The Leaden Order of Things: Marriage and Work

He perpetually, therefore, had before him an enfeebled reflection of himself, and this much irritated him, notwithstanding his love for her; for who could help loving a woman who, without the least hesitation, would have opened her veins at his command, and have given up every drop of blood in her body for him?

—Mark Rutherford’s Deliverance

I

In February 1854, Hale White refused John Chapman’s offer of a partnership in his publishing business and left 142 Strand. Turning his back on the “heartless emptiness” that he felt was characteristic of that establishment, he moved to the home of Mrs. Elizabeth Street, a generous, religious woman who was a good friend of the Reverend Caleb Morris. It is possible to see this decision as a flight from unorthodox attitudes in both the religious and social spheres. Wollaston, Mark Rutherford notes, “had ‘liberal’ notions about the relationship between the sexes,” and “he disbelieved in marriage” (A, 123). White was never particularly comfortable in Chapman’s milieu; after Marian Evans’s departure he may have felt more out of place than ever. In Mrs. Street’s “unworldly” household he returned to the familiar values of his childhood—loyalty, fidelity, piety—and conventional behavior. ¹ Here, at 11 Serle Street, Lincoln’s Inn Fields, White met and courted Harriet Arthur, the young half-sister of Mrs. Street.
After a two-year engagement, Hale and Harriet married, on his birthday in 1856. He was twenty-five years old. He records this event rather tersely in *The Early Life*: after describing his life at Chapman's and his next job as a clerk in the Registrar-General's Office, Somerset House, he adds, "Meanwhile I had married" (EL, 88). Because one of the major themes of White's fiction is the anguish of unhappy marriage, attention has naturally been focused on his own. It is true that few novelists have portrayed with such stark realism the gradual decay of love and the barriers that can arise between people who are irrevocably bound; and true also that his marriage became a burden and a substantial source of pain to him. But the causes of this unhappiness were complex; more so than in the novels.

By all accounts, Harriet was a gentle and affectionate woman. Her children recall that she knew French and German, loved simple lyrical poetry, and was an accomplished pianist who had studied with Sir Charles Halle. She was sweet, earnest, unintellectual, beloved by all who knew her. Shortly after the marriage, though, her health, always delicate, began to decline. It was discovered that she had an incurable disease, which eventually made her an invalid. She suffered increasingly for thirty years until her death in 1891. White's children felt, with good reason, that much of his "hypochondria" was related to this agonizing fact. Sir William Hale-White, his eldest son and a renowned physician at the turn of the century, writes of his father: "He had one great sorrow, enough to overwhelm most men. It was this. Shortly after his happy marriage, my mother showed signs of disseminated sclerosis—an incurable disease of the nervous system—which had been completely unsuspected. . . . My father cannot be understood by those who are unaware of his wife's illness." Earlier I argued that White's tragedy lay in the quality of his isolation. He had forfeited the vocation and been disowned by the religious community that might have provided a natural
home to him, and he was never quite happy in a secular environment. He may well have felt that although he had been denied the "Emmaus walk" and the self-realization it would have afforded, he might still reasonably expect to find in marriage some of the intimacy and community that he craved. Sadly, this hope was also gradually eroded, and his marriage slowly became the source of another form of exile.

Harriet White's children could scarcely recall when their mother was not an invalid. The disease induces gradual paralysis of the limbs and general decay of the organs. Mrs. White eventually became paralyzed in both legs, and was taken about in a bath chair. The paralysis then spread to her arms, "so that she could not write and hardly feed herself." In her last years, she was almost blind, although to the end of her life "she managed to read the Bible in large clear type and with the help of a magnifying glass." Because of her predicament, housekeepers and nurses were necessary.

The implications of this invalidism were staggering. In addition to his journalism and daily job in the Admiralty, White shouldered all the household cares. He was isolated a great deal of the time, for Mrs. White's condition made participation in many of his concerns and interests impossible. "When he came home from his work," his son writes, "he and she together would have liked to be alone, but a stranger was always there." Not only was his privacy invaded by nurses and housekeepers; but he also feared the calamity that would strike them all should he fall ill and be unable to work. Mark Rutherford expresses this anxiety: "What would become of... [Ellen]—this was the thought which kept me awake night after night when the terrors of depression were upon me, as they often were" (A, 255).

The description of Mrs. White by her sons is extraordinary. They believed her to be infinitely wise, gentle, long-suffering, and generous. Jack White thought she resembled the Madonna in Rossetti's painting "The Annunciation"; her eldest son
testified that “to all of us she was a saint” who awakened “not only reverence but great love”: “for thirty weary years she endured but never once complained.” White himself spoke of her patience and unselfishness. Yet his married life was hardly the ideal union he had dreamed of. He would have been more than human if he had not questioned the justice of his lot. Zachariah Coleman cries out to his wife, “My life is blasted, and it might have been different” (RTL, 171). Harriet, of course, in no way resembled the cold and rigid Jane Coleman, yet it is clear that White sometimes resented the loving creature who had inadvertently shattered his dreams. Such resentment was promptly succeeded by guilt.

On Christmas Eve, 1887, White wrote to Mrs. Colenutt: “Everybody here is well, excepting my wretched self, over whom the shadow rests, darkening every day, and darkening the house too. It is very sad when the master of the household to whom everybody in it—at least it has always been so here—looks for guidance and stimulus falls into silence and despair. It would be different if I had a wife energetic and active; able to take my place, but her disease, rendering her unfit for all exertion, makes the position very dismal.” Although such expressions of self-pity rarely escaped him, we can still understand that White’s love for his wife was compromised by this feeling, and that his response to her suffering was distressingly ambivalent. One of the worst aspects of the situation was his daily observation of her decline and his total helplessness in the presence of her pain. In letters to his son Jack, White refers with despairing frequency to Harriet’s “growing weakness and weariness which I cannot relieve.” The constant spectacle of her suffering both humbled and angered him.

We should consider that his wife’s fortitude may also have appeared to White as a subtle, indirect judgment of his own confessional impulse. He frequently voices the fear that his desire to share suffering may actually be mere selfishness. Two passages
in particular seem to illuminate his emotional conflict. In the first, Mr. Cardew is described as despising his wife’s inability to express herself with originality and vividness: “He had inwardly taunted her, even when she was suffering, and had said to himself that her trouble must be insignificant, for there was no colour nor vivacity in her description of it” (CF, 133). Cardew’s egotism is censured (“Mistaken mortal! it was her patient heroism which made her dumb to him about her sorrows and his faults”); but the original complaint rings as true as the rebuke. In the second passage, Mark Rutherford describes the shame he feels upon discovering that Mary Mardon has been enduring the agony of neuralgia all evening without mentioning it to anyone. Mentally, Rutherford had “accused her of slightness” because she did not participate in the conversation. When he learns how she is suffering, he springs to contemptuous self-judgment:

I thought how rash I had been in judging her as I continually judged other people, without being aware of everything they had to pass through; and I thought, too, that if I had a fit of neuralgia, everybody near me would know it, and be almost as much annoyed by me as I myself should be by the pain. . . . when thus proclaiming my troubles I often considered my eloquence meritorious. . . . to parade my toothache, describing it with unusual adjectives, making it felt by all the company . . . , was to me an assertion of my superior nature. (A, 53)

One cannot help feeling that it might have been better if Harriet had complained upon occasion and spared her husband some guilt and self-hatred. While White greatly admired stoic conduct and struggled daily for patience and endurance, it seems probable that Harriet’s silent heroism also estranged him. He declares that he often complained to her about his problems, but doubtless he tried to mask much of his spiritual anguish in her presence. It seems likely that the contrast of her visible physical suffering with his own spiritual pain made the latter appear
abstract and self-indulgent. Harriet’s saintliness was therefore both a nearly divine example and a perpetual reprimand, an oblique reminder of his own weakness and egotism. A curious passage in *Catharine Furze* further reveals the emotional turmoil occasioned by his wife’s condition. The narrator describes the loving-kindness Phoebe’s family shows to her when she is dying. Suddenly he interjects: “It was not with them as with a man known to the writer of this history. His wife, whom he professed to love, was dying of consumption. ‘I do not deny she suffers,’ he said, ‘but nobody thinks of me’” (CF, 318).

Nevertheless, there is no question that White loved his wife. Jack White writes that his mother’s relationship to his father was “one of devotion, almost of adoration: she was absorbed in him.’” Not surprisingly, White remarked that “it was impossible to help loving such a tender affectionate creature.” Yet the fact remains that he shouldered most burdens—domestic, financial, emotional, spiritual—more or less alone. The haunting question of what “might have been” is present in all White’s novels. It also explains White’s strange distress concerning his eldest son’s impending marriage. Although he approved of his son’s choice, and was to become exceptionally close to his daughter-in-law, he found that he could not bear to attend the wedding. His response included more than the natural fear of losing a much-loved son. On the eve of Willie’s marriage, his father wrote: “But you must think of us. It is not all bliss to us—simply because your joy reminds us of a whole life’s joy missed through her illness. What she has denied herself God only knows.”

White’s children, then, declared emphatically that their parents were devoted to one another. Not unnaturally, at least some readers of his novels have regarded their testimonials with suspicion, finding it odd that a man so happily married should be obsessed with imagining and examining marital incompatibility in its myriad forms. For unhappy marriage and the consequent isolation of one or both of the partners is the single strongest
theme in White’s fiction. In the *Autobiography* and *Deliverance* alone, Miss Arbour, Rutherford’s friend M’Kay, Ellen Butts, and two of the members of the Drury Lane room—Taylor and John the waiter—are unhappily married. In *The Revolution in Tanner’s Lane*, Zachariah Coleman in the first half of the novel, and George Allen in the second, both learn the “sad truth—the saddest a man can know”—that they have “missed the great delight of existence” (RTL, 18). Miriam Tacchi eventually becomes reconciled to her lot, but not before the novelist explores her feelings shortly after her marriage, when contemplation of the “dreary length” of the future stretching out before her, married to a man she does not love, leads to her depression (MS, 133). Cardew, in *Catharine Furze*, and minor characters in *Clara Hopgood* may be added to the list. In the short stories, Michael Trevanion, both Mrs. Fairfax and the rector (“Mrs. Fairfax”), Esther (“Letters from My Aunt Eleanor”), and the narrators of “A Dream of Two Dimensions” and “The Sweetness of a Man’s Friend” all discover with Mark Rutherford that “while there is nothing which a man does which is of greater consequence than the choice of a woman with whom he is to live, there is nothing he does in which he is more liable to self-deception” (A, 74–75). Clearly White found the complexities of the marital relation a fascinating and compelling subject. But what exactly is the relationship between this aspect of his life and his art, and how did his marriage affect his creative and spiritual development?

I shall begin by saying that I think it certain that White’s dominant theme had an autobiographical foundation. The autobiographical material, however, is used in at least three different ways. My discussion of White’s creative process to this point has, I hope, now made familiar the imaginative transformation that frees the novelist from inhibiting self-judgment, gives access to his deepest feelings, and allows investigation of them in a way that purely autobiographical representation would prohibit. The first way, then, in which White’s biography informs his fictions
is in the creation of fictional situations that provide a focus for feelings he could not bear to acknowledge directly, feelings that would appear to be unfair to his wife and unworthy of himself: resentment, anger, frustration, self-pity, loneliness. These stories portray marriage in which one partner is cold and unloving, and alienates the other by unsympathetic, rejecting behavior. The coldness of such characters provides an excuse as well as a cause for the unhappiness of the spouse: thus these fictions allow both the expression and the justification of feelings deemed unacceptable in the novelist’s own life.

If in the first category of fictions the novelist transforms the raw material of his life into the energies and tensions of his art, in a second category, he himself is transformed by the very act of exploring the situations he has created. This second class of fictional relationships comes closest to White’s “real-life” marriage, in that these fictions portray the relationship between an intellectually proud, self-centered man or woman and a kind, unpretentious, unintellectual spouse. White seems here to be trying to teach himself what the intellectual partner learns: to appreciate the valuable human qualities of the neglected spouse.

The third category is the most nebulous, and treats matters that White probably found most difficult to acknowledge consciously. Here the imaginative conversion includes the possibility of dreams fulfilled via second choices, idealized women and what, however muted, may be called sexual fantasy. This is fiction as a form of wish fulfillment.

_The Revolution in Tanner’s Lane_ is White’s finest and most thorough exploration of an unhappy marriage in which the protagonist is bound to an unsympathetic and commonplace spouse. The first half of the novel charts his growing isolation. Three months after his wedding day, Zachariah is thoroughly depressed. “It was, he feared, true he did not love her, nor she him; but why could not they have found that out before?” “Paralysed, dead in half of his soul,” he “would have to exist
with the other half as well as he could’’ (RTL, 17, 18). Zachariah can blame no one but himself for his mistaken choice; ‘‘he could not accuse her of passing herself off upon him with false pretences’’ (RTL, 17). He is deceived solely by his own innocence and ignorance. Like Dorothea with Casaubon, Zachariah quickly discovers that ‘‘the light had changed, and you cannot find the pearly dawn at noonday.’’

Zachariah’s discovery that in the soul of the ‘‘woman with whom he was to be for ever in this world’’ there was ‘‘nothing, nothing, absolutely nothing which answered anything in himself with a smile of recognition’’ (RTL, 130) is conveyed by a series of scenes in which husband and wife reveal how far apart they are and how totally their marriage has failed. White creates a smoldering compound of resentment, hostility, and guilt through faltering dialogue, awkward silences, and the narrator’s account of Zachariah’s inner turmoil. In one such scene, Zachariah returns home from the theater after seeing _Othello_ for the first time and, ‘‘burning with excitement at what was a discovery to him’’—that while men and women may not actually murder one another, they deliberately ‘‘misconstrue and lose each other’’ daily—desires to be reconciled with his wife. Once home, confronted with her brisk ‘‘Oh, here you are at last,’’ he feels the impossibility of reaching out to her. He ‘‘was struck dumb[,] . . . shut up again in his old prison, and what was so hopeful three hours before was all vanity’’ (RTL, 49–51).

The creation of this kind of marital relation seems to be a way of revealing the peculiar loneliness that is the result of alienation from the person with whom one is supposed to be ‘‘one flesh.’’ White makes a great point, in this novel and elsewhere, of stressing the irrevocable nature of the marital bond: ‘‘It came upon him with fearful distinctness that he was alone—that he could never hope for sympathy from his wife as long as he lived.’’ White is also able to reveal the anger and helplessness Zachariah feels because he is so bound. He questions God’s designs: ‘‘Could
anybody be better for not being loved?’ ‘Why had God so decreed?’ (RTL, 105, 106).

Jane Coleman is certainly the coldest and most rigid of White’s characters. She is portrayed as intellectually shallow and inanely conventional. Her obsession with cleanliness and order is emphasized, not without some humor: “The sight of dirt, in fact, gave her a quiet kind of delight, because she foresaw the pleasure of annihilating it... she would have risen from her deathbed, if she could have done so, to put a chair straight” (RTL, 146). White hints that she is sexually reserved (a familiar gesture is smoothing her apron over her knees), although she is pleased and flattered by Major Maitland’s attentions and clearly finds him attractive. She has no sympathy with Zachariah’s religious doubts and is obviously threatened by his infidel friends. In fact, she doesn’t much like her husband and disapproves of his political enthusiasm in the same way that she disapproves of his table manners. White suggests that Zachariah shuts his wife out from his emotional life, too. Mrs. Coleman’s social and religious orthodoxy stems from her lack of self-confidence, and White makes it clear that beneath her conventional exterior she is a frightened and lonely woman, who goes to pieces when she is suddenly removed from London and the sphere of known duties and familiar attitudes. White is also astute enough to suggest that her increasing frigidity and self-righteousness are jealous and defensive responses to her husband’s attraction to Pauline Caillaud. White allows us to see events momentarily from her point of view and implies that with a man other than Zachariah she would have been a better and a happier woman: “injustice, not only to others, but to ourselves, is always begotten by a false relationship” (RTL, 222).

Others of White’s fictional marriages have characteristics similar to Zachariah’s. Miss Arbour’s husband, Mr. Hexton, is “cold, hard, and impenetrable. His habits were precise and methodical, beyond what is natural for a man of his years”
(A, 64). Esther’s husband (in “Esther”) is not really interested in who his wife is, desiring only that she observe the formalities and do her duty. Esther writes to her mother that “this absence of curiosity to explore what is in me kills me” (MP, 46). All these characters—Jane Coleman, Esther’s husband, Mr. Hexton—are fastidious, rigid, and unsympathetic, and all cause their partners to question their own value and identity. All provide a focus for diffuse marital dissatisfactions on the part of the author, and for his feelings of worthlessness and frustration. Behind their creation is the helpless thought that “it might have been different.”

In the second group of fictional relationships, White’s own marital situation is more obviously represented and his complex response to it worked through. Here, as I have suggested, we discover him in the process of enlarging his sympathies and extending his moral nature through the creation of and conscious engagement in the lives (and deaths) of his characters. Mark Rutherford and Ellen of the Autobiography and Deliverance, Mr. and Mrs. M’Kay of that novel, Mr. and Mrs. Cardew of Catharine Furze, Miriam and her husband in Miriam’s Schooling, and couples in two short stories, “A Dream of Two Dimensions” and “The Sweetness of a Man’s Friend,” all reflect several aspects of White’s own marriage. They have in common a conflict of intellect with unintellectual piety or virtue; in all cases the neglected spouse is devoted to his/her mate; the intellectual partner feels hard done by and desires more intellectual sympathy or passion (or both). In all these instances, intellectual pride is humbled by simple human charity.

White’s son remarked that if his father “drew any character from . . . [Harriet] it was that of Mary Mardon to whom Mark Rutherford was not married in the story, and who is one of his most sympathetic creations.” Mary is indeed a sympathetic character, but her role in Mark’s history, and in the Autobiography as a whole, is not at all clear. She resembles Harriet White in many ways: she is delicate and sweet-looking; her manner of talking
is characterized by "perfect simplicity"; she is a musician, whose voice (like Harriet's playing) "wound itself into the very centre of my existence"; she teaches Rutherford, through her silent endurance of pain, "that such virtues as patience and self-denial" are "heroism, and that my contrary tendency was pitiful vanity" (A, 50, 91, 53). Rutherford falls in love with her: "I thought I chose Mary, but there was no choice. . . . My soul rushed to hers as if dragged by the force of a lodestone"; and he remarks that "looking backward" he feels that "what I did then was the one perfectly right thing which I have done in my life" (A, 96–97).

This last remark has the air of personal conviction, yet the plot of the novel demands that Mary refuse Mark's offer of marriage. She succumbs to consumption shortly after her father's death. Reuben Shapcott informs us that after Mary's death, Mark was for a time "not only broken-hearted, but broken-spirited" (A, 137). He is in such bad shape that he is forced to leave Wollaston's. In "real life," Hale White left Chapman's to get married. At the very least, it is interesting that in his spiritual autobiography White should replace a marriage with the death of the woman who most resembles his own wife. Mary Mardon dies, but she is resurrected in Ellen, her surrogate and counterpart. Like Mary, Ellen is kind, affectionate, gentle, and loyal. After a lengthy engagement, however, Mark breaks off with her: "I became at once aware that my affection for her, if it ever really existed, had departed. I saw before me the long days of wedded life with no sympathy, and I shuddered when I thought what I should do with such a wife" (A, 57). At this juncture, Ellen is a much more sympathetic character than Mark, whose main concern is that Mardon would be unimpressed by her and her orthodox religious views. Several years later they meet, fall in love again, and marry. "All the old confidences, confessions, tender­nesses, rushed upon me. What is there which is more potent than the recollection of past love to move us to love, and knit love
with closest bonds?’ (A, 244). Mark finds a clerical job, and also writes for a couple of newspapers, like his creator.

How are we to understand this chaos of feelings and choices? I have suggested that in the *Autobiography* and *Deliverance* the author’s conflicting impulses are expressed in the similar characterizations of Mary and Ellen, and through the apparently gratuitous twists of the plot: the death of Mary, the initial rejection of Ellen. These elements embody, I believe, White’s impulse to deny his married situation and undo imaginatively the possibility of its occurrence. He is free in this way simultaneously to celebrate Mary’s virtue and to mourn its passing. This impulse, however, is rapidly succeeded by its opposite: Mary is recreated in Ellen, and marriage to her affirms both characters.

In the novel, Rutherford’s feelings about love and marriage evolve and mature. Miss Arbour’s advice, that Mark break off his first engagement to Ellen, is surely right. Given his feelings at the time, marriage would have been a fatal mistake. A marriage is seen to be possible later because Mark—and Ellen, too—are no longer the same people. Both characters have matured through their individual suffering. The emotional development of Mark Rutherford may be seen to parallel White’s own shifting feelings for his wife. The difference is that White did marry in his youth, and his emotional response doubtless underwent a series of transformations within the bonds of marriage. But the dominant attitudes that emerge from the conflicting creative and destructive impulses are acceptance and recognition. Three years before Harriet’s death, White wrote to his son  Jack: “As I get older I more and more learn to set store upon the virtues which are not intellectual but emotional and moral. . . . I recur now to the preference of Jesus for the simple and not for the philosophers; for Peter, Mary, Mary Magdalen, and not for the priests and the Greeks. The simple too have saved the world.”

Rutherford’s Ellen is not the ideal partner, but she is still his conscious choice. The placement of Rutherford’s marriage at the
end of the Deliverance rather than at the chronologically appropriate—for its author—end of the Autobiography is symbolic of White's recognition of his responsibility, and an affirmation of his commitment. Here as elsewhere, he vicariously atones for his frequent feelings of resentment, irritation, and the yearning for "something different" that punctuated his actual marriage.

Young Mark Rutherford rejects Ellen primarily because he thinks she is not enough for his complex personality. After the marriage, Rutherford celebrates the enduring power and the renewal possible to him through a woman's devotion, but he also remarks that love must be constantly fed, or it will all too easily dissolve: "It wanted perpetual cherishing. The lamp, if it is to burn brightly, required daily trimming... if through relapse into idleness we do not attempt to bring soul and heart into active communion day by day, what wonder if this once exalted relationship become vulgar and mean?" (A, 257). This statement, like so much of the novel, is autodidactic: both an explanation of White's affection for Harriet and a reminder to himself of the proper attitude and course of action.

The great complaint of the "superior" partner in this group of relationships is that his/her spouse is not an intellectual or spiritual equal who can discuss, guide, and challenge. Mark Rutherford describes his friend M'Kay's wife as being "an honest, good little woman, but so much attached to him and so dependent on him that she was his mere echo. She had no opinions which were not his" (A, 163). M'Kay condescends to her, reduces her to tears, ignores her unselfish devotion, and humiliates her by refusing to discuss anything with her but household management. His wife responds by loving him despite his cruelty and defending him to their children. When she becomes seriously ill, M'Kay begins to understand how much he depends upon her and repents his brutality. Now that time is running out, he sees who she is and reads to her, talks to her, defers to her opinion. The period before Mrs. M'Kay's death is "the most blessed time of
her married life": "She grew under the soft rain of his loving care, and opened out, not, indeed, into an oriental flower, ... but into a blossom of the chalk-down. ... There are some natures that cannot unfold under pressure or in the presence of unregarding power. Hers was one" (A, 165). The language is important here: Mrs. M'Kay is a "good little woman," not exotic but a "blossom of the chalk-down." White often referred to Harriet as his "poor wife"; in a letter to Mrs. Colenutt he speaks of Harriet's "shy, unpretending soul" (L, 50). Harriet died in 1891, and the Autobiography was published in 1881. We can reasonably assume that White was in the process of learning the hard lesson M'Kay learns only at the end, and that Rutherford's disapproval of M'Kay's earlier conduct toward his wife is a self-judgment.

Mr. Cardew, the parish minister in Catharine Furze, finds his wife's intellectual inferiority sufficient justification for his seeking solace elsewhere. Mrs. Cardew, though loyal, gentle, and devoted, has neither the passionate nature nor the intellectual curiosity of Catharine Furze. Although Mrs. Cardew tries valiantly, she is incapable of analyzing Milton's poetry. (The neglected wife in "The Sweetness of a Man's Friend" cannot appreciate Shelley's symbolism.) Cardew upbraids his wife for her want of intelligence and imagination in language that echoes Zachariah's complaint: "I don't know how it is, Jane, but whenever I say anything I feel you are just the one person on whom it seems to make no impression. You have a trick of repetition, and you manage to turn everything into a platitude. If you cannot do better than that, you might be silent" (CF, 127–28). At this juncture, White is able to enter into Mrs. Cardew's pain. (In one episode, she asks Catharine Furze for help in discussing poetry: "Do you think I could learn how to talk? What I mean is, could I be taught how to say what is appropriate?" [CF, 134].) Mrs. Cardew passionately loves a man who finds her inadequate and, though she understands what is wanted, without his affection she is powerless to become acceptable. Nevertheless, White does
not entirely condemn Cardew, whose needs, fears, and self-
distrust are analyzed with compassion.

Miriam Tacchi (*Miriam's Schooling*) also has a spouse whose
intelligence is unsympathetic to her own. After great struggle,
she reconciles herself to the marital bond and tries to be grateful
for her husband's continuing affection. In this novel, however,
the atmosphere of resigned compromise is more pronounced
than in the others. Out of a sense of duty, Miriam renounces her
dream of passionate love and accepts her husband with quiet
affection. But the delight that she felt in the presence of her first
lover seems to have been drowned in the symbolic storm that
concludes the novel.

In varying degrees all these situations resemble White's own
married life. But the story that seems to me to be the most exact
and subtle exploration of White's own marriage is "A Dream of
Two Dimensions." Here, White turns from his characteristic
realism toward fantasy.

This story, published in *Last Pages From a Journal*, was
written during the 1870s and circulated privately under the title
of *Flatland* in 1884. Narrated in the first person, the story as
a whole is a revealing psychological exploration of the author's
ambivalent feelings toward his wife, his marriage, and his domes-
tic situation. The story opens on a Sunday afternoon, with the
narrator resentfully trying to teach his son mathematics. The
child had been incapable of mastering his lesson the previous
day and now intrudes upon his father's leisure time, "the only
day . . . [he] had for reading." The opening scene is astonishingly
realistic. In style, tone, and content it in fact resembles White's
Christmas Eve letter to Mrs. Colenutt, quoted above:

I bundled him off upstairs and proceeded to bewail to his mother,
as I generally did on Sunday afternoons, my hard lot, my lack of
leisure and society, etc., etc. Whenever I went into other houses
everything seemed cheerful and bright: here there was nothing
but gloom; life for me was a perpetual grind and nobody cared two pins about me. My poor little wife, as her habit was, tried to console me, and observed that our greatest blessings were, perhaps, those of which we took the least notice because we were so used to them. I held my tongue. I had got into the habit of despising her counsels as feeble. She did not appreciate me, and I could never hope she would. What a thing it would be to have a wife with some intelligence, who could see that my sufferings were real and could soothe them! I answered her by turning my head on one side in my easy chair and obtrusively shutting my eyes, as if what she had said were not worth notice. It was my usual way of meeting her endeavours to help me. (LP, 138–39)

A brief summary of the story will facilitate discussion. Following this opening, the narrator’s wife leaves the room in tears. Slowly a mist steals over him, and he enters a world of colored shadows. This realm is initially strange and disconcerting because everything in it has only two dimensions. The narrator is the only being who possesses three dimensions; everyone and everything else has only length and breadth. This world seems delightfully simple and the protagonist enjoys himself hugely, but eventually he grows depressed and is particularly distressed by the disappearance of the entire population at sunset and their reappearance each morning. After a doctor suggests that marriage will cure his melancholy, he wins a “bright, charming damsel” and marries her. He is pleased with his wife’s society but is worried by her nightly disappearance: “‘What does it matter,’ said I to myself, ‘that she is with me all day if she is dead during the rest of the twenty-four hours?’ I dwelt upon my trouble till I became enveloped in it, worse than I had ever been” (LP, 144).

His wife attempts to understand the cause of his low spirits, but an explanation of his third dimension makes her think that her husband is mad. The narrator remarks, “I wished all the time she were something different” (LP, 145). “Several times I made up my mind to be satisfied and to torment myself no longer. We
were decently well off; she loved me tenderly—why not be content?” In spite of this recognition, the narrator grows more obsessed with the value of his third dimension, even while recognizing his wife’s virtue, charm, and pathetic attempts to distract him from his overmastering concern. At length, his growing brutality tells upon her and she becomes ill. The narrator, intercepting a letter from a doctor whom his wife has consulted about her husband’s strange obsession, finds that the physician has sent her a remedy—a magic potion which, if they both drink it at the same time, will make them equal in insight and affection. The narrator, fearing the loss of his third dimension, refuses to drink the potion. In desperation, his wife drinks it alone, hoping her husband will follow her. Still refusing, he watches his wife grow phantasmal and finally, along with the entire population, disappear. The husband, overcome with remorse, belatedly drinks the potion, but it now has no effect: “I had to lament the loss of a woman to whose loveliness, virtues, and gifts I had wilfully blinded myself, and I had lost her, not through anything which was part of my own self, but through an assumed, false conceit. It was worse than murder in a moment of anger” (LP, 150). After desperately wandering about for a long while, the penitent husband goes home and in a deep sleep perceives his wife once more, her features altered and misty. He promises to do anything to regain her, and they both drink again of the liquid she offers him. The narrator is just moving to embrace the phantom when he awakes in his own living room with his earthly wife beside him.

The first paragraph of the story reveals many aspects of White’s marital situation. He loves his “poor little wife” in his own way but still wishes “she were something different.” He is frustrated by the apparent injustice of his lot; other men have “leisure” and “society,” whereas his household (one of illness and stress) seems full of gloom. He tends to brood about his problems and thus intensifies them. We can also see here White’s deep need to share his mental and emotional suffering and have it
appreciated and understood. He is irritated by pious platitudes that dismiss or mitigate his pain and frustration. As in the case of his characters Cardew and Michael Trevanian, the wife's counsels “give no help”; facile formulae diminish his uniqueness; her suggestions are felt as indirect reprimands that trivialize and alienate him. The reminder that his suffering is commonplace and the hint that his complaints may be self-indulgent cause his latent self-loathing to erupt, and the self-tormentor emerges once again. Helplessly caught in this conflict of self-hatred and self-love, he desires to strike back, to annihilate momentarily the source of his original anguish and subsequent guilt. “Obtrusively” closing his eyes, he separates himself from his wife, and temporarily erases her. The suppressed violence of the following dream-vision extends and completes the process already begun in the realistic introduction of the story.

The dream world of this story exposes two particular problems. The husband is distressed and frustrated because his wife “disappears” each night, and he is obsessed with his third dimension, which no one else perceives or comprehends. The narrator’s response to this second difficulty is characteristic of Hale White: the needs of the ego go into battle with his sense of justice. He wants, on the one hand, to be content with what he has; on the other, the drive toward self-realization and the need for recognition of his uniqueness force him into egotism and cruelty. “To a being ignorant of my third dimension,” writes the narrator, “it was not worth while to communicate my plans, and I actually felt a secret pleasure in stalking out of the house, informing her, in answer to her earnest inquiries, that I could not tell her when she might expect me” (LP, 147). The “third dimension” primarily symbolizes his intellectual or spiritual life (including his melancholia), which no one, especially his wife, recognizes or values. Unknown, it becomes a torment to him. Less specifically, the third dimension suggests any unique or important aspect of the self which remains imprisoned within
and unfulfilled. Circumstances (Harriet’s illness, her lack of intellectual interest) do not allow full expression or realization of it. The second problem, the nocturnal disappearance of the narrator’s wife, is more complicated. Specifically, it seems to suggest sexual frustration, and, more generally, it points to White’s isolation from wife and community, his constant feelings of only partial existence. He is, I think, obliquely alluding here to his loneliness—mental and physical—in a household of pain and depression.

This singular work of fiction provides White with an opportunity for the expression, however indirect, of his resentment, frustration, and loneliness. In addition, it allows for the equally powerful operation of conscience and remorse. The narrator controls his wife’s very existence; lack of affection causes the “bright, charming damsel” to fade away and die. In the dream world, the dreamer has power over life and death. How far Harriet White actually depended upon her husband for life is open to conjecture. Yet we recall Jack White’s comment that her feeling for her husband was “one of devotion, almost of adoration: she was absorbed in him.” All the “inadequate” spouses discussed in this section, and especially the wife of this story, are long-suffering and patient, devoted but unintellectual. Here the frustrated narrator unleashes his carefully controlled emotions and allows them to swell to a murderous climax. In his passionate egotism he destroys the offending object, his loving wife. The narrator recognizes that his willed, conscious rejection of her—which causes her death—is “worse than murder in a moment of anger.” His immediate response to her death is remorse, horror, and fear. Love for the gentle creature then springs up, and he wishes to sacrifice himself in order to atone, to undo his self-centered response. Here we see again the destructive/creative conflict that was at work in the Autobiography. White does not allow anger and violence to triumph in this instance, either. Through the operation of remorse, he denies the wish to destroy
once it is expressed and promises the self-sacrifice necessary to resurrect his "poor little wife." Nevertheless, the story concludes ambiguously. The narrator drinks from the magic phial and is about to embrace his fantasy wife when he awakens to the real one beside him. The fantasy offers no resolution. Rather, the story as a whole expresses the emotional and psychological conflict that White was experiencing at this stage of his life. This story and *The Revolution in Tanner's Lane* are also more distinctly imaginative safety valves for growing negative feelings than are White’s other treatments of marriage. Anger, pain, resentment, frustration emerge—though so does the genuine wish to deny his own needs in recognition of his wife’s gentleness and loving-kindness. But exactly what future the dream-vision and the final movement toward repentance signify for the relationship with the "earthly wife" we are never told.

The fantastic mode of "A Dream of Two Dimensions" seems to have freed White from some inhibitions and encouraged the exploration of hidden desires and needs. His own suppression of the story, however (Dorothy writes that White told her he had destroyed remaining copies because he was "ashamed" of it [GD, 73]), may suggest that he understood full well—and feared others might also—the extent to which he had exposed his equivocal feelings about his marriage. In the third category of White’s imaginative investigations of the marital relation, the conflicts I have been pointing to take place at what appears to be a less conscious level. In this uncertain territory of wish fulfillment, the possibility of another chance and the power of sexuality are key elements.

White emphasizes the self-deception that operates in his characters’ mistaken marriage choices. As in religious conversion, their innocence and lack of self-knowledge are dangerous. Victorian social practice complicates the problem. In describing Zachariah’s history, the narrator sardonically remarks, “the courtship between Zachariah and the lady who became his wife
had been short, for there could be no mistake, as they had known one another so long” (RTL, 11-12). As for Michael Trevanion, Rutherford notes that his case was “the simplest, commonest case in life”: “He married . . . when he was young, before he knew what he was doing, and after he had been married twelve-months, he found he did not care for his wife. . . . He mistook passion for love; reason was dumb, and had nothing to do with his choice; he made the one irretrievable false step and was ruined” (MS, 156-57). Similarly, the rector in “Mrs. Fairfax” first marries at twenty-five, and in maturity declares that his choice was “the arbitrary selection of a weary will” (P, 266). Zachariah, George Allen, Esther, Miss Arbour, Michael Trevanion, and various other characters all project their own natures onto their marriage partners and initially convince themselves that apparent limitations are really virtues. They all pay heavily for what Dickens calls the “undisciplined heart.”

Some of these characters are able to escape the consequences of their mistakes; a few are given second chances. Thus, in middle age Baruch Cohen (whose first wife died in childbirth) wins Madge Hopgood, and a new life begins for him. After the death of Jane Coleman, Zachariah is free to wed the beautiful Pauline. And in spite of his general cynicism, the middle-aged rector of “Mrs. Fairfax” marries Mrs. Fairfax. These mature decisions, presented as the fruit of suffering and self-knowledge, seem to involve a form of wish fulfillment.

The women chosen the second time all strikingly resemble Marian Evans as White remembered her. They are independent, intelligent, passionate, and, above all, vital. Indeed, these traits characterize a number of White’s heroines. Pauline, Madge Hopgood, Miriam, and Catharine Furze all forge their individual values through their original response to experience. White is especially attracted to this originality. Mark Rutherford remarks that Theresa was a woman who dealt in ideas, but nevertheless could be overcome by emotion (A, 127-28). In the creation of his
heroines, then, White incorporated many of Marian Evans's attributes, but he also found it necessary to look beyond his own nation, culture, and religious heritage for material. Miss Leroy of the Autobiography, the Hopgood sisters, and Pauline, for example, are either French or educated on the Continent. Pauline and Miss Leroy are perceived as being out of place in conventional rural English society. The former is described as being "like a wild seagull in a farm-yard of peaceful, clucking, brown-speckled fowls" (RTL, 86). Miss Leroy, similarly, lives amidst Cowfold society "as an Arabian bird with its peculiar habits, cries, and plumage might live in one of our barnyards with the ordinary barn-door fowls" (A, 184). Pauline is the adopted daughter of a French radical (she is in fact the natural daughter of a French aristocrat and his mistress, Victorine, who heroically saves him from the guillotine); the Hopgood sisters have lived in Weimar (the home not only of Goethe but of Marian Evans and G. H. Lewes when they first left England). These characters and the women of Cowfold/Eastthorpe/Fenmarket (with the exception of Catharine Furze) differ markedly. White frequently attacks the Victorian education of women, both by championing intelligent foreign infidels and by more direct analysis. Mark Rutherford makes the contrast explicitly in The Revolution in Tanner's Lane: "In . . . [Zachariah's] Calvinistic Dissenting society, the pious women who were members of the church took little or no interest in the mental life of their husbands. They read no books, knew nothing of politics, were astonishingly ignorant, and lived in their household duties. To be with a woman who could stand up against him was a new experience. Here was a girl [Pauline] to whom every thought her father possessed was familiar!" (RTL, 77).

White's conflict and longing are expressed indirectly in these contrasts between the women characters in his fiction. He was not an intellectual snob, irritated because his wife was unable to engage him in literary chats. Nevertheless, the idealized,
unconventional heroines of his fiction and the imaginative projections of "what might have been" reflect his profound desire for mutual understanding and passionate commitment. All White's heroines have intellectual and moral power. In differing ways, they challenge the men who admire them and demand equality in marriage. Their freedom and originality seem to inspire in their male counterparts both love and the freedom to be themselves.

The emergence of this imagined possibility of another chance to realize an ideal relationship and fulfill the hidden dream is not without some unconscious censoring. Here we encounter the area of deepest conflict and ambiguity—White's response to sexuality as it emerges in his fictional characters and their relationships.

White's treatment of sexuality is complicated, but there is no question about his understanding of its power. Directly or indirectly, this power is often revealed as destructive. We can see this in Zachariah Coleman's relationship with Pauline Caillaud, the "second choice" par excellence. Zachariah is clearly sexually attracted to her. White shows Zachariah's arousal and his confusion in the face of it through his ambivalent response to Pauline's dancing. "Even ordinary dancing was a thing prohibited" in Zachariah's Puritan circle, and Pauline's exquisite solitary performance, executed in a short black dress and red stockings, would have been denounced "as the work of the devil" (RTL, 167, 75). Zachariah, who has never witnessed anything of the kind before, detects "a secret pleasure in what he had seen" (RTL, 75), and on the next occasion follows her every movement "with hungry eyes" (RTL, 167). His religious background provides him with no armor against the strength of his attraction, and he is unable to prevent "the very sinful occupation of dwelling upon every attitude of Pauline, and outlining every one of her limbs" in his mind's eye (RTL, 77). "Even in his prayer he saw Pauline's red stockings" (RTL, 79). White is
acute enough to recognize that Zachariah's sexual response is the more powerful because of the repression that preceded it. When unhappy Jane Coleman dies, Zachariah marries Pauline and presumably has a brief period of intellectual fulfillment and physical delight. Pauline dies in childbirth a year later. One cannot but feel that White's guilt had something to do with this gratuitous death. Zachariah is allowed to realize his desire momentarily, but he is also punished for it. He is left alone and unhappy, with a "bitter sense of wrong, a feeling that he had more than his proper share of life's misery" (RTL, 281). This is more familiar and less threatening territory. Pauline's reappearance as Zachariah's daughter (who is said to resemble her mother in both appearance and temperament) may imply that White was more comfortable investigating the ideal woman without the sexual dimension.

Other works support the notion that White felt free to explore sexual attraction in his fiction only if he simultaneously denied its fulfillment as a real possibility. We may remind ourselves that in "A Dream of Two Dimensions" the husband regrets, and wishes he could undo, all the destructive feelings that culminate in his wife's death. This dual response—a kind of imaginative opening of the door and closing it—seems also to be at work in Miriam's Schooling. Miriam's melancholia, which ends in her near suicide, is largely initiated by her unfulfilled passion for George Montgomery. Later, she is able to make her marriage to plodding Didymus Farrow tolerable by escaping daily tedium through literature. For Miriam, imaginative escape is what it is to Maggie Tulliver: "the form in which she took her opium." She becomes aware of the "possibilities of love" by immersing herself in Romeo and Juliet, and Cowfold disappears as she imagines herself on the balcony in Verona, with Romeo below (MS, 129). Later, when she yields to her husband's embrace, "it was not Mr. Farrow who held her in his arms; she purposely strove to think an imaginary Romeo's head was on her neck—his face was something like the face of Montgomery—
and she kept up the illusion all that night. When she came down to breakfast and sat opposite her husband, it struck her suddenly that she had cheated him and was a sinner” (MS, 131). Again we have the indulgence of sexual possibility and its immediate retraction. Through Miriam’s self-judgment concerning her sexual fantasy White surely condemns himself, for his character’s imaginative activity is parallel to his own: both are tentatively exploring sexual possibility in their fictional worlds, and both see this imaginative flight as a subtle betrayal of their marriage partners.

In the next novel, *Catharine Furze*, Cardew fantasizes about Catharine. He embraces his wife “tenderly, fervently, more than fervently, and yet! while his mouth was on her neck, and his arms were round her body, the face of Catharine presented itself, and it was not altogether his wife whom he caressed” (CF, 226). This repetition of the scene would seem to suggest that the treachery of the imagination in this particular was a familiar thing.

White’s interest in the erotic dimension of marriage erupts most dramatically in his retelling of 1 Samuel. “Saul” is one of the “Other Papers” published with *Miriam’s Schooling.*22 The story is a prose dramatic monologue told from the point of view of Saul’s widow: “Rizpah the Horite, in her old age, talks of Saul to the wife of Armoni, her son” (MS, 29). The linguistic energy, deep feeling, and psychological insight shown here are White at his best, getting (like Caleb Morris or Thomas Binney) “into the interior of a Bible character,” bringing to life a hidden aspect of the biblical story. The monologue confirms my view that White found a liberating sanction in the creation of masks and disguises. The choice of a female narrator whose role in the biblical narrative is negligible, and whose emotions he can therefore invent, gives him tremendous freedom and allows him to discuss eros with a conviction and directness not found, I think, to the same degree in any of his other works. In her monologue, Rizpah tells of Samuel’s treachery and Saul’s madness, of her hatred for the son of Jesse and her incomprehension of the
"ways of Jehovah" (MS, 44), who has struck down her beloved husband and left her alone, waiting for death. She was Saul's beloved before he became king, and "I am eighty years old now, but the blood moves in me, and I grow warm as I think of him" (MS, 29). She remembers the time Saul was crowned king:

O that night! never to be forgotten, were I to live a thousand years, when I held the king in my arms! Never—no, not even on the night when I first became his—had I known such delight. . . . when I call to mind the night after he was crowned, and its rapture of an hour—the strength and the eagerness of his love: the strength, the eagerness, and the pride of mine—I say it is good that I have lived. The next morning I saw him with his valiant men— . . . him higher than any of them, from the shoulders upwards; and I said to myself, he is mine, the king is mine, that body of his is mine, and I am his. (MS, 30)

She remembers Saul's deep sadness, which she tried to relieve; unlike David he "never sang, nor danced, nor played." "Would to God he had smiled oftener; and yet if he could not laugh, he could love. Ah me! how strait was his embrace" (MS, 43–44).

This extraordinarily wholehearted celebration of erotic joy is rare in White's work. The context partially explains his lack of inhibition. Not only is an Old Testament attitude to human sexuality emphatically not a Victorian one, but Saul is now dead; Rizpah's delight is a memory. There is no continuing sexual relation to defend: Rizpah's present isolation exists as adequate punishment for her earlier joy.

If "Saul" embodies White's uninhibited treatment of eros, Catharine Furze constitutes his fullest investigation of its destructive power. White's fear of this power and his attempt to discover ways to survive the experience of it are reflected in the shifting perspectives of the novel. Catharine's situation is considered by Rutherford in his capacity as narrator; by Dr. Turnbull, whose sane and stolid perspective issues from White's own hard-won
conclusions; and indirectly, by Cardew, who has inspired her passion.

In a later chapter, I shall discuss Catharine's death as self-sacrifice prompted by love. It is, however, still possible to agree with John Lucas's conclusion that Catharine wants to die; that "denied her sexual identity she simply gives up on life"; that, finally, "Catharine's love for Cardew destroys her."\(^{23}\) White traces the growth of Catharine's passion and her gradual decline with intelligence and subtlety. Here he admits no possibility of consummation: Cardew has a loving and worthy wife at home. The scene which precedes Catharine's rejection of Cardew—in spite of, or indeed because of, her love for him—is one of the most carefully conceived and beautifully executed in White's canon. It is worth quoting at length:

One afternoon, late in August, Catharine had gone with the dog down to the riverside, her favourite haunt. Clouds, massive, white, sharply outlined, betokening thunder, lay on the horizon in a long line: the fish were active; great chub rose, and every now and then a scurrying dimple on the pool showed that the jack and the perch were busy. It was a day full of heat, a day of exultation, for it proclaimed that the sun was alive; it was a day on which to forget winter with its doubts, its despair, and its indistinguishable grey; it was a day on which to believe in immortality. Catharine was at that happy age when summer has power to warm the brain; it passed into her blood and created in her simple, uncontaminated bliss. She sat down close to an alder which overhung the bank. It was curious, but so it was, that her thoughts suddenly turned from the water and the thunderclouds and the blazing heat to Mr. Cardew, and it is still more strange that at that moment she saw him coming along the towing-path. In a minute he was at her side, but before he reached her she had risen.

"Good morning, Miss Furze."
"Mr. Cardew! What brings you here?"
"I have been here several times; I often go out for the day;
it is a favourite walk."

He was silent, and did not move. He seemed prepossessed and anxious, taking no note of the beauty of the scene around him.

"How is Mrs. Cardew?"

"She is well, I believe."

"You have not left home this morning, then?"

"No; I was not at home last night."

"I think I must be going."

"I will walk a little way with you."

"My way is over the bridge to the farmhouse, where I am staying."

"I will go as far as you go."

Catharine turned toward the bridge.

"Is it the house beyond the meadows?"

"Yes."

It is curious how indifferent conversation often is just at the moment when the two who are talking may be trembling with passion.

"You should have brought Mrs. Cardew with you," said Catharine, tearing to pieces a water lily, and letting the beautiful white petals fall bit by bit into the river.

Mr. Cardew looked at her steadfastly, scrutinisingly, but her eyes were on the thunderclouds, and the lily fell faster and faster. The face of this girl had hovered before him for weeks, day and night. He never for a moment proposed to himself deliberate love for her—he could not do it, and yet he had come there, not, perhaps, consciously in order to find her, but dreaming of her all the time. He was literally possessed. . . . Catharine felt his gaze, although her eyes were not towards him. At last the lily came to an end, and she tossed the naked stalk after the flower. (CF, 176-79)

White does a great deal in this delicate fusion of realistic detail and symbolic suggestiveness. The scene is a powerful celebration of natural joy, of the "animal gladness" that pervades Catharine's young life. It is not insignificant, I think, that the
imagery and the lyrical cadence of the passage echo the opening chapter of the *Autobiography*. White associates both childhood and eros with water and sunshine and heat, the body's languor and the "mackerel-crowded seas." The reiterated "it was a day" recalls the idyllic "I remember" of Rutherford's boyhood. It seems natural and right that Cardew is almost conjured up by the force of Catharine's passion, as if he were in a dream, and that they are drawn inevitably and magnetically together. It is convincing that Catharine should try to protect herself from her building emotion by repeating Mrs. Cardew's name as if it were a talisman. The turbulent landscape serves to mirror Catharine's increasing agitation, while the piquant stripping of the lily, "faster and faster," clarifies her vulnerability as well as her growing sexual excitement.\(^{24}\) The mechanical nature of her activity, the awkward, self-conscious dialogue—both sharply convey the ineffectuality of the characters' efforts to command their distress. Yet at this "perilous moment," as Rutherford calls it, thunder is heard, the image of Mrs. Cardew appears suddenly before Catharine's eyes, and she abruptly bids Cardew goodbye.

Lucas thinks that *Catharine Furze* is "partly about the nature of female sexuality," and how it cannot be considered apart from the social context in which it finds itself.\(^{25}\) While it is true that in Catharine, as in his other extraordinary heroines, White examines the general plight of intelligent and passionate women in Victorian England, I am bound to say that the sexuality he explores here is essentially his own. Catharine's situation is so emphatically White's dilemma, her psyche so clearly familiar ground. When Catharine first met Cardew, she stood "by herself, affiliated to nothing, an individual belonging to no species" (CF, 192). She is unable to realize her complete nature. In an earlier chapter I described her intense isolation: Mentally, spiritually, emotionally, and then sexually, she is in exile; born vocationless, two hundred years too late. With skillful care White analyses
the source, nature, and extent of her displacement. In so many areas, she is quintessentially himself.

In contrast to other representations of himself, though, in the creation of this character White develops his natural, spontaneous side. Because they are being filtered through a female consciousness, he feels greater freedom to indulge his wishes and dreams and to explore the nature of desire. * Catharine Furze is a celebration of White’s own passionate nature: but it is also something of a farewell. Catharine, after all, dies unfulfilled. Her disparate energies have been gathered and channeled into her love for Cardew; that love is thwarted, then repressed. In the summer of her passion, “it was a day on which to believe in immortality.” But the winter, the death of Phoebe, the consuming fire of love, change her. The following spring, Catharine goes to the stream again: “Once more, as on a memorable day in August, the sun was upon the water.” But the landscape, and the emotions for which it was the objective correlative, have been subtly transformed: “Then the heat was intense, and the heavy cumulus clouds were charged with thunder and lightning. Now the sun shone with nothing more than warmth, and though the clouds, the same clouds, hung in the south-west, there was no fire in them, nothing but soft, warm showers” (CF, 361–62). The fire has burned away into mere warmth; Catharine no longer imagines immortality but only natural death: “she could happily have lain down amid the hum of the insects to die on the grass.”

This gently elegiac passage signals the end of a possibility. White’s dream would very likely never be fulfilled now. Harriet was recently dead, and he was in his mid-sixties. Catharine embodies White’s emotional isolation and his sexual yearning, without the restraint of duty and conscience that guided his own life. Hale, in fact, had forced himself to learn Dr. Turnbull’s advice—to consider himself “a piece of common humanity and bound by its laws” (CF, 334), evading melancholy through active duty to others. Catharine’s glorious sexuality is created and
destroyed within the space of a year, but her author spent a lifetime subduing his natural desires to his sense of decency and marital obligation. Mark Rutherford, Pauline, Catharine Furze all die before their passion can afford them or their partners much delight. Miriam's lover is killed and she is meted a "good man." *Clara Hopgood* is the only novel in which sexuality goes unpunished—and that is because Clara is her sister's proxy in suffering and death. White's final novel makes it clear that someone will pay the penalty for sexual indulgence, even if the actor escapes unscathed.

White's fiction thus celebrates his belief that genuine passion "is earnest as flame, and essentially pure" (A, 18), while simultaneously conveying his suspicion and fear of sexuality. Impurity, Rutherford remarks, "was a sin for which dreadful punishment was reserved," and sometimes, "I hanker... after the old prohibitions and penalties" (A, 8). White's deep-rooted conflict is a natural enough response to the peculiarities of his heritage and his situation. His conscience had already been sensitized by the potent combination of Victorian social mores and Puritan sexual attitudes. In addition, through no fault of his own, he was deprived in his prime of ordinary marital fulfillment. It is difficult not to conclude that some kind of sexual repression was the inevitable result.

White's preoccupation with the power of sexual temptation and the imperative need to conquer it emerges in a number of places. The most revealing of these is the intriguing digression in the first chapter of the *Autobiography*, when Mark Rutherford states that in addition to "a rigid regard for truthfulness," "purity of life" was the chief advantage conferred on him by his religious education. The passage is astonishing. He begins by lamenting the loss nowadays of the "old prohibitions and penalties" for illicit sex: "Physiological penalties are too remote, and the subtler penalties—the degradation, the growth of callousness to finer pleasures, the loss of sensitiveness to all that is most nobly attractive in woman—are too feeble to withstand temptation
when it lies in ambush like a garrotter, and has the reason stunned in a moment” (A, 8–9). He goes on to suggest that day after day a father must attempt to divert his son’s attention from sex, and attempt to form “an antipathy in him to brutish selfish sensuality.” The child’s reading should be carefully censored; to a youth, Byron “is fatal.” But the conclusion of this fervent Victorian speech is the unsettling remark that “parents greatly err by not telling their children a good many things which they ought to know. Had I been taught when I was young a few facts about myself, which I only learned accidentally long afterwards, a good deal of misery might have been spared me” (A, 9). A comment removed from the published Groombridge Diary, but preserved in the manuscript, suggests that White continued to think this way as late as 1908. “He distinctly affirmed that if only his parents had told him more facts about himself, he would have been spared much misery.” While Mark Rutherford stridently affirms that purity of life, however come by, is “a simply incalculable gain” (A, 8), the sexual ignorance which fostered it appears to have generated only “misery.”

White’s efforts to triumph over the natural man were constant. The Deliverance documents the trials of early manhood that succeeded the confused ignorance of boyhood. As a young and impressionable clerk, White daily endured the obscene conversation of his colleagues. Rutherford describes his employment as an occupation breeding “strange habits, humours, fancies, and diseases” (A, 247). In a close basement room tediously copying letters all day, he is shut up with three other men, “of rather a degraded type” (A, 224), whose “enforced idleness of brain” generated “the most loathsome tendency to obscenity” (A, 247–48). Although Rutherford soon comes to understand that, ironically, their obscenity is a kind of sanity-preserving release, and that the real fault lies with their trade, whose deadly monotony “compelled some countervailing stimulus,” his initial horror “when I first found out into what society I was thrust was unspeakable” (A, 248). Rutherford tries to remain aloof from
this encompassing sensuality, encouraging the belief that he is a Plymouth Brother. He comes in for a good deal of abuse. Dorothy White again confirms that here as elsewhere, memory was the source of White’s creative inspiration. “He told me that, when he was a young man at the Office, he had to endure plenty of such talk [obscene joking], but he never joined in it, and never laughed at it—never, at least, if he could possibly help it. . . . I asked Hale what they thought of him for never joining in. He said: ‘Oh, of course I got called names—Pious, I think that was the word’” (GD, 264–65). He may not have joined in, but the conversation nevertheless had its effect. The Autobiography describes not only Rutherford’s clerkship but that of his friend Clark. In this second account (transferred for safety to a clearly fictitious character), White suggests with disturbing conviction what results attended the “filthy grossness” daily confounding him: “They excited in him loathsome images, from which he could not free himself either by day or night. He was peculiarly weak in his inability to cast off impressions, or to get rid of mental pictures when once formed, and his distress at being haunted by these hateful, disgusting thoughts was pitiable. They were in fact almost more than thoughts, they were transportations out of himself—real visions” (A, 224).

This passage is, I think, the only suggestion we have that the “phantom foes,” the ghostly hallucinations of melancholia, might have had a sexual aspect. It also gives us a context in which to place White’s obscure praise of Tennyson’s “Lucretius”: “I should imagine it is hardly intelligible to a woman. . . . Many a man has blessed A.T. for printing those daring verses, showing thereby that this temptation or disease was not strange to him” (L, 168). And it illuminates to some degree the nature of White’s strong sense of sin, and his obsession with “perfect purity.”

His own personal struggle to transcend what in himself he judged to be vicious must have been fierce.

Aware as he was of the powerful lure of “vice,” it is not surprising to find White, in the last years of his life, dismayed by
what he suspected might be a tendency toward indecency among some of the rough youths in Dorothy's Boys' Bible Class and Club. The Boys' Club, writes Dorothy, was "our only quarrel. . . . He cannot . . . understand the relationship. I find it very hard to explain." One reason for White's irritation and impatience was his oft-reiterated distrust of boys: "It is a thing inexplicable to me, who see nothing attractive in boys as boys and can only partly see why they should be attractive to you" (GD, 84). The language he uses to describe boys in general hints at his fears: "I have been a boy of boys myself. This makes it so difficult to comprehend. I wonder if these boys have ever allowed Dorothy to look into themselves, their selfish, dirty, brutal selves. I must say that my schoolfellows, except in personal courage, were detestable" (GD, 44). His querulous letters to Dorothy on the subject, and his frequent assertions that he knows "what boys are," are revealing. When he discovered that one of Dorothy's boys was indeed guilty of self-abuse and wanted to confess all to her, he took control of the situation, wrote to Dorothy's brother, who was a headmaster, and expressed his personal view that the youth had a weak character and could do no better than to ship out to the colonies. White judges the boy severely, much more for his inability to struggle against temptation than for the original propensity. A few years earlier, White had met the young man and talked with him. According to the boy's journal, White had then asked him, "how the boys in Miss Horace Smith's Bible Class behaved to her. 'Were there many rough young men?'" (GD, 225). Sexuality, and especially what he considered sexual impurity, was a subject that exercised him until his death. It is not, I think, finally possible to determine the extent to which the obscure suffering that imbues the novels has a sexual origin or even a sexual dimension. What we can perceive, however, is the constant complexity of White's feelings about eros in general.

To return to my original point of departure: what can we conclude about the relationship between White's complicated
domestic situation and his melancholia, his creative work, his quest for spiritual freedom and reconciliation? White obviously loved his wife, but while he admired her fortitude and gratefully accepted her devotion, he continued to experience a sense of isolation and frustration. The eventual necessity of sexual abstinence doubtless made married life even more difficult. His own spiritual existence was constantly threatened by a plethora of “sordid cares.” He certainly questioned the Eternal Justice which had both allowed Harriet to suffer and elected him to bear the cross. Nevertheless, the effort, which his fiction documents, to transcend his own selfishness and enact compassion was largely successful. In his story “The Sweetness of a Man’s Friend,” a family friend helps the intellectually superior husband to comprehend the value of his wife’s extraordinary virtues. The final sentence says much about White’s character and his struggle: “She died ten years ago. The face in the vision which is always before me is a happy face, thank God” (LP, 46).

After Harriet died in 1891, White wrote to Mrs. Colenutt about her:

It is difficult for an outsider to comprehend. . . . He sees of course nothing but the death of a woman to whom death was a release. I think of five and thirty years ago, and think too that this history has ended as all things end. Furthermore you can hardly imagine what it is to be at once deprived of an outlet for what you feel most intimately. Much as children are loved, it is impossible to impart to them all one hopes or fears. My poor wife daily heard from me what nobody now can hear, and offered a sympathy which nobody else can give. The world, aware of so small a portion of what was in her shy, unpretending soul, would have been astonished perhaps that she could be of such service to me, but she was for me and not for the world. The lesson of her heroic patience and perfect unselfishness was obvious to everybody, and that daily teaching has also departed. (L, 50)
Harriet was clearly not George Eliot nor even Pauline Caillaud. She was a "flower of the chalk-downs" rather than a "wild seagull" or an "Arabian bird." If White's letter to Mrs. Colenutt seems defensive and something of an apologia, a comment of Mark Rutherford's may shed some light on its tone. Rutherford, wishing at this stage to break his engagement with Ellen, remarks: "I could have endured, I believe, even discord at home, if only I could have had a woman whom I could present to my friends, and whom they would admire. . . . I have always been more anxious that people should respect my wife than respect me, and at any time would withdraw myself into the shade if only she might be brought into the light" (A, 57). Rutherford wants a wife he can be proud of and show off. Recognizing this attitude as a "form of egotism," he nevertheless breaks his engagement. White in marriage often wished his wife to be "something different." He knew her value and hated himself when, in his imagination, he denied it in favor of a more flamboyant feminine ideal. The defensive tone of his letter to Mrs. Colenutt suggests that not only the world but he himself would be astonished at her worth. In the letter, he affirms the value of his wife and accepts the bond he sometimes wished to break. This difficult situation was one more obstacle in the journey toward spiritual freedom. When we consider this addition to a soul already immensely burdened, we can appreciate more justly White's slowly evolving faith and how painfully he earned his ultimate affirmation of life and the power of love.

II

If the "sordid cares" of White's domestic situation limited his inner freedom, his daily work added another level of frustration. The 1850s were a crucial decade for White. The decisions made during these years would bear fruit much later, especially in the novels. In 1852 he was expelled from New College and
exiled for life from a religious community. In 1855 he married and was gradually shut out from normal marital happiness. The year before, he had left Chapman's and found, or had found for him, a job in the Registrar-General's Office, Somerset House. This was the beginning of his career as a civil servant, and of his estrangement from a literary, academic, or religious vocation. White remained at Somerset House for a few years, achieving in 1857 the position of Registrar of Births, Deaths, and Marriages for Marleybone. The following year he transferred to the Admiralty, where he worked in the Contract and Purchase Department until his retirement at the age of sixty, in 1892, one year after Mrs. White's death. 29 I have already noted that until he rose to the position of Assistant Director of Naval Contracts in 1879, his salary was insufficient to support his family. For more than twenty years, White supplemented his income by writing for various newspapers and periodicals.

The expenditure of so much time and energy in the performance of these duties was in itself a major cause of the melancholy and frustration which pervaded White's adult life. His negative feelings about the nature of the work added to the burden. The scathing remarks of Mark Rutherford and many of White's conversations with Dorothy on the subject of his work suggest that he suffered considerably in giving his life to tasks that nowhere touched his spiritual life and were alien to his imaginative and religious temperament. In spite of his Puritan heritage, he could not adopt a Carlylean attitude to work. He aligns himself rather with Dickens and Ruskin in markedly distinguishing among different kinds of work. Mark Rutherford bitterly exclaims that the mechanical labor performed by the London masses is slavery: "There is no possibility of relieving it, and all the ordinary copybook advice of moralists and poets as to the temper in which we should earn our bread is childish nonsense. If a man is a painter, or a physician, or a barrister, or even a tradesman, well and good. The maxims of authors may be of some service to
him. . . . but if he is a copying clerk they are an insult, and he can do nothing but arch his back to bear his burden and find some compensation elsewhere’’ (A, 250–51).

White’s republican attitudes and his indignant sympathy for the poor arose partly from his own bitter experiences in the labor market. He seems to have disliked working for Chapman, and he heartily detested working as a clerk. Although the transfer to the Admiralty was a tremendous relief to him, White still had mixed feelings about the job that was to occupy most of his working life. “I never liked it,’’ he told Dorothy early in their friendship (GD, 2), though he evidently did the job very well.30

Many of the circumstances of White’s work are echoed in the tribulations of his characters. Mark Rutherford’s friend Taylor, for instance, is able to get work only as an occasional messenger. He is therefore “‘a servant of servants,’’ who compensate for the tyrannies to which they have themselves been exposed by treating him with brutality. Taylor finds it a new experience to “‘feel that he was a thing fit for nothing but to be cuff ed and cursed. . . . Nobody ever cared to know the most ordinary facts about him. . . . Suffering of any kind is hard to bear, but the suffering which especially damages character is that which is caused by the neglect or oppression of man. . . . He could not lie still under contempt’’ (A, 212–13). In this description of Taylor’s situation, White clarifies what most horrifies and angers him. Taylor is disregarded, looked upon as a “‘thing.’’ No one cares to know him, and he is reduced to less than the mud under others’ feet. Contempt destroys his self-respect, and lack of concern about him threatens his identity. The threat is that others’ perception of him might be an accurate estimate of who he is. White further describes Taylor as “‘powerless,’” impotent in the face of pettiness. The deprivation of human respect and concern casts him into despair. White’s earlier experience as a clerk, and to a lesser extent his job in the Admiralty, deprived him of what he instinctively believed to be possible in work:
personal fulfillment, human fellowship. The repeated pattern in the situations of his various characters is one of oscillation between hatred of the job which they desire to leave and recognition that it must be endured, if life, and often the lives of others, is to continue.

In addition to its isolation and degradation, and the exposure to obscenity which I mentioned earlier, White details the monotonous triviality of clerkdom. His characters are alternately bored and offended by aspects of their work. Rutherford's friend Clark is oppressed by the crowded working space, artificial light, and soul-destroying boredom of his daily task. White remarks that Clark's love of literature became an actual curse to him, in that the earlier exposure to something good and noble served now only to remind him of the contrast between earlier aspirations and present degradation. Worse, "the monotony of that perpetual address-copying was terrible. He has told me with a kind of shame what an effect it had upon him. . . . for days he would feed upon the prospect of the most childish trifle because it would break in some slight degree the uniformity of his toil" (A, 223). Clark finds himself joyfully anticipating the change from a steel pen to a quill, or a different route to work.

In his own work White continually encountered "the facts": degradation, obscenity, reduction of selfhood, and boredom. Abstract religious principles could not help him preserve sanity in the office—they were simply irrelevant. Here, as in other areas of life, he required a faith that would provide aid in the sordid situations he confronted daily. White, one suspects, like his character Mark Rutherford, strove to preserve his individuality by devising what he calls "strategems of defence." Rutherford, like Dickens's Wemmick, keeps his private and public lives completely separate. He refuses to tell anyone at the office anything personal about himself. (We should, however, bear in mind his earlier complaint, that no one cared to know him anyway.) "I cut off my office life . . . from my life at home so completely
that I was two selves, and my true self was not stained by contact with my other self.” Rutherford feels that “scrupulous isolation” preserved him, that thus the “clerk was not debarred from the domain of freedom” (A, 250). His language is telling. His “true self” had nothing to do with his office work; this self he tries to keep “free.” Nevertheless, this self-inflicted division of being and the internal conflict that accompanies it cost him dearly. White’s instinctive impulse is toward wholeness, toward reconciliation. Ironically, the “strategems of defence” only preserved and intensified his isolation. His constant struggle to transform waste and frustration into duty and imaginative integrity is impressive. To his religious heritage, his melancholia, his marriage, and his civil service posts we owe the novels, the fruit of an intellect fighting to cling to sanity and identity.

Dorothy writes that White “used to go to the House after work. His dread, terror, was lest he should not finish his office duties in time, for, if he failed in that, he knew he should never get promotion. This was a perpetual nightmare, and the strain on the nerves was very bad. After the House he came home to supper, then must write out his reports; home to an invalid wife. He said that he told me all this (so egotistical, he thought it!) because it explained so much in him” (GD, 72). The situation explains not only White’s character and much of his personal sadness but also sheds light on his intense empathy with the working classes of his century and his understanding of the plight of the urban poor. White, like Mark Rutherford, recognized that his own situation did not approach the horrors of the London poor, but some part of their desperation he knew from his own experience. The degradation and selfishness he perceived in these lives was “naturally begotten of their incessant struggle for existence and the incessant warfare with society.” With prophetic fervor of the kind we associate with Dickens, Carlyle, and Ruskin, White proclaims, “our civilisation seemed nothing but a thin film or crust lying over a volcanic pit, and I often
wondered whether some day the pit would not break up through it and destroy us all" (A, 209).

Rutherford and his friend M'Kay, responding practically to the corruption and human torment which they witness, open a room in Drury Lane and do what they can to provide quiet space and human fellowship for the inhabitants of the area. White himself attempted the same experiment. In 1859 he ventured to establish a room where people could come and meditate, talk, read, or worship. The room was in Little Portland Street, and according to White's mother's diaries, Hale often spoke to the few who attended the essentially religious meetings. Rutherford did not wish to convert anyone to anything. The purpose of the meeting place was twofold. "Poor people," he says, "frequently cannot read for want of a place in which to read," and often people will listen to someone talk, who have not the necessary motivation to read. Second, they aimed to "create in . . . [their] hearers contentment with their lot, and even some joy in it" (A, 227). The "central, shaping force" of Drury Lane was to "teach Christ in the proper sense of the word," to have the listeners ask themselves, when "any choice of conduct is presented to us, . . . how would Christ have it?" (A, 172, 173). The experiment was a limited success. He and M'Kay did not, Rutherford says, "convert Drury Lane," but only "saved two or three" by giving them friendship and practical help (A, 210). They could not provide interesting jobs, dispense money, or set up a program of advanced education, but they touched the lives of the laborer, the clerk, the waiter, the commercial traveler—wretched human creatures in whose lives there had been till then "no break in the uniformity of squalor" (A, 169). Given the conditions they had to work under, their success was not contemptible, for in the back streets of the great city even "the preaching of Jesus would have been powerless" (A, 171).

The room in Portland Place and White's own experience of poverty and uncongenial labor strengthened the acute social
conscience that was one of his Puritan legacies. His satire is most savage when he describes the response of cultured or religious people to Victorian social problems; his anger is most bitter when he observes the profession of Christian belief in the absence of compassion. When Phoebe, the servant girl in *Catharine Furze*, dies in a damp, unventilated, wretched rural cottage, White uses the occasion both to attack the culpable ignorance of the Victorian upper classes about the living conditions of their less fortunate brethren and to point out the vicious ramifications of pastoral escapism: “Diana Eaton, eldest daughter of the Honourable Mr. Eaton, had made a sketch in water-colour of the cottage. It hung in the great drawing-room, and was considered most picturesque” (CF, 313). White owes something here to Dickens, whose Skimpole justifies the existence of the American slaves by arguing, “they people the landscape for me, they give it a poetry for me.”

Both writers clarify the evil of justifying the existence of hovels and ruins and brutality on aesthetic grounds. Both denounce the refusal of human responsibility, the unwillingness to see that an “artistic” facade shrouds corruption and death:

That we should take pleasure in pictures of filthy, ruined hovels, in which health and even virtue are impossible, is a strange sign of the times. It is more than strange; it is an omen and a prophecy that people will go into sham ecstasies over one of these pigsties so long as it is in a gilt frame; that they will give a thousand guineas for its light and shade—light, forsooth!—or for its Prout-like quality, or for its quality of this, that, and the other, while inside the real sty, at the very moment when the auctioneer knocks down the drawing amidst applause, lies the mother dying from dirt fever; the mother of six children starving and sleeping there—starving, save for the parish allowance, for the snow is on the ground and the father is out of work. (CF, 314)

One comes to recognize, too, that a considerable measure of personal guilt underlies these scathing attacks on the artistic
but irresponsible temperament. In the *Autobiography*, Mark Rutherford describes an evening in which he and M'Kay go to hear a great violinist, whose music is so exquisite that "the limits of life . . . [are] removed." Their walk home is through the Haymarket. At the end of this walk, violin-playing seems to them "the merest trifling" (A, 167). M'Kay, who is, according to Rutherford, "tormented . . . incessantly" by the "spectacle of the misery of London," "never seemed sure that he had a right to the enjoyment of the simplest pleasures so long as London was before him."

What a farce, he would cry, is all this poetry, philosophy, art, and culture, when millions of wretched mortals are doomed to the eternal darkness and crime of the city! Here are the educated classes occupying themselves with exquisite emotions, with speculations upon the Infinite, with addresses to flowers, with the worship of waterfalls and flying clouds, and with the incessant portraiture of a thousand moods and variations of love, while their neighbours lie grovelling in the mire, and never know anything more of life or its duties than is afforded them by a police report in a bit of newspaper picked out of the kennel. (A, 166–67)

This attack is not self-righteous but self-condemning, for White himself was one of the "educated classes" who loved literature and music and was often healed by the power of art and nature. Such passages show the operations of an acute Puritan conscience. Feeling the waste and brutality that caused so much human suffering in Victorian England, White cries, "I ask myself the question 'what good are you?' and my conscience tells me that I should be more virtuous in relieving the least bit of misery than in discovering and propounding—had I the brains to do so—a new theory of *Hamlet*" (L, 198). This strain—feelings of guilt and uselessness, his finer nature regarded as a curse separating him from the suffering of his fellow creatures—runs ominously through White's writing.
His feelings about waste and unnecessary pain also mark his attitude to war. White believed in applying Christian ethics, and his attacks upon the Boer War in particular were virulent because he felt Christian principles were either being used as justification for violence or ignored altogether. White was a republican to the core and a committed believer in democracy from his youth. In 1866 he wrote *An Argument for an Extension of the Franchise: A Letter addressed to George Jacob Holyoake*. Many years later, in response to the Boer War, he distributed antiwar pamphlets and proclaimed that he wished he were still young enough to stand on a soapbox and express his outrage. His letters during this period record his genuine horror and fear that the nation, which professed to be Christian, had lost all sense of the meaning of its faith. He writes to Mrs. Colenutt that he hopes she is “sound” on the Transvaal question and is openly protesting the war (L, 98); he urges Miss Partridge to demand of the first clerical person she meets “of what use Christianity is.” The great majority of English people, he writes, approve the war, and in so doing, “must put Christ in a cupboard and turn the key.” If a religion has nothing to do with politics, he exclaims, “it is not a religion” (L, 211–12). Again, during this period, when White urges everyone who has a conscience “to protestation,” we hear the familiar plaint: “all art, literature, seem to me to be a mockery now—mere trifling” (L, 193). Another statement on the necessary opposition of genuine Christianity to the Boer War reveals an additional aspect of his concern:

I affirm that if we were genuine believers in the gospels, if we were true disciples of Jesus, not of the official, symbolic, ecclesiastical Christ, but of the real Galilean . . . , we should not be at war in South Africa. . . . Furthermore, that the attempt to reconcile our modern ways with the teaching of the New Testament produces a condition of mind worse than that in which we should be without the New Testament, because we have immorality plus
hypocrisy and because the embrace of opposites is damnation to the soul, incapacitating it for any vision of the truth. (L, 217)

He is appalled here by the inability to perceive the contradiction in professing a faith while enacting what opposes it. He goes on to add that, if men *do* become incapacitated for truth, there will come "such an earthquake before long as the civilised world has never beheld."

Marriage, work, and recognition of evil and suffering in the world initially inhibited but finally enriched White's religious faith. It was difficult, in the face of the "leaden order of things," to sustain a sense of self and a larger purpose. Despite his anguish, though, he was able to continue to forge the experiential faith which permitted freedom of being. He had to confront essential questions in the process: How can one preserve the experience of the momentary rending of the veil, those moments when life is full of purpose? How can one pursue a genuine spiritual life in a world of "chaotic power"? Where is the "indwelling Christ" to be found in a world that rejects His message?