

Nourit Melcer-Padon

CREATING COMMUNITIES

Towards a Description of the Mask-function in Literature

In this cube of expanding and contracting light (I no longer think of it as a cell) I have the standard truckle bed, a chair, and most important, the desk on which are laid four piles of unblemished foolscap. And two ball-point pens, one black, one red.

Now that I am free to write, shall I ever dare begin to sort out my disordered thoughts? It is a frightening prospect. I sit with my hands back to back, held tightly between my knees. I read if I look inside my churning abyss of a mind. But I must ~~not~~ remain in the vertical position. Reason's posture is vertical, like ~~Wilde's~~ ~~Wilde's~~ spinal column. If Patrick were here he could guide me. No. I must do it myself. Patrick guides. Patrick cannot guide himself, that's why he's taken to carrying a walking stick.

I / I / that's how I began, how I covered all those sheets of paper scissored away in the chest hole, overflowing drawers and suitcase in the house above Centennial Park.

I take up the black ball-point and start myself hobbling sturdily along the topmost line of this sheet of white foolscap in my hygienic room. Too hygienic perhaps. I am progressively full ● Perhaps there was never anything there and I only imagined it. I throw down the sharp object of which Gabriel Kerkett had his doubts all day have been right. I shall have aborted my legs somewhere back along the line. I pick up the horrid red ball-point and dig a deep, bloody trench from a pen to the sea of the innocent sheet. Through my own lack of skill I shall remain sterile for ever after.

Oh God, forgive me... Save me from the jacket...

Enter Mrs. Cheyking. I seem to have met her in some other play. I ~~know~~ which. She is wearing civilian clothes, a pattern of big cinnamon and fuchsia flowers, a choice



From:

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How does historical reality interrelate with fiction? And how much are readers themselves involved in the workings of fictional literature? With innovative interpretations of various well-known texts, Nourit Melcer-Padon introduces the use of literary masks and illustrates literature's engagement of its readers' ethical judgement. She promotes a new perception of literary theory and of connections between thinkers such as Iser, Castoriadis, Sartre, Jung and Neumann. The book offers a unique view on the role of the community in post-existentialist modern cultural reality by emphasizing the importance of ritual practices in literature as a cultural manifestation.

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Foreword: Literary Masks as Agents of Revelation and Formation of Collective Beliefs

Years ago, I witnessed a fight between my daughters. “Take off that mask!” screamed the younger one, pointing at a cat’s mask the older one was wearing, which was evidently scaring her. Of course the older one kept teasing the younger sibling, and refused to take the mask off. Exasperated, the younger one cried: “Fine. Don’t take it off. I will go outside and grab a cat, I will qwetch it and put it on my face, and then I’ll show you!”

This episode forcefully demonstrated the potency of masks, their deep-rooted effect and their power to impact historical reality. Yet it also demonstrated the existence and operation of two distinctive kinds of masks: the mask my older daughter was using and the mask my younger daughter threatened to fabricate. The older one’s mask is commonly used in carnivals or costume parties. It is a mask which is known to be false, covering a factual individual identity of the person using it. The second mask is quite different: had my younger daughter been able to do as she threatened, and turn a real cat into a mask, this mask would have allowed her to become the cat, to embody its nature and spirit, and possess its (apparently) scary attributes, instead of merely resembling a cat.

Masks can thus be differentiated according to their functions which are in turn related to their historical development. In the course of a long cross-cultural history, masks have evolved. Today’s masks carry traces of their previous phases and of their transformation over time according to their use in rituals, in the theater and in carnivals, and finally in fiction. Masks operate in both religious and secular frames. As agents of identity transformation, they assist in superficial transformations as well as in deep-rooted ones. The most complete transformation occurs for the person donning a mask during a ritual. For the duration of the ritual, this person is identified with his mask, to the point of voiding himself of his own identity in order to become the mask-invoked deity: both man and mask together constitute a vessel which brings the invoked deity to life among its believers and triggers its efficacy.¹

As Johan Huizinga explains: “when a certain form of religion accepts a sacred identity between two things of a different order, say a human being and an animal ... the essential oneness of the two goes far deeper than the correspondence between a substance and its symbolic image. It is a mystic unity. The one has become the other. In this magic dance the savage *is* a kangaroo.”² Yet not only is the dancer transformed, but as a result of participating in the ritual, all the members of the community are transformed as well, and become other than they were before. When a ritual mask dances, it is thus activated by the whole community: the dancer and all the participants in the ritual. The power and efficacy of ritual masks stem from the sanctioning of each member of the ‘mask-community,’ a community in turn created by the transformation undergone while the mask was dancing. Moreover, ritual masks assist in generating strong bonds between the members of this community and solidifying its essence.

Whether or not the theater was born directly out of ritual practices (a much debated question that cannot be adequately discussed here),³ masks were transposed from ritual to theater. No longer used to invoke a God for the community, theater masks were nevertheless instrumental in the creation of a collective experience for what may be called the theatrical community. The collective experience in the theater is similar to the collective experience of ritual since it consists of the creation of a collective imaginary, a subject that will be central to the present study.

Masks were later transposed into novels. Although they were secularized and their medium had changed, literary masks still relied on the collective ritual experience manifest among ritual believers and theater audiences, to invoke and trigger them and recreate a collective imaginary. Textual masks are necessarily invisible and intangible, yet they can be detected by their functions. Since both ritual masks and theater or carnival masks were transposed into novels, one must make a clear distinction between literary masks whose functions are reminiscent of older kind of ritual masks, that I have termed ‘personification masks,’ and masks whose functions relate to relatively later theater and carnival masks, that I have termed ‘impersonation masks.’

Like ritual masks, fictional personification masks have a major role in forming their belief community and constantly reaffirming it. A personification mask-character embodies the collective values of its society, and reveals these values to the readers by the character’s behavior. In rites of believing, whether of religious, political or social communities, the efficacy of a personification mask depends on each member of the community, and on the projection of each participant’s fragment of the collective image onto the mask. Similarly, in rites of reading, the personification mask is recomposed by each member of the implied reader-community, a community that is simultaneously being defined by the co-production of the personification mask in the act of reading. The use

of literary masks thus enables the writer to reach out of the books' pages and create a doubly responsible community of readers: both because the readers assisted the writer in activating the mask, and because they are made to realize that what is reflected on the mask pertains to personal, collective unconscious elements within the individual psyche, to follow the elucidations of Carl G. Jung and of Erich Neumann, the same elements which have produced this specific mask in the first place.

Modern-time individualism encourages the consideration of the imaginary as a personal, private matter, yet the incidence of personification masks in fiction makes it clear that personal imaginaries are merely part of a collective imaginary. The paradox regarding personification masks is that through a recognition of their existence, one also recognizes one's individual personality to be a personality that embraces a greater self, a self that embodies and represents a collective spirit. Accordingly, Personification masks prove that readers are neither as solitary nor as free as they may believe themselves to be. By activating the masks, each reader is made to recognize (to varying degrees) personal, ethical responsibility for the contents embodied by masks.

The masks' power thus stems not only from the power of imagination, but also from the pragmatic impact their operation has on historical reality. As unlikely as a readers' revolution may seem to the more pessimistic among us, the power of personification masks my younger daughter sensed when she threatened to become a cat, is quite considerable. It is up to each of the readers to realize and assume responsibility for the activation of literary masks encountered in fiction and to vigilantly criticize these masks. This attitude will in turn ensure that future literary masks will embody reformed values and reflect a better society.

NOTES

1 | Peter and Roberta Markman explain that "the lifeless mask must be animated by the wearer in order to 'live' in ritual, thus demonstrating the integral relationship of spirit and matter." See: Peter T. Markman and Roberta H. Markman, *Masks of The Spirit: Image and Metaphor in Mesoamerica* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), p. 191.

2 | Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study of The Play Element in Culture*, trans. Huizinga and unknown translator, 2nd ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1950), p. 25.

3 | Three representative examples of the disparate views regarding the birth of the theater are those of (1) Phyllis Hartnoll, who considers Greek tragedy to be a direct development of the *Dythyrambs*, sung around Dionysus' altar; though the evolution of the act of worship into a tragedy was slow, the altar was kept in the center of the stage of the earliest plays. See: Phyllis Hartnoll, *The Theater: a Concise History* (London: Thames

and Hudson, 1998), p. 8; (2) David Napier claims that ritual and drama are related but did not necessarily stem one from the other and that there is no basis for the belief that all drama is directly related to rituals. Nevertheless, Napier admits that there is no way to determine the exact nature of rituals in pre-classic Greece and one can only rely on what has become known from the sixth century BCE onward. See: A. David Napier, *Mask, Transformation and Paradox* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), pp. 33, 42; (3) Victor Turner, for his part, claims that “the roots of theater is in social drama there is, therefore, in theater something of the ... sacred, mythic, numinous, even ‘supernatural’ character of religious action – sometimes to the point of sacrifice.” See: Turner, *From Ritual to Theater: The Human Seriousness of Play* (New York: Performing Arts Journal Publication, 1982), pp. 11-12.

Chapter One: The Double Function of Literary Masks

The most obvious difference between masks used in fiction and masks used in rituals or in the theater is that in fiction the presence of masks is not self-evident, since the purely verbal medium precludes the tangible embodied visibility that facilitates the immediate recognition of masks in ritual or in the theater. Nonetheless, the claim made here is that literary masks not only inherited the functions of their two historical predecessors, the ritual and theatrical masks, but that these functions are operative in fiction in ways similar to the functions masks perform in rituals and in the theater.

Literary masks are divided according to their two major discernible functions, which are closely related to the functions of their two previous manifestations, as ritual masks¹ and as theater masks. The function related to theater masks is that of impersonation: an impersonation mask stages one private mask-identity concealing another private identity, with playful or deceitful intent, in acts of manifest duplicity. Impersonation masks are artifacts used for purposes of disguise, concealment or deceit, which hide feelings and truths. When a reveler at a carnival dons a mask for example, he is still considered to be himself underneath the mask. The mask allows for a temporary change of behavior and identity, one which does not usually endanger its user. Using impersonation masks merely entails foregrounding one persona rather than another while retaining the same subject underneath the mask. The same is true of an actor using such a mask. A duality between the actor and his mask-act must be created for the actor to maintain his sanity. Just as the carnival is limited in its duration, so the theatrical convention clearly differentiates between an actor's identity and his various possible, interchangeable stage identities. Impersonation masks can be visible or not, since in effect any role-playing as well as titles, names, modes of behavior, besides the more obvious masks such as articles of clothing or face-covers, can be considered an impersonation. In modern times, impersonation masks have become synonymous with falseness and are sometimes considered purposefully deceitful and even evil. This view of impersonation masks both explains and stems

from a modern concept that what is seen on the outside is merely a false cover for some truth or reality lying inside, yet the origins of this view should probably be sought earlier, in the attitude of the Church towards theatrical practices.²

The function related to ritual masks is that of personification: a personification mask materializes one person as the embodiment and manifestation of many participants in a common collective identity. Personification masks reveal, rather than hide, truths about a society's beliefs and fantasies. While impersonation masks deal with the relationship of the individual to his society, personification masks deal with the relationship of the individual to the rituals of society. The agent creating identity in impersonation masks is the individual who invents himself by adopting this mask. The agent creating identity in personification masks is not the individual but rather the collective. Personification masks also allow access to the shared collective imaginary in addition to beliefs that are common to a given society. Although the imaginary is at present generally thought of as a private, individual matter, personification masks clarify the fact that all personal imaginaries are parts of a collective imaginary since all such masks are the result of group production. Personification masks are therefore useful tools for detecting the shared community reality that is projected onto them and transforms its users. In rites of believing, whether of religious, political or social communities, the efficacy of the personification mask depends on each member of the community, and on the projection of each participant's fragment of the collective image onto the mask. Similarly, in rites of reading, the personification mask is recomposed by the reading act of each member of the implied reader-community, a community that is at the same time being defined by the co-production of the personification mask in the act of reading.

To sum up, the traditional communities in which masks are fashioned and deployed are comprised of the ritual and theatrical communities. Literary masks assist in producing an additional community, a community of readers, who co-produce the masks in their act of reading, at the same time as the community itself is created and sustained by the personification masks that embody the community's common collective imaginary projected onto them. The functional differences between masks divide them into two major groups, of impersonation masks and of personification masks. Popular carnivals and the theater make visible use of impersonation masks, though personification masks are also used in the theater. Rituals rely on personification masks to embody the collective beliefs of their community as they are projected onto the religious symbols particular to each religion. Masks serve to incarnate the spirit that the collective shares, whether in church institutions, theater institutions or political institutions. This spirit must be projected onto a person, be it a priest, an actor or the king, to be manifest and effective.

The historical changes that masks have undergone did not alter their functions, rather they altered our perception of these functions. Early theatrical practices already made use of both kinds of masks, as did early novels. Today, both kinds of masks are still used in fiction and what has changed is the readers' perception of personification masks. Based on the assumption that reading is a solitary activity, readers do not usually realize they are sharing their reading experience with a community of readers, and yet such a community is created with the assistance of personification masks. Every member of the reader community participates in piecing the mask together in the process of reading, and in projecting values and beliefs onto the personification masks.

The reason personification masks are effective in the various communities in which they are used, whether social, religious or literary, is that the collective content projected onto them is not merely present outside the self but is also a projection of the collective unconscious residing in the self of each member of the community. Personification masks are thus the embodiments of the collective unconscious, which are at the source of the collective imaginary of a given society. The importance of personification masks, as writers who use them demonstrate, is in their capacity to bring about a change in a society's values if that society realizes that what is projected onto the personification masks must be changed.

A. CONCEPTUAL TOOLS

It is widely held among cultural anthropologists that masks are effective artifacts used in collective rites of character formation and transformation. Anthropological studies, as well as cultural and social studies, examine the pragmatic function of the artifacts used in religious or social rituals such as theatrical performances. The analysis of semiotic systems carried out in these fields of study concentrates on how the sign system works, with what purpose and to what effect. Sign systems are instrumental in modeling a collective identity and imprinting it into the self-awareness of each member of the community. I suggest that similar questions as those guiding anthropological and cultural studies are relevant in the analysis of the functions and intended effects of masks in fiction, specifically regarding those masks that are the descendants of ritual masks and whose functions are maintained in fiction.

The questions pertinent to the study of fictional masks regard the community frameworks in which masks are fashioned and deployed and the nature of their roles in each framework. Other aspects of these questions regard the influence historical changes may have had on the functions of masks, and whether there are functional differences between fictional masks, ritual masks

and theater masks. The role masks play in the formation of *dramatis personae* in fiction, in modeling and manifesting the collective spirit or identity of society present both within the self and outside the self, will be at the center of the discussion.

In order to develop a theoretical model and conceptual tools with which to examine literary masks in the texts under discussion, it was necessary to follow the steps of several thinkers whose work stems from the same cross-road as literary masks do, between anthropological considerations and cultural or literary semiotics. Wolfgang Iser's work was the starting point of this research. Iser not only coined the term "literary anthropology,"³ but also traced in *The Fictive and the Imaginary* the philosophical development of human nature and its definitions. Iser examined the works of several writers and thinkers from the point of view of the cultural techniques that model the individual. One of these thinkers is the sociologist Cornelius Castoriadis, whose conclusions regarding the role of the collective imaginary in sustaining the structure of society and its institutions contextualizes the social scene in which masks operate.

Another angle pertinent to the study of literary masks is provided by Jean-Paul Sartre, who read the works and lives of Gustave Flaubert and Jean Genet from a sociological point of view, analyzing collective psychoses through the prism of masks. In these texts Sartre examines how each of the writers interact with their audience and readership in the process of creating masks. This process conjointly manufactures the mask in the collective imagination of writer and readers. Sartre emphasizes the presence of a collective imaginary operating in and through each individual of that collective. The readers contribute to the creation of the imaginary construct through their own psyche, in which the collective imaginary is seen to be embedded as well, especially when triggered by the text. In these studies, Sartre explicitly discusses the writer as 'embodier' of his generation's collective psychosis in a mask-character, who is presented for the collective judgment of an audience. Sartre's texts are also invaluable in understanding the centrality of the theater, even in the writing of novels, for the collective creation of personification masks. An example of this collective creation of a personification mask is foregrounded by Iser as well, in *Staging Politics*, in his examination of Shakespeare's *Henry V*.

In certain ideological times and places, such as in the era of modern fiction, the social self, or the impersonation mask one uses in order to function in society is also used for self-invention and free-play, as stressed by Iser.⁴ Yet whereas Iser and Castoriadis are mainly concerned with the social self, and the impersonation masks one puts on for the purposes of social interactions, the collective self, personified in a personification mask, transcends the regular social community identity. Undoubtedly, the ultimate recognition of the exis-

tence of impersonation masks one produces as pertinent to one's social role is performed, as Iser suggests, by a single consciousness. Nevertheless, the paradox regarding personification masks is that through the recognition of their existence, one also recognizes one's individual personality to be a personality that embraces a greater self, a self that embodies and represents a collective spirit. This becomes clear when one considers ritual practices. Rituals release their participants from everyday activities, since the time and place of the ritual are specific to the ritual and are set apart from the ordinary time and place of the habitual community's coexistence. The self-identity of the participants of a ritual is distinguished from their everyday social identities. The ritual self is thus a self that exists beyond the social self, and exists in each and every member of the community taking part in the ritual. It is this collective community self that the personification masks embody.

This is the reason that Carl G. Jung's and Eric Neumann's analytical research on collective elements in dreams, myths, and cultural manifestations proved to be of the utmost importance for the understanding of the nature and functioning of personification masks. Jung and his followers' writings are relevant to the study of masks because these writings seek an ontological foundation for the force of the archetypes and their outer expressions. One of these expressions is the mask that is postulated on the existence of a universal, collective unconscious, existing within the self. Jung examines collective codes and traditions as embodiments of instituted practice, mirroring the interaction between the individual and the collective. Yet Jung is aiming at a perception of the individual personality that enlarges the scope of the self beyond the individual, private identity, to a self that encompasses a collective unconscious as well.

B. TEST CASES: LUIGI PIRANDELLO AND PATRICK WHITE

Two modern, secular writers explicitly declare their use of masks. These writers are Luigi Pirandello and Patrick White, both of whom use impersonation masks as well as personification masks. In their writing, they allude to religious ceremonies and invite the readers to recognize the characteristics of the masks that originated in ritual and whose functions are operational in community character formation.

Patrick White's novel *Memoirs of Many in One* is the core exemplum for my investigation because it is a novel that both traces the two earlier stages of the mask and, in my opinion, concretely represents the current summit in the development of the fictional mask. Not only does *Memoirs* allude to previous texts in the fictional tradition, it actually points to specific texts by earlier authors. Each of the plays and novels exemplifies a salient feature of fictional

masks. These works are Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*, Imre Mádach's *Tragedy of Man* and Goethe's *Faust*, as well as an indirect reference to medieval morality plays.

My reading of Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*, which is the play that White made the focal point of *Memoirs of Many in One*, will be followed by a reading of two plays by White, *Big Toys* and *Shepherd on the Rocks*, in order to examine the use White makes of masks in the theater, before moving on to examining his use of masks in his novel *Memoirs of Many in One*. But even before reading Shakespeare and White's plays, I will open the discussion with Luigi Pirandello's play *Six Characters in Search of an Author* and with his novel *The Late Mattia Pascal*. There are striking similarities between Pirandello and White in their understanding and use of both kinds of masks in their works, despite important differences in time, language and place. Moreover, Pirandello is known as a master of mask deployment in fiction. In an introductory comment to the play *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, Pirandello instructs the actors to wear masks. Although it is a modern play, breaking new ground in modern theater conventions, it still makes use of visible masks, a use which must be addressed directly since it emphasizes the transition masks have undergone from being visible artifacts to becoming fictional elements in prose. A reading of *The Late Mattia Pascal* will allow us to follow the detailed construction of an impersonation mask in fiction and of its concomitant function as a personification mask in the text.

C. PIRANDELLO'S USE OF THE DOUBLE FUNCTION OF MASKS

Pirandello's works deploy both kinds of masks, in their functions of impersonation and of personification. Most of his critics, interested in Pirandello's theories regarding illusion and reality, focus on his use of impersonation masks, as an expression of the tension between the world outside the character and the character's internal life.⁵ The individual's crisis became emblematic of the modern existentialist experience of uncertainty and alienation, and the impersonation masks became in turn emblematic of this existential angst.⁶ The mask is presented by Pirandello as one of the necessary evils of socialization.⁷ By means of the mask, the individual can change his identity and social role, and as Susan Bassnett-McGuire pointed out, Pirandello was interested in "the ironies inherent in belief in a single absolute identity. Many of his plays and prose writings center on the clash between a fixed notion of identity and the multi-faceted nature of man's social role ... Pirandello explored the dichotomy between the mask, which may be assumed as a disguise, and the face that may or may not exist behind it."⁸

Yet Pirandello's masking devices are multifaceted, too, and call for an examination of his use of personification masks, that have not received the same attention that impersonation masks have. Indeed, Pirandello presents characters who misguidedly believe that, by using impersonation masks, they can free themselves of their social constraints. Some characters unwittingly personify at the same time the modern notion that one can fashion oneself in any way one chooses by using impersonation masks. Some also personify the desire to elude their responsibilities by playfully pretending to be someone else. Such is Enrico, in *Enrico IV*, whose real name is not known, and who maintains his friends' impression that he is mad and irresponsible for his actions by continuing to pretend to be the historical King Henry IV, long after he has already recovered enough to realize the truth about his condition. Mattia, the main protagonist of *The Late Mattia Pascal*, is another character who exploits the possibility of self-invention by an extensive use of impersonation masks. Yet at the same time, Mattia embodies the fantasy that one can reinvent oneself and start life over again. Mattia and Enrico embody the modern illusion that one can choose to fashion oneself as one pleases. Both characters are punished for their transgressions of social conventions and for their misuse of their masks. Their punishment is similar to the punishment that the misuse of a ritual mask would entail, since they are both banished from normative society.

Pirandello's masks are thus not to be taken lightly: they are not just playful artifacts and their use – and especially their misuse – may have severe repercussions. Masks cannot be used differently than their socially accepted conception allows, nor can they be discarded, as two representative Pirandellian characters prove. The effort that the young boy in “Canta l'epistola” (“He Who Chants the Epistle”) makes to rid himself of masks costs him his life. Moscarda, the main protagonist of *Uno, nessuno e centomila*, thinks he can “peel” all his masks off and become free of society, only to discover that he remains linked to society even in his remote refuge, where he falsely believes himself to be living with no masks. Pirandello's use of masks leads us to the conclusion that there is no point in trying to go against the masks since their use in society is both necessary and inevitable. As some of his other characters demonstrate, a clever use of masks can be beneficial for their wearer, such as the husband's mask in “La tartaruga” (“The Tortoise”), that ultimately protects him from an impossible marriage and allows him a new future, or the sorcerer's mask in “La patente” (“The License”), that provides the main protagonist's livelihood once he realizes he cannot be rid of it in any case.

Most importantly, Pirandello's personification masks prove that masks cannot be dismissed as false artifacts, as impersonation masks could lead one to believe, but should also be understood to be artifacts that can embody and

reflect real feelings that must not be ignored. This is apparent in Pirandello's use of masks in "Marsina stretta" ("The Tight Tailcoat"). The comical ripping of the coat-mask allows its wearer to give expression to his outrage at the unfairness he witnesses. His character embodies higher moral values, and the ripping of the mask allows these values to come to the fore, substituting one set of conventions with another, morally superior set of conventions. The establishment of a better mask saves the otherwise tragic fate of a young girl. In *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, the mother and daughter characters embody real feelings and their juxtaposition with the other characters reflects and exposes these characters' (and the audience's) cynical attitude. As we shall see, in his use of personification masks, Pirandello also suggests that in each of the separate "characters" an entire community identity is personified, in and through the cooperation of the other characters and of the audience. His personification masks allow him to hold an accusing mirror up to his cynical implied audience and to his cultural period.

The necessity of a common effort to bring about change in society's personification masks is apparent in Pirandello's works. Such change entails a change of values and can only be carried out if each individual member of the community realizes not only the necessity for change but also his or her personal responsibility in bringing this change about that could then lead to renewed hope and to a better society. Pirandello's masks are thus used for two interrelated functions: the masks criticize the present situation by embodying and reflecting the ills in need of change, engaging the readers' recognition of this need and hopefully in responsible action towards a better future. Some masks are also used to reflect a different and better reality that will become possible once society embraces morally superior values that will subsequently be embodied and reflected by new masks.

D. MASKS AS THE KEY TO THE ARTISTRY OF PATRICK WHITE'S *MEMOIRS OF MANY IN ONE*

In his public speeches, White accepts his share of the collective self and addresses himself to the collective component of his audience. In one particular speech, delivered on August 2, 1984, at an advanced stage of his creative life as a writer, the ideological identity White describes and targets is insincerity. This speech, entitled "In This World of Hypocrisy and Cynicism," delivered as a lecture on the theme of *The Search for an Alternative to Futility*,⁹ evokes the collective community feeling that paradoxically exists in the fashioning of every individual.¹⁰

In this speech, White points to the universal practice of hypocrisy and duplicity and to the reigning pessimistic and cynical ideology which views all

people as masked, and all masks as necessarily delusional. He acknowledges that he and his audience are part of a society that has been disappointed in its leaders, “the politicians in their politician suits,” politicians who wear masks that allow them to become “divorced from life” and to have “lost contact”¹¹ with the needs of those they are supposed to represent. Yet White does not share the conclusions many draw from this situation. Those who view the world as hypocritical and duplicitous use this claim as an excuse to do nothing. Their philosophy supports the alibi impersonation masks afford: if the truth can never be reached and everything is meaningless, then there is no point in trying to protest or change the present situation. Such a view leads to despair of any possible change. White admits that his own single voice, with which he tried to be heard by politicians, was ignored, and that he received no response to the many letters he sent to various public figures. And yet White believes one should not give up, and that there is an alternative to the reign of the false impersonation masks of corrupt politicians. By agreeing to speak in public on this and other occasions, White is performing in his own personification mask, which is created and supported by the audience listening to him. Through this personification mask White can embody another facet of the collective spirit and the faith each individual should have in the possibility to change society by uniting and speaking up together. As White says, “you can’t do much on your own. We must unite – those of us of similar vision in Australia and throughout the world – those of us who have lost faith in our leaders.” Uniting is “the only way we can overcome despair and the sense of futility so many of us are suffering from.” White concludes that it is our duty to unite “in creating faith in life and humankind.”¹²

White thus believes masks to have the opposite function to hiding the truth, namely that of incarnating and personifying the moral options available to human nature. He believes in the power of each individual to bring change, and especially in the joint contribution each individual could bring to the social and political scene. He is connecting, by means of the mask, between each individual and his or her collective national identity. The “We” exists by each person’s very presence in the audience, by the collective upholding of a personification mask that calls for change. As an artist, he feels he has a special responsibility to uncover lies and expose the values that upheld the impersonation masks, and facilitated the work of corrupt leaders. He uses personification masks in his writing to embody and expose the ills he targets, masks which embody these values and expose them for what they are. Yet the persona as mask of the public speaker that he and his audience create and share in his speeches invites a glimmer of hope that this personification function of the mask might serve a constructive purpose. This hope derives from White’s trust in the power of people of goodwill, who, when working together, can make their will prevail. A mask that embodies this will could be an alternative to illusion

and deception. What artists can do to help alter their social reality is to reinvent masks that would provide an alternative and put an end to the rule of the hypocritical masks.

Personification masks needn't only personify bitter alternatives. White uses masks not just to criticize and mock the collective hypocrisy but also to stage collective feelings of bonding and togetherness. In one mask technique he thus offers two alternative functions, with positive or negative outcomes. As in Pirandello's, so in White's writing, the personification mask has another face, which can be positive when it manifests and sustains strong collective feelings of love and hope. White's speech connects his use of personification masks in his ideology, in his writing practice and in his private life.

In both his life and in *Memoirs of Many in One*, marriage is exposed as yet another personification mask of the accepted social conventions yet at the same time as an alternative to solitude and cynicism, enabling one to fulfill an important part of the self. In his own life, White "clung to Lascaris," his partner, "as the man who saved him from the worst suffering of all, loneliness."¹³ The two had met during World War II, and although "war has always been against the marriages it makes,"¹⁴ their union lasted over four decades. Manoly Lascaris, for his part, stayed with White despite his bad temper and bad manners, defending him in the face of criticism. "What made suffering ... worthwhile for Lascaris was the conviction that White was a great novelist and that he had a part in his success."¹⁵ In White's novel, the wedding ring gnaws into Alex, his protagonist's finger, and the war indeed is a poor match-maker in her case: her husband, whom she married during World War II despite her parents' misgivings, commits suicide. But her editor, Patrick, does manage to live in a marriage of sorts with her daughter after Alex's death, achieving a kind of wholeness and a recognition Alex had striven for but had not been able to reach on her own. Unlike Alex, who did her utmost to separate herself from her family and from Patrick, Patrick realizes that Alex is a part of him that cannot be exorcised even after her death, and his coming to terms with this allows a consciously shared life rather than a solitary, unfulfilled existence.

The artistic device White used to stage the prevailing collective fantasy of his age in *Memoirs of Many in One* is thus not made up of a single personification mask, but rather of two, personified by White's complementary dramatis personae of Alex and Patrick. As we shall see, Alex embodies the dominant prevailing trends that value the cult of the self-fashioned individual who pursues his or her goals even at the price of a solitary, misunderstood life, and in total disregard of others. The staging of this mask-character is invariably carried out within a community frame, and such staging only underlines the values the mask embodies and that White criticizes by exposing this mask to his readers' scrutiny. Patrick, the editor, personifies the alter-

native to Alex's mask. His mask embodies the realization one arrives at in adulthood, that other people are not just a part of one's experience in life but literally part of oneself. Solitude is a delusion, for even in solitude one is never completely alone. The alternative to solitude and cynicism is to be found in the other, and in the realization that the self is not single but composed of many.¹⁶

White depicted various group portraits in his writing, such as family portraits, portraits of an anarchic avant-garde theater group in *Memoirs of Many in One*, or portraits of aristocratic circles in pre-WWII London and of cattle raisers in Australia in *The Twyborn Affair*. The various groups, whether composed of a single family or of many members of a convent, are the frameworks that sustain the mask-character's personification function in the novels. White hoped that exposing the values that needed to be changed in the masks he used in his writing would eventually foment the necessary change. Masks embody truths that cannot be accessed in any other way, and provide group-portraits in one visible individual mask-character for the readers to judge. At a time when nihilism and philosophies of the absurd turned emptiness into a fashionable trend, White felt the need to render his criticism of the complex compound self in the grips of these philosophies in a way that would be visible and tangible to his readers, that is, embodied in masks.

White tried in vain to show his genre of writing to be a translation of plastic mediums into a verbal medium.¹⁷ To his editor and friend, Ben Huebsch, White explained, "always something of a frustrated painter, and a composer *manqué*, I wanted to give my book the textures of music, the sensuousness of paint, to convey through the theme and characters of *Voss* what Delacroix and Blake might have seen, what Mahler and Liszt might have heard."¹⁸ White's effort to make his ideas visible included turning *Voss* and *A Fringe of Leaves* into an opera and a film. Nevertheless, he was frustrated that his critics did not see his art for the archeology of the mask, of history and of faith that it was.

In 1970, White was not awarded the Nobel Prize since the Academy decided it could not award the prize to "an author whose latest work elaborates on the not at all attractive conclusion that the artist steps over dead bodies in order to give free sway to life; that he consumes people as the raw material of his art."¹⁹ Had the members of the Royal Swedish Academy realized the nature of the personification masks used by White, perhaps they would have seen past their superficial reading of the text. White used masks to embody, reflect and criticize the very same elements the Academy found offensive. Far from stepping over dead bodies, White's masks confronted the readers with the embodied and renewed presence of the dead members of the community and with the collective history the community shares. His masks remind each reader that the dead and the living share the same collective archetypal

contents and that this content is as relevant today as it always was. The fact that White had chosen to write certain novels, such as *Voss*, as fiction based on a real occurrence, did not mean he was producing a chronicle. A writer's imagination, shared and supported by his readers' imaginations, is precisely what can fill the gaps in the dry facts and add soul to the narrative.²⁰ White had borrowed particular facts from the writings produced by historians at the time of the expedition of the flesh-and-blood explorer Leichhardt to the same extent that he had relied upon details of his own experiences in the Egyptian desert, although he was writing about the Australian desert in the novel.²¹ In other words, the fact that his story was based on true occurrences did not detract from his artistic rendering of the same. Without the safe distance of time, White knew his readers to be uncomfortable with the picture of themselves that he forced them to look at, through the use of his mask-character. As he goes on to say in his memoirs:

Voss's controversial origins led to strife with Leichhardt's academic guardians and confusion amongst the thesis writers. All demanded facts rather than a creative act. In time I was forgiven, Voss canonized, and it became my turn to resent the misappropriation of a vision of flesh, blood, and spirit, for translation according to taste, into a mummy for the museum, or the terms of sentimental costume romance. Half those professing to admire Voss did so because they saw no connection between themselves and the Nineteenth Century society portrayed in the novel. As child-adults Australians grow resentful of being forced to recognize themselves divorced from their dubious antiques, surrounded by the plastic garbage littering their back yards; they shy away from the deep end of the unconscious. So they cannot accept much of what I have written about the century in which we are living, as I turn my back on their gush about Voss. (If there is less gush about that other so-called 'historical' novel *A Fringe of Leaves* it is perhaps because they sense in its images and narrative the reasons why we have become what we are today.)²²

Readers focus on the literal plot in the literal setting, whereas White believes more attention must be paid to the function and nature of the *dramatis personae*. The personification mask-character forces the readers to realize that the character they are judging is an embodiment of their own beliefs. It is the product of their own society, regardless of the time depicted by the novel, and it is their responsibility and their duty to alter the mask and the values it embodies when necessary.

White's last novel, *Memoirs of Many in One*, has received relatively little attention in comparison to his other novels. Critics mostly concentrate on thematic interpretations relating to political, linguistic, mystical, metaphysical or psychoanalytical issues, none of which explains the art of this unusual text.²³ Some have pointed to the biographical details borrowed from White's life that

indeed abound in the novel. Alex, the main protagonist, can be read as being made up of compound features borrowed from the Greek aunts of Manoly Lascaris, White's lifelong partner,²⁴ and the character of Patrick, the editor of *Memoirs*, not only shares White's name, but also his one-time employment. Yet such details have usually been used to buttress a particular thematic interpretation, rather than being read as part of White's artistry of masks.²⁵ The presence of masks in the text has not been explained, nor has the use White makes of various kinds of theater.

That White chose for the character of Patrick in *Memoirs* the role of editor is not a mere coincidence, considering the fact that this is a mask-character. During World War II White served as an army censor, reading other soldiers' letters and approving what the recipients of the letters would read. This occupation, which White terms in his own official memoirs one which entailed "guarding the common good against any excesses of human emotions,"²⁶ is also telling of the nature of personification masks. The accepted "common good" of society is embodied in the masks and reflected on them, making that "good" debatable and open to criticism and change. White's late effort to underline the role of masks is apparent in his autobiography, as well as in his biography, written by David Marr yet supervised by White, who was also involved in the work, and most of all in *Memoirs of Many in One*. In this novel, the compounded collective spirit is embodied in one mask-character, a mask that dramatizes an image of a psyche in which many, not one, are present.

Wolfgang Iser's model of the implied reader (followed by the school of reader-response theory) is based on the premise that this reader is a single reader.²⁷ Yet the very presence of masks in certain fictional texts raises a central question about this premise. Whether one is part of a ritual community, part of an audience at the theater, or part of a community of readers of a fictional text, the question remains the same: what is the relation between one's response as part of the community and one's response as oneself only? Clearly, neither a believer reciting psalms in church, nor a member of a theater audience is alone, yet readers of fictional texts also participate, unwittingly, in a collective activity. Although writers and readers are considered to be solitary, Patrick White's text challenges this concept in his many dramatizations and explicit commentaries regarding his persona as the editor of his protagonist's rambblings. This is already indicated in the full title of the novel, *Memoirs of Many in One by Alex Demirjian Gray edited by Patrick White*. The co-existence of the private self and of the community in one mask is addressed by White from many different angles and is tested in each community that the mask protagonist is made to visit and mirror.

The most prominent mask White uses in the novel is that of the main protagonist, Alex. White uses the unlikely mask-character of this somewhat mad elderly woman to embody modern ideals of eternal youth and

self-fulfillment. Alex's quest for meaning and self-fulfillment, and her aspirations for artistic expression, are implicitly condoned or sanctioned by her society, which encompasses the readers as well. Readers may even admire Alex's rebelliousness and obliviousness to, or disregard for, her advanced age and its limitations despite the ridicule her actions elicit. There are many social scenes in the novel, and White uses his main mask-character to reflect each community that Alex visits, one after another. This mask's awkward journey criticizes both the communities she visits and the mask itself, since it is the product of the community it mirrors in each episode. Only in this way can a scene such as Alex's appearance at the Hitler Hotel (*MMO*: 44-5) for example, be made intelligible and connected to the rest of the novel. While the mask-character performs in this scene, its community, made up of an "American herd of businessmen and politicians" advances, "snouts to the ground as though rootling after a rare crop of truffles" (*MMO*: 45). Only if the mask is recognized as a personification of this society and its central figures, which it criticizes at this point, is it possible to connect the scene to the choice of name for the hotel. White includes himself in the crowd he criticizes. He is targeting those who did not refrain from going into a hotel bearing the name of Hitler. The name of the hotel did not make the fascist footfall ring in their ears, and they willingly participated in the events taking place inside the hotel, even if it made them behave like pigs. The many were magnetized by blatant evil, and responded to their own incarnation in the mask dancing before them.

Alex and Patrick together present the reader with one compound psyche. Patrick, the editor of Alex's memoirs, is the one who insists on the historical details of her life, while Alex does not even date her letters or her diary entries. Patrick is used as the conscious and responsible part of the narrated self. Although he recognizes and assumes responsibility for his unconscious counterpart, embodied by Alex, he resists it by clinging to the historical real. From the reader's point of view, Patrick is used as a mediating consciousness within the text, which facilitates the mission of recognizing the collective 'we' within the self as it is projected onto the masks. Through Patrick, White suggests that the reader is as bound to his private collective self as Patrick is to Alex, and is not free to turn away from it or ignore it.

E. PRINCIPAL ARGUMENT

The mask function in literature is a mode of individual and communal activity that is primary in many literary works and has achieved a retrospective exemplary status in the works of Pirandello and White. The agency of the

mask is derived from the collective subject, modeled by the collective imaginary, and embedded in both writer and readers. Though readers may feel that they are solitary in the act of reading, each reader shares his or her reading experience with a community of readers. This community is created with the assistance of the personification mask, which the writer and each of his readers co-create and piece together as they read. The mask defines its own community to which each of the readers belongs once he or she has actively participated in bringing the mask to life. This is a community upon which the mask itself relies for its existence and functioning since it is the readers, we may say, who generate it.

Far from being outmoded, literary masks are quite alive in fiction, deploying the two main functions of impersonation and personification, and are not merely used for playful or deceitful purposes. Literary masks have a real, pragmatic impact though they are invisible and intangible imaginary constructs. These masks embody and reflect the values of their readers' community, which are rooted in the collective unconscious. Therefore, masks do not depend on a specific belief or on particular rituals in order to function. Since the content embodied in them is collective and at the same time exists subconsciously in each reader's psyche, the function of the literary mask cuts across cultures, creeds, geographical locations or time specifications. Importantly, literary masks are operated by the readers who participate in their co-creation.

Literary masks raise the readers' conscious access to the archetypes by which historical events are governed, and they are therefore key agents of cross-semination of history and fiction. The masks the readers co-produce embody and reflect the values of their society, forcing them to face and pass judgment on the values which have fashioned the masks that the readers actively bring to life. These readers are made doubly responsible for the masks, for their present nature and operation, as well as for the potential changes the masks may undergo. Literary masks are thus effective in raising each of the reader's awareness of his or her personal responsibilities for the values of their community, validating at the same time the importance and capacity of each single reader to bring about changes in these values and consequently to society and to the nature of future masks.

Pirandello's and White's works are particularly interesting for the study of the function of literary masks because their texts rely upon and inherit the cultural legacy of the Western tradition that has culminated in them. Not only do Pirandello and White make a conscious use of masks, but they also regard their works as closely related to the history of their times and are aware of the potential impact their use of masks may have on the future fiber of their respective societies.

NOTES

1 | Ritual masks have been studied extensively by anthropologists. Masks from Africa, Europe, the Americas or from Asia vary in shape and texture but not (not significantly at least) in a range of functions that includes law enforcement devices, crafts used for entertainment purposes and as embodiments of the God that is collectively believed in. See George W. Harley, *Masks as Agents of Social Control in Northeast Liberia* (Cambridge, Mass.: Peabody Museum of American Archeology and Ethnology, Harvard University Press, 1950), pp. 7, 11, 17, 21, 26, 27. In the religious function, the person wearing the mask becomes a tool for the apparition of the deity. The mask wearer's identity is usually kept secret and is in any event irrelevant. In many ritual communities, not only the identity of the wearer of the mask is kept secret, but the masks themselves can only be seen by a small number of select people, such as the elders of the village, and are often forbidden to the sight of women and young children. Some masks only 'dance' once in seven, ten and even sixty years. See Andreas Lommel, *Les Masques* (Paris: Braun, 1970), p. 42; Harley, *ibid.* p. x.

2 | The decline of the Roman Empire also saw a decline in tragedy, as political satire replaced moral debates, and improvisation comedy, which arrived from Naples to Rome, became popular. See: George Freedley and John Reeves, *A History of The Theater* (NY: Crown Publishers, 1968), pp. 48-9. The religious aspect of the theater had also diminished towards the end of the Roman Empire, yet statues, effigies and altars to the gods still marked the theater as the domain of pagan gods. Tertullian, and later Augustine, demonstrated why theater practices "were fundamentally incompatible with a Christian view of the world." Importantly for the subject of masks, Remigius of Auxerre, in the 9th century, followed Augustine's concern with true and false representations, and made a categorical distinction between person and mask, which still prevails, considering that "masks could represent the contingent and transient qualities of a person, but not a person's substance or true nature." See: Donnalee Dox, *The Idea of the Theater in Latin Christian Thought: Augustine to the Fourteenth Century* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004), pp. 12, 67. Despite the Church's condemnation of those who attended spectacles rather than the Mass, neither theatrical practices nor the use of masks stopped. The Church eventually integrated the theater into its own practices, in morality plays and religious processions. Masks became symbols of the devil, more often than not in the shape of a goat. See: Romulus Vulcanescu, "Rural Masks in European Cultures," in: Mircea Eliade ed., *The Encyclopedia of Religion* (New York: Macmillan, 1987), vol. 9, pp. 271-2. The threat presented by the theater, which was condemned for immorality, continued to be a major concern of the Church from the early councils to the council of Trent (1545-63), which excommunicated actors. Even a philosopher such as Pascal termed the theater as dangerous for a Christian life. See: Larry F. Norman, "The Theatrical Baroque: European Plays, Painting and Poetry, 1575-1725," Fathom Archive, University of Chicago Library, Digital collections 2001. <http://fathom.lib.uchicago.edu/2/10701023/>. (Accessed 5 February 2009).

3 | The cross-semination of anthropology and literature, two highly inter-related disciplines, has long been established. Their combined approach doubtlessly contributes to a deeper understanding and more meaningful interpretation of cultural phenomena. Some noteworthy examples from by now a vast bibliography, (aside from the work of Wolfgang Iser, to which we shall return below), include: James Boon, *From Symbolism to Structuralism: Lévi-Strauss in a Literary Tradition* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972); Victor Turner and Edward Bruner eds. *The Anthropology of Experience* (Urbana and Chicago: Illinois UP, 1986); Clifford Geertz, *Works and Lives: The Anthropologist as Author* (Cambridge: Polity, 1988); Fernando Poyatos ed. *Literary Anthropology* (Amsterdam, Phil.: John Benjamins, 1988); Kathleen M. Ashley, ed. *Victor Turner and the Construction of Cultural Criticism* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1990); Nigel Rapport, *The Prose and the Passion: Anthropology, Literature and the Writing of E. M. Forster* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1994); and E. Valentine Daniel and Jeffrey M. Peck eds. *Culture/Contexture: Explorations in Anthropology and Literary Studies* (Berkeley: California UP, 1996).

4 | Iser's focus, especially in *The Fictive and the Imaginary*, is on the capacity of the fictive to inspire the play element in the individual imagination. The play element liberates the individual reader from his real-life constraints and from the pressures of the collective. Iser uses the metaphor of the impersonation mask to demonstrate the boundary-crossing entailed by the "de-pragmatization" that reality undergoes when it is turned into fiction. Such boundary-crossing is likened to the use of impersonation masks because while the subject seems to become another when using such a mask, he maintains his previous identity underneath the mask. Thus, there ensues a to-and-fro motion in the mind of the reader of fiction: while he is aware of entering a fictive world when reading a novel, he is also still aware of his own reality. It is in this to-and-fro motion that the play element finds its expression, an element that frees the reader's imagination from its usual social constraints. See: Wolfgang Iser, *The Fictive and the Imaginary*, pp. 78-79, 224, 236-7, and 303. All further references to this book will be noted *F&I* in the text. I must add here that Iser's texts are very complex, and I do not presume to provide a description of his position regarding ethical issues and the imaginary, which would require a separate study. I am only pointing to Iser's concept regarding the play element in fiction since it is related to the difference between the functions of impersonation masks and those of personification masks.

5 | Impersonation masks were considered to be Pirandello's tools of criticism of the entire knowable world, which proved to be a mere illusion. Pirandello viewed masks as necessary because they make people's co-existence in a society possible, but also considered them to be emblematic of the tension between art and reality, and of his contention that eternal art is superior to transitory life, as he expressed in his essay *On Humor*. Life cannot be stopped in order to be examined, since it is in perpetual movement, and what was viewed a moment ago is no longer the same a moment later. James McFarlane considered Pirandello's "obsessive preoccupation with masks" as a "determination to replace the illusionistic counterfeiting of reality by the recognition of the

profounder reality of illusion.” See: James McFarlane, “Neo-Modernist Drama: Yeats and Pirandello,” in: Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane eds., *Modernism 1890-1930* (Hardmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1976), p. 561. Only art can freeze life, reflect and represent it, in an endless effort to capture the living experience, and only art is immutable and permanent. According to Oscar Brockett and Robert Findlay, Pirandello was concerned with the tension between appearance and reality, but he questioned whether a more reliable truth is to be found when the mask is stripped away. See: Oscar G. Brockett and Robert Findlay, *Century of Innovation: A History of European and American Theater and Drama since the Late Nineteenth Century* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1991), p. 209. Jana O’Keefe Bazzoni would add that Pirandello’s structural factor is one of unmasking. The role of the writer, as is expressed in *On Humor*, is to remind one of the harsh reality of the unknown. See: Jana O’Keefe Bazzoni, “Reluctant Pilgrim: Pirandello’s Journey toward the Modern Stage” in: John Lois Di Gaetani ed., *A Companion to Pirandello Studies* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991), p. 49.

6 | See Raymond Williams, *Drama from Ibsen to Brecht* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1968), pp. 165, 341. Bassnett-McGuire points out that “the irony of Pirandello’s concept of the mask, however, is that it does not hide an accessible truth. Once the mask is lifted, what remains is a series of other masks stretching into infinity because there can be no single true identity beneath. Just as life flow cannot be halted, truth cannot be established as identifiable.” See: Susan Bassnett-McGuire, *Luigi Pirandello*, Modern Dramatists Series (London: MacMillan, 1983), p. 27.

7 | Roger Oliver saw the mask as “a metaphorical construct” of Pirandello’s plays, establishing “the relationship between theater and life.” Oliver explains the term ‘costruirsi’ (to create oneself) which Pirandello uses in his essay *On Humor*, in terms of the creation of a persona, a mask that “can be a protective as well as a destructive mechanism for both the individual and society.” See: Roger W. Oliver, *Dreams of Passion: The Theater of Luigi Pirandello* (New York: New York University Press, 1979), pp. 12-13. Giacomo Debenedetti viewed Pirandello’s mask as emblematic of the human condition, which redefines the individual self and at the same time it is also emblematic of the tension between the individual self and the social self. See: G. Debenedetti, *Il romanzo del novecento* (Italy: Garzanti editore, 1971), p. 410. MacClintock notes the contrast and tension between the social mask and the natural face in Pirandello’s play *L’uomo, la bestia e la virtù*, see: Lauder MacClintock, *The Age of Pirandello* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1951), p. 191. Finally, Gian Paolo Biasin considers the use of the mirror in *Uno nessuno e centomila* a “doublement de soi [which] points to the idea of the mask, which in turn points to the conception of reality as a social construction.” See: Gian Paolo Biasin, *Literary Diseases* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1975), p. 103.

8 | See: Susan Bassnett-McGuire, *Luigi Pirandello*, pp. 3, 102. Fiara Bassanese, for her part, remarked that “masks and by extension, identities are constantly shifting, evincing one of Pirandello’s defining concepts: the multiplicity and changeability of the human personality.” See: Fiara Bassanese, *Understanding Luigi Pirandello* (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1997), p. 79.

9 | A speech delivered by Patrick White at La Trobe University in Melbourne. See: White, *Patrick White Speaks* (London: Penguin Books, 1989), pp. 151-158.

10 | One may wonder how White's title is relevant to the theme of the lecture, of finding an alternative to futility. I would like to suggest that White's speech can be read through the prism of the dual functions of masks, of deception and of incarnation, and that White's alternative to futility lies in the masks' capacity to incarnate collective ideals for each individual. In fact, this is the underlying meaning of White's use of masks in his fiction.

11 | *Ibid.* p. 152.

12 | *Ibid.* pp. 152, 153, 158.

13 | See in White's biography: David Marr, *Patrick White: A Life* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992), p. 312.

14 | Patrick White, *Flaws in The Glass: A Self-Portrait*, (New York: Viking Press, 1981), p. 100; hereafter *FG*.

15 | Marr, *Patrick White: A Life*, p. 357.

16 | White himself admits that "as an artist, my face is many-faceted, my body protean, according to time, climate and the demands of fiction" (*FG*: 153). In other words, as a novelist, he lends his body to the collection of voices in him in order to bring this united voice into existence in his writing. White is aware of the toll such an existence has on him, when he is mistaken for his partner's father though both of them are of the same age: "perhaps it is the price a novelist pays for living so many lives in one body" (*FG*: 113).

17 | In a conversation between White and Thelma Herring and G.A. Wilkes, White said: "I find words frustrating as I sit year in year out reeling out an endless deadly grey. I try to splurge a bit of colour - perhaps to get a sudden impact - as a painter squeezes a tube." The conversation is quoted in: Peter Wolfe, *Critical Essays on Patrick White* (G.K. Hall & Co.: Boston, 1990), p. 34. Lyndon Harris points to White's own correlation of "painters" with "writers," and sees it as "an indication of how White sees himself, as a painter in words." See: Harris, "The Peculiar Gifts of Patrick White," in: *Contemporary Literature*, Vol. 19, No. 4 (autumn, 1978), p. 466.

18 | A conversation between White and Huebsch, as reported in White's biography. See: David Marr ed., *Patrick White: Letters* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), p. 318.

19 | See: Ingmar Björkstén, *Patrick White: A General Introduction*, trans. Stanley Gerson (St. Lucia, Queensland: Queensland University Press, 1976), p. 92, as quoted in: John Colmer, *Patrick White* (London: Methuen, 1984), p. 56.

20 | The tension between the value of archives as opposed to that of memoirs underlies *Memoirs of Many in One*: Hilda, Alex's daughter, keeps the family archives religiously, while Alex tries to write her memoirs. Alex claims that "archives are only half the truth ... Archives have no soul" (*MMO*: 21). According to White, only if turned into a fictional mask-narrative by a writer with the assistance of his readers, can archives acquire a soul. The mask-character embodying the writer in the novel, Patrick White the editor,

invites the readers to judge for themselves which is more valuable, archives or memoirs, when he says “whether archives or memoirs contained the truth it might be difficult to decide” (*MMO*: 16). All references to this novel are noted *MMO* in the text, and taken from: Patrick White, *Memoirs of Many in One by Alex Xenophon Demirjian Gray edited by Patrick White* (New York: Viking Penguin Inc., 1986).

21 | White confessed he had borrowed “details of the actual expeditions from the writings of those who found themselves enduring the German’s leadership. The real Voss, as opposed to the actual Leichhardt, was a creature of the Egyptian desert, conceived by the perverse side of my nature at a time when all our lives were dominated by that greater German megalomaniac [Hitler].” See: Patrick White, *Flaws*, p. 104.

22 | Patrick White, *Flaws*, p. 104.

23 | Several critics found *Memoirs* to be one of White’s lesser achievements, such as Rodney Edgecombe, who qualified the novel as a “lightweight work,” or Lawrence Steven’s existentialist reading of White’s works, in which he declared that “if *Memoirs of Many in One* were representative of White’s work ... he would not warrant consideration as a major novelist.” See: Rodney Stenning Edgecombe, *Vision and Style in Patrick White: A Study of Five Novels* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1989), p. 159, and Lawrence Steven, *Dissociation and Wholeness in Patrick White’s Fiction* (Waterloo, Canada: Laurier University Press, 1989), p. 153. Elisabeth Webby and Margaret Harris have labeled the novel “quirky.” See: Elisabeth Webby and Margaret Harris, “Patrick White’s Children: Juvenile Portraits in *Happy Valley* and *The Hanging Garden*,” in: Cynthia vanden Driesen and Bill Ashcroft eds. *Patrick White Centenary: The Legacy of a Prodigal Son* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014), p. 270. John Beston, for his part, finds that *Memoirs* is “more remarkable as an exercise in game-playing and self-mockery than as a literary endeavor.” Beston goes on to claim that this novel “is a flight of fancy that White allowed himself at the end of his career as a novelist, and he spent less care on its structure, characterization and style than in any previous novel *Memoirs of Many in One* does not sustain the image of White as the careful craftsman that his previous novels convey.” See: John Beston, *Patrick White within the Western Literary Tradition* (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 2010), pp. 15, 359-60. For a comprehensive review of White’s critics, and a comparison between the reviews White’s work received in Australia and in the rest of the world, see: Alan Lawson, “Unmerciful Dingoes? The Critical Reception of Patrick White,” *Meanjin Quarterly* 4 (1973), pp. 319-392.

24 | White describes Manoly’s aunts in his memoirs, see: Patrick White, *Flaws*, pp. 101-2.

25 | Mark Williams claims that by choosing the name ‘Patrick White’ for the editor of *Memoirs*, White “situates himself within the novel ... with a mixture of nostalgia and self-mocking deflation.” See: Mark Williams, *Patrick White*, Modern Novelists Series (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1993), p. 154. David Tacey finds the use of Patrick White’s name to be a “playful literary device [which] confirms what we have always suspected:

the mother is the actual 'author' of the work." See: David J. Tacey, *Patrick White: Fiction and the unconscious* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 200.

26 | Patrick White, *Flaws*, p. 103.

27 | See: Wolfgang Iser, *How to do Theory?* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), p. 37. Iser stresses that his reception theory does not deal with a real reader but rather with an implied one. The implied reader, engaged in the act of reading, is modeled by Iser on a single subject consciously processing the text and letting his awakened imagination carry him away from real life constraints to free play and self-fashioning. See also: Iser, *F&I*, pp. 224-230.