the neglected surface of Terminus Road. Soon at least they'd come out on tar.
>
> 'But Leonard Saporta was such a very *ordinary* man. I have nothing against him. But why I should *write* about him!'
>
> Lady callers had inquired about Waldo's Writing as though it had been an illness, or some more frightening, more esoteric extension of cat's-cradle.
>
> 'There's nothing in Leonard Saporta,' said Waldo, 'that anyone could possibly *write* about.'
>
> Arthur walked looking at the stones.
>
> 'Well', he said carefully, 'if you ask my opinion', and sometimes Mrs Poulter did, 'simple people are somehow more' – he formed his lips into a trumpet – 'more transparent,' he didn't shout.
>
> But Waldo was deafened by it.
>
> 'More transparent?'
>
> He hated it. He could have thrown away the fat parcel of his imbecile brother's hand.
>
> 'Yes', said Arthur. 'I mean, you can see right into them, right into the part that matters. Then you can write about them, if you can write, Waldo – can't you? I mean, it doesn't matter what you write about, provided you tell the truth about it.'

> Scruffy and Runt had started a rabbit.
> 'What do *you* know?'
> Waldo was worrying it with his teeth.
> 'No,' said Arthur.
> 'You were always good at figures,' Waldo had to admit.
> He was yanking at his twin's blue-veined hand.
> 'Yes. That was useful, wasn't it?' said Arthur. 'Even Mrs Allwright, who didn't like me, admitted it was useful'. (WHITE, 1969, p. 29-30)

This dialogue shows Arthur's intelligent comments (or hints) to Waldo about writing and, thus, the former would act as a critic and the latter, as a writer. We can say that Arthur, for his simplicity, is transparent in the story, and perhaps that is why he is a more charismatic character than Waldo. Again, objectivity in writing is highlighted, since Arthur points to the fact that you need to concentrate on the part that matters. There is even the questioning of Waldo's ability to write, as he seems unable to look into people, grasp their essence and then translate his feelings into words. The idea that you need to be truthful in writing is also important, since this aspect did not appear, for example, when Waldo was rereading his works and was proud of an excerpt copied from Tennyson which he claimed was his own. Therefore, in a way acting like Tiresias, one can observe that Arthur's simplicity is only apparent, since he sees into people better, with all their complexities.

Though Arthur does not explicitly prove his geniality to his family, his mother still waits for his son's gift to show up: "For a long time after everyone had realized, she persuaded herself Arthur was some kind of genius waiting to disclose himself. But Dad was not deceived, Waldo even less. Waldo didn't believe it possible to have more than one genius around" (WHITE, 1969, p. 35).

It is important to report Waldo's reaction to Arthur's geniality in both points of view, when reading one of the poems written by Arthur. First, according to Waldo's perspective:

> 'Arthur', he called, 'do you know about this?'
> 'Yes', said Arthur. 'That's a poem.'
> 'What poem?'
> 'One I wanted to, but couldn't write.'
> Then Waldo read aloud, not so menacingly as he would have liked, because he was, in fact, menaced:
>
> '"my heart is bleeding for the Viviseckshunist
> Cordelia is bleeding for her father's life
> all Marys in the end bleed
> but do not complane because they know

> they cannot have it any other way"'
>
> This was the lowest, finally. The paper hung from Waldo's hand.
> 'I know, Waldo!' Arthur cried. 'Give it to me! It was never ever much of a poem.'
> He would have snatched, but Waldo did not even make it necessary. (WHITE, 1969, p. 212)

Waldo's reaction after the discovery of his twin brother's geniality (the poem indeed makes Waldo angry, since he thinks impossible such verses coming from his insane brother) already prepares the reader for the next step, which is more dramatic. The same scene, now, according to Arthur's point of view:

> Now the poems were about the only part of him Arthur would not have revealed to his brother. The mandala, the knotted mandala, he would have given, had kept, in fact, for that purpose, had offered even. But not the poems. There was no blasphemy at the centre of the mandala. Whereas, in certain of the poems, there was a kind of blasphemy against life. Which Waldo exaggerated quite horribly and deliberately on finding the crumbled poem unfortunately fallen out of an overstuffed pocket.
>
> *'all Marys in the end bleed'*
>
> Waldo's voice was reading, deliberately blaspheming,
>
> *'they know they cannot have it any other way…'*
>
> In spite of mornings shouting with light, and faces of women receiving the truth.
> 'I know, Waldo!' Arthur cried. 'It was never ever much of a poem.'
> Because, more than his own, written words, his brother's voice was convincing him of his blasphemy against life. Not so much against God – he could understand God at a pinch – but against the always altering face of the figure nailed on the tree.
> 'Give it to me, Waldo!'
> But Waldo made it unnecessary. Waldo was tearing the poem up.
> That his brother continued to suffer from the brutality of their revelation was evident to Arthur when, in the course of the afternoon, he looked through the trees and saw Waldo carrying his boxful of papers towards the pit. Knowing he had probably destroyed his brother did not help Arthur to act. Through the trees he could smell the burning papers. He stood around snivelling, sniffing the fumigatory smell of burning. But he was not in any way cleansed. (WHITE, 1969, p. 293-294)

There are some important aspects to be discussed from the excerpt above: Waldo's rejection of Arthur's knotted mandala (and, therefore, his exclusion from the mandala dance) already signals to Arthur that his efforts to take care of his brother were in vain. Thus, the idea of the blasphemy against life highlighted by Arthur (almost like his own interpretation of his

poems) does not seem adequate for the context, since the one who shows he knows how to live (and how to portray life in words) is Arthur, not Waldo (despite his attempt to make Arthur believe that he is the one who blasphemes against life or against God). In a way, the religious connotations of the poem seem to hurt Waldo who is unable to understand the religious issues which were puzzling Arthur. It is here that one perceives Waldo's vulnerability and Arthur's strength, after his attempt to understand *The Brothers Karamazov* (and *The Grand Inquisitor*) as well as those (and the environment) around him.

The burning of the poems and other literary production in fact reflects Patrick White's experience as a writer, since he used to burn his works and drafts. However, in this excerpt the action gains another connotation: Waldo makes the decision because what he wrote cannot be compared to what Arthur wrote, that is, when he recognises that his own literary attempts do not have enough quality, Waldo simply destroys everything. After this episode, Waldo dies (it is his destruction).

Another example of Arthur's 'crazy artistic vein' appears in his song:

> It had not yet happened, when Arthur burst back into the room, wearing, his shouting seemed to emphasize, the *capple* Mr Feinstein had kept as a symbol of his emancipation.
>
> 'Who am *Ieeehhh*?
> Guess! Guess! Guess!'
>
> Arthur hissed rather than sang.
> Waldo could only sit holding his kneecaps, from which sharp blades had shot out on Arthur's reappearance.
> Arthur sang the answer to his question without waiting for anyone to try:
>
> '*Peerrot d'amor*
> At half-past four,
> That's what I am!
> How the leaves twitter –
> And titter!
> No one is all that dry,
> But *Ieeehhh*!'
>
> Mrs Feinstein who had behaved so *piano* since her welcome, with hands in the sleeves of a coat she was wearing although it wasn't cold, began to shriek with laughter.
>
> 'I am the bottom of the bottom,'
>
> Arthur sang,

> ‘But shall not dwell
> On which well.
> Might see my face
> At the bott-*urrhm*!’
>
> There he stopped abruptly, and his face, which had become impasted with the thick white substance of his song, returned to what was for Arthur normal, as he hung his ruff together with Mr Feinstein’s capple on the knob of a chair.
> ‘What a lovely song! Where did you learn it?’ Dulcie finished laughing, and asked. Her upper lip was encrusted with little pearly beads.
> ‘I made it up,’ said Arthur, primly.
> Not so prim as Waldo.
> Waldo said: ‘I think you’d better sit down. Otherwise you’ll over-excite yourself.’
> Arthur obeyed, and when he was again seated, they heard Mrs Feinstein’s throat settling itself back, as though to suggest they were all as they were in the beginning. (WHITE, 1969, p. 133-134)

This indicates Arthur’s sense of humour, in comparison to Waldo, who seems to have inherited his mother’s ‘English humourless feature’. As opposed to his habit of opening cupboards when he was younger, Arthur now exudes his joviality in a creative and humorous manner, and in an environment known to the twins: Dulcie’s house. Waldo’s reaction again mixes shame and embarrassment (which would sound natural were they visiting a strange person), as well as a little envy, as for a moment the focus of attention in the scene is Arthur. If we can apply the saying by Henri de Régnier[29] that women remember (and in this context, even like) men who have made them laugh, then this explains why Arthur is the favourite of the twins, not only to the Feinsteins’, but also to the reader.

[29] RÉGNIER, Henri de. Fine Phrases on the memories. Available at: <www.bellefrasi.it/en/Fine-phrases-on-the-memories/> Accessed on: 20 Aug. 2010.

4 INTERTEXTUALITY: HOW *THE BROTHERS KARAMAZOV* FUNCTIONS INSIDE *THE SOLID MANDALA*

Undoubtedly, intertextuality is a frequently used theoretical support in Literature and, paradoxically, it never stops amazing scholars with its power to attribute new meanings to texts whose interpretations might not have been explored. Intertextuality, broadly defined, is the 'shaping of the meaning of texts´ by other texts. It can refer to an author's borrowing and transformation of a prior text or to a reader's referencing of one text in reading another'[30]. In our case, the reading of the intertextual reference (*The Brothers Karamazov*) would help us understand the main text better, which is *The Solid Mandala.*

> No-one today - even for the first time - can read a famous novel or poem, look at a famous painting, drawing or sculpture, listen to a famous piece of music or watch a famous play or film without being conscious of the contexts in which the text had been reproduced, drawn upon, alluded to, parodied and so on. Such contexts constitute a primary frame which the reader cannot avoid drawing upon in interpreting the text[31].

According to Julia Kristeva, who first coined the term 'intertextuality' in the 1960s:

> The addressee, however, is included within a book's discursive universe only as discourse itself. He thus fuses with this other discourse, this other book, in relation to which the writer has written his own text. Hence horizontal axis (subject-addressee) and vertical axis (text-context) coincide, bringing to light an important

[30] INTERTEXTUALITY. Entry on Wikipedia. Available at: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intertextuality>. Accessed on: 10 Nov. 2010.
[31] CHANDLER, Daniel. *Semiotics for Beginners.* Available at: <http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Documents/S4B/sem09.html>. Accessed on: 10 Nov. 2010.

> fact: each word (text) is an intersection of word (texts) where at least one other word (text) can be read. In Bakhtin's work, these two axes, which he calls *dialogue* and *ambivalence*, are not clearly distinguished. Yet, what appears as a lack of rigor is in fact an insight first introduced into literary theory by Bakhtin: any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another. The notion of *intertextuality* replaces that of intersubjectivity, and poetic language is read as at least *double.* (KRISTEVA, 1980, p. 66)

The intertextual relation between *The Solid Mandala* and *The Brothers Karamazov* is not accidental and cannot be reduced only to the fact that, like *The Solid Mandala*, it refers to brothers and family relations. In the following excerpt one can find hints of the novel's impact on Patrick White:

> Six weeks after moving in White was able to report he was resting and enjoying a read 'such as I haven't had for years. I have just finished *The Brothers Karamazov* for the third time in my life. Each reading has given me a little more. I hope I have the opportunity of reading it again in twenty years time. By then I should be able to get into every corner of it. The sad part of the book is that one realises one hasn't, and never will arrive anywhere very much in one's own writing. Now I am re-reading Varieties of Religious Experience, and mopped up a funny, sour, bankrupt little novel of Edna O'Brien's, *Girls in Their Married Bliss*. I finally got hold of *Notre dame des fleurs* – in English though… it sailed in without a hitch'. (MARR, 1992, p. 448)

There is an explicit preference stated by Patrick White, the reader. Certainly the fact that he actually read *The Brothers Karamazov* three times is notable, which makes us think that he really considered it a book 'to be chewed and digested' (following the quote by Francis Bacon: "Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested"[32]), and not simply enjoyed. We may dare say White had access to *The Brothers Karamazov* only in an English translation.

In this analysis, we use the translation of *The Brothers Karamazov* by Constance Garnett, published in 1912. Being the first translation into English, we can infer this was probably the version Arthur must have been reading (and the one White read, as well).

We presented earlier a passage which confirms White's preference for the Russian novel. Since it provokes mixed feelings in the twins, it is possible to say that *The Brothers*

[32] BACON, Francis. *Quotes*. Available at: <http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/f/francisbac118465.html> Accessed on: 15 May 2010.

Karamazov has a special meaning in *The Solid Mandala.* In the following excerpt, Arthur is at the library reading *The Brothers Karamazov* as he always did. While Arthur is trying to understand humanity's situation in face of paradoxical ideas related to religion and to humanity's behaviour, Waldo appears, resolute to take an action against his brother's disguise:

> Arthur, as soon as he had swum up out of his thoughts, closed his mouth, and smiled.
>
> Hello, Waldy, he said rather drowsily.
>
> Waldo winced.
>
> You have never called me that before. Why would you begin now?
>
> Because I'm happy to see you. Here in the Library. Where you work. I never looked you up on any occasion because I thought it would disturb you, and you mightn't like it.
>
> This was so reasonable a speech Waldo could only regret he was unable to squash it.
>
> Do you come here very often?, he asked.
>
> Only on days when I run a message for Mrs Allwright. Today she sent me to fetch her glasses, which are being fitted with new frames. He felt in his pocket. That reminds me, I forgot about them so far. I couldn't come here quick enough to get on with *The Brothers Karamazov*.
>
> Arthur made his mention of the title sound so natural, as though trotting out a line of condensed milk to a customer at Allwrights'.
>
> But, said Waldo, ignoring the more sinister aspect of it, is there any necessity to come to the Public Library? You could buy for a few shillings. In any case, there's the copy at home. Dad's copy.
>
> I like to come to the Public Library, said Arthur, because then I can sit amongst all these people and look at them when I'm tired of reading. Sometimes I talk to the ones near me. They seemed surprised to hear any news I have to give them.
>
> He stopped and squinted into the marble, at the brilliant whorl of intersecting lines.
>
> I can't read the copy at home, he who had been speaking gently enough before, said more gently. Dad burned it. Don't you remember?
>
> Waldo did now, unpleasant though the memory was, and much as he respected books, and had despised their in many ways pitiful father, his sympathies were somehow with Dad over *The Brothers Karamazov*. Which George Brown had carried to the bonfire with a pair of tongs. Waldo found himself shivering, as though some unmentionable gobbet of his own flesh had lain reeking on the embers. (WHITE, 1969, p. 198-199)

Inevitably, the figure of the father, who was the one who burned the copy, appears again. Thus, if George Brown is to blame, and this is more or less transparent in the scene, we should seek an explanation for his action.

Gérard Genette is the theoretician chosen to support our intertextual analysis. Following the studies performed by Julia Kristeva in the 1960s, and other theoreticians who

produced their own views in the same period, Genette proposes a new perspective on the application of intertextuality to literary texts. His approach is certainly in favour of taxonomies, and this is precisely the usefulness of his method.

Gérard Genette's concept of paratext would involve elements which are present in the threshold of the text and 'which help to direct and control the reception of a text by its readers' (ALLEN, 2000, p. 103). In the threshold we would have a peritext (which would contain elements such as titles, chapter titles, prefaces and notes) and an epitext (formed by interviews, publicity, announcements, reviews by and addresses to critics, private letters and other editorial materials). Therefore, the sum of the peritext and the epitext would result in the paratext. The prefix 'para' is interesting for his theory, as it signals the 'space which is both inside and outside (or 'para') […], and thus it paradoxically frames and at the same time constitutes the text for its readers' (ALLEN, 2000, p. 103-104).

For example, in our case, this kind of intertextuality, with the mentioning of the author of *The Brothers Karamazov* in the epigraph of the book, is a common example of intertextuality, classified by Genette as allusion:

> […] that is, an enunciation whose full meaning presupposes the perception of a relationship between it and another text, to which it necessarily refers by some inflections that would otherwise remain unintelligible. (GENETTE, 1997, p. 2)

Undoubtedly, this is a way to enrich a literary work, sometimes making the reader look for the other literary works and texts to try to better understand the novel. In our case, the reading of *The Brothers Karamazov* was motivated by the allusion to the title in very important scenes.

To Genette, a major paratextual field entails dedications, inscriptions, epigraphs and prefaces. Particularly interesting in our case is the epigraph, 'which can set up important resonances before the reader begins the text in question' (ALLEN, 2000, p. 105):

> *There is another world, but it is in this one.*
> Paul Eluard
>
> *It is not outside, it is inside: wholly within.*

> Meister Eckhart
>
> *… yet still I long*
> *For my twin in the sun…*
> Patrick Anderson
>
> *It was an old and rather poor church, many of the ikons were without settings, but such churches are the best for praying in.*
> Dostoyevsky

The first sentence comes from the surrealist poet Paul Eluard, and it refers precisely to what Arthur experiences throughout the story: seeing mandalas in his glass marbles, dancing a mandala for Mrs. Poulter, reading, imagining things and actually writing a poem, that is, creating his own world, inside this one. The second sentence is by Meister Eckhart, a German theologian and philosopher who lived in the 13th century, and whose defence against the inquisition is famous worldwide. Thus, this might refer to the religious aspect present in the novel. The third sentence is from the Canadian poet Patrick Anderson, and, according to Peter Beatson: 'The orange disc of the sun […] is man's source and his destination. […] Arthur Brown, the true alchemist, manages to reconcile sun and moon – the conscious and the unconscious minds – and by his acceptance of both these spheres he produces the final, the third sphere of the Self, symbolized by the last mandala' (BEATSON, 1973, p. 157-158). And the fourth was written by Fiodor Dostoyevsky, found in the novel *The Brothers Karamazov*:

> They reached the church at last and set the coffin in the middle of it. The boys surrounded it and remained reverently standing so, all through the service. It was an old and rather poor church; many of the ikons were without settings; but such churches are the best for praying in. During the mass Snegiryov became somewhat calmer, though at times he had outbursts of the same unconscious and, as it were, incoherent anxiety. (DOSTOYEVSKY, 2005, p. 713)

Here we have the description of a church (during a funeral), and, as such, the first idea which would come to the reader's mind would be the religious aspect present in *The Solid Mandala*. In terms of possible expectations created, though we can see characters dying in the story (George Brown, Anne Quantrell and Waldo Brown), their funerals are not described. In fact, churches are more or less described, but just externally (perhaps suggesting that the characters are afraid of going into this kind of environment). In relation to possible explanations and how it could affect our reading of *The Solid Mandala*, it is possible to say that we start paying attention to Arthur's religious statements, rather than to his silly attitudes

as a nut character. The anxiety observed in Arthur can be compared to the one we see in Dmitri's character after the parricide: Arthur's first reaction after Waldo's death is that of guilt, since he keeps thinking that he was responsible for killing his other half. However, his strong emotion subsides and the reader is able to understand that Arthur is not to blame. The same reaction also occurs to Ivan (when he sees the Devil and at the same time tries to assume the responsibility for the parricide). Thus, in a way, Arthur incorporates the reactions of the two brothers in *The Brothers Karamazov* after confronting his twin brother's death.

A very interesting way to refer to the brothers throughout the story, which appears quite often, also represents an intertextual relation to *The Brothers Karamazov*. For example: 'The private lives of other parties act as the cement of friendship. The Brothers Brown could be about to set the friendship of the friends' (WHITE, 1969, p. 15). Though the reference here does not carry a negative meaning, later it acquires that tone: 'A couple of no-hopers with ideas about 'emselves,' he would grumble, and then regurgitate: 'The Brothers Bloody Brown!' (WHITE, 1969, p. 18). Certainly this was said by Mr. Poulter, while talking about the brothers Brown with his wife, Mrs. Poulter, who had previously in the scene said: 'There's more in the Brothers Brown than meets the eye' (WHITE, 1969, p. 18). Every time this phrase appears, both words begin with capital letters, thus indicating that something important is present in *The Brothers Karamazov* which might help the reader understand *The Solid Mandala*. Another occurrence: 'On the broken path Waldo's oilskin went slithering past the gooseberry thorns. The wind might have cut the skins of the Brothers Brown if they had not been protected by their thoughts' (WHITE, 1969, p. 25). In a way, this phrase reproduces the whole context of the *The Brothers Karamazov*, with each one of the brothers (and mainly the father, Fiodor Karamazov, an immoral man) not paying attention to what society was thinking of them at that time (their thoughts serving as protections), whether they lived according to the rules or not. For example, we can say that the attitudes of the brothers Brown are sometimes similar to those of the brothers Karamazov. Let us see for instance Arthur's attitude towards his friendship with Mrs Poulter, which shows he is not concerned about other people's reaction to this relationship, whereas Waldo is affected by the insinuations he hears on the street and immediately asks Arthur to stop seeing Mrs Poulter. Arthur is not concerned about what others might think of him, which is similar to the outlook both Ivan and Dmitri have in their lives: they dismiss other people's opinions and the laws of society to such an extent that they are not worried about the idea of committing a crime (a fact which contrasts

to the outlook of the monk, Alyosha, who feels guilty just considering that possibility). Then, we have:

> The Brothers Brown had almost emerged from the subfusc vegetation, the clotted paddocks of Terminus Road, into the world in which people lived, not the Poulters or the Duns or themselves, but families in advertised clothes, who belonged to Fellowships, and attended Lodges, and were not afraid of electrical gadgets. (WHITE, 1969, p. 30)

Some of the phrases actually refer to the brothers Brown as literary abstractions (and that is more or less the idea of having a new world inside this one, present in the epigraph). In another excerpt, we can see more about the Brothers Brown: 'Some of those who noticed the old blokes might have seen them as frail or putrid, but the Brothers Brown were not entirely unconscious of their own stubbornness of spirit' (WHITE, 1969, p. 55): in this part the comparison makes us think of Ivan, Alyosha and Dmitri in Dostoyevsky's novel, who could be qualified with the adjectives mentioned in the excerpt. Johnny Haynes, the fellow who was always disturbing Waldo at school (and found salvation only in Arthur, who helped him solve maths problems), also uses the phrase: 'Instead, the mortals went. 'The Brothers Brown!' Johnny snort-laughed. 'If they ever existed', the woman replied dreamily' (WHITE, 1969, p. 190). In this part, the reference seems to be to the fact that The Brothers Brown, as well as The Brothers Karamazov, are just characters, so their existence should always be doubted (the twins are abstractions inside Johnny's mind, as referred to earlier by his wife – given she thinks Johnny is just dreaming). We can also see this in the following reference: 'Perhaps understanding they should not advance beyond the pale, the children dissolved on seeing the Brothers Brown enter Terminus Road' (WHITE, 1969, p. 202). Again, the words seem to refer to a dream. The mentioning of children in the excerpt signals Dostoyevsky's story: the brothers, except Alyosha (who, at the end of the story, is among children), are feared by the children (given their father's reputation). In the last passage we can observe: 'The Brothers Brown were pestered no more, but allowed to moon about the yard' (WHITE, 1969, p. 225). Therefore, from these occurrences of the phrase 'The Brothers Brown', we could more or less establish some intertextual references.

Although George Brown puts *The Brothers Karamazov* in the fire, and also considering he had other titles to read (as exemplified earlier in this thesis), his son Arthur,

besides being considered a lunatic, is the character who shows the most interest in the novel, not Waldo:

> In any case, it was time. It was time to return to Terminus Road. So frustrating. If only he could have retired – but they needed him more than ever, Mrs Allwright and Mrs Mutton, since Mr Allwright died – he would have been able to give all that extra time to his reading.
>
> To *The Brothers Karamazov*. Wonder what Dad would have said! (WHITE, 1969, p. 282)

We can imagine exactly what Arthur's father would say: that he should look for another book to read, since that one was not appropriate for his moral, religious beliefs and values. Again, we have the father disappointed by his son Arthur who comes up with a book that incites strong reactions and feelings. Arthur's discourse regarding the father's possible reaction is worth mentioning:

> Sometimes Arthur wished Dad hadn't burnt his copy of *The Brothers Karamazov,* so that he could have got on with it at home. Then he realized it mightn't have been desirable: to introduce all those additional devils into their shaky wooden house. (WHITE, 1969, p. 282)

The word 'devils' is important in this context, since it refers to the characters in *The Brothers Karamazov*. Certainly Fiodor Pavlovich Karamazov does not deserve the title of 'saint', in the same way as the other members, such as Ivan, do not. The only exception is Alyosha, the monk, considered the 'saviour' of the Karamazov family. In the introduction of the English translation of *The Brothers Karamazov,* the editor T.N.R. Rogers claims: "[…] the characters Dostoyevsky writes about, though they may not appear to be ones who live on our street, or even on any street, seem, in their passions and lack of self-control, the familiar and intimate denizens of our souls"[33]. George Brown might have recognised himself in the novel, perhaps identifying with some character (for instance, Fiodor Pavlovich, as they share the position of patriarchs in the families). We cannot say this precisely, but the fact that the religious conflict inside *The Brothers Karamazov* is something that might have called George Brown's attention is quite possible. Moreover, from the mapping of readings, we can see that some titles refer to religiosity, though not to any institutional religion. The conflict in fact

[33] DOSTOYEVSKY, Fiodor. *The Brothers Karamazov*. Translated by: Constance Garnett. Mineola: Dover, 2005. p. III.

seems to be centred on the importance of faith in God (or in anything), as shown in the following excerpt:

> And Dad, darkening, began to cough. He could never forgive the Baptist Church. Its chocolate campanile 'leaning a bit, but not far enough' stuck in his mind. He couldn't let it rest.
>
> It's a pity you weren't born a Quaker, Waldo said. There would have been less architecture. And you could have left them just the same.
>
> But Dad didn't care for other people's jokes on serious matters.
>
> There's too much you boys, reared in the light in an empty country, will never understand. There aren't shadows in Australia. Or discipline. Every man jack can do what he likes.
>
> Because he wanted to believe it, he did believe – if not of himself (WHITE, 1969, p. 160-161).

Indeed, it is not reasonable to find Patrick White advocating a determined creed in his oeuvre. As we can see in his biography:

> Belief brought no revolutionary change to his life. White did not embrace the dogmas of sin and hell and the heaven that lies beyond death. At the communion rail of the local church he toyed with these ideas, but they remained foreign to him. He sought illumination not forgiveness. White continued to drink, eat, desire, gossip and rage. He found no contradiction between his belief in God and homosexuality. He did not set out to become a do-gooder, a type he was to lacerate a few years later in the figure of the Cheery Soul. He would always believe Christian love should be 'administered in homeopathic doses…Minute doses to be really potent. Not get up and charge about, not to be evangelical about it.' […] White's God was an Anglican, but the dogma of any religious sect seemed to him 'ridiculous and presumptuous. Faith is something between the person and God, and must vary in its forms accordingly'. (MARR, 1992, p. 282-283)

Here one can see a criticism to Australian sectarianism, which made the population uncomfortable, raising fear and inequality in a society which was shaping itself according to noble principles, that is, freedom of speech and religious choice, paradoxically trying to get rid of the conservative values of the metropolis, that is, the British Empire. Sectarianism in Australia involved mainly the Catholics (represented by the Irish settlers – many of them had been involved in separatist conflicts in Ireland) and the Protestants (representing the British Empire's interests). For example, in the penal colony of New South Wales, founded in 1788, Catholic chaplains were not allowed in its first thirty years. Even though some advances took place from that time on, some vestiges remained, and this is more or less stated in Patrick White's writing. Also, one of the reasons which contributed to alleviate this situation in the

country was the Second World War (and the other conflicts involving Australian troops, like the Korean War and the Vietnam War): when defending the country, they had to overcome religious differences.

An intertextual reference can also be seen in the fact that Arthur shows an interest in Russian, which is mentioned during a conversation with Dulcie, before her trip to Europe:

> Shall you send me picture post-cards? he asked.
> She would, of course. Written in coloured inks. In all the languages she proposed to learn.
> Together they were making a joke of it.
> And Russian?, he asked.
> Too untidy for post-cards! Dulcie laughed. (WHITE, 1969, p. 246)

Russian is mentioned, and indicates a vague possibility that Arthur was already interested in reading *The Brothers Karamazov* though he then discovers that the copy was no longer available in his house. Later on, because the book is around 700 pages long, his visits to the public library (done disguised, since he does not want to be found out by Waldo) are so frequent that this is perceived by Miss Glasson. One day she comments on that with Waldo:

> One day, after he had time to forget, at least enough, Miss Glasson was standing at his elbow.
> She said: 'I'd love to show you an old bloke who's catching up on his reading. He asks for the most extraordinary things. Sometimes at the desk they nearly split themselves. The *Bhagavad Gita*, the *Upanishads*! He's interested in Japanese Zen. Oh, and erotological works! Of course there's a lot they don't allow him. Mr Hayter vets him very carefully. He might over-excite himself. Some old men, you know! (WHITE, 1969, p. 196)

His tastes are not common, but there are other books to be mentioned, again according to Miss Glasson:

> Today his tastes are comparatively simple, she persisted. He's back on *The Brothers Karamazov* and *Alice Through the Looking Glass*. Oh, I do wish', this time Miss Glasson only half-giggled, 'I do wish you'd let me point him out. I'm sure you'd find it rewarding. Just a peep. I shan't show myself. I sometimes talk to him, and it would be such a shame if he felt he could no longer trust me'. (WHITE, 1969, p. 197)

All the scenes referred to so far come from the chapter *Waldo*. One thing should be mentioned regarding point of view, since the story of *The Solid Mandala* relies heavily on this.

A crucial element in a narrative, point of view, in simple words, can be defined as the way a story is told. According to *A glossary of literary terms*, point of view is 'the mode (or modes) established by an author by means of which the reader is presented to the characters, dialogue, actions, setting and events which constitute the narrative in a work of fiction'[34]. Another definition, provided by Chris Baldick in *The concise Oxford dictionary of literary terms*, is that point of view is 'the position or vantage-point from which the events of a story seem to be observed and presented to us'[35]. On the function of the point of view in the narrative, Fenson and Kritzer claim that: 'since the point of view operating in the story determines the perspective through which we are made to view the filtered details, it is obvious that our attitude toward, and our understanding of the characters in the story will be influenced by this perspective'[36]. In the case of *The Solid Mandala*, we can say the narrator is third-person omniscient: the storyteller does not play a part in the story, but gets inside the minds of the characters, revealing their impressions and feelings to the reader. Of course, we need to follow the advice that narrators cannot be trusted (and in *The Solid Mandala* that is also the case). In a way, the three different points of view presented in the story (Waldo's, Arthur's and Mrs Poulter's) complement each other (their differences comprise the whole of the story).

When thinking of the relation between point of view and intertextuality, we can say that in Waldo and Arthur's points of view the same intertextual references appear, complementing our understanding of the function of *The Brothers Karamazov* inside *The Solid Mandala* as a whole (if the reference had appeared just in the Waldo part, and not in Arthur's, then we would consider that *The Brothers Karamazov* represented an intertextual relation affecting mainly only one character). In our case, however, we have the scene at the library presenting the reference in both points of view, as well as the characters' reaction to

[34] ABRAMS, M.H. *A glossary of literary terms.* 7. ed. Philadelphia: Harcourt Brace College, 1999, p. 231.
[35] BALDICK, Chris. *The concise Oxford dictionary of literary terms.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996. p. 173.
[36] FENSON, Harry; KRITZER, Hildreth. *Reading, understanding and writing about short stories.* New York: The Free Press. 1966, p. 22.

what they read and experience. In a way, we have these different aspects complementing the scene. However, it is under Arthur's point of view that his interest in the novel becomes clear.

Also adding to the discussion involving Intertextuality, we see that *The Brothers Karamazov* is a traditional representation of a polyphonic novel, in which no character's views/points of view dominate in the story. In a way we could apply that qualification to *The Solid Mandala*. Certainly, in a superficial analysis, we might say that this is not possible. First, many would be tempted to say that because Waldo's chapter has more pages than Arthur's, it would not be reasonable to claim that there is not a superimposition of voices in White's novel. Indeed, it is not the number of pages that matters in this case. Recalling the structure of the work, we have the first chapter seeming neutral and trivial already in its title ('In the Bus'); the second, carrying Waldo's name, naturally describing the events under his point of view; the third, to which Arthur lends his name, with his own view; and Mrs. Poulter and the *Zeitgeist* telling the events from Mrs. Poulter's point of view, but also having the interference of Arthur's point of view. The Waldo chapter lacks the humour, the subtlety and the poetry seen in Arthur's chapter, precisely because Waldo's mood, outlook on life, and excess of intellectuality exude in the text, sometimes making it dull and rather slow. Peter Beatson mentions the characteristics found in Waldo's chapter: "In *The Solid Mandala*, Waldo Brown's section is filled with visions of flood, flux and chaos. Waldo is constantly menaced by waves of grass or storm-clouds" (BEATSON, 1976, p. 60). One example extracted from *The Solid Mandala* is the following: "On this hitherto evil morning, of a cold wind and disturbances, of decisions and blotting-paper clouds, Waldo Brown's convictions helped him to breathe less obstructedly. He failed for the moment to notice the smell of mucus in his nostrils" (WHITE, 1969, p. 56). As we can see, the references are very realistic, based more on the natural (and why not say ugly) acts of human nature, rather than presenting us a positive and imaginative view. The feeling we have by reading Arthur's chapter is quite different, with the first sentence being a good representation: 'In the beginning there was the sea of sleep of such blue in which they lay together with iced cakes and the fragments of glass nesting in each other's arms the furry waves of sleep nuzzling at them like animals' (WHITE, 1969, p. 215). With this word choice, we can see that the chapter is lighter, and the images evoked reflect Arthur's imagery and dreams ("sea" and "sleep") which will be developed throughout the narrative.

Indeed, Arthur is much more effective even in his own literary activity, being the one who actually composes a poem, whereas Waldo spends the whole story just dealing with his aesthetic and literary preferences/indecisions and unclear ideas.

4.1 Arthur's question (and divinity): who is The Grand Inquisitor?

Indeed, this question asked by Arthur is one of his wonderful insights throughout the story:

> But he had to return to what had become, if not his study, his obsession. There was all this Christ jazz. Something of which Mrs Poulter had explained. But he couldn't exactly relate it to men, except to the cruelty some men practise, in spite of themselves, as a religion they are brought up in. Reading *The Brothers Karamazov* he wished he could understand whose side anyone was on.
>
> Who was the Grand Inquisitor?
>
> Then quite suddenly one morning at the Library Waldo was sitting at the same table, opposite him, making that scene. Afterwards Arthur could not remember in detail what was said. You couldn't exactly say *they* were *speaking*, because the remarks were being torn out of them helter skelter, between tears and gusts of breathlessness, like handfuls of flesh. The raw, bleeding remarks were such that Waldo kept looking round to see who might be noticing. As for Arthur, he did not care. Their relationship was the only fact of importance, and such an overwhelming one.
>
> 'I shan't ask if you've come here, if you're making this scene, to humiliate me,' Waldo was saying, 'because the answer is too obvious. That has been your chief object in life. If you would be truthful.'
>
> 'Why hurt yourself, Waldo?' Arthur was given the strength to reply. 'Kick a dog, and hurt yourself. That's you all over.'
>
> 'For God's sake, don't drag in the dogs! And who, I'd like to know, wanted the miserable animals? And why?'
>
> 'We both did,' said Arthur, 'so that we could have something additional – reliable – to love. Because we didn't have faith in each other. Because we are – didn't you say yourself, Waldo? – abnormal people and selfish narcissyists.' […]
>
> 'Afraid,' Arthur was saying, and now he did begin to feel a kind of terror rising in him. 'Like our father. I mean Dad. Not the one they pray to. But Dad putting Dostoyevsky on the fire.' […]
>
> 'Afraid of the blood and the nails, which as far as I can see, is what everyone is afraid of, but wants, and what Dostoyevsky is partly going on about. Do you see, Waldo,' he was bursting with it, 'what we must avoid?'
>
> Suddenly Arthur burst into tears because he saw that Waldo was what the books referred to as a lost soul. He, too, for that matter, was lost. Although he might hold Waldo in his arms, he could never give out from his own soul enough of that love which was there to give. So his brother remained cold and dry. […]
>
> 'You will leave this place,' Waldo was commanding, and very loudly: '*sir!*'
>
> Indicating that he, Arthur, his brother, his flesh, his breath, was a total stranger.
>
> It was then that Arthur began to tear the Grand Inquisitor out of *The Brothers Karamazov*, he was so confused. And Waldo shaking him like any old rag,

> which he was, he admitted, he was born so, but not to be bum-rushed against and through the swing-doors. As if you could get rid of your brother that way. (WHITE, 1969, 283-284-285)

The Grand Inquisitor is the poem Ivan tells Alyosha when they meet, presenting the ideological and theological conflict between the intellectual Ivan (who believes in the existence of a benevolent and personal God, and Alyosha, who is a monk and believes in God as the saviour of humanity). Presenting ideas involving freedom and human nature, it starts with Ivan reporting the return of Christ to Earth in Seville, at the time of the Inquisition. After performing some miracles and being recognised and adored by the people, he ends up arrested by the Inquisition (with his sentence due the next day). In his cell, he is visited by the Inquisitor, who explains why he is no longer necessary, pointing out the reasons why he would interfere with the mission of the Church. The inquisitor's arguments against Christ are based on the three questions asked by Satan in the desert (in the temptation of Christ), which were: the temptation to turn stones into bread; the temptation to cast Himself from the Temple and be saved by the angels and the temptation to rule over all the kingdoms of the world. The Inquisitor asserts that Jesus rejected the temptations in favour of freedom. By doing so, however, he misjudged human nature, as humanity cannot deal with freedom. By giving them freedom to choose, he would have excluded humanity from redemption and led them to suffering.

Arthur questions the existence and the identity of the Grand Inquisitor after reading the eponymous chapter in the novel, and this represents a more detailed and specific intertextual reference. However, it would not be possible to analyse this intertextual relation without considering the whole novel, that is, to simply reduce our scope to the chapter mentioned. In fact, Arthur has a peculiar reason for reading *The Brothers Karamazov* in its entirety: to 'understand whose side anyone was on'. Throughout the story, Arthur's friendship with Mrs Poulter and with the other female characters (for instance, Dulcie Feinstein, Mrs Allwright – although this might be considered more an employer-employee relation, rather than a friendship -, and Mrs Musto) have an influence on him in religious, as well as literary, terms, given all of them share different beliefs/outlooks and interests with him. Thereby, we believe that the reading of *The Brothers Karamazov* might help us understand Arthur's search for his own position in relation to the world he is living in, since White, in his literary practice, seems to use theology to help readers grasp the story (as well as his characters' search for themselves).

Furthermore, George Brown's strong negative reaction (putting the book in the bonfire) may have prompted Arthur to seek the novel out to try to understand his father's position/reaction. At this point, it is important to identify the changes in Arthur's position throughout the story, and whether the reading of *The Brothers Karamazov* influenced him or not. With his own understanding of the novel, along with his contact with his friends, we can see how Arthur becomes 'enlightened' at the end, rather than his intellectual brother, Waldo.

It is significant to mention Arthur's position, when he is still young, during a conversation with Mrs Musto:

> What are mouths given us for? Yairs, I know – food. Lovely, too. Within everybody's reach in a country like Australia. […] Ooh, scrumptious! There are, of course, other things besides. But never forget one in remembering the other. As I said to the Archbishop, it doesn't pay, never ever, not even an evangelical, to neglect the flesh altogether. The Archbishop was of my opinion. But She – *She* – She's not only a poor doer, she's clearly starving 'erself to make sure of a comfy passage to the other side. As I didn't hesitate to tell 'er. But as I was saying – what was I saying? Conversation is the prime purpose this little slit was given us for – to communicate in *words*. We are told: in the beginning was the Word. Which sort of proves, don't it?
>
> She had a snub nose you could look right up.
>
> In the beginning was what word? Arthur asked, seated on that beaded stool, looking up Mrs Musto's nose.
>
> Why, she said, the Word of God!
>
> Oh, said Arthur. God.
>
> He might have started to argue, or at least to wonder aloud, but fortunately stopped short, lowering his thick eyelids as if to prevent others calculating the distance to which he had withdrawn. (WHITE, 1969, p. 85)

He makes a seemingly idiotic question to Mrs Musto, regarding the 'first word' to appear on Earth. He certainly did not have 'the Word of God' on his mind, given his reaction to her answer. Perhaps he was expecting something greater than that, or even smaller– the first 'word' being any lexical unit, for example, 'sun'. However, in this excerpt we can see that Arthur, considering the other interpretation he might have given to the word in the context of the conversation, is not influenced by any religious belief. His comment might actually have seemed atheistic, depending on the point of view of the reading. Later, we have Arthur's answer to Mrs Musto's comment:

> Then, just before leaving for the store, he came up with something which was on his mind and spat it out, wet: 'Tell Mrs Musto I'm concentrating on words. *The* Word. But also words that are not just words. There's so many kinds. You could make necklaces. Big chunks of words, for instance, and the shiny, polished ones. *God*, he said, and the spit spattered on Waldo's face, 'is a kind of sort of *rock* crystal.
>
> Waldo was disgusted by his brother's convulsed face and extravagant, not to say idiotic, ideas. (WHITE, 1969, p. 87)

We are inclined to think that Arthur, at the time he makes such a comment, is too young to grasp any kind of spiritual meaning. In fact, as he comes from a family whose religious beliefs (or values) have been questioned (they are Baptists), this might sound understandable. A comment on the word of God is also made in *The Brothers Karamazov*, with Father Zosima writing his thoughts: 'And what is the use of Christ's words, unless we set an example? The people is lost without the Word of God, for its soul is athirst for the Word and for all that is good' (DOSTOYEVSKY, 2005, p. 267). Thus, the points of view of the religious people (Father Zosima and Mrs Musto) try to convince Arthur of the usefulness of God's word. See, for example, what Waldo thinks, when he is already an old man:

> Everybody to their own. The Presbyterians had their red brick. The convicts had built the Church of England. Over his shoulder the Methoes had hung out their business sign. Waldo Brown, so thin, was filled out considerably by knowing that nothing can only be nothing. […] So Waldo stalked through the main street, in the wind from his oilskin, on only physically brittle bones, knowing in which direction enlightenment lay. Waldo stiffened his neck, and skirted round the Church of England parson with a smile, not of acknowledgement, but identification. As for priests, jokes about them made him giggle. He would look for the vertical row of little black buttons, for the skins of priests which flourished like mushrooms behind leather-padded doors. Waldo believed his parents had just tolerated clergymen as guardians of morality, priests never. Myths, evil enough in themselves, threatened one's sanity when further abstracted by incense and Latin, and became downright obscene if allowed to take shape in oleograph or plaster. (WHITE, 1969, p. 55-56)

As explained earlier, in Australia, the problem was between the Catholics (associated with Irishness) and the Protestants (seen more positively because of their link to Britishness). This excerpt signals the Catholic/Protestant split, which took place in Australia during the first decades of the 20th century. Waldo is considered a member of the Baptist Church (therefore, he would be seen as a Protestant). In the last bit, we see a criticism to the myths used by most religions to make them sound more truthful than others (as well as the means each one uses to diffuse them). Responsible for a societal crisis, this sectarianism did not allow the option 'no religion', as evidenced by the following:

> The headmaster was Mr Heyward, with whom at first there was a spot of trouble. It was not so much over the green Junior Scripture Books which Mr Hetherington doled out. You didn't need to bother with those. You could look at other things beyond the page. The trouble began over the half-hour segregation, when the clergyman, the ministers came.
>
> Dad wrote Mr Heyward a note:
>
> Dear Sir,
>
> As my twin boys are convinced unbelievers I must request you to exempt them from religious instruction. I myself was born a Baptist, but thought better of it since.
>
> Yours truly,
> Geo. Brown.
>
> Mr Heyward sent a reply:
>
> My dear Mr Brown,
>
> The problem is a simple one. All agnostics are classified automatically as C of E. You can rest assured the Rev. Webb-Stoner will not assault your boys' convictions.
>
> H.E. Heyward
> (Principal)
>
> Then Dad thought of a tremendous joke:
>
> Dear Mr Heyward,
>
> What if I should reveal a pair of Moslem boys are attending your very school?
>
> G. Brown
>
> The Brothers Brown were pestered no more, but allowed to moon about the yard. Waldo kept a book hidden on him. But Arthur used to play with the marbles he had earned. Arthur in particular longed for the half-hour segregation. (WHITE, 1969, p. 224-225)

The school attended by the twins in Australia is extremely conservative in its religious principles (following the tradition from Home), as one can see by the excerpt. The father's 'threat'(that his boys were Moslems) works, since it is outside the expectations of the school. This shows the influence of the Metropolitan educational system in a new country, which supposedly should repel such practices of classification according to religion (at least in what would be the father's point of view, since he left England probably because of religious freedom). Arthur seemingly does not know anything about the religious dispute between his father and the school's principal, or anything about religion at all, as he was still a child (thus, the argument used by the father that they were 'convinced unbelievers' is a little controversial, since they were not mature enough to judge such issues). However, let us assume that, in this case, religious definition in a family is influenced by the parents. In the Browns, this process is quite interesting. The mother, Anne Quantrell, is not a churchgoer, nor can we say that she is any sort of atheist. Our focus, naturally, is again on the father, George

Brown. If previously he was analysed under the perspective of the reader of the family (somehow influencing his children in their reading habit/preferences), why is it not possible to say that he also manages to influence his children's religious inclination? It is pertinent to have a look at the following excerpt:

> And Dad, darkening, began to cough. He could never forgive the Baptist Church. Its chocolate campanile 'leaning a bit, but not far enough' stuck in his mind. He couldn't let it rest.
>
> 'It's a pity you weren't born a Quaker,' Waldo said. 'There would have been less architecture. And you could have left them just the same.'
>
> But Dad didn't care for other people's jokes on serious matters.
>
> 'There's too much you boys, reared in the light in an empty country, will never understand. There aren't any shadows in Australia. Or discipline. Every man jack can do what he likes'. (WHITE, 1969, p. 160)

The lack of 'shadows' in Australia is a strong aspect (in a way complementing the 'blackness of those times' mentioned earlier), perhaps pointing, in our case, to the probable religious conflict that would not exist, allowing the new society to develop itself fully, that is, without 'shadows'. However, that is not what happens, given what George Brown had to do to free his children from the obligation of attending religious classes. According to David Marr, Patrick White "could not accept 'the sterility, the vulgarity, in many cases the bigotry of the Christian churches in Australia' and more than ever doubted his capacity to forgive" (MARR, 1992, p. 451). Thus, George Brown is disappointed, since the religious freedom he was longing for does not exist.

Arthur always perceives depth, producing a vision of wholeness in his mandala (uniting the four corners), excluding only Waldo, who represents the rejection of Australian shallowness and who cannot go beyond it to the depth that is hidden within.

Notwithstanding, a 'new religious trend' in the book seems to be Christian Science. Founded in 1866 by Mary Baker Eddy, it was adopted by Mr and Mrs Allwright. Arthur, in his process of spiritual discovery, one day finds Mr Allwright praying:

> On a later occasion going to the store for some article of less importance, Arthur looked through what must have been the storekeeper's bedroom window, and there was Mr Allwright down on his knees in a blaze of yellow furniture. Arthur was fascinated, if not actually frightened, by his friend's face sunk on his chest, by the

> hands which he held out in front of him, pressed straining together as stiff as boards. It puzzled Arthur a lot.
>
> Mrs Allwright, he said at the counter, I saw Mr Allwright down on his knees.
>
> Mrs Allwright blushed and pursed up her mouth.
>
> He is praying to his Maker, she said, as though that explained everything.
>
> His maker?
>
> He liked the idea, though, of the wooden man, freshly carved, and sweet-smelling.
>
> To the Lord Almighty.
>
> As Mrs Allwright elaborated, she very discreetly lowered her eyes. (WHITE, 1969, p. 226-227)

The fact that he is fascinated shows that this was an act he had never seen: someone down on his knees, praying enthusiastically (which is evident by the description). Arthur does not question the validity of the action, Mr Allwright should have been doing something else instead of praying. Actually, Arthur stops and starts thinking about such issues. Soon after this discovery, we have the following sentence: 'Johnny Haynes, the boy at school, asked if the Browns were really pagans as was said. Arthur didn't know what they were' (WHITE, 1969, p. 228). Thus, from this portion, Arthur is undecided, perhaps attempting to understand himself.

The dialogue below takes place when the twins are old and therefore, Arthur has already read *The Brothers Karamazov* and perhaps feels inclined to appreciate Christian Science (which happens to be the Allwrights' religion), too. Arthur would be attracted to this new religion perhaps because of his acquaintanceship with the Allwrights (also because he had witnessed Mr Allwright praying, an important scene). One more reason for this admiration might be the fact that it was a new trend at the time, created in the 19th century by a woman. However, according to Michael Giffin, Australian theologian who has studied Patrick White's oeuvre, there is a criticism in relation to Christian Science in many novels: 'In their minds, Christian Science becomes another illusionary refuge, another solipsistic horizon, for one of the tenets of Christian Science that White disagrees with, as a Modern, is its gnostic and transcendental emphasis, its insistence upon the separation of matter from spirit" (GIFFIN, 1996, p. 13). In a passage in *The Solid Mandala*, Arthur mentions that Christian Scientists would believe in the inexistence of death; right after Mr Allwright's death, Mrs Allwright would be fine because she had her religion and because she believed that her husband was not really dead. This separation of matter from spirit actually is not welcomed by Patrick White, since the search for the whole implies that matter, mind and spirit need to be together to accomplish this discovery.

During a walk with Mrs. Poulter (in which he ends up dancing his mandala for her), Arthur raises very important questions about her worship of God:

> Funny none of you Browns never ever went to church, she said.
> I suppose they went in the beginning. Till they found out.
> Found out what?
> That they could do without it.
> Ah, but it's lovely! Mrs Poulter said.
> They began to feel it wasn't true.
> What isn't true?
> He saw her raise her head, her neck stiffen.
> Oh, all that! said Arthur Brown, spinning a cow-turd. About virgins. About him, he said.
> Don't tell me, said Mrs Poulter, as prim as Waldo, that *you* don't believe in Our Lord Jesus Christ?
> Don't know all that much about Him.
> For the moment he cared less for her.
> How do *you* know, anyway?
> It's what everyone has always known, she said. Then, looking at the toes of her shoes as they advanced, she said very softly: I couldn't exist without Our Lord.
> Could He exist without *you*? It seemed reasonable enough to inquire.
> But she might not have heard.
> Mother says Christians are all the time gloating over the blood.
> Don't you believe they crucified Our Lord? she said looking at him angrily.
> He had begun to feel exhausted.
> I reckon they'd crucify a man, he said. Yes, he agreed, trundling slower. From what you read. And what we know, Christians, he said, are cruel. (WHITE, 1969, p. 261)

Arthur uses the pronoun 'they' all the time, to refer to why his parents do not go to church and show their spirituality in public. The fact that Arthur is not interested in church and religion does not necessarily mean that he did not appreciate spirituality. This passage might find an echo in the dialogue between Alyosha and Ivan, which happens prior to the discussion of Ivan's poem, entitled *The Grand Inquisitor*:

> Joking? I was told at the elder's yesterday that I was joking. You know, dear boy, there was an old sinner in the eighteenth century who declared that, if there were no God, he would have to be invented. […] And man has actually invented God. And what's strange, what would be marvellous, is not that God should really exist; the marvel is that such an idea, the idea of necessity of God, could enter the head of such a savage, vicious beast as man. So holy it is, so touching, so wise and so great a credit it does to man. As for me, I've long resolved not to think whether man created God or God man. […] Besides, too high a price is asked for harmony; it's beyond our means to pay so much to enter on it. And so I hasten to give back my entrance ticket, and if I am an honest man I am bound to give it back as soon as possible. And that I am doing. It's not God that I don't accept, Alyosha, only I most respectfully return him the ticket.

> That's rebellion, murmured Alyosha, looking down
>
> Rebellion? I'm sorry you call it that, said Ivan earnestly. […] And can you admit the idea that men for whom you are building it would agree to accept their happiness on the foundation of the unexpiated blood of a little victim? And accepting it would remain happy forever?
>
> No, I can't admit it. Brother, said Alyosha suddenly, with flashing eyes, you said just now, is there a being in the whole world who would have the right to forgive and could forgive? But there is a Being and he can forgive everything, all and for all, because he gave his innocent blood for all and everything. You have forgotten him, and on him is built the edifice, and it is to him they cry aloud, 'Thou art just, O Lord, for thy ways are revealed!'.
>
> Ah! the one without sin and his blood! No, I have not forgotten him; on the contrary I've been wondering all the time how it was you did not bring him in before, for usually all arguments on your side put him in the foreground. Do you know, Alyosha – don't laugh! I made a poem about a year ago. (DOSTOYEVSKY, 2005, p. 212-222)

This excerpt was taken from a section called *Rebellion,* which is more or less what Arthur goes through at this stage of our discussion (the culmination of his rebellion is the scene at the library). Indeed, he could be considered a rebel when he asks Mrs Poulter how on earth she believes in God and in its miraculous power (being, therefore, one of the 'savage, vicious beasts' referred to by Ivan). First, the idea that God was invented and the questioning of the necessity of God puzzle Arthur: in a way, he does not show this necessity in the story (he dismissed comments in favour of this necessity of reading/believing in God's word) and he does not imagine that the Lord Almighty might have been invented.

After the dialogue with Mrs Poulter, we have the scene at the library involving *The Brothers Karamazov* (all this presented in the chapter *Arthur*). When he talks to Mrs Poulter and asks the sceptical questions regarding the truth of the existence of God, in a way trying to broaden Mrs Poulter's view, we immediately think of *The Brothers Karamazov*. This mental process of reference, resulting from the comparison of both excerpts, evidently configures a form of intertextual relation (a form of allusion).

Another dialogue in *The Brothers Karamazov* similar to that of Mrs Poulter and Arthur occurs between Kolya, a fourteen-year-old boy, and Alyosha:

> I have heard you are a mystic and have been in the monastery. I know you are a mystic, but… that hasn't put me off. Contact with real life will cure you… It's always so with characters like yours.
>
> What do you mean by mystic? Cure me of what? Alyosha was rather astonished.
>
> Oh, God and all the rest of it.
>
> What, don't you believe in God?

> Oh, I've nothing against God. Of course, God is only a hypothesis, but… I admit that he is needed… for the order of the universe and all that… and that if there were no God he would have to be invented, added Kolya, beginning to blush. (DOSTOYESVKY, 2005, p. 513)

We see that Arthur, unlike Dmitri in *The Brothers Karamazov*, albeit placed between two opposing ideas (one, represented by Ivan, with his rational atheism; the other, represented by Alyosha, and his excessive religiousness), ends up incorporating many aspects to create his own religious option. What Dmitri presents in the following excerpt could be applied to Arthur's situation in *The Solid Mandala* prior to his dancing of the mandala:

> You see, I never had any of these doubts before, but it was all hidden away in me. It was perhaps just because ideas I did not understand were surging up in me, that I used to drink and fight and rage. It was to stifle them in myself, to still them, to smother them. Ivan is not Rakitin, there is an idea in him. Ivan is a sphinx and is silent; he is always silent. It's God that's worrying me. That's the only thing that's worrying me. What if he doesn't exist? What if Rakitin is right – that it's an idea made up by men? Then if he doesn't exist, man is the chief of the earth, of the universe. Magnificent! Only how is he going to be good without God? That's the question. I always come back to that. For whom is man going to love then? To whom will he be thankful? To whom will he sing the hymn? Rakitin laughs. Rakitin says that one can love humanity without God. Well, only a snivelling idiot can maintain that. I can't understand it. Life's easy for Rakitin. (DOSTOYEVSKY, 2005, p. 550)

The question of the existence of Christ[37], which Arthur and Dmitri share (and which reappears here), points to another aspect of Patrick White's style: according to Iris Murdoch, he is one of the authors who 'attempts to express a religious consciousness without the trappings of religion'[38]. In the chapter entitled *A Story About a Man: the demythologised Christ in the novels of Iris Murdoch and Patrick White*, Pamela Osborn claims that 'Where Christ holds value is through his status as an ordinary human being attempting to behave morally, and he can only be useful in this way if he is stripped of his divinity and made entirely human'[39]. Thus, seeing a real man as Christ would sometimes seem reasonable to Arthur (and, in this case, he himself incorporates Christ). When we consider White as a writer, he needs a 'Christ-like' figure, 'characters who embody an element of Christ, allowing

[37] According to Pamela Osborn, 'White's concept of Christ sees him as a reflection of what he called God, though without divine power, but this idea of Christ is often obscured, for his characters, by the traditional picture of the crucified Christ' (ROWE et al., 2002, p. 162).
[38] MURDOCH, Iris. *Existentialists and Mystics*. London: Chatto, 1997. p. 225.
[39] OSBORN, Pamela. A Story About a Man: the demythologised Christ in the novels of Iris Murdoch and Patrick White. In: ROWE, Anne; HORNER, Avril. *Iris Murdoch and Morality*. London: Palgrave, 2010. p. 157.

the idea of Christ-like goodness to infiltrate the novel free of the "trappings" of Christianity'[40]. For instance, in *The Solid Mandala,* Arthur is the character chosen to represent that (Mrs Poulter believes in his goodness, so she is able to see a 'demythologised form of religious belief which centres upon human reality[41]'). This is also related to one of the sentences presented in the epigraph, authored by Meister Eckhart ('It is not outside, it is inside; wholly within'): Luiz Felipe Pondé says that 'to him [Eckhart], somehow God is born at the bottom of the soul of the human being; it is the idea that the human being finds himself God. […] That is what Meister Eckhart calls 'the birth of the Son' within the soul, the birth of God deep inside the soul: the individual dissolves the identity, he dissolves any name[42]' (PONDÉ, 2003, p. 179-180, my translation). Thus, this is what happens also in *The Solid Mandala*, particularly in the scene of the mandala dance.

In the following excerpt, we see Arthur's divinity in relation to Dulcie: 'I have always been – particularly lately – hideously weak. You", she said, gasping for breath above the glass marble, "were the one, Arthur, who gave me strength – well, to face the truth - well, about ourselves – in particular my *own* wobbly self' (WHITE, 1969, P. 255). In this sense, Arthur would be able to shed 'light' on people, acting as a 'divine counsellor'.

It is crucial to observe how Arthur questions some arguments present in *The Grand Inquisitor*:

> The need to 'find someone to worship'. As he says. Well, that's plain enough.
> Arthur had begun to slap the book and raise his voice alarmingly. That's clear. But what's all this about bread? Why's he got it in for the poor old *bread*?
> He was smashing the open book with his fist.
> Eh? Everybody's got to concentrate on something. Whether it's a dog. Or, he babbled, or a glass marble. Or a brother, for instance. Or Our Lord, like Mrs Poulter says. (WHITE, 1969, p. 200)

Arthur, unlike Ivan in The Grand Inquisitor, uses the phrase 'concentrate on something', putting 'dog', 'glass marbles', 'brother' and 'Our Lord' in the same range of possibilities. That is, at the time of confusion (which makes him slap the book), Arthur

[40] Ibid. p. 160.
[41] Ibid. p. 163.
[42] In the original: "Para ele, de alguma forma, Deus nasce no fundo da alma do ser humano; é a ideia de que o ser humano se descobre Deus. [...] É o que Meister Eckhart chama de 'Nascimento do Filho' na alma, o nascimento de Deus no fundo da alma: o indivíduo dissolve a identidade, dissolve qualquer nome próprio."

considers the idea of concentrating on something as a possible action, since his feelings (for God or anything else, in this context) would not be deeply involved (that is, his reason would speak louder than his emotions, which is something that would not happen when you worship someone – God, or any other entity, in this case). 'Something' rather than 'someone' also signals the argument present in The Grand Inquisitor: God, with his ability to think, decided to make people suffer, when he had the power to make them happy forever, thus, misleading thousands of worshippers. Possibly to avoid being misled, then Arthur prefers to concentrate on something (as things do not have the power to contradict or lie to you, like people). Also, this shows his pagan inclinations (*things* as the carriers of meaning and power, explaining the existence of his mandalas). As we see throughout the story, this idea does not avoid the concentrated Arthur from being neglected by his twin brother.

Corroborating the idea presented earlier, we have the following excerpt from *The Brothers Karamazov*:

> This is the significance of the first question in the wilderness, and this is what thou hast rejected for the sake of that freedom which thou hast exalted above everything. Yet in this question lies hid the great secret of this world. Choosing "bread", thou wouldst have satisfied the universal and everlasting craving of humanity – to find someone to worship. So long as man remains free he strives for nothing so incessantly and so painfully as to find someone to worship. But man seeks to worship what is established beyond dispute, so that all men would agree at once to worship it. For these pitiful creatures are concerned not only to find what one or the other can worship, but to find something that all would believe in and worship; what is essential is that all may be *together* in it. (DOSTOYEVSKY, 2005, p. 230)

Sometimes we can say that Arthur incorporates the behaviour seen in Ivan's character, such as being sceptical about some issues, for example, in regards to the religiosity of others, questioning the truth of established things; at other times, he acts like Alyosha, showing his passionate side, attempting to love Waldo the way God (and Alyosha himself, in his initial role as a monk) loves all mankind.

So far in this thesis we have focused on the figure of Arthur. We shall now turn to Waldo. Certainly we can see that his behaviour is similar to that of Ivan, though the latter is much more effective in his comments and attitudes. For instance, in relation to the very reading of *The Brothers Karamazov*, it is not stated that Waldo actually read the novel: he

recognises the title in the same way he knows the name Maggie Tulliver from *The Mill on the Floss*, by George Eliot, or even the chapter *The Grand Inquisitor*. Moreover, regarding religion/spirituality, Waldo could be qualified as an atheist, though we do not have any specific evidence (once again, all we have is Waldo's disdain for most philosophical/religious systems) in a way resembling Ivan. For example, when he seems in need of immediate help, he summons God: 'O God, send at least the dogs, he prayed, turning it into a kind of Greek invocation as he was not a believer, and no doubt because of his blasphemy against reality, the dogs failed to come' (WHITE, 1969, p. 190). Evidently, his prayer is not heard: as a 'convinced unbeliever', it is done without true intention, only at a moment of difficulty when Johnny Haynes is trying to invade his house.

In the following section, we will focus on another aspect which seems to relate Patrick White's story to Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*: suffering.

4.2 Suffering

There is a significant comment made by Ingmar Björkstén, a Swedish commentator of Patrick White's oeuvre:

> Like Dostoevsky, Patrick White views suffering as a necessity; it is the path of purification that leads to spiritual insight. But suffering is not so much a religious phenomenon as an existential one; it is less a prerequisite for salvation than it is a part of existence. Conventional religiousness is a party game which does not exclude a sophisticated malice towards those who don't want to join in. (BJÖRKSTÉN, 1976, p. 19)

We should make a distinction here between physical suffering and psychological/emotional suffering. Waldo and Arthur do not suffer *physically* (neither of them has a serious disease, or anything like that), whereas their parents do. The reader follows the father suffering from asthma and the mother from cancer:

> But dad probably suffered without telling, or giving expression only indirectly to his pain. There was his leg. His foot. Often strangers, and always

> children, were fascinated by George Brown's boot, which was something members of the family hardly noticed. It fell into the same category as inherited furniture. (WHITE, 1969, p. 34)

Regarding psychological/emotional suffering, however, we have some parallels with Dostoyevsky's story. Let us start with Waldo, who, albeit his intellectuality, seems unable to deal wisely with his own problems/conflicts. He aspires to become a great writer and, at the end, the one who finally gets to compose something is his supposedly mentally challenged brother. In his love life (although we can infer some undertones of homosexuality, mainly when he refers to his friend Walter Pugh, or his first encounter with Mr Poulter) he seems not to accept the fact that Dulcie prefers a Jewish man to him, a young intellectual, without religious concerns, who works in a library. However, perhaps his main source of suffering is related to his whole family: in a way, he is not proud of his family, since he makes a number of negative comments about his father throughout the story, such as:

> Family matters of an exalted nature had always been stirring in his mind. If he resisted toying with the possibility of his not being his father's son, it was because a twin brother denied him that luxury. Though Waldo might have been better got, Arthur's getting and fate could hardly be improved upon. (WHITE, 1969, p. 161)

On the one hand, throughout the story we see him make positive comments about his mother, highlighting his 'proximity' to her (in terms of thought and behaviour). Sometimes he disapproves of her comments (mainly related to his literary career), and when she was ill his attitude is reproached by Mrs Poulter (one reason why he hated her so much). In his view he was doing a great deal by reading *The Pickwick Papers* to her, instead of looking for resources to try to save her (or at least to alleviate her suffering).

Thus, if Waldo possibly knew that he was not his father's son from his perspective, things would improve for him. Nevertheless, we are not so sure to what extent; given he is his father's son, what we see is that he is just playing with the idea. This makes us think of the hatred the brothers Karamazov feel towards their father, who is a figure that is dismissed and, ultimately, murdered. This is not the case in Patrick White's novel, as one can see according to Ingmar Björkstén:

> Perhaps Dostoyevsky presents the closest parallel: the same close scrutiny and soul-searching of characters and the same reluctance to dismiss a character until there is nothing more to reveal about him. But White's characters are of a gentler sort. In spite of his dislike of the superficial materialism of Australia, they are not so much described in relation to the society they live in as in relation to each other and to nature. (BJÖRKSTÉN, 1976, p. 1-2)

Indeed, it is possible to visualise this similarity in terms of style between both authors (and this is one more reason why the comparison between Patrick White and Fiodor Dostoyevsky is sensible). In terms of soul-searching, in *The Solid Mandala* the character who is available for that search is Arthur; Waldo seems to have lost his soul. To confirm this, one sees that Mrs Musto mentions something important to comprehend Waldo's personality: 'I shall ask that Feinstein girl, she decided. Does it work, though? A *couple* of lost souls' (WHITE, 1969, p. 239). While Dulcie finds salvation through Arthur (who is the one who makes her see things, who makes her understand herself), Waldo negates Arthur's power, and ends up a 'lost soul' (hence, his 'death in life').

Waldo's suffering could be compared to that of Dmitri Karamazov, the brother accused of murdering his own father. Though Waldo does not commit such a crime in the novel, we do have his negative feelings revealed. Dmitri falls in love with two women at the same time (in the end he makes an option, but the situation led both women to quarrel over him, which makes him suffer as well). Waldo perhaps suffers due to *lack* of options (if he does not have Dulcie – who chooses a man who shares her religion - then he will end up alone, since he seems unable to look for another girl in his life). When his mother dies, we see Waldo suffering (afraid of something which we are unaware of) to the point of not being able to deal with the organization of her funeral (a task left to Arthur, along with Dulcie's fiancé, Leonard Saporta).

Luiz Felipe Pondé says something about the theme of suffering in the novel:

> Dostoyevsky's characters really suffer, even at the moments when they are happy. The word 'suffer' is directly related to the words *páthos*, *affectus*; we are individuals who suffer *páthos* from all sides, including inside ourselves. Thus, we

> are beings adrift: we are in the constant movement of passions – passion in the Greek sense. To flee from it is an illusion. (PONDÉ, 2003, p. 168, my translation)[43]

If we have this sense of suffering all the time, given we are subject to passions, then God plays an important role in this respect. In the case of Waldo's suffering, we could say that distance from God would apply. According to Peter Beatson, that would be 'the supreme form of suffering' (BEATSON, 1976, p. 30). Thus, Arthur's suffering would be diminished from the moment he starts finding God (and actually incorporating it) in the story. In the case of Dostoyesvky's characters, Alyosha is already aware of God, Dmitri finds God in prison and Ivan at the end meets the Devil (when he claims to have looked inside his eyes).

Concerning Arthur, we see that he suffers mainly when he loses his twin brother. When he loses both his parents we can say that he deals with the loss quite well: unlike Waldo, he plucks up the courage and attends his mother's cremation. Towards the end of the novel, he tries to blame himself for Waldo's death, but in fact his death was something unavoidable, as a consequence of Waldo's disgust. According to Peter Beatson:

> Arthur Brown accepts full responsibility for his brother's evil. His love and devotion, operating through the clumsy vehicle of his unfortunate exterior, force Waldo into defensive acts of destruction, which culminate in his death, a suicide which Waldo interprets as murder. Arthur, however, realizes with horror that goodness and innocence are not sufficient, and blames himself for Waldo's death. (BEATSON, 1976, p. 37)

In fact, Arthur denominates himself thus: 'Arthur Brown, the getter of pain' (WHITE, 1969, p. 294). This feeling has a relation to what both Dmitri and Ivan Karamazov suffer in *The Brothers Karamazov*: the former, considering his personality and strong emotional reactions, being condemned for a crime he did not commit; the latter, for giving the idea for the crime (his rationality in action) and actually inducing Smerdiakov to commit the crime. Perhaps this is more evident in *The Solid Mandala* in the following excerpt:

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[43] In the original: "Os personagens de Dostoyevsky sofrem de fato, mesmo nos momentos em que são felizes. A palavra 'sofrer' está diretamente ligada às palavras páthos, affectus; somos indivíduos que sofrem o páthos de todos os lados, inclusive dentro de nós mesmos. Então somos um ser à deriva: estamos no movimento constante das paixões – paixão no sentido grego. Fugir disso é uma ilusão." (PONDÉ, 2003, p. 168)

> How many days Arthur Brown walked his guilt he didn't think to calculate; time was all of a piece, and meat pies, and snatches of sleep on the slats of benches. He began to feel his age at last. If he continued experiencing guilt while the sorrow drained out of it, it was because he knew Waldo would have been ashamed of sorrow. Waldo had always been ashamed. Himself, never, but the cause of shame in other people. (WHITE, 1969, p. 307)

Again, Arthur is blaming himself for causing shame (trying to find redemption). And here his suffering consumes him, but he finds his redemption when he finds Mrs Poulter and her willingness to believe in him and to help take care of him (now that his half was dead).

The issue of tragedy is something related to suffering in the novel as well. Waldo claims he wants to write a Greek tragedy (referring merely to the genre, since he is unable to fully describe things in his life). Arthur, on the other hand, is conscious that a tragedy is more than that, so, he decides to act his cow tragedy for his family (this is referred to on page 52 in this thesis, when we have Waldo's literary activity – his desire to write a tragedy - being encouraged by his parents; Arthur is excluded from Waldo's tragedy, which makes him write his own). Michael Giffin claims that Arthur's acting 'confronts his family, for they do not want their existential and ontological dilemmas to become real or involving' (GIFFIN, 1996, p. 80). This negation makes Arthur afflicted, and already indicates that he 'can understand that suffering and affliction are part of a wholeness, while his family wants to deny this' (GIFFIN, 1996, p. 80). In fact, Arthur realizes, from that moment on, that 'it was some question of afflictions. Except in theory, the afflicted cannot love one another. Well, you couldn't altogether blame Dad. With his aching leg' (WHITE, 1969, p. 230). This would explain then why George Brown is afraid of *The Brothers Karamazov*: because he does not want to face the conflict of the three brothers, in order to understand his situation and his belief. Related to the discussion, it is important to see what Ivan says to Alyosha about suffering in their conversation: 'But we are not gods. Suppose I, for instance, suffer intensely. Another can never know how much I suffer, because he is another and not I. And what's more, a man is rarely ready to admit another's suffering' (DOSTOYESVKY, 2005, p. 214). Arthur tries to do the contrary: he wants to show (after having admitted) the suffering to his family, in order to face it, but they refuse to accept that.

The issue of suffering finds a biographical reference in David Marr's words:

> White saw himself as a sufferer: as an asthmatic, homosexual, foreigner and artist. He was aware that his own sense of suffering was, at times, exaggerated; he knew that money had saved him from many of the ordinary miseries experienced by the human race; he clung to Lascaris as the man who saved him from the worst suffering of all, loneliness. Yet he saw suffering as a force in his life, making him what he was, making us as we are. For White, pain is a force of history, shaping men and events. (MARR, 1992, p. 312)

A significant difference between *The Solid Mandala* and *The Brothers Karamazov* is the issue of money, here considered possibly as one factor related to suffering. For example, we do not have any reference to money in Patrick White's novel (the brothers work, they earn their money, have their own house, live a quiet life, with no financial distress). On the other hand, in *The Brothers Karamazov* the parricide takes place, among other things, because of the money of Fiodor Karamazov. Thereby, this would indicate the background of each author: Patrick White, as mentioned in the quotation by David Marr, was saved by his financial advantage, while Fiodor Dostoyevsky, at the time he was composing *The Brothers Karamazov*, was completely broke, in need of the money accrued from the completion of the book to pay even for his most basic needs (and, unlike White, Dostoyesvky already had a family to take care of).

One more reason for suffering, in this case for Waldo, is to see his one and only possibility of love, in middle age, with a family, on the street (and knowing, on the occasion, that Dulcie's son was named after Arthur):

> It was Waldo who suffered, Arthur regretted, from his meeting with the whole Saporta family in Pitt Street, in middle age. The shock of recognition had sent Waldo temporarily off his rocker, with the result that he was knocked down farther along, his pince-nez damaged beyond repair. It was not Arthur who had arranged the meeting, though Waldo seemed to think it was. (WHITE, 1969, p. 279)

Indeed, it was not easy for Waldo to see that, since it dawns on him that he is a failure: living only by idealizations and negating spiritual values (as well as his brother's power to make people see things). One more reason for suffering is fear of death, which, according to Peter Beatson, has an effect on 'emotionally and spiritually depleted characters, like Waldo' (BEATSON, 1976, p. 51). In the following dialogue we can see Waldo's idea in relation to death, when he replies to what Arthur says: 'Wonder if Mrs Allwright died. That's the worst

of it when people leave the district. Sometimes their relatives forget, or don't know how to put the notice in the column. Or perhaps Mrs Allwright *didn't* die. By rights, *by logic* – wouldn't you say? – Christian Scientists don't. Death, thank God – Waldo caught himself, comes to everyone' (WHITE, 1969, p. 115). This part was taken from Waldo's chapter, and his remark sounds menacing, since he shows his desire to see his own brother dead. However, his conscience accuses him: 'One thing, he decided, he would never do. He wouldn't touch a penny of Arthur's savings, out of delicacy, because he had willed Arthur dead' (WHITE, 1969, p. 116). Arthur goes on in his analysis of Waldo:

> All the way to his brother's bedside Arthur had suffered for Waldo's suffering, more particularly for Waldo's fear of death. […] Though Arthur continued to blub a little to show his brother he needed him. Love, he had found, is more acceptable to some when twisted out of its true shape. (WHITE, 1969, p. 279)

Indeed, the fear of death appears just in relation to Waldo, which, in a way, is a paradox, since we could consider him already dead in life. Once Waldo wrote in his notebook that 'Death was the last of the chemical reactions', and this seems to confirm the trend in Patrick White's novels that the characters who consider death as a mere physical action are 'those who have only experienced the semblance of life and have not really lived at all' (BEATSON, 1976, p. 51). Waldo, when talking to Arthur about death, mentions something which signals his own fate in the story: 'People die, he said, usually in one of two ways. They are either removed against their will, or their will removes them'. (WHITE, 1969, p. 69). Indeed, we could apply the second option to Waldo. Arthur, on the other hand, celebrates life in his chapter (culminating in the mandala dance).

Another aspect which also makes us think of *The Brothers Karamazov* is love and goodness, a feeling Patrick White shows in his oeuvre in a unique way.

4.3 Love and Goodness

Peter Beatson summarises how 'love' appears in *The Solid Mandala*:

> Waldo Brown […] is locked up in the icy citadel of the ego, holding love at arm's length. […] he desperately longs for love, and […] he lashes out at those who might give it to him. […] however, the redemptive power never breaks through his defences, and he dies of his own hatred. This is the most detailed and explicit account White had written of how the potential for love can be transformed into its lethal opposite number. Arthur, on the other hand, is […] a generator of love which the grossness of the clay from which he is created prevents him expressing. His unprepossessing exterior and lumbering mind alienate many of those who should be the recipients of his gift. (BEATSON, 1976, p. 43)

In Dostoyevsky's novel, the representative of love (meaning charitable love, not sexual love) is Alyosha, the monk (we already have a signal of his connection to religion and God). Thus, his attitudes can be translated in the idea of 'love all humanity the way God loves everyone'. In the case of *The Solid Mandala*, Arthur seems to share this role, having as the target of his love his twin brother, Waldo (who paradoxically is not touched by this gift, if one recalls the previous quotation). In the following dialogue we see the importance of love to the twins:

> Arthur, the mountain in front of him, finally asked: 'Do you understand all this about loving?'
> 'What?'
> This, perhaps, was it, which he most dreaded.
> 'Of course', said Waldo. 'What do you mean?'
> 'I sometimes wonder,' Arthur said, 'whether you have ever been in love.'
> Waldo was filled with such an unpleasant tingling, he got up and put the pudding basin down. One of the dogs, it was perhaps Scruffy, had come in to gloat over him.
> 'I have been in love,' Waldo said cautiously, 'well, I suppose, as much as any normal person ever was.'
> By now he suspected even his own syntax but Arthur would not notice syntax.
> 'I just wondered,' he said.
> 'But what thing to ask!' Waldo blurted. 'And what about you?'
> At once he could have kicked himself.
> 'Oh,' said Arthur, 'all the time. But perhaps I don't love enough or something. Anyway, it's too big a subject for me to altogether understand.'
> 'I should think so!' Waldo said.
> I should hope so, he might have meant.
> 'If we loved enough,' Arthur was struggling, kneading with his hands, 'then perhaps we could forget to hate.'
> 'Whom do you hate?' Waldo asked very carefully.
> 'Myself at times.'
> 'If you *must* hate, there's no reason to pick yourself.'
> 'But I can see myself. I'm closest to myself.'
> Then Waldo wanted to cry for this poor dope Arthur. Perhaps this was Arthur's function, though: to drive him in the direction of tears.
> 'I don't know what you're talking about,' he said, to offer his driest resistance.
> 'Love,' said Arthur. 'And that is what I fail in worst.'
> 'Oh, God!' Waldo cried.
> The light was the whitest mid-day light, of colder weather, and Arthur was standing him up.

> ‘If,’ said Arthur, ‘I was not so simple, I might have been able to help you, Waldo, not to be how you are.’
> Then Waldo was raving at the horror of it.
> ‘You’re mad! That’s what you are. You’re mad!’
> ‘All right, then,’ Arthur said. ’I’m mad.’
> And went away. (WHITE, 1969, p. 207-208)

Arthur’s concept of love calls our attention, since it is more or less the kind of love that Alyosha represents, one that does not look for reward. Actually, at the same time he says that Waldo is his responsibility, he recognizes that he has failed to change Waldo. However, what we can see is that Arthur could not do anything in this situation: Waldo was not ready (or was unable) to grasp such issues as love. Thus, we have Arthur suffering, for being unable to fulfil this ‘mission’ in his life. Returning to the main scene at the library, in which Arthur is considered a total stranger by his twin brother, we see that, even though he is portrayed as a good and lovable man, he ends up being the ‘getter of pain’ (WHITE, 1969, p. 294). Thereby, by ‘feeding’ Waldo with his love and dedication, Arthur actually breeds hatred, considering Waldo’s incapacity to love. It is from this situation that the feeling of ‘uselessness’ in relation to Christ, present in *The Grand Inquisitor*, appears in *The Solid Mandala* in relation to Arthur. In the quotation we can see that Arthur is quite explicit about his desire of ‘not’ being like his twin; also, Arthur’s function to drive Waldo to tears is interesting, since it illustrates Waldo’s incapacity to identify his own emotional problems (and to deal with them) like his mentally challenged brother.

It is at this moment that Mrs Poulter shows her importance in the story. According to Ingmar Björkstén:

> Mrs Poulter, the childless neighbour in Terminus Road, represents in a new guise Dostoyevsky’s active love (Mrs Godbold is another incarnation of this but more complicated). Mrs Poulter is likewise bound in love and marriage to a man who feels his wife is a stranger to him; the real woman he suspects lies behind the persona he knows. But he accepts the feeling of security that her presence gives him. Bill Poulter does not make marriage into the same hell for his wife as Tom Godbold. (BJÖRKSTÉN, 1973, p. 90)

Thus, we are able to say that, as a representative of active love, and through her love and belief in Arthur, Mrs Poulter can ‘attain to a level of fulfilment previously unknown to

her, which manifests as a love of ordinary objects, people and domestic life'[44]. She could be seen as an 'angel' who satisfies Bill Poulter's needs. In addition to that, not surprisingly, she represents a means by which, in contrast to Waldo's physical death (as we are under the impression that Waldo had already died earlier in the story, given his lack of energy and belief in life), Arthur is reborn, through the mandala dance and his discovery of himself. Mrs Poulter is one of the characters (together with Dulcie) to discover Arthur's 'divine love', which is exemplified in the following quotation, towards the end of the novel: 'This man would be my saint,' she said, 'if we could still believe in saints. Nowadays,' she said, 'we've only men to believe in. I believe in this man' (WHITE, 1969, p. 314). Indeed, if we have the possibility of Arthur loving people in general, in a way following Alyosha, then this 'divinization' seems to match our interpretation. However, we should not consider this divinization as something that comes from a specific religion; in this context, it refers to spirituality.

At the end of the novel, Mrs Poulter, showing all her love and compassion towards Arthur, says something important to our analysis:

> There's a truth above truth at times. That, Mrs Poulter said, is what a person, if she's honest, believes.
> That's okay for you, he said. You're safe. You've got your religion to believe in.
> I believe in you, Arthur.
> So she did, this man and child, since her God was brought crashing down. (WHITE, 1969, p. 311)

Again, there is the idea of having someone/something to worship as being an important factor in one's life, according to Arthur, since Mrs Poulter is safe by having her religion to believe in (as well as Mrs Allwright), albeit the reference, by the narrator, that her God is collapsing. Luiz Felipe Pondé analyses how love is portrayed in Dostoyevsky:

> However, beyond that, the way towards good is the perception that, while the individual does not get outside himself, he will continue in hell. And how to get out? Loving. It is the old Agostinian maxim: if you want to be free, love. He who loves is someone who gets outside himself, and this is the mechanism that really realizes good. Thus, the idea of *caritas* of freedom: there is only freedom in *caritas.* Here

[44] OSBORN, Pamela. A Story About a Man: the demythologised Christ in the novels of Iris Murdoch and Patrick White. In: ROWE, Anne; HORNER, Avril. *Iris Murdoch and Morality.* London: Palgrave, 2010. p. 163.

> Dostoyevsky comes near to the Agostinian theology. (PONDÉ, 2003, p. 196, my translation) [45]

Arthur, by loving his friends and family (though not always receiving this love in exchange) in the mandala dance and through his solid mandalas (that is, his glass marbles) shows the love which is inside him (thus, he manages to get out of himself, and, consequently, is considered free). Initially he is afraid that the Inquisitor is right, that is, that God is not necessary, that love is something meaningless in this world. However, the way he chooses to express his feelings and philosophy conveys at the same time his desire to bring all the elements together (Paganism and Christianity, for instance), to see them in just one point. Thus, he surpasses all 'doctrinal' and 'institutional' religions, and actually creates a new outlook, with love being a crucial element.

The concept of love presented in *The Brothers Karamazov* by Father Zosima (Alyosha's 'mentor') is worth mentioning, and it appears in a section called *Of prayer, of love and of contact with other worlds*:

> Love a man even in his sin, for that is the semblance of divine love and is the highest love on earth. Love all God's creation, the whole and every grain of sand in it. Love every leaf, every ray of God's light. Love the animals, love the plants, love everything. If you love everything, you will perceive the divine mystery in things. Once you perceive it, you will begin to comprehend it better every day. And you will come at last to love the whole world with all embracing love. (DOSTOYEVSKY, 2005, p. 291)

Precisely the love of animals should be highlighted, as Arthur expresses this aspect of love in his contact with the dogs. Waldo, on the contrary, despises even the possibility of the animals sleeping with them inside the house. Thus, this already signals the fact that Arthur, following the idea of 'loving everything', ends up discovering the 'divine mystery' of things (to the point of transforming ordinary 'glass marbles' into 'solid mandalas').

In addition to that, we have one more comment made by Father Zosima, referring to 'the contact with other worlds':

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[45] In the original: "Todavia, para, além disso, o caminho em direção ao bem é a percepção de que, enquanto o indivíduo não sair de si mesmo, continuará no inferno. E como sair? Amando. É a velha máxima de Agostinho: Quer ser livre, ame. Aquele que ama é alguém que sai de si mesmo, e é esse mecanismo que, de fato, realiza o bem. Por isso a ideia de *caritas* da liberdade: só existe liberdade na *caritas*. Aqui Dostoiévski se aproxima da teologia agostiniana." (PONDÉ, 2003, p. 196)

> Much on earth is hidden from us, but to make up for that we have been given a precious mystic sense of our living bond with the other world, with the higher heavenly world, and the roots of our thoughts and feelings are not here but in other worlds. That is why the philosophers say that we cannot apprehend the reality of things on earth.
>
> God took seeds from different worlds and sowed them on this earth, and his garden grew up and everything came up that could come up, but what grows lives and is alive only through the feeling of its contact with the other mysterious worlds. If that feeling grows weak or is destroyed in you, the heavenly growth will die away in you. Then you will be indifferent to life and even grow to hate it. That's what I think. (DOSTOYEVSKY, 2005, p. 293)

Once again, we see that this is one more feature in Arthur's character: when he dances the mandala, he mixes elements of other worlds, and this reminds us of one more sentence in the epigraph, by Paul Eluard: 'There is another world, but it is in this one'. Arthur, although blending all those elements from different worlds, is still 'on this earth', and in a way he grasps the 'mysterious' existence, which justifies his 'liveliness' in the novel. On the contrary, Waldo seemed to have 'destroyed' this feeling, thus, again, indicating that he is already 'dead' psychologically in the story earlier (physical death being just a consequence of his hatred of life). To complement this idea, we have Luis Pondé commenting on that subject in Dostoyevsky's oeuvre:

> Thus, it is in this sense that Dostoyevsky asserts that atheists do not perceive that death is not the main form of decomposition, for it already occurred in life. And atheism is nothing more than the bet on the decomposition of the individual alive. Hence his conception of atheism as the biggest tragedy in the world. Nihilism is its conceptual name. (PONDÉ, 2003, p. 83)[46]

Similarly to Ivan meeting the Devil and almost dying due to his brain fever (as a consequence of his strong negation of God as well as of his guilt about the planning of the parricide – following his philosophy that, given God does not exist, everything is permitted on Earth), Waldo exudes the fear of death (as mentioned earlier) as well as the fear of love and life (since he is unable to grasp any form of love, referring again to what Arthur says in relation to love having to be 'twisted out of its true shape' to some people).

[46] In the original: "É nesse sentido, portanto, que Dostoiésvki afirma que os ateus não percebem que a morte é a principal forma de decomposição, pois esta já aconteceu em vida. E o ateísmo nada mais é do que a aposta na decomposição do indivíduo vivo. Daí sua concepção do ateísmo como a maior tragédia existente no mundo. O niilismo é seu nome conceitual." (PONDÉ, 2003, p. 83)

5 THE SEARCH FOR THE WHOLE

At the time of the composition of *The Solid Mandala*, David Marr states that White was a "believer without any formal faith […]. Unable and unwilling to call himself a Christian, White nevertheless recognized Christ as one of the means by which 'God reveals Himself' (MARR, 1992, p. 451). As presented in the analysis, Arthur in the mandala dance incorporates Christ, and sees the whole of his life.

Thus, this is a factor informing White's choice of influences to compose *The Solid Mandala*. The idea of considering mandalas and the search for the whole, which is evident in Arthur's behaviour, finds its biographical support, when Patrick White meets the painter Lawrence Daws, who:

> recalled them discussing these images, 'and the possibility that they were archetypal images that we carried around and that, loosely, the images evoked were common to all people. We talked about mandalas […]. Then onto Jung. The idea of making oneself *whole*, of making *a mandala of one's life*… appealed strongly to Patrick… I think Jung clarified for Patrick the idea of the *whole* and the attempting to arrive at the real purpose of our lives.' […] White became enthusiastic about horoscopes and the *I Ching*: 'he behaved at times in a fairly vulnerable way, sometimes seizing on the slightest reference as a divine message and giving it significance in shaping his life. In a way, the Jungian mandala concept gave him… a structure on which to hang all those things that were separately shaping his being'. (MARR, 1992, p. 452)

We did not delve into Carl Jung's work in this thesis due to the number of works that have already discussed the role of Jung in Patrick White's novels. Moreover, White was generally annoyed with Jungian commentators: "Of course I'm no expert on Jung, only picked a few bits which suited my purpose, just as I've picked a few bits from Christian

theology and the Jewish mystics" (MARR, 1992, p. 452). In fact, with this structure in mind, and considering the mystical references, one can definitely see that *The Brothers Karamazov* does not appear in this context accidentally. The three aspects found (religion, suffering and love) suggest White's desire that 'now that the world becomes more pagan' to 'lead people in the same direction in a different way'. According to Michael Giffin, the direction referred to by White can be 'towards a religious reality that is quite the opposite of what the Western Eye has come to project through its aesthetic ideology' (GIFFIN, 1996, p. 30). Giffin continues:

> This places White in a definite literary tradition in which it is difficult to imagine, as some critics have, that the texts rose up from his unconscious, *ex nihilo* as it were, as a form of automatic writing or literary ectoplasm which White does not understand. For there are critics who appeal to the ideas of dead author and autonomous text, in White's case, often inconsistently and whenever it suits them to do so. And in doing so these critics forget that while the unconscious is an important theme for White, he definitely uses his conscious mind to plumb its depths, to give a language to what emerges from his unconscious. His writings are theoretical and intentional. (GIFFIN, 1996, p. 30)

The Brothers Karamazov is part of that attempt. By introducing the conflicts and the points of view of the three brothers – Alyosha, Ivan and Dmitri -, we see Arthur in search of his religious/spiritual enlightenment, creating his own philosophy (his belief in simple things). In the Russian novel, Dmitri at the end seems to be the character who is looking for redemption, and who at the same time is able to foresee a future, as well as to understand his condition, to assuage his fear and to assimilate Alyosha's religious philosophy, while negating Ivan's intellectuality and atheism. Patrick White might have chosen *The Brothers Karamazov* because, according to Luiz Pondé:

> In regard to what we would call 'constructive manifestation of the religious thinking' (or 'constructive path'), the texts in which Dostoyesvky better defines his idea of a religious person or religion are, undoubtedly, *The Idiot* and *The Brothers Karamazov*. In these two novels he tries to shape, depict people who, although living in the world of evil (that is, the world of the disgraced nature), are still in contact with God. (PONDÉ, 2003, p. 59, my translation)[47]

[47] In the original: "Com relação ao que chamaríamos de 'manifestação construtiva do pensamento religioso' (ou 'percurso construtivo'), os textos nos quais Dostoiésvki melhor define sua ideia de pessoa religiosa ou de religião são, sem dúvida, *O idiota* e *Os irmãos Karamázov*. Nessas duas obras ele tenta moldar, desenhar o que seriam pessoas que, apesar de viverem no mundo do mal (leia-se o mundo da natureza desgraçada), permanecem em contato com Deus." (PONDÉ, 2003, p. 59)

The world of the disgraced natured mentioned by Pondé could be considered the society of the suburbs of Sydney, in Sarsaparilla, as well as the whole Australian society criticized by White, with one aspect being the false religious possibility of freedom, which actually had motivated George Brown to move with all his family. In reality what they find is Sectarianism, which was still active while White was writing *The Solid Mandala*. Thus, Arthur is a distinctive character, making use of his discoveries, even though he knew his father (or his intellectual brother, Waldo, or his mother) would not be able to find totality, let alone provide a decent definition for the term:

> What, he asked, is the meaning of "totality"? […]
> Well, he said, it is one of those words so simple in themselves as to be difficult of explanation. So very simple, repeated. […]
> Dad took the dictionary down. […]
> Dad read out: Totality is the "quality of being total".
> He looked at Arthur.
> That is to say, said Dad, he could not clear his throat enough, it means, he said, that which is a whole, adding: Spelt with a *w* – naturally.
> Then Arthur realized Dad would never know, any more than Waldo. It was himself who was, and would remain, the keeper of mandalas, who must guess their final secret through touch and light. (WHITE, 1969, p. 240)

The reading of *The Brothers Karamazov* helps the reader of *The Solid Mandala* to pursue more or less the same path as Arthur's: he lives, as Pondé mentions, in 'the world of evil', but in such a way as to stay away from his environment, dreaming, finding the meaning of totality in his mandalas (and even dancing his mandala), and discovering (and trying to grasp) the conflict involving the three brothers in the Russian novel (with the environment depicted by Dostoyevsky being the world of evil, with its disgraced nature, as well as with important religious issues being discussed – the 19th century, according to Pondé, represents the century of religious doubts).

At the end of the novel, soon after Waldo's death, Arthur is shocked, and then he starts remembering some events of his life. Then we have a crucial statement, reassuring the importance of *The Brothers Karamazov* to Arthur Brown and his constant visits to the Public Library:

> At one stage in his limping progress, he squared his shoulders, he put on the cloak of an air, and swirled inside the Public Library, squelching over the polished rubber, trailing his identity round the room in which he had begun the struggle to find it. If he no longer felt moved to take down a book, it was because in the end

> knowledge had come to him, not through words, but by lightning. (WHITE, 1969, p. 307)

Thus, Arthur was looking for his identity, determined to face the demons presented in *The Brothers Karamazov*. Trying to define himself, Arthur follows his own intuition, and acts like a wise fool. Perhaps that is why we have, once again, the important figure of Tiresias: not only because of the hermaphroditic experience, but also because of the gift to foresee things, as well as to tell the truth. This adds to the idea of Arthur being the holy character, or, according to Dulcie's words: 'You, Arthur, she said, are you, I wonder, the instrument we feel you are?' (WHITE, 1969, p. 279). This is also related to the idea of knowledge conveyed in the excerpt above: he is illuminated to find the truth, and words (which belonged to Waldo) are not necessary (as a result of his experience of the mandala dance).

In the mandala dance, which summarizes his search for the whole, we have the following:

> In the first corner, as a prelude to all that he had to reveal, he danced the dance of himself. […] Even in the absence of gods, his life, or dance, was always prayerful. […] In the second corner he declared his love for Dulcie Feinstein, and for her husband, by whom, through their love for Dulcie, he was, equally, possessed so they were all three united, and their children to be conceived. In Mrs Poulter's corner he danced the rite of ripening pears, and little rootling suckling pigs. […] In the fourth corner, which was his brother's, the reeds sawed at one another. […] He couldn't dance his brother out of him, not fully. […] Till in the centre of their mandala he danced the passion of all their lives, the blood running out of the backs of his hands, water out of the hole in his ribs. His mouth was a silent hole, because no sound was needed to explain. (WHITE, 1969, p. 265-266)

Corroborating what was presented in our discussion on religion, suffering, and love/goodness, we have that these three subjects constitute the whole of his mandala (and, in a way, the whole represented by each one of the chosen elements in his life, as well – namely, Dulcie, Mrs Poulter and Arthur himself). Before we go on, a brief explanation involving the meaning of the mandala is needed.

In relation to the use of mandalas, Peter Beatson in his study of Patrick White's oeuvre claims that the mandalas 'not only express the estrangement of the unique individual from the society around him; they are also symbols of the union and communion that exist among

people of a similar inner grace' (BEATSON, 1979, p.160). That is why in the scene of the mandala dance we have Dulcie and Mrs Poulter sharing (and indeed being part of) Arthur's totality. Peter Beatson complements his idea, stating that: 'the mandala is a square within a circle, with a symbolic centre that represents the in-dwelling god which is double-natured or hermaphroditic' (BEATSON, 1979, p. 163). From this we can recall the idea of Arthur incorporating Tiresias and experiencing this hermaphroditic condition. A compelling statement concerning the meaning of the mandala is made by John Sayre Martin, complementing the idea developed by Peter Beatson:

> "[…] an age-old symbol of unity and harmony in the material and phenomenal worlds. The circles symbolizing – as in Christian iconography – the celestial and visionary, and the squares the mundane and the practical; the total configuration points to […] a desire for total, integrated reality." (MARTIN, 1977, p. 30)

That's what Arthur pursues: to integrate his reality, transcending any kind of religious doctrine or political views or philosophical convictions. Another meaning which needs clarification is related to the phraseology 'dance a mandala' or 'dance someone'. Waldo, by refusing the mandala, is rejected, that is, Arthur is unable to dance someone who is not willing to share his discovery of the whole. In this case, we can see that the lexical choice (dance someone) reflects Patrick White's interest in mystical elements. In an article entitled *Terpsichorean Moments in Patrick White's The Solid Mandala and Hal Porter's The Tilted Cross*, Melinda Jewell[48] claims that White uses an uncommon definition of mandala, influenced by his reading of Carl Jung's statement:

> I have […] found mandala drawings among the mentally ill […]. Among my patients I have come across cases of women who did not draw mandalas but who danced them instead. In India this type is called *mandala nrithya* or mandala dance, and the dance figures express the same meanings as the drawings[49].

[48] JEWELL, *Melinda. Terpsichorean Moments in Patrick White's The Solid Mandala and Hal Porter's The Tilted Cross*. Available at: <www.nla.gov.au/openpublish/index.php/jasal/article/download/46/47>. Accessed on 3rd December 2010.

[49]WILHELM, Richard; JUNG, Carl. *The Secret of the Golden Flower: A Chinese Book of Life and Part of The Hui Ming Ching: The Book of Consciousness and Life.* London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962. p. 100.

Thus, this source of meaning is more or less understandable now. Also, according to Melinda Jewell, 'it is the free and spontaneous movement of ordinary people in ordinary circumstances that White most closely identifies with, and it is this kind of movement that Arthur performs in *The Solid Mandala*'[50].

In relation to the three brothers of *The Brothers Karamazov*, Ivan perhaps would be the rejected character, for his atheism and disdain for life – he is the one who keeps mentioning throughout the novel that "when at thirty, I want to 'dash the cup to the ground'" (DOSTOYEVSKY, 2005, p. 239). Alyosha, for his concept of love and attitudes towards others (being responsible for bringing peace among the children during the event of Ilyucha's problem with his classmates at school), is a character who would be one more element in the mandala dance (perhaps inside Mrs Poulter's corner), since we could say that through his reflections on important matters (such as in *The Grand Inquisitor*'s discussion with his brother, Ivan) he helps the reader stop and think of the question of the existence of God (in the same way as Mrs Poulter does in the dialogue in which she questions Arthur's position in relation to the inexistence of God). Arthur, after having read (and grasped) these arguments, feels stronger to pursue his own search, and then is able to introduce one more character in the dance: Dmitri Karamazov (perhaps inside Dulcie's corner). The one who is blamed for a crime he did not commit finds redemption by discovering God and accepting his condition. Therefore, Dulcie Feinstein would be more or less the equivalent in this case, since she is first considered a lost soul. However, due to Arthur – the instrument she needed – she is able to understand her own self and find redemption.

In Michael Giffin's interpretation, he considers the four parts (Arthur, Waldo, Mrs Poulter and Dulcie) as a combination of the whole in religious terms:

> The drab, material, ordinary suburban setting of Part One and Part Four frame the narrative of Part Two, which is focused upon Waldo, and Part Three, which is focused upon Arthur. These two middle sections can be read as an exploration of the varieties of Western religious experience. Dulcie Feinstein and Mrs Poulter represent Judaism and Christianity, while the Brown family represents the unhappy marriage between the myths of Primitive and Classical religion (GIFFIN, 1996, p. 75).

[50] JEWELL, Melinda. *Terpsichorean Moments in Patrick White's The Solid Mandala and Hal Porter's The Tilted Cross*. Available at: <www.nla.gov.au/openpublish/index.php/jasal/article/download/46/47>. Accessed on 3rd December 2010.

Thus, we have *The Solid Mandala* representing a whole, not only in the mandala dance (with Arthur uniting the spheres of his life), but also in terms of structure, with the four narrative parts being united, forming the story of the twin brothers in the suburb of Sarsaparilla. In the middle of the story, the presence of the brothers Karamazov, in a way, changes the life of the characters. Nevertheless, Arthur is particularly affected since he is the one who is interested in facing the devils and fears around him, as well as those presented in the Russian novel, in order to be the instrument to connect all the parts in just one point (his solid mandalas).

CONCLUSION

We began this work highlighting Patrick White's importance in worldwide literature, justifying why this author's oeuvre deserves to be analysed more attentively at the academic level. With his centenary soon approaching (in 2012), many events around the world have started to be organized to discuss his work (one of them, the Patrick White Conference, was held in London in June 2010).

After that, we focused on the relevance of *The Solid Mandala* in the author's oeuvre as representing everything he wanted to say, an expression of his desire to lead people to find the whole of their lives, valuing their solid mandalas (whatever they might be). The historical context of the novel helped connect the events being portrayed to the author's view concerning many issues, mainly the wars, diseases and socio-political problems affecting Australia (pertaining to events prior to the 1960s). It is especially important to highlight the idea of blackness, which refers to White's disappointment with the philistinism reigning in Australia, since initially his work as a playwright was rejected.

The role of the readers in the novel is explored in order to arrive at the main point of the work: to identify the intertextual relevance of *The Brothers Karamazov*, written by F. Dostoyevsky, inside *The Solid Mandala*. Considering the relevance literature has in Patrick White's novel, we also depicted the main characters' literary activity (writing), as a way to sustain the argument that *The Solid Mandala* is a metaliterary novel. To answer the first question, why *The Brothers Karamazov?*, we could see that, from the descriptions of the reading habits of the characters, some titles mentioned are related to religious issues, and *The Brothers Karamazov* appears among them. Any other novel written by Dostoyesvky (such as *Crime and Punishment*) could appear in the list of readings of the characters, but *The Brothers*

Karamazov is there because it is in this novel that Dostoyesvky was able to define his religious views more accurately, besides developing his concept of polyphony with mastery. The character in *The Solid Mandala* who reads the Russian novel is Arthur, the twin who is considered mentally challenged. The intellectual members of the family reject the novel: the father, George Brown, throws it into the fire; Waldo, in his turn, takes part in the discussion about *The Brothers Karamazov* at the library, but the reader is not sure whether he actually read it or not (it is important to remember that the narrator in *The Solid Mandala* is not in complete control of the action). We tend to believe Waldo has not read, since he particularly likes to show off his superficial literary knowledge.

The answer to the second question that was made, what is this title doing in Patrick White's novel?, lies in the parallels we found, namely involving how Arthur's divinity starts to be perceived after his constant visits to the public library to read *The Brothers Karamazov.* We observe that throughout the narrative Arthur seems to change his point of view concerning religion/spirituality. At the beginning, following the trend in his Baptist family, whose members (namely George Brown, the father) question some of their values, Arthur shares the same opinion: he does not believe there is a God who created life and all things, nor does he believe in God's word. However, in search of his identity, Arthur starts to pay regular visits to the public library to read *The Brothers Karamazov*. During his process of discovery, we see that some of his doubts and suffering are also shared by the Karamazovs (mainly Dmitri, the brother who is in prison, accused and condemned for the parricide he did not commit). Arthur is particularly confused after the dialogue between Ivan and Alyosha (that is, between an atheistic view *versus* a religious view, which considers religion an important source of meaning).

The answer to the third question asked in this work, i.e., does the reading of *The Brothers Karamazov* deepen the reading of *The Solid Mandala?*, is that, if the Russian novel was an instrument for Arthur in his search for the whole (and for himself), we can say it might also be an instrument for us, readers of Patrick White's oeuvre, to better comprehend the relations established inside his novel and also follow Arthur in his search for the whole. Also, the Russian novel has an important role in allowing the reader, who is receptive and open to it, to transcend the day to day aspects of life, as Arthur did, at the same time making connections and reflecting upon the issues presented.

Given *The Solid Mandala* has intertextual references appearing at the very beginning of the novel (in the epigraph, the name of Dostoyevsky calls our attention), the theoretician that could offer the adequate support for this thesis was Gérard Genette, who focuses on intertextuality as allusion. Thus, using his concepts of transtextuality and paratextuality, we were able to classify the intertextual references we were analyzing, concluding that in very subtle ways (for example, through the phrase 'the Brothers Brown', which appears in many occurrences throughout the novel), it is possible to observe connections to other literary works, in this case, specifically to *The Brothers Karamazov*. As the reader becomes intrigued with this form of addressing the characters, he or she will realize the multiple ways through which one can deepen the understanding of any literary work and enrich interpretations.

It is crucial to see that Arthur is not worried (or does not seem to care) about understanding the historical context of *The Brothers Karamazov*, but the underlying mystical and ahistorical aspects, such as the psychological relations inside a family (in this case, the Karamazovs) who, in fact, more or less share some of the anxieties of the Brown family, who flees to Australia in search of religious freedom and face sectarianism upon their arrival.

If we believe that literature gives us the possibility of reading a novel that can open our horizons (*The Brothers Karamazov*), Arthur is a perfect example with his frequent visits to the public library. By facing the demons he was taught to fear, he reads the novel and looks for connections between the arguments developed by the Karamazov brothers, and his own afflictions, trying to grasp the meaning behind those trends. Several elements, such as Mrs. Dun's encyclopedia, which shows the meaning of the word 'mandala', and Arthur's interest in other cultures (as evidenced in the titles he looks for at the library), make us see that the reunion of these elements creates Arthur's world inside this one, in which he incorporates Christ in his mandala dance, in such a way that it celebrates through anticipation the fact that he is enlightened and, because of that, manages to be the sole survivor in the Brown family. By admitting his suffering and looking for ways to express it (via the poem he writes and the cow tragedy that he enacts), Arthur shows why he transcends, and, in a way, becomes Tiresias, the mythological figure gifted with foresight. By saying the truth, and by making people see and understand their situation (in the case of Dulcie), Arthur takes the elements of goodness and divinity (as well as of realism) presented by the good characters in Dostoyesvky's novel and is able to go beyond his reality, which is something the other members of the Brown family refuse to do (or cannot do).

Thereby, the critical address to White needs to change. Even though he presents his disappointment and hopelessness in relation to the human race (all reflected in the "blackness of those times") in *The Solid Mandala*, it is possible to find, in the paths his novels open into light, answers to our current questions, somehow admitting that the "blackness" has already become part of our lives, so, it is not something to be feared anymore.

Since he is able to go through this process, Arthur is ready to live his life, unlike his brother Waldo, who ends up a frustrated writer, with no friends, and who dies out of his own sense of failure and anger towards his twin brother, the one thought to be crazy but who proves, at the end, to be the possessor of the key that can unite the most diverse elements to build his own world (inside this one), and invite his friends Dulcie and Mrs Poulter to join him in the discovery.

The feeling we get after closing both *The Solid Mandala* and *The Brothers Karamazov* is the same: we know life is not lived in constant beauty, and that suffering is not only present but is also an important part of living and of the process of spiritual discovery. By being the only character of the Brown family who survives in the story, Arthur is the one who shares aspects of fraternal love (and spirituality) with Alyosha: they are both able to survive because they had the power to love people. Also, Arthur is not frightened about things, and retains his ability to *feel*. Waldo is not able to deal with his emotions, and believes that people perform roles in life: to him, what matters is the exterior, or the impressions people have of you, rather than what you really are.

In general, when we read novels by both Patrick White and F. Dostoyevsky, what we see is that both authors may provoke feelings of depression in the readers, making him/her think of his/her reality, that is, we cannot expect happy endings or feelings of comfort after closing a book by these authors. And this is one more aspect which confirms the comparison between them: their intention in describing the events is not to mask reality, but rather, to make the reader think about it and try to experience and understand the psychological state of the characters being presented, with all their flaws, failures and disappointments.

Patrick White was facing a moment of spiritual search in his own life at the moment he composed *The Solid Mandala*, and his reading of *The Brothers Karamazov* helped him in the process. White's novel presents to the reader a world in which spirituality seems non-existent (like the world depicted in *The Brothers Karamazov*), and it criticizes intellectuality as a means to succeed in this journey, since Arthur, the mentally challenged character, is the one chosen to represent this enlightenment (concomitantly, Ivan, the rational and intellectual character in *The Brothers Karamazov*, fails in his search, like Waldo). The message is clear: in this spiritual search, it is not enough to count merely on our intellectual effort when obtaining knowledge (whether from books, as it is the case in the novels analysed in this work, or elsewhere). We need to be open-minded to accept that we carry this spirituality inside us (without the interference of any institutional religion to put it into practice). Like Arthur, we must try to become a whole, uniting body and soul, feeling and intellect (and in relation to White, also the environment) to find our spiritual identity.

Therefore, from this intertextual analysis involving *The Solid Mandala* and *The Brothers Karamazov*, we can experience the power of literature to make us ponder about our reality (in order to better understand our world and the complex relations established among its inhabitants) and question our own attitudes towards it and society in general, while transcending our everyday living.

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