

**CONFLICT OF ‘MANDALA’ IN THE LIFE OF BROWN TWINS IN PATRICK
WHITE’S *THE SOLID MANDALA***

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Abstract

Patrick White, the most well-known literary authority in the Australian literary community, arrived at the most crucial point in the expansion and development of Australian literature. Art is both communication and expression, according to White. White’s goal in his novels, as stated in *The Solid Mandala*, is to communicate the essence of his lyrical vision and cause the reader to see. White searches for information using both analytical thought and gut instinct. However, his work is a manner of knowing, not just a means of imparting knowledge. *The Solid Mandala* is a representation of self-reunification. The identical twin brothers, Arthur and Waldo Brown, were so opposed in temperament and demeanour despite sharing the same womb. When they both fall in love with Dulcie Feinstein as teenagers and later develop a close connection with their neighbour, Mrs. Poulter, as adults, their lacklustre love lives are strikingly similar. Without the knowledge of each other, they try to control their desire and depend on each other. Waldo is a literary nerd, while Arthur is friendly. Waldo and Arthur were social outcasts on their own. Individual prejudices, characters, and convictions colour this book. Waldo and Arthur alone were social misfits. This work is coloured by individual prejudices, personalities, and convictions.

Keywords:Self-reunification, Temperament, Prejudices, Convictions.

The grand old master of Australian literature, Patrick White, is a novelist, short story writer, and dramatist whose works are distinguished by carefully considered treatment of important subjects. The inner hollowness of Australian existence is felt profoundly in his fiction. He was a genuinely aristocratic writer who viewed every intellectual effort in Australia with a sarcastic eye. Patrick White asserts that any work of art must have a message for the viewer rather than only for the viewer's enjoyment. It explores themes such as the complex relationship between two brothers, Waldo and Arthur Brown, who are very different in personality and outlook on life.

The novel delves into their struggles, conflicts, and search for meaning and identity. White explores the idea of duality and the contrast between the spiritual and the material aspects of life. In his own words, "Art is a kind of innate drive that seizes the human being and makes him its instrument.", he described the goal of art. He must make a sacrifice for his happiness and for everything else that makes life worthwhile for regular people. His view is quite similar to the underlying essence of human beings' spiritual yearnings and the need for acknowledging the psychic potential of the human spirit, of which conscious cognitive processes are only a small portion. His work continues to

question how we view ourselves and the world around us because he was particularly sensitive to how fragile human identity is. He was especially perceptive to the flimsy nature of human identity, and his work continues to make us question who we think we are and what is genuine. Through language's impact on memory and preconceived notions, an individual forms himself, and his subjectivity.

Personal identity must necessarily remain brittle when these conventional beliefs are contested. By examining the connections between the fictitious protagonist's relationships, White illustrates this frailty. The solid mandala itself serves as a symbol of unity and balance, representing the interconnectedness of opposites. White's writing style in this novel is known for its dense and introspective prose, which can make it a challenging but rewarding read. "*The Solid Mandala*" is often considered a significant work in Australian literature, reflecting White's exploration of human nature and the human condition.

Waldo Brown and Arthur Brown, twin brothers who lived in Sarsaparilla throughout their childhood, adolescence, middle age, and retirement, are the subjects of the four-part novel *The Solid Mandala* (1966). Its main section is a description of their lives, first from Waldo's perspective and then from

Arthur's. Waldo's disappointment in both love and authorship, his growing resentment of his dim-witted, illiterate brother, and his sterile and jaded outlook on life were offset by his confused and inarticulate brother, who has a radiant goodness and insight that is symbolized by his four marbles, which resemble mandalas.

The complex relationship between the two brothers, Waldo and Arthur, is central to the story. Their interactions, conflicts, and moments of reconciliation highlight the intricate dynamics within families. Waldo and Arthur both grapple with questions of identity and their place in the world. Their journeys of self-discovery are at the heart of the novel. The characters in the novel often struggle with societal expectations and norms. Arthur, in particular, rejects conventional ways of living and embraces a non-conformist lifestyle. The latter, who was the less clever of the twins, desired his mandala. His straightforward approach to finding out the truth about people makes him wiser than his more intelligent brother. He is aware that many around him cannot understand their significance. As the solitary keeper of the mandalas, he would be left to deduce their ultimate meaning from touches and light. In the book, the "red gold disc of the sun, which he wanted to hold by the icebergs" represents the struggle to decipher their

significance. Part of the inspiration for this Mandala idea came from Lawrence Daws' Mandala paintings, which proposed an "all-embracing symbol to explain existence."

Since William Walsh, a renowned critic, has declared *The Solid Mandala* to be free of any such flaws, White does not suffer from an artistic flaw in this book. He has given the twofold narrative of the same event—an abstract pattern—through the twins, who appear to be opposite sides of the same coin. The narrative moves between concepts and substance necessarily and seamlessly. The novel's complex themes are intertwined in a way that combines "soul with body". Aside from "spiritual consciousness in middle-class life," the most prevalent themes in the *Solid Mandala*, which is rich in symbolism and imagery, are pain and mysticism.

The value of mysticism must reside in what it has to provide to human beings for its value to higher creatures to remain measurable, which is the only factor contributing to the success of this work. The recurrent overarching theme of White's novels—religious philosophy—is a significant component of this one as well.

"Religion. Yes, that's behind all my books. What I am interested in is the relationship

between the blundering human being and God. I belong to no church, but I have a religious faith... I believe God does intervene; I think there is a Divine Power, a Creator, who influences human beings if they are willing to be open to him.”(19)

The sketchy account of Arthur Brown, which shows how a person develops into a being from society and its collective forms, illustrates the dilemma in White's own life. He retains his ego to accomplish a challenging task for this. He must first enter the unconscious and then emerge from it to form a distinct individuality. White keeps giving Waldo the marble with the knot inside it to symbolize his fleeting desire for the outside world. Because Arthur keeps the marble in front of his sibling, Waldo is impressed by him. Walsh had drawn Waldo's attention to contrast Arthur's pressing need with the novelist's:

"He is so to speak, the un-lived, unrealized potential within White himself... He is the image par excellence of repressed life, a life which throughout the last twenty-five years or more of White's career has not been allowed to live. Arthur, then, is no external vision, but White's own masculine shadow, his positive spirit, his capacity for change and transformation.” (91)

Arthur possesses certain practical skills in tasks like preparing bread, milking the cow, and engaging in pastimes that his

father detested and thought were for women. He has a strong passion for animals, and his favourite job is serving as a delivery boy for the neighbourhood grocer Mr. Allwright. Others frequently took advantage of his command of mathematics, which in most circumstances has nothing to do with intelligence. One endearing quality of Arthur's personality was his candour, which had an unmistakably protective and good influence on people.

He enjoyed a great deal of affection from the women, especially Dulcie Feinstein, Mrs. Poulter, and Mrs. Feinstein. Although he wasn't intelligent in the conventional sense, he had a soul and understood the nature of reality. White's *The Solid Mandala* features a wide range of characters, and the simplest way to sum them up is to say that each, in his or her unique way, is a decent person, a failure, and unfit for the demands placed on them. However, each is also a whole human being and a vital part of the whole, and the author treats these qualities with the appropriate consideration in the case of the two Brown parents.

The twin brothers' stroll down Baranugli Road is featured once more in *The Solid Mandala's* conclusion, maintaining a continuous thread with the two elderly men's hand-in-hand stroll at the book's opening. This time, Waldo has a secret

ambition to fully demolish his shadow sibling to cause him to have a heart attack. To persuade Waldo to face the person, Arthur believes it is appropriate to utilize his final strategy. The plot suddenly takes a tragic turn as the destroyer himself is doomed to destruction. Waldo increased the contemplated pace of his walk, while Arthur was “trotting like a dog”. (p. 63)

As Waldo attempted to drive Arthur to his demise, a truck unintentionally collided with the flap of Waldo’s oil skin. In the end, denying the brother is denying oneself; wanting to eliminate the shadow identity is a type of self-murder. After making numerous attempts to reunite with his brother, Arthur was now completely alone. In the tale, they were discovered together, but they had scarcely ever been able to unite in the mandalic oneness that Arthur had long wished for; instead, they had typically fused in an incestuous and undifferentiated way. Arthur lost his tangled mandalas on the empty streets because he believed that no one could suffer Waldo's passing. This was a terrible awful period in his life. Mrs. Poulter was the only person who amazingly assisted him at this difficult time. She rejoiced to learn of Waldo’s passing and rejoiced to meet the afflicted Arthur:

“The aged man or crumpled child began to whimper, so she went to him again, because it was necessary to take him in her arms, all

the men she had never loved, the children she had never had”. (p. 311)

The helpless Arthur became Mrs. Poulter’s unwanted kid and her submissive lover. Despite having a small role in the story, she is revered as the earth's mother’, and the triumph over the maternal ego is positively perceived. The unexpected arrival of Mrs. Poulter in this terrible moment, according to Brain Kiernan, is “unconvincing...her transformation is stated...rather than fictionally argued and discovered.” (476) Tracey says, “Mrs. Poulter is not a ‘character’ in the conventional sense, she is a mythic figure, and she does have to ‘earn’ her sudden endowment; she merely has to claim it. Her transformation derives from the sudden rush of energy into the maternal image”. (145)

In the final scene, the faces of Arthur and Mrs. Poulter are reflected upon the circular surface of a glass marble. “She saw the two faces becoming one, at the centre of that glass eye, which Arthur sat holding in his hand”. (p. 312) It alludes to the relationship between “Mother” and her “unborn child” in a suggestive manner. A. P. Riemer comments that on this occasion Mrs. Poulter designedly becomes “the custodian of this symbol of perfection... she is the anima... capable of Mandalic experience”. (115)

Thelma Hering concludes that the “novel demonstrates the fulfilment of the quest for totality”. (82) White’s exploration of the Australian landscape and culture is a recurring theme in his works. While “*The Solid Mandala*” primarily focuses on the characters’ inner lives, it is set in the Australian context and reflects aspects of Australian identity. These themes, along with White's unique writing style, contribute to the depth and complexity of “*The Solid Mandala*.” It’s a novel that invites readers to delve into the intricacies of human nature, relationships, and the search for meaning. The symbol of the “solid mandala” in Patrick White's novel of the same name holds significant thematic and symbolic importance throughout the story. The term “mandala” itself is derived from Hindu and Buddhist traditions and typically represents a geometric design or pattern symbolizing the universe, wholeness, and unity. In the novel, the “*solid mandala*” takes on a unique and complex meaning.

The novel’s conclusion is tragically chosen. Sergeant Foyle shows up to transport Arthur to the asylum. Mrs. Poulter didn’t object and let him leave after accepting this slobbery child as a

saint. The Solid Mandala resembles an emotional poetry that is pacified and written in prose. Philosophically, the book is prone to being the tragedy of human flaws, as neither twin was whole in him because he was the separated half of one full person. Additionally, the novel’s tone is consistently sombre, calm, and submissive. White is sufficiently knowledgeable about tantric Buddhism, Hindu Shakti Tantra, and Eastern philosophy. It indicates that Mrs. Feinstein, a Jewish woman, has read the Upanishads. She told Arthur to drink his lemonade carefully and focus when she presented it to him, for example. You’ll then draw Prana from this lemonade. The question is “the what?” It is Indian for “vital force.” (39)

In this context, nectar or Amrit, which provides strength and power, can be equated symbolically to lemonade. Distinct elements of one single personality make up the twin sibling. The term “Janadandh” in psychology refers to these two waves of a single personality and means “waiting for someone to join them as a whole.” (p. 232) They represent man’s search for completion.

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