

## INTRODUCTION: *A wilful obliteration?*

My aim here is to explore the phenomenon of male bonding through its particular manifestation in male homosocial desire,<sup>1</sup> and specifically, the role it plays in the life and writings of Australian author Martin Boyd. That I am prompted to do so has little to do with the so-called ‘fashionable’ disinterment of hitherto taboo subjects best left, according to some critics, undisturbed.<sup>2</sup> I am motivated rather by a sense of lack, or of absence, or even of the wilful obliteration of the sexual in the critical evaluations of Boyd. Although recognising in him a man of complicated and diverse identities — those of aesthete, Anglophile, expatriate, arts connoisseur, cosmopolitan, universalist and religious aspirant, to mention a few — literary critiques in the main have turned a blind eye to issues of sexual difference: by this calculus, Boyd remains, to all intents and purposes, an unequivocal heterosexual writing unequivocally heterosexual novels, give or take an oddball vicar or two. By contrast, Boyd’s deepseated restlessness and sense of dislocation, self-confessed as well as evident in his fictionalised family sagas, has attracted widespread comment. Codified by himself as ‘geographical schizophrenia’,<sup>3</sup> it was a condition Kathleen Fitzpatrick was tempted to compare to the Jamesian ‘complex fate’<sup>4</sup> to draw Boyd into a shared brotherhood in post-colonial angst. My object in this study is to attempt to show that Martin Boyd’s fate was yet more complex than this depiction suggests. I also hope to demonstrate the truth of my contention that, however far-reaching and inclusive the evaluation of Boyd may have been up until this point, it has by no means achieved a state of heuristic exhaustion. To put my case even more strongly, I am suggesting that much of the critical discursive practice surrounding Boyd and his work has, wittingly or unwittingly, fallen prey to the ‘repressive hypothesis’ — a legacy of bourgeois Victorianism — noted by Michel Foucault in his study of sexuality. Boyd’s expression and/or suppression of sexuality, with few exceptions, has been subjected to a modern, institutionalized puritanism which has, to quote Foucault, ‘imposed its triple edict of taboo, non-existence and silence’.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Designated as such by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick in her book *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1985. It is a paradigm I shall be applying to this study. Further citations from *Between Men* will be given by page number in the text.

<sup>2</sup>Commentator Andrew Riemer dismisses those academics ‘who confine their interests [in Shakespeare]...to the sonnets’ homoeroticism’ as having fallen into the ‘vulgar error’ of liberated political correctness and fashionable political theories (‘Let us all praise dead white genius’, *SMH*, 11/3/95).

<sup>3</sup>This state of mind is applied to Boyd’s alter ego Guy Langton in *A Difficult Young Man*, Melbourne: Lansdowne Press, 1972, p95 (further citations from this work will be given by page number in the text). Relevant to this is Boyd’s sense of Australia as ‘a sinking ship’, at least in a childhood where he felt he had ‘missed something, and that on the other side of the world...life was brighter and full of pleasure’ (‘Preoccupations and Intentions’, *Southerly*, Vol. 28, No. 2, 1968, p83).

<sup>4</sup>Fitzpatrick defined this fate as consisting in ‘having one’s physical roots in one continent and one’s cultural roots in another and distant one’ (‘Martin Boyd and the Complex Fate of the Australian Novelist’, Commonwealth Literary Fund Lectures, 1953, p2). Her definition, at least so far as Boyd is concerned, may be a misrepresentation of what is arguably a more finely nuanced cultural condition.

<sup>5</sup>Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol I: An Introduction*, New York: Vintage Books, 1990, pp4-5. Further citations from *The History* will be given by page number in the text.

Although Foucault devotes his thesis in *The History of Sexuality: Vol. I* to debunking conventional wisdom that prohibition has been a ‘basic and constitutive element’ of the modern epoch’s historical record of sexuality — at least since the seventeenth century and the coming of capitalism — he stops short of claiming that ‘sex has *not* [my italics] been prohibited or barred or masked or misapprehended since the classical age’; rather, he takes the view that negative elements such as censorship and denial have played a tactical role in a transformation of sex into discourse, indeed in an increasing incitement to discourse and the ‘dissemination and implantation of polymorphous sexualities’, through the mechanisms of the technology of power and the will to knowledge (*History* 12). Certainly it was censorship that motivated Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s negative critique of Henry James’s critics, a critique which fortuitously draws a further possible parallel between James and Martin Boyd. Her discussion of what she perceives as the ‘repressive blankness’ and ‘active incuriosity’ applied to James complies with Foucault’s paradigm of a sexual discourse founded on dissent: ‘With strikingly few exceptions...the criticism has actively repelled any inquiry into the asymmetries of gendered desire’.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, she states that the easy assumption (by James, society, and the critics) that sexuality and heterosexuality are always exactly translatable into one another is not only homophobic, but importantly, deeply heterophobic in its denial of the possibility of difference in desires, in objects. Where in James’s life, she argues, ‘the pattern of homosexual desire was brave enough and resilient enough to be at last biographically inobliterable, one might have hoped that in criticism of his work the possible differences of different erotic paths would not be so ravenously subsumed under a compulsorily...heterosexual model’. Most interestingly, she conjectures that

It is possible that [the critics] read James himself as, in his work, positively refusing or evaporating this element of his eros, translating lived homosexual desires, where he had them, into written heterosexual ones so thoroughly and so successfully that the difference *makes* no difference, the transmutation leaves no residue. (*EC* 197)

There are considerable implications for Boyd in Sedgwick’s insights and special pleading, even if they are not precisely coextensive. It is feasible to assume that Boyd’s critics, like those of James, have wished to protect him from homophobic misreadings, from marginalization as a member of a stigmatised minority, or from ‘what they imagine as anachronistically gay readings, based on a late twentieth-century vision of men’s desire for men that is more stabilized and culturally compact than [the writer’s] own’ (*EC* 197).<sup>7</sup> Traditionalists might counter with the argument that it is just as feasible that critics have responded to the Eliot/Joyce dictum of ignoring the writer and concentrating on what he appeared to be saying. Yet would not the logical extrapolation from such a view be that a writer’s autobiographical works and self-explanatory prose writings are overlooked in favour of his novels? At what cost? Also, does this viewpoint assume, perhaps, that fiction is not self-revelatory? In Boyd’s case, it will be argued that it is precisely the implications in Boyd’s writing, and especially in his fictional writing — what is revealed/concealed, muted/emphasized —

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<sup>6</sup>Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990, p197. Further citations from *Epistemology* will be given by page number in the text.

<sup>7</sup>Sedgwick offers an example of teaching at Amherst College where ‘students who had already studied *Dorian Gray* said they had never discussed the book in terms of any homosexual content: all of them knew it could be explained in terms of either the Theme of the Double — “The Divided Self” — or else the Problem of Mimesis — “Life and Art”’. *Epistemology of the Closet*, p161.

that have been ignored or misinterpreted. In the general climate of wilful ‘not knowingness’ I would hazard that only two commentators appear to have intuited that Boyd’s sexuality — and indeed his persona as a whole — did not consist in a limited model, but in one of bi-polar, or even multi-polar identities. In her biography *Martin Boyd: A Life*, Brenda Niall mentions his ‘doubleness’, his penchant for role-playing. More searchingly, Manning Clark, following his own agenda of looking everywhere for Dostoevskyan patterns, saw Boyd as ‘a deeply divided man’

attracted to both the Greek idea of ‘beauty’ and the Catholic idea of the Madonna: he was torn between sensual and spiritual love: he loved both men and women: he had a love-hate relationship with both Australia and England. One suspects that he had to live with these contradictions all his life, that he was one of those men with an eye for pleasure, and another for salvation.<sup>8</sup>

The sensual/sexual/spiritual tensions and contradictions apprehended here by Clark will form part of my general discussion. The analogy with James, however, falls short of my claiming for Martin Boyd’s life a ‘pattern of homosexual desire’. Notwithstanding, I shall be arguing strenuously that in his novels and autobiographical writings the thematics of a heterosexual male norm are frequently liable to disruption, and undermined by a more privileging and predominant thematics of homosocial desire.

To enter the realm of the homosocial is to enter a volatile spectrum of possibility, as fraught with contradiction and confusion as the concept of masculinity itself. Definitively, the male bond cannot be reduced to readily coherent formulae; on the contrary, and doubtless because it connotes both the political and the sexual, the male-male bond as a lexical and cultural construct is riddled with hermeneutic complexity, nuance and paradox. If we take into account the theories of Lévi-Strauss,<sup>9</sup> Foucault and Luce Irigaray (among others), we find that most of the paradoxes associated with male bonding can be traced to economically-based but politically motivated stratagems devised to consolidate and perpetuate male hegemonic capitalist systems; we also discern how practices which somehow escaped the unwritten but cunningly enforced socio-economic strictures with their emphasis, first on marriage as the lynch-pin of social structure and extrapolating from that, on market forces as ultimately dependent on the power relationships between men and men (to which those between women and men are subverted)<sup>10</sup> — anything which smacked of sexual deviance, in particular — came to be side-lined as undesirable, if not corrupt.

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<sup>8</sup>Postscript to Martin Boyd, *Nuns in Jeopardy*. Melbourne: Sun Books, 1973. Further citations from this work will be given by page number in the text.

<sup>9</sup>For example, Lévi-Strauss writes, ‘The total relationship of exchange which constitutes marriage is not established between a man and a woman, but between two groups of men, and the woman figures only as one of the objects in the exchange, not as one of the partners’ (*The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, Boston: Beacon, 1969, p115, quoted in Gayle Rubin, ‘The Traffic in Women’, in Rayna R. Reiter (ed), *Toward an Anthropology of Women*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975, p174, and cited by Sedgwick, *Between Men* p26.

<sup>10</sup>Sedgwick (*Between Men* p3) gives Heidi Hartmann’s definition of patriarchy: ‘relations between men, which have a material base, and which, though hierarchical, establish or create interdependence and solidarity among men that enable them to dominate women’ (from ‘The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a More Progressive Union’, in Sargent, *Women and Revolution*, p14).

Irigaray encapsulates the historico-economic perspective with her hypothesis that [male] homosexuality is the law that regulates the sociocultural order,<sup>11</sup> where for her ‘homosexuality’ is a broad generalisation designed to encompass the social, commercial, and political transactions within patriarchal kinship and power systems — what she calls succinctly ‘the trade...among men’ — ensuring that ‘women, signs, goods, currency, all pass from one man to another’.<sup>12</sup> In this formulation male bonding is identified as societal glue; it has no bearing on sexual activity between men. Sedgwick, on the other hand, is critical of Irigaray’s vision of male homosexuality on two counts: firstly, because it sacrifices, or at least sublimates, ‘the quicksilver of sex itself’; and secondly because it ignores the diachronic or evolutionary nature of the male same-sex relation (*BM* 26). While she concurs with Irigaray that patterns of male friendship and rivalry cannot be understood outside of their relation to women and the gender system as a whole, she stresses the importance of the ‘historically volatile’ nature of male homosexuality across time and across class (*BM* 27), issues which have relevance to this study.

The significance for me of Irigaray’s hypothesis towards an etiology of a ‘homosexual’ (that is, male hegemonic) conspiracy oppressive of women and by implication of ‘real’ homosexuals — and bearing in mind similar analyses by Lévi-Strauss and Gayle Rubin — is the implications for the masculine bond itself. If, according to these accounts, the politics of convenience and economic advantage are reciprocally dependent on male solidarity, fraternization begins to assume a somewhat predetermined and compulsory character.<sup>13</sup> And to introduce the notion of compulsion, it seems, is irrevocably to compromise the male relationship. Compulsory collusion may have been necessary to secure male entitlement, especially in the nineteenth century, but requiring as it did ‘certain intense male bonds that were not readily distinguishable from the most reprobated bonds’ (*EC* 185), it left itself vulnerable and open to prohibition. The result was that male ‘homosocial desire’, the male-male bond as described by Sedgwick, became subjected to a coercive double bind she delineates thus: ‘For a man to be a man’s man is separated only by an invisible, carefully blurred, always already crossed line from being “interested in men”’ (*BM* 89).

Irigaray is similarly aware of the paradoxes involved in male transactions. Her desexualised, and therefore neutralised ‘homosexuality’ to indicate masculine collaboration is used figuratively, I believe, in order to emphasize the ironies and hypocrisies embedded in its tabooed status. A particular lament in her article ‘When The Goods Get Together’ is the occlusion of the sexual. The structure of patriarchal culture, she says — the culture represented by her larger homosexuality — ‘would prohibit...the return to *red blood*, and even [to] sex’. And she goes on to speak of the ‘sovereign authority of pretense’ which does not recognise the ‘incest’ at work in ‘father-son

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<sup>11</sup>Luce Irigaray, ‘When the Goods Get Together’. In *New French Feminisms*, (ed) Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron, New York: Schocken, 1981, p107. Further citations from ‘Goods’ will be given by page number in the text.

<sup>12</sup>Her formulation had an antecedent in Lévi-Strauss’s views on marriage and is reinforced by Gayle Rubin’s assertion that the male traffic in women has ‘the primary purpose of cementing the bonds of men with men’. Cited in Sedgwick, *Between Men*, pp25-26.

<sup>13</sup>Contemporary social practice in Australia — we have only to think of men’s clubs, football events, pub nights, stag parties and country dances — suggests that even in the absence of any ostensible economic imperative, the repercussions for male solidarity in the socio-political sphere have been profound (and this is without taking into account a sizeable increase in the visible male gay population in recent years).

relations which assure the genealogy of patriarchal power, its laws, its discourse, its sociality'. She continues:

These relations which are operative everywhere can neither disappear — in the abolition of the family or of monogamic reproduction, for example — nor be displayed openly in their pederastic love, nor be practiced in any other way but in language without provoking a general crisis. A certain symbolic order would come to an end. ('Goods' 107)

Irigaray also talks of the 'forbidden' nature of 'other' masculine homosexual relations considered subversive by reason of their ability to 'devalue the exalted worth of the standard of value': 'When the penis itself becomes simply a means of pleasure, and indeed a means of pleasure among men, *the phallus loses its power*'. She then sums up with what could be the originary, economic version of the double bind: 'Trade relations, always among men, would thus be *both required and forbidden by the law*. These masculine subjects would be traders only at the price of renouncing their function as goods' ('Goods' 108).

Foucault (and Freud before him) also recognised that sexual practices peripheral to the procreative 'norms' demanded by the development of capitalism were considered 'sterile', 'tainted with abnormality' (*History* 3-4) and a dissolution of the precious energies required to sustain the work imperative, and therefore the modes of production. The suppression of the homosexual component of human sexuality in the name of obligatory heterosexuality, and by corollary, the oppression of homosexuals, is, according to Gayle Rubin, 'a product of the same system whose rules and relations oppress women'.<sup>14</sup> That system, representative of the power/knowledge/repression nexus, was in the process of institutionalising homophobia — a condition of fear and hatred not only directly equivalent to misogyny in its oppression of the 'feminine', whether in men or in women, but which is caught up in a paranoia about homosexuality<sup>15</sup> so inter-dependent that, according to Sedgwick, each mirrors the other to the extent that the two have become virtually indistinguishable (*BM* 20). She suggests that modern masculinist culture and male heterosexual identity may require for their maintenance the scapegoating crystallisation of a same-sex male desire: hence, for instance, the school football coach's 'abjection' of his team's 'sissy' personality traits (*EC* 85).

Thus the male homosocial erotic economy, entangled in an unenviable pleasure/danger binary, lends itself to elements of uncertainty and precariousness: a definitive open-endedness captured by Sedgwick's designation of the male-male bond as homosocial desire. Her use of 'desire' in this context is deliberately provocative. As part of a discussion revolving around the 'long crisis of modern sexual definition' (*EC* 1), Sedgwick is careful to distinguish between traditional differentiations of 'love' and 'desire'. Within the critical dialectic, she says, 'love' names a particular

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<sup>14</sup>Gayle Rubin, 'The Traffic in Women', in Rayna R. Reiter (ed), *Toward an Anthropology of Women*, p180.

<sup>15</sup>Sedgwick reminds us that Freud's study of Dr. Schreber 'shows clearly that the repression of homosexual desire in a man who by any commonsense standard was heterosexual, occasioned paranoid psychosis; the psychoanalytic use that has been made of this perception, however, has been, not against homophobia and its schizogenic force, but against homosexuality...on account of an association between 'homosexuality' and mental illness. *Between Men*, p20.

emotion, while ‘desire’ is indicative of a structure, the ‘affective or social force, the glue, even when its manifestation is hostility or hatred or something less emotively charged’ (*BM 2*). Her own selective emphasis lies in reclaiming and rejuvenating the endemic erotic connotations of ‘desire’, thus leaving room for the possibility, although not the inevitability, of the sexual. Rather than being a strategy that would place genital homosexual desire as ‘at the root of’ other forms of male homosociality, it is one she adopts ‘for making generalizations about, and marking historical differences in, the *structure* of men’s relations with other men’ (*BM 2*). Nevertheless, the signal effect of the re-eroticizing of ‘desire’, and its aligning with the description ‘homosocial’ — a term rendered questionable both by the double bind and by its occupation of a continuum inclusive of the homosexual — is to construct a labile, floating signifier ramifying into areas already identified as those of enigma and ambiguity.

There is no doubt that, as literary analytic tool and interpretive aid, the ‘male homosocial desire’ paradigm has proved productive for Sedgwick in identifying masculine strategies of self-interest and their erotic pathways. Convinced that the European canon is ‘already a male-homosocial literary canon...and most so when it is most heterosexual’, she argues, in *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*, for strategies based on triangulations of desire using the woman as a conduit for the mutual desire of male rivals.<sup>16</sup> Although these particular configurations are seldom to be found in Boyd’s novels, they are important insofar as men’s bonds with women are relegated to a ‘subordinate, complementary and instrumental relation to bonds with other men’;<sup>17</sup> and because, as Sedgwick emphasizes, male-male desire became ‘widely intelligible primarily by being routed through triangular relations involving a woman’ (*EC 15*). More specifically relevant to Boyd, perhaps, is her observation, in *Epistemology of the Closet*, of Herman Melville’s *Billy Budd* that ‘every impulse of every person in this book that could at all be called desire could be called homosexual desire, being directed by men exclusively toward men’ (*EC 92*), a situation which brings Sedgwick back to the Irigarayan hypothesis, with its inbuilt dichotomies, with which we began. Displayed as a ‘male body lovely to male eyes’ she says, ‘...whose magnetism for his fellows...render[s] him the exact, catalytic image of revolution<sup>18</sup> — of that threat or promise of armed insurrection’, *Billy Budd* forces us to ask whether men’s desire for other men is ‘the great preservative of the masculinist hierarchies of Western culture, or is it among the most potent of the threats against them?’ (*EC 93*)

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<sup>16</sup>Sigmund Freud’s prior theory held that the ‘necessary conditions for loving’ for some men required a precondition that there should be ‘an injured third party’, that is, the love-object should only be a woman to whom another man can claim right of possession as her husband, fiancé or friend. In *On Sexuality, Vol. 7: Three Essays*, London: Penguin Books, 1991, p232. Further citations from *Three Essays* will be given by page number in the text.

<sup>17</sup>Propos William Wycherley’s *The Country Wife*, for instance, Sedgwick finds that ‘the men’s heterosexual relationships in the play have as their *raison d’être* an ultimate bonding between men’, quoting both Dorilant: ‘A mistress should be like a little country retreat near the town, not to dwell in constantly, but only for a night and away, to taste the town better when a man returns’; and Sparkish: ‘It may be I love to have rivals in a wife’, since ‘loving alone is as dull as eating alone’. *Between Men*, pp50-51.

<sup>18</sup>There may be a connection here to Foucault’s ‘revolution and happiness; or revolution and a different body, one that is newer and more beautiful; or indeed, revolution and pleasure’. In *History of Sexuality: Vol. I*, p7.

Sedgwick seems to be alluding, in the latter half of her question, not so much to the fallout from the traffic-in-women paradigm as it incites the reformist zeal of women, but as it oppresses and marginalises those men whose sexualities escape the confines of absolutist and conformist taxonomies. Contemporary views of men's desire for men may have stabilized and become more accepting, but in Australia at least, there remain, legally as well as attitudinally, die-hard pockets of resistance. The residue of homophobic fear and prejudice exposed by the Wilde trials at the turn of the century still exerts a manifest influence, not least in those literary practices where 'the elision and subsumption of supposedly embarrassing material' (EC 197) have been seen to markedly skew the critical faculty.<sup>19</sup> My own project, to reappraise the work of Boyd with a view to positioning him at the more social and relational (and occasionally eroticized) end of the homosocial/homosexual spectrum, is undertaken in the spirit of a Foucauldian liberation from repression, invalidation and modes of thought which have for so long "sinned" against sex' (*History* 9), and is cognisant of the findings of contemporary world views and intuitions that sex/sexuality tends to represent

the full spectrum of positions between the most intimate and the most social, the most predetermined and the most aleatory, the most physically rooted and the most symbolically infused, the most innate and the most learned, the most autonomous and the most relational traits of being. (EC 29)

Boyd himself brought to the question of masculinity some of the freshness and unorthodoxy of this mode of comprehension. In the light of the current revisionist admission of disparate and multiple masculinities, Boyd's views, looked at retrospectively, seem advanced and therefore subversive for his time, but were more likely based on an ideal of Greek maleness that was virilizing yet 'noble', heroic yet imbued with chivalry. And although Boyd never explicitly states as much, implicit in that ideal is the notion of male homosexuality as widespread, licit, culturally influential, and without homophobia.<sup>20</sup> Beyond dispute, however, is that his empathies lay with the apparently seamless continuum in Greek society between 'men loving men' and 'men promoting the interests of men' (BM 4). His rejection of his own society's hegemonic, dominating male model was congruent with his distaste for authority and its role in aggression, hypocrisy and violence; and while he was careful to divest his characters of any association with the word 'effeminate'<sup>21</sup> (thus refusing any symbolic assimilation to 'gayness'), his 'different masculinity' — characterized in real life by pacifism, sensitivity, emotionalism and participation in the arts — clearly valorized, rather than eschewed, the feminine component of human nature.

There is reason to assume, in fact, that in his own quiet way Boyd was a revolutionary of sorts, a natural — and passionate — dissident who, at the same time as tilting at Victorian puritanism, was fundamentally in accord with that strand of Victorianism Foucault has identified as

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<sup>19</sup>Some writers of fiction have no such inhibitions, as evidenced by a Robertson Davies character: 'Homosexuality has become, not the love which dares not speak its name, but the love that never knows when to shut up'. Quoted by Gerry Turcotte, reviewing Davies' *The Cunning Man*, *The Australian Weekend Review*, 20-21 May, 1995.

<sup>20</sup>K.J. Dover, *Greek Homosexuality*, cited by Sedgwick in *Between Men*, p4.

<sup>21</sup>Boyd's frequent and very explicit refusal of the term 'effeminate' for his androgynous and occasionally obviously feminized male characters (for example, Lucinda's friend Tony Duff in *Lucinda Brayford*), could be seen psychoanalytically as a form of denial. Other possible explanations will be discussed later.

a striving towards 'enlightenment and liberation', the possibility of a discourse which would allow full rein to a 'longing for the garden of earthly delights' (*History* 7). For beneath the surface of Boyd's seemingly mild and decorous manner may be detected the will towards what Foucault calls 'nothing less than a transgression of laws, a lifting of prohibitions, an irruption of speech, a reinstating of pleasure within reality' (*History* 5). Boyd's transgressiveness was neither flagrant nor egregious: it was not, by any stretch of the imagination, an advocacy for licentiousness. Rather, it was an intuitive and subtilized crusade against the impoverishment of the spirit by self-denial, a process Oscar Wilde has called 'the mutilation of the savage' within. Boyd, well versed in the writings of Wilde and Walter Pater, could be seen to be simply following a Paterian injunction to 'realize one's nature perfectly' by a return to the Hellenic ideal.<sup>22</sup> This pederastic/pedagogic model, having taken over 'the woman's problem of pregnancy and the secret task of forming, maturing, perfecting' (*EC* 135),<sup>23</sup> was structured stereotypically along the lines of romantic heterosexual love, involving conquest, surrender, the absence of desire in the love object.<sup>24</sup> Greek pedagogy, according to Foucault, allowed truth and sex to be 'linked...by the transmission of a precious knowledge from one body to another; sex served as a medium for initiations into learning' (*History* 61).

As already stated, although pederastic/pedagogic relationships do exist in Boyd's writings, and although many of his own same-sex associations were structured along classically based diacritical differences such as age/youth, maturity/inexperience, he never openly advocated the mentor/pupil Hellenic model in its fully realised sexual manifestation. His idealisation of Greek manly love was directly reflective of his cultural, social and political affiliations with the European tradition, and as such is quite remote from the Lawsonian brand of 'mateship' and its sense of a male collective of supportive and loyal friends. It may be closer, however, to Max Harris's definition of those bonds forged early in Australia's history between pairs of men for survival purposes: 'mateship was a shy synonym for love, describing a condition different from friendship yet largely devoid of sexual undertones';<sup>25</sup> Harris also referred to mateship as going 'beyond friendship to a form of sexless male marriage'.<sup>26</sup> Yet where Boyd's actual relationships with his male peers, with boys, and in one recently documented instance with an older man<sup>27</sup> appear to have been sexless (as indeed, as far as has been ascertained, were his relationships with women, with one possible exception), his writings are often infused with a nameless desire.<sup>28</sup> This desire, or preferment, is all pervasive yet subtilized; often eroticized yet never distinctly genital. Inchoate longing can be deflated into an awkward and boyish sentimentality, or it may be elevated and

<sup>22</sup>Lord Henry Wotton to Dorian Gray, in Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. London: Claremont Classics, 1994, p25.

<sup>23</sup>Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, (trans) R. J. Hollingdale. New York: Viking Penguin, 1973, p161. Cited by Sedgwick in *Epistemology of the Closet*.

<sup>24</sup>K.J. Dover, *Greek Homosexuality*, cited by Sedgwick in *Between Men*, p4.

<sup>25</sup>In today's context, David Buchbinder suggests that Australian mateship substitutes shared activities for the explicit articulation of affection; it also signals, he contends, that the condition of many men 'is lonely, traversed by tension, conflict and confusion' (*Masculinities and Identities*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1994, p38).

<sup>26</sup>Max Harris, 'To Define True Mateship', in *The Angry Eye*, Sydney: Pergamon Press, 1973, p34.

<sup>27</sup>Robert Lindsay (born in 1872), with whom Boyd was associated for some years, was his senior by some twenty years.

<sup>28</sup>As distinct from the romanticized but sincere same-sex 'love' which finds expression in his novels.

transmuted, etherealised, metamorphosed to a state of religious epiphany — or again, at the level of the secular, evaporated of eros to the point of sexlessness or at least anaesthetized sexuality. Same-sex desire appears afflicted by what I am tempted to call male homosexual panic,<sup>29</sup> but which could be more usefully and accurately termed male heterosexual panic or simply male sexual panic: in Boyd's case perhaps, a male panic in the face of the heterosexuality that purports to be central to these books. Some such panic could explain the linguistic panoply of subterfuge used by Boyd to suggest 'difference' and ambiguity in his male characters: characters made enigmatic by suggestiveness, elision, evasion and by recourse to rhetorical tactics of metonymy and symbolism.

It is this very suggestiveness and instability which lends itself to the notion of homosocial desire as a defining paradigm for an analysis of the work of Martin Boyd. My approach to the 'revisioning' of Boyd takes its cue from Sedgwick's understanding (not forgetting her indebtedness to Freud and Foucault) of sexualities in general, and homosexuality in particular, as multi-valenced and protean, and will attempt to incorporate elements that are anti-homophobic, feminist and deconstructive: a feminism which recognises sexuality as problematical, and where interrogation allows for the decentred and the contradictory; and a deconstructivism which destabilizes settled categories and symmetries in the name of '*differance*'. For I am persuaded that without a critique of Boyd which pays attention to his fetishization of the beautiful male body, his obsessive idealisation of male-male desire as embodied in the Hellenic model, his advocacy of unphobic physical enjoyment and his struggle to reconcile the pagan and the Christian, the sensual and the spiritual, there is a failure to do justice to the full dimensionality of this writer.

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<sup>29</sup>For the purposes of definition we need to remember here that homosexual panic is something experienced by the heterosexual male who fears he may have homosexual desires. In the strict sense, therefore, it cannot be applied to homosexuals. See Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, p200.

The concept 'panic fear' on the other hand is of Greek origin but seems to have been exclusively heterosexually-based. It arose in relation to the god Pan and his custom of either chasing or leading a dance of nymphs to the accompaniment of the syrinx or pipes. His sudden appearance was said to be dreaded by travellers, whence 'panic fear' (*Everyman's Encyclopaedia* Vol. 9, London: J. M. Dent, 1968, p438).

## CHAPTER ONE: *Definitions and encodings*

Martin Boyd's reception in Australia was characterized by inconsistency. The critical acclaim he attracted initially, together with the Australian Literary Society's first Gold Medal in 1929, was for the then pseudonymous *The Montforts* (Martin Mills, 1928), a complex family history not remote from Boyd's own background and centred for the most part in genteel Melbourne. Nettie Palmer, the most astute critic and reviewer of her era, was enthusiastic in her praise: she described the novel as a comedy of manners, 'sedate, witty, crowded and yet composed', one which helped to supply a missing dimension in Australian literature, a sense of the past.<sup>1</sup> The American version too, *The Madeleine Heritage*, was heralded as the work of 'a novelist to be reckoned with... [demonstrating] delicious irony and assurance of promise such as few novelists give'.<sup>2</sup> Literary recognition was no prerequisite for success in terms of Australian sales, however, nor was there generous publicity over the award. Thereafter, although more books started appearing in the 1930s, previous to the '60s and '70s commentary was sporadic, scanty, more often than not mistimed, and occasionally hostile. By the time critical interest began in earnest Boyd had entered a final decade of depleted health and financial difficulty. The new survey appeared comprehensive but was not without controversy. Detractors took him to task for being 'immoral',<sup>3</sup> 'over-elegant', 'insincere', snobbish and hypercritical;<sup>4</sup> defenders compared his 'comedies of manners'—distinctive by their far remove from the colonial egalitarian ethos—to those of John Galsworthy<sup>5</sup> and Jane Austen. His major preoccupations were isolated and analysed as those of class, religion, heredity and environment, nostalgia for the past, culture, morality, aesthetics, and the pleasure principle. Only the last-named appears to have some relevance to Boyd's not inconspicuous fictional and personal preoccupation with sex/gender loyalties and conflicts, an anxiety which, despite his exertions to celebrate and glorify the physical, manifest, 'incarnate' world, operates effectively to cloud and confuse issues of sensuality and sexuality. Sex itself is therefore often demoted, robbed of affirmation and agency, reduced simply to what Foucault claims the Christian pastoral always presented as the 'disquieting enigma: not a thing which stubbornly shows itself, but one which always hides, the insidious presence that speaks in a voice so muted and often disguised that one risks remaining deaf to it' (*History I* 35).

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<sup>1</sup>Nettie Palmer, *Brisbane Courier*, 8 September 1928. Cited by Niall, *Martin Boyd: A Life*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1990, p113. Further citations from *Martin Boyd: A Life* will be given by page number in the text.

<sup>2</sup>Alice Beal Parsons, *New York Herald-Tribune*, 11 March 1928. Cited by Niall, *Martin Boyd: A Life*, p114.

<sup>3</sup>This had nothing to do with sexual immorality, and everything to do with Boyd's anti-nationalism, an attitude seen as inimical to the Australian ethos of the time. Kathleen Fitzpatrick, *Martin Boyd*, Melbourne: Lansdowne Press, 1963, p26.

<sup>4</sup>Fitzpatrick considers these accusations in her critical study *Martin Boyd*.

<sup>5</sup>Boyd himself described *The Montforts* as 'a pseudo-Galsworthian account of my mother's family over five generations, full of thinly disguised portraits' (*A Single Flame*, London: J. M. Dent, 1939, p204). He distanced himself from Galsworthy's preoccupation with bourgeois 'business men', however, stating that he wrote of families who 'had by-passed the industrial revolution' ('De Gustibus', *Overland* No. 50/51, Autumn 1972, p5). Further citations from *A Single Flame* will be given by page number in the text.

Dorothy Green was convinced of Boyd's superiority to Galsworthy, however: 'to compare Boyd with Galsworthy is irresponsible and insulting'. 'From Yarra Glen to Rome: Martin Boyd, 1893-1972', *Meanjin Quarterly*, September 1972, p248.

It is no doubt a truism to say that Martin Boyd's peculiar predicaments and concerns *vis-à-vis* sex are closely bound up with his milieu, his particular historical and cultural context (without, of course, overlooking personal ideology and congenital circumstances). Nevertheless, I would suggest that some background information on late nineteenth and twentieth-century attitudes towards homosexuality is vital in helping to explain characteristic obliquities and comic absurdities in his treatment of homosexual themes. His birth in 1893 in Switzerland to third-generation Australian parents occurred at a time long after permissiveness was the rule in regard to sexualities in general. Boyd inherited an epoch of gentility and respectability, a period marked by the reticences and silences of 'Victorian puritanism' and 'dominated by directives enjoining discretion and modesty' (*History I* 22), the repercussions of which were to make themselves felt well into the next century.

Foucault claims rather sweepingly, without regard it seems to the post-Restoration reaction against Puritanism which condoned, or at least tolerated, licence in literature and society manners, that the age of sexual repression had begun much earlier — in the seventeenth century — after hundreds of years of free expression, frankness, and a 'tolerant familiarity with the illicit' (*History I* 3).<sup>6</sup> Inconvenient exceptions aside, Foucault argues that repression coincided with the development of capitalism, becoming an integral part of the bourgeois order (*History I* 5). Its effect was to restrict sex to a purely procreative function: accordingly, sex was moved to the bedroom, secrecy and silence. Aberrant or "abnormal" sexualities, those incompatible with reproduction and a work imperative intolerant of the dissipation of energies in pleasurable pursuits, were assigned to institutions like the brothel and the mental hospital: 'Only in those places [for the prostitute, the client, the pimp, together with the psychiatrist and his hysteric — those "other Victorians", as Steven Marcus would say] would untrammelled sex have a right to (safely insularized) forms of reality...' (*History I* 4).<sup>7</sup> Freud and his pronouncement of paranoid psychosis in the case of the homosexually-repressed Dr Schreber, a diagnosis medicos and psychologists were only too ready to wrongfully interpret as an instance of 'mental illness', contributed to the medical, legal, psychiatric and literary discourses — engaged in by Krafft-Ebing (*Psychopathia Sexualis*) and Havelock Ellis (*Studies in the Psychology of Sex*), for instance — around perverse sexualities which started to proliferate in the decades around the turn of the century.

On the socio-political and legal front, until the Labouchère amendment of 1885 there was no English law that codified or criminalized most of the spectrum of male bodily contacts.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Perhaps, in England at least, the onset of repression for Foucault began with Cromwell's interregnum.

<sup>7</sup>Nineteenth century reference to institutions such as the brothel was usually coded, suggesting that, on the contrary, subterfuge and secrecy were the norm. When, for instance, Charles Dickens writes of David Copperfield visiting his acquaintance Traddles at the Inns of Court, London, he finds a situation where the 'domestic arrangements are quite unprofessional': Traddles' chambers, besides accommodating himself and his wife Sophy, are let out to five girls who presumably find their clientele amongst the legal fraternity. From *David Copperfield*, London: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1902, p867 (first published in a serialised twenty parts, 1849-1850).

<sup>8</sup>Captain Arthur Phillip, prior to his landing at Botany Bay in 1788, had his own ideas on deviant and criminal practice. Described as 'no sentimentalist' and a firm disciplinarian, when it came to punishing the crimes which he considered merited the death penalty — murder and sodomy — '[Phillip] proposed to deliver the convicted person to the natives of New Zealand, who were known cannibals, "and let them eat him"'. According to Owen Rutter, he changed his ideas after reaching New South Wales (Introduction, *The First Fleet*, London: The Golden Cockerel Press, 1937, p18).

Previous to this homosexual acts would more likely have become legally visible for the violence that may have accompanied them than for any distinctively sexual content (BM 174). The new law ushered in a time of tumult and change, with sexuality, especially aberrant sexuality, not only the subject of debate and classification, but of moral and legal censure. The nineteenth century's most notorious scapegoat of this evolutionary process was, of course, Oscar Wilde, a writer to whom Boyd frequently makes reference, and with whom he may have felt a certain artistic kinship. Wilde was also an antecedent for a particular stereotype that until recently, according to Sedgwick, characterized American (and I would add Australian) middle-class gay homosexuality: its strongest associations, she says, are with 'effeminacy, transvestitism, promiscuity, prostitution, continental European culture, and the arts' (BM173). Wilde's aestheticism, even its aspects of unabashed decadence, may have found an answering rapport in Boyd, dedicated as it was to

the search for intense or rare sensations, the ban put on every feeling which sets a limit to the faculty of enjoyment, or captures the soul; the superiority of the true artist over the rules of society or morality....<sup>9</sup>

and while Boyd as a moral writer may not have subscribed to the notion of setting the artist over society or morality, the *cri-de-coeur* of painter Gavin Leigh in *Night of the Party*, for example, with its strong sense of connection to Wildean ideology, suggests, with its subtle slide into the authorial register, a pleading for an artistic dispensation free from the constraints of conventional morality.<sup>10</sup> The sexual styles of Wilde and Boyd, however, though sharing similar trajectories of same-sex desire, could not have been more different. Wilde's extravagant flamboyance, inflected as it was by 'effeminacy, transvestitism<sup>11</sup> [and] promiscuity', was aristocratic in tone; recklessly and defiantly daring, it bore no resemblance to Boyd's circumspect outward demeanour, his instinctive mode of middle-class 'gentlemanly' rectitude.

Considering that Oscar Wilde was destined to join a distinct group of late Victorian aristocratic men — plus their friends and dependents, including bohemians and prostitutes — for whom, by 1865, 'a distinct homosexual role and [sub]culture seem already to have been in existence in England for several centuries...a milieu, at once courtly and in touch with the criminal, related to those in which the usages of the term "gay" recorded by John Boswell occurred' (BM 172-3), it comes as a surprise to learn from Sedgwick that most Victorians 'neither named nor recognized a syndrome of male homosexuality as our society thinks of it' (BM 174). Rather, this range of sexual activities was grouped, according to her, under various moral and psychological headings depending on who was doing the labelling. The middle-class, for instance, categorized the sexually ambiguous, 'effeminate' aristocrat as dissolute or decadent, while at the same time (as already noted), equating working-class homosexual conduct with violence (BM 174). Classifications such as these ignore the

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<sup>9</sup>*Everyman's Encyclopaedia Vol. 12*, p482.

<sup>10</sup>Gavin's vocational fixation is expressed in terms of 'His work had to come before everything, before respectability and morals...' (for the complete quotation see page 221 of this study). *Night of the Party*, London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1940, pp318-19. Further citations from this work will be given by page number in the text.

<sup>11</sup>Sedgwick is being extreme here. Wilde was not a cross-dresser, rather he indulged in 'dressing-up' on occasion. He has been depicted in drawings as Salome, in a Greek costume featuring a skirt, and caricatured as a woman by Alfred Bryan (see Richard Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde*, London: Penguin Books, 1988).

fact that aristocratic, and later, twentieth-century middle-class male homosexuality, was often organized, as Sedgwick observes, 'to a striking degree around the objectification of proletarian men', a phenomenon recorded by writers such as E. M. Forster, Christopher Isherwood, J. R. Ackerley, Edward Carpenter, Tom Driberg and others (*BM* 174). As for the categorisation of Victorian middle-class homoeroticism — and again we have to rely on Sedgwick — we are told that

a gentleman will associate the erotic end of the homosocial spectrum, not with dissipation, not with viciousness or violence, but with childishness, as an infantile need, a mark of powerlessness, which, while it may be viewed with shame or scorn or denial, is unlikely to provoke the virulent, accusatory projection that characterizes twentieth-century homophobia. (*BM* 177)

The effect of disempowerment of the sexual subject, of rendering him childish (Algernon Charles Swinburne is a good example), is to present him as feminized, even perhaps as effeminate.<sup>12</sup> There is a connection here, one feels, with Richard Dellamora's observation, apropos an attack by Bulwer-Lytton on Tennyson's poems of 1833 for their 'effeminacies', for 'a want of all manliness in love...an eunuch strain',<sup>13</sup> that in the nineteenth century 'effeminacy' as a term of personal abuse 'often connotes male-male desire, a threat of deviance that seems to haunt gentlemen should they become too gentle, refined, or glamorous'.<sup>14</sup> On the several occasions that Boyd hastens to reassure us that one or other of his male characters is not 'effeminate' it is precisely because, I would suggest, he is cognisant of these implications (needless to say the effect is to invoke the implications rather than to quash them). There is also a sense that he is actively defending certain of his male characters from charges of not only feminine mental or physical traits, but from any taint of unmanliness or weakness.

Still on the issue of homosexuality and its polite class refusals and euphemistic nomenclatures and transformations, it should be noted that the aristocracy was well equipped to command secrecy 'in the face of an ideologically hostile dominant culture [by means of] money, privilege [and] internationalism' (*BM* 173). On the other hand, the middle-class, nineteenth-century 'gentleman' or educated bourgeois seems to have been excluded from association with the genital activities now classified as homosexual. He did, however, appear to have had a good deal of objective sexual freedom, especially if he were single and had managed to 'evade the great cult of the family and, with it, much of the enforcing machinery of his class and time' (*BM* 173). Sedgwick says that at the same time (and she is worth quoting in full, not only for the peripheral relevance to Boyd, but for a certain accent on the bizarre):

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<sup>12</sup>In Mollie Panter-Downes, *At The Pines*, Boston: Gambit Incorporated, 1971, there is plenty of evidence for Swinburne's characterization as 'perennially childlike'. Max Beerbohm, for instance, drew Swinburne several times as his younger self, 'tiny red haired Algernon, no higher than a pepper-pot and as fiery...[declaiming] his poetry, one little hand sawing the air, doll boots dangling' (p4).

<sup>13</sup>Charles Harpur said of Tennyson, in a letter to Henry Kendall, 7 July, 1866: '...generally, in Tennyson's verses of all kinds...there is a feebleness, or I might say, *feminineness* of movement and flow. I cannot call to mind a really thundrous line that he has written...' (Adrian Mitchell, *Charles Harpur*, Melbourne: Sun Books, 1973, p193).

<sup>14</sup>Richard Dellamora, *Masculine Desire: The Sexual Politics of Victorian Aestheticism*. Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1990, p199. Further citations from *Masculine Desire* will be given by page number in the text.

he seems not to have had easy access to the alternative subculture, the stylized discourse, or the sense of immunity of the aristocratic/bohemian sexual minority. So perhaps it is not surprising that the sexual histories of English gentlemen, unlike those of men above and below them socially, are so marked by a resourceful, makeshift, *sui generis* quality, in their denials, their rationalizations, their fears and guilts, their sublimations, and their quite various genital outlets alike. Biographies of English gentlemen of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are full of oddities, surprises, and apparent false starts; they seem to have no pre-determined sexual trajectory. Good examples include Lewis Carroll, Charles Kingsley, John Ruskin, and a little later T. E. Lawrence, James M. Barrie, T. H. White, Havelock Ellis,<sup>15</sup> and J. R. Ackerley, who describes in an autobiography how he moved from a furtive promiscuous homosexuality to a fifteen-year-long affair of the heart with a female dog. The sexuality of a single gentleman was silent, tentative, protean, and relatively divorced from expectations of genre, though not of gender. (*BM* 173-4)

With Boyd in mind, Sedgwick's allusion to fictional male-male relationships in this context is perhaps even more interesting. She cites Pendennis and Warrington, Clive Newcome and J. J. Ridley, and the two Armadales of Collins' *Armadale* as examples of the 'thematically tame but structurally interesting and [often] emotionally turbid and preoccupying' relationships common between single gentlemen. They are unions generally marked by 'the shadowy presence of a mysterious imperative (physical debility, hereditary curse, secret unhappy prior marriage, or simply extreme disinclination) that bars at least one of the partners in each union forever from marriage' (*BM* 174). Remarkably, many of the young male characters of Boyd's earlier novels conform uncannily with Sedgwick's relationship criteria for fictional single gentlemen: their interest in each other is emotional, it can be preoccupying and is invariably structurally interesting in terms of how it affects the male/female dynamic. What is extraordinary is that 'shadowy imperatives' similar to those mentioned by Sedgwick are capable of showing up, to a lesser or greater degree, in Boyd's fiction. Their influence, however, is often in reverse, or at least more multi-directional: while they may operate to facilitate the same-sex male bond, they are just as likely to disrupt, prevent or disappoint any 'ideal' of heterosexual union. Yet it is also true to say (with Paul Brayford and his manservant/companion Harry possibly the only exception) that there are no long-term or permanent male partnerships in Boyd's novels. As a generalisation, the fate of his 'single gentleman' is to be the independent but essentially lonely bachelor: romantically thwarted if his desired love-object is a man or boy, and emotionally detached but charming if there is a woman involved.

Victorian society may have disavowed, feigned ignorance of, or expurgated from consciousness the term 'homosexual', yet Foucault's historical viewpoint, which selects 1870 as the date for the advent of the homosexual as a species,<sup>16</sup> throws the question into a different perspective. In contradistinction to 'those mere sodomites', defined by the ancient civil or canonical codes as partaking in 'a category of forbidden acts'...

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<sup>15</sup>As for 'no predetermined sexual trajectory', Havelock Ellis's life and works would seem to indicate differently.

<sup>16</sup>The popularization of the word 'homosexual' preceded even that of the term 'heterosexual'. Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, p2.

The nineteenth-century homosexual became a personage, a past, a case history, and a childhood, in addition to being a type of life, a life form, and a morphology, with an indiscreet anatomy and possibly a mysterious physiology...the psychological, psychiatric, medical category of homosexuality was constituted from the moment it was characterized — Westphal's famous article of 1870 on 'contrary sexual sensations' can stand as its date of birth — less by a type of sexual relations than by a certain quality of sexual sensibility, a certain way of inverting the masculine and the feminine in oneself. Homosexuality appeared as one of the forms of sexuality when it was transposed from the practice of sodomy onto a kind of interior androgyny, a hermaphroditism of the soul. The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species. (*History I* 43)

Reifying as it did a 'natural order of disorder', Westphal's formulation created an inclusivist principle of classification according to which all types of unorthodox sexualities could be analysed and entomologized. This scientific 'implantation of multiple perversions' acted to ensure, through complex and interconnecting networks of power, prohibition and incitement, 'the proliferation of specific pleasures and the multiplication of disparate sexualities' (*History I* 48-49). It is through findings and conclusions such as these that Foucault comes to question the reputed oppressive prudishness of Victorian society. Recalling the secrecy commanded by the aristocracy in its pursuit of perverse pleasures, however, we cannot assume that, concurrent with the newly reifying scientific discourse, there was not a socio-political dialectic marked by puritanism, hypocrisy and homophobia.

Foucault's model of the homosexual is one that the contemporary generation is familiar with and which is slowly undergoing change. Revolving unequivocally as it does around the trope of inversion and gender transitivity — in the form of the feminized man or the virilized woman — it is a view that is curiously arbitrary in its condensation of sexual categories. It is also flawed in that it contains the assumption, one that Christopher Craft has noted, that there is 'an essential heterosexuality within desire itself...desire, in this view, by definition subsists in the current that runs between one male self and one female self, in whatever sex of bodies these selves may be manifested'.<sup>17</sup> The assumption is indeed hard to shrug off; its roots run deep in Western cultural mythology, its message potent in foundation narratives such as that of Cupid and Psyche. Sedgwick's view is less exclusively oriented:

so long as dyads of people are all that are in question, the broadening of view to include any larger circuit of desire must necessarily reduce the inversion or liminality trope to a choreography of breathless farce. [Nevertheless] not a jot the less for that has the trope of inversion remained a fixture of modern discourse of same-sex desire...(*EC* 87).

While allowing that definitions of sexual difference are doomed to historical instability and internal incoherence (*EC* 158), Sedgwick offers two broad categories for distinguishing homosexualities. The minoritizing (or essentialist) view that is Foucault's version, based on transitivity or liminality between genders, assumes a small, distinct, relatively fixed population of people who really are 'gay'

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<sup>17</sup>Christopher Craft, "'Kiss Me with Those Red Lips': Gender and Inversion in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*", *Representations*, no. 8 (Fall 1984), pp107-34. Cited by Sedgwick in *Epistemology of the Closet*, p87.

(EC 85): for Foucault, says Sedgwick, the terms ‘homosexuality’ and ‘sexual inversion’ are virtually interchangeable (EC 157).

Yet it would seem that the conflation of these two terms is actually a misrepresentation. More recent research has shown, claims Sedgwick, that ‘even within the minoritizing, taxonomic identity-discourses instituted in the late nineteenth century, there was an incalculably consequential divergence between [these] terms...’. In support of this, she cites George Chauncy:

Sexual inversion, the term used most commonly in the nineteenth century, did not denote the same conceptual phenomenon as homosexuality. ‘Sexual inversion’ referred to an inversion in a broad range of deviant gender behavior — the phenomenon of female ‘masculinity’ or male ‘femininity’, condensed in formulations such as Karl Heinrich Ulrichs’ famous self-description as *anima muliebris virili corpore inclusa*, a woman’s soul trapped in a man’s body — while ‘homosexuality’ focused on the narrower issue of sexual object choice.<sup>18</sup>

Had homosexuality simply been refigured in favour of a defining *sameness* between partners, or had it always been thus? The point is a subtle one. Sedgwick perceives a shift in conceptualization, telling us that though the etymological meaning of ‘*homo-sexuality*’ referred to ‘relations (of an unspecified kind) between persons of the same sex’ her belief is that ‘the word is now almost universally heard as referring to relations of *sexuality* between persons who are, because of their sex, more flatly and globally categorized as *the same*’. She offers David Halperin in support of this shift: ‘That sexual object-choice might be wholly independent of such “secondary” characteristics as masculinity or femininity never seems to have entered anyone’s head until Havelock Ellis waged a campaign to isolate object-choice from role-playing and Freud...clearly distinguished in the case of the libido between the sexual “object” and the sexual “aim”’.<sup>19</sup>

Halperin’s elaboration on the consequences of this variation is enlightening:

The conceptual isolation of sexuality *per se* from questions of masculinity and femininity made possible a new taxonomy of sexual behaviors and psychologies based entirely on the anatomical sex of the persons engaged in a sexual act (same sex vs. different sex); it thereby obliterated a number of distinctions that had traditionally operated within earlier discourses pertaining to same-sex sexual contacts and that had radically differentiated active from passive sexual partners, normal from abnormal (or conventional from unconventional) sexual roles, masculine from feminine styles, and paederasty from lesbianism: all such behaviors were now to be classed alike and placed under the same heading. Sexual identity was thus polarized around a central opposition rigidly defined by the binary play of sameness and difference in the sexes of the sexual partners; people belonged henceforward to one or the other of two exclusive categories...Founded on positive, ascertainable and objective behavioral phenomena — on the facts of who had sex with whom — the new sexual taxonomy could lay claim to a descriptive, trans-historical validity. And

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<sup>18</sup>George Chauncy, ‘From Sexual Inversion to Homosexuality: Medicine and the Changing Conceptualization of Female Deviance’, *Salmagundi*, no. 58-59 (Fall 1982—Winter 1983), p124. In Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, p158.

<sup>19</sup>This and the following quote are from Halperin, *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality*, New York: Routledge, 1989, p16. Cited by Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, p158.

so it crossed the ‘threshold of scientificity’ and was enshrined as a working concept in the social and physical sciences.

The ‘exclusive categories’ Halperin refers to are, of course, homo- and hetero-sexualities. Henceforth people were no longer to be assigned merely a masculine or feminine gender (though we do well to remember that gender, theorised by Jacques Lacan as a cultural construct and system of symbolic relations,<sup>20</sup> is not in itself unproblematical); they would also be dichotomized according to their sexuality, or more accurately, their sexual orientation. The new *homo*-style homosexuality, in depending on a defining ‘sameness between partners’, functioned to reassimilate identification and desire. It assumed that same-sex relationships had more in common than cross-sex relationships (EC 159), an assumption which leaves itself open to charges of gender separatism — or the exclusion of difference — and even of narcissism: when Sedgwick asks, for instance, ‘How does a man’s love of *other* men become a love of the *same*?’ (EC 160) the reverse is surely just as pertinent: ‘How does a man’s love of the same become a love of the other?’ Yet (and I have included this quote here because of its relevance to Boyd’s sentimentalizing tendencies) it is with this new homosexuality, Sedgwick claims, ‘and not with inversion, pederasty, or sodomy (least of all, of course, with cross-gender sexuality) that an erotic language, an erotic discourse comes into existence that makes available a continuing possibility for symbolizing slippages between identification and desire. It concomitantly makes available new possibilities for the camouflage and concealment...of proscribed or resisted erotic relation and avowal...through the mechanisms that cluster under the stigmatizing name “sentimentality”’ (EC 159).

For Halperin, the supersession of the inversion model by the new homosexuality — whose ‘highest expression is the “straight-acting and -appearing gay male”, a man distinct from other men in absolutely no other respect besides that of his “sexuality” — starts in the latter part of the nineteenth century and ‘comes into its own only in the twentieth’.<sup>21</sup> Since, as he claims, the sex-role reversal form of homosexuality was unknown in classical antiquity, where according to Sedgwick ‘the virility of the homosexual orientation of male desire seemed as self-evident to the ancient Spartans...as its effeminacy seems in contemporary popular culture’ (BM 26-27), it seems safe to say that Halperin’s apprehension, if not a re-invention of the wheel, is decidedly a rehabilitation of a formerly established and potent genre. However that may be, his definition of modern homosexuality, reliant as it is on a notion of gender intransitivity, is in direct conflict with the Foucauldian template which privileges gender transitivity: the feminized man or virilized woman.

Sedgwick widens the debate by offering a yet more fluid slant on homosexuality, a more inclusive interpretation. Against Foucault’s essentializing, minoritizing formulation she balances a constructivist and universalizing perspective, one that sees homosexuality ‘as an issue of continuing, determinative importance in the lives of people across the spectrum of sexualities’ (EC 1). This view holds that

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<sup>20</sup>For Lacan, gender is not a matter of ‘fixed facts about persons’. Cited by R. W. Connell, *Masculinities*, St Leonards NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1995, p20. Further citations from *Masculinities* will be given by page number in the text.

<sup>21</sup>Halperin, *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality*, pp8-9. Cited by Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, p46.

sexual desire is an unpredictably powerful solvent of stable identities; that apparently heterosexual persons and object choices are strongly marked by same-sex influences and desires, and vice versa for apparently homosexual ones...(EC 85)

and owes its provenance to the antiminoritizing, gender-transitive account formulated by Freud — during the period of the so-called ‘invention of the homosexual’ — which took as its premise the recognition that the homosexual was a ‘not...unproblematically discrete category of persons’ (EC 84). Sedgwick owns that Freud’s ‘universalizing mapping of this territory [is] based on the supposed protean mobility of sexual desire and on the potential bisexuality of every human creature; a mapping that implies no presumption that one’s sexual penchant will always incline toward persons of a single gender...’ (EC 84). But then Freud’s psychoanalytic research-based theory of masculinity was altogether remarkable for its awareness of the ‘empirical complexity of gender’. As Bob Connell comments in *Masculinities* (p10): ‘The point [Freud] most insistently made about masculinity was that it never exists in a pure state. Layers of emotion coexist and contradict each other. Each personality is a shade-filled, complex structure, not a transparent unit’.

Later, more conservative psychoanalysts, Connell asserts, were to abandon the theory of bisexuality. In fact, between 1930 and 1960 ‘psychoanalysis as a practice increasingly became a technique of normalisation’, placing its stress on the equation of mental health with gender orthodoxy, especially conventional heterosexuality and marriage:

The course towards adult heterosexuality, which Freud had seen as a complex and fragile construction, was increasingly presented as an unproblematic, natural path of development. Anything else was viewed [by psychoanalysts such as Theodore Reik] as a sign of pathology — especially homosexuality. This was declared inherently pathological, the product of ‘disturbed parent-child relationships’, as a team of New York psychoanalysts led by Irving Bieber announced in 1962. (*Masculinities* 11)<sup>22</sup>

The ‘normalisation’ spoken of here is, of course, quite simply a semantic feint; what is actually at issue is the ‘abnormalisation’ of homosexuality in the interests of conformity and social control: an instance, no doubt, of Foucault’s ‘power-knowledge’ machinery at work, the manipulative ‘interweaving of new sciences (such as medicine, criminology and sexology) with new institutions...[such as] clinics, prisons...psychotherapy’ (*Masculinities* 5). And since the histories of European and American homosexual sciences are closely linked, it seems reasonable to assume an attitudinal bias in the United States — despite radical anti-conservative initiatives such as the German gay rights movement of 1910 — influenced by Victorian anti-homosexual paranoia as embodied in the act of 1885. The Labouchère legislation, not repealed in England until 1967, was

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<sup>22</sup>If American psychoanalysts of the period increasingly saw homosexuality as ‘unnatural’, some theorists and/or literary critics were later to downplay its significance to the point of banality. For example, J. E. River’s *Proust and the Art of Love: The Aesthetics of Sexuality in the Life, Times, & Art of Marcel Proust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980, p14) argues that ‘homosexuality is a perennial adjunct of mammalian sexuality, neither a pathological condition nor a biological perversion. It has always existed, both among humans and among animals’; while for Leo Bersani ‘sexual preference’ is ‘secondary’ and ‘anecdotal’, the ‘thematization of homosexuality...sentimental and reductive’ (in “‘The Culture of Redemption’: Marcel Proust and Melanie Klein”, *Critical Inquiry* 12, no. 2 (Winter 1986) p416). Both cited by Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* pp214-215.

fiercely discriminatory: not only did it place male homosexuals in the same category as female prostitutes,<sup>23</sup> but it criminalized male homosexual activities on a broad front, ‘shifting emphasis from sexual acts between men, especially sodomy, the traditional focus of legislation, to sexual sentiment or thought, and in this way to an abstract entity soon to be widely referred to as “homosexuality”’ (*Desire* 200).

The 1885 amendment to the Criminal Law Act threw homosexual existence into jeopardy, gender roles into uncertainty, and masculinity in general into crisis.<sup>24</sup> It effectively shattered the always fragile illusion of immunity from retribution hitherto enjoyed by the aristocracy, the bohemian set and the public school elite in their intra- and cross-class same-sex alliances/dalliances. The homosexual became not only highly visible but his desire was now the property of the law, an appetite to be scrutinized, regulated, controlled and punished. An inevitable spin-off was the creation of a breeding ground of fear, anxiety, antipathy, criminality involving extortion and blackmail, and, as already touched on, a medical impulse to categorize and pathologize. Also inevitable were the scandals which followed in the wake of the act. According to Dellamora, the first of these was the Cleveland Street affair of 1889-90, a scandal which crossed ‘lines of class, embracing aristocrats and “gentlemen” on one side, telegraph boys and members of the Household Cavalry on the other’ (*Desire* 206). Then came the publication in America in 1890 of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, disliked in the main for its deviant connotations and its depiction of middle-class life as ambitious and scheming (*Desire* 207); the Wilde trials were to follow in 1895, with Wilde allegedly sacrificed to protect the establishment (*Desire* 211);<sup>25</sup> and finally, Thomas Hardy caused a stir, also in 1895, with *Jude the Obscure*, a novel which ‘subverted male privilege in marriage’ and was ‘notable for the weakness within it of same-sex bonding’ (*Desire* 212).

Despite these ‘scandalous’ outcomes offered by the perpetrators of hypocrisy, censure and prohibition, there were dissenting voices ‘positive about male-male desire’ around the time of the Wilde trials (*Desire* 209). Dellamora points out that in 1894, Edward Carpenter gave a public lecture on the topic of homogenic love; and writers like John Addington Symonds and Carpenter and others like Alfred Douglas ‘used written language quietly to campaign on behalf of decriminalizing male homosexual behavior’ (*Desire* 209). He goes on to cite Brian Reade, who points out that ‘1894 marks the high-water mark of publications that valorized male homosexual feeling within the general ambit of “culture”, whether of contemporary painting, of poetry, or of High Anglican religious sentiment’. One of these publications, Wilde’s ‘The Portrait of Mr. W. H.’, appearing in *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine* in 1889, was the first fictional work in England which dealt with romantic pederasty (*Desire* 209), and seems not to have attracted the general calumny attached to *The Picture of Dorian Gray* published only a year later. *Dorian Gray*, according to Dellamora, formed part of a ‘literature of masculine crisis’ — examples of other works in this vein being Robert Louis

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<sup>23</sup>This information is provided by Jeffrey Weeks (‘Inverts, Perverts, and Mary-Annes: Male Prostitution and the Regulation of Homosexuality in England in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries’, *Journal of Homosexuality* 6, Fall 1980-Winter 1981, p118) and quoted in Richard Dellamora, *Masculine Desire*, p207.

<sup>24</sup>‘Gender construction of the British male’, particularly the product of the public school system, was compromised, for instance, by the ‘dandy’ image thrown up by Wilde. See Dellamora, *Masculine Desire*, p208.

<sup>25</sup>Most directly, Dellamora says, to protect Alfred Douglas, but also to protect the Prime Minister, Lord Rosebery.

Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) and Henry James's 'The Beast in the Jungle' (1903) — a literature that was indicative of the actual crisis afflicting homosexual existence during the 1890s. The situation was compounded by the vagaries of the English all-male public school system, available after 1880 to the professions as well as to the landed gentry. The homosocial structure fostered within these schools was plagued by inherent paradox and instability: the by now familiar incompatibilities to do with homosexual bonding and masculine privilege and power; and a new vexation concerning the status and meaning of the word 'gentleman'.

The fact remains that some publications caused literary scandals while others, and not always the ones whose thematics were skilfully masked, raised barely a ripple. It is difficult to know whether constraints within the publishing industry involving 'deviant' — and therefore potentially corrupting — books were guided by capriciousness or by fear of the censor. Possibly there was some sort of moral backlash operating by the time, some forty years after the publication of 'The Portrait of Mr. W. H.', that Martin Boyd's novel *The Shepherd of Admetus* was submitted to Dent in the early '30s. Or possibly the publishers merely erred on the side of exaggerated caution if not outright timorousness. This book was rejected, Brenda Niall tells us,

because it treated homosexuality without making a moral judgement against it. Richard Church could not recommend it to Dent. Although Church thought it possible that a homosexual relationship might be an acceptable subject for fiction, Boyd's treatment 'was not sufficiently tragic...as one dealing with so disastrous a predilection should be'. Since Church singled out for condemnation 'little gifts of flowers' it must have been decorous, even in the context of a period in which E. M. Forster could not risk publishing *Maurice*.<sup>26</sup>

No doubt as a direct consequence, by the time Boyd came to write his second memoir *Day of My Delight*, the acknowledgment of 'gifts of flowers' from one man to another comes with a self-conscious rider: 'If [Roger Hone] came to see me in London, and if he thought I wanted flowers he would bring me flowers, careless of misunderstanding. No one was less effeminate'.<sup>27</sup> If it is true, as Niall asserts, that Boyd's fiction in the wake of the publishing debacle is likely 'to have presented homosexual love in a spirit of rueful comedy' (*A Life* 117), it is easy to understand why.

In the unlikely event that Boyd had approached Australian publishers early in his career (at that stage Boyd's publishers were consistently English or American), he would have fared no better.<sup>28</sup> Australia was slower to repeal proscriptive laws against male homosexual behaviour than most western countries. The history of this country's official treatment of homosexuals has not been an enlightened one. Having originally adopted the British legal code with respect to male homosexuality, the laws of the Australian States provided severe penalties for sodomy (and the term 'sodomy', as in Britain, could be interpreted broadly. In South Australia, for instance, it was

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<sup>26</sup>Brenda Niall, *Martin Boyd: A Life*, p117. She notes that there is no surviving manuscript of *The Shepherd of Admetus*, or of any of the other unpublished novels.

<sup>27</sup>Martin Boyd, *Day of My Delight: An Anglo-Australian Memoir*, Melbourne: Lansdowne, 1974, p162. Further citations from this work will be given by page number in the text.

<sup>28</sup>Australia's moral guardians were diligent up until the late '60s in their banning of books which were explicitly sexual, let alone homosexual.

applied to any form of sexual contact between men).<sup>29</sup> Homosexuality was largely unspoken of until the end of the 1960s; even in 'liberal' Britain, Jeffrey Weeks reminds us, the reformed law of 1967 (following on the Wolfenden Report of ten years earlier) was 'severely limited in its extent', and resulted in an actual increase in police prosecutions relating to 'public decency'.<sup>30</sup> Australia in 1970, however, saw the beginnings of the homosexual rights movement which was to lead first, to universal decriminalization (with the notable exception of Tasmania which, until an outright repeal in May 1997, clung to its controversial *Criminal Code* of 1924 prohibiting sexual acts between male adults)<sup>31</sup> and then, in New South Wales at least (in 1982), to anti-discrimination laws aimed at both male and female homosexuals. The Keating Federal Government planned, as part of its law reform agenda, the legal recognition of gay and lesbian relationships, a project possibly in doubt under the Howard regime. In line with the slow pace of socio-sexual reform, book censorship in Australia — with its triple target of 'obscenity, blasphemy and sedition'<sup>32</sup> — was still imposing restrictions up until the 1970s.

Australia's tardiness in protecting and improving the legal status of male homosexuals reflects a hiatus in community receptivity to liberalisation and reform.<sup>33</sup> The long-standing, demonstrated unwillingness of Australian society at large — so often self-congratulatory on account of its perceived broad attitudinal tolerance — to co-operate in upholding the principle of sexual difference<sup>34</sup> suggests, perhaps, an obdurate masculinist culture which believes itself under threat. Such a culture has a vested interest in the status quo regardless of more enlightened legislation, which may go some way to explaining the largely unmediated blindness possessed by many of those literary critical sensibilities referred to earlier.

Which brings me back to Martin Boyd and the constraints of his times, influences which had been accumulating since well before his actual writing period from the '20s to the '60s; to the question of how, and where, he sits in relation to the conflictual and contradictory currents responsible for the multiplicity of *fin-de-siècle* discourses surrounding sex and gender which had begun before he was born and which were still preoccupying sexologists and scientists at the time of his death in 1972; and to any relevance the various — again, often conflicting (as has been shown) — hypotheses and interpretations concerning the nature of homosexuality may have held

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<sup>29</sup>Even so, South Australia was the first State to decriminalize homosexuality, followed by Victoria in 1980 and New South Wales in 1984. From *The Australian Encyclopaedia* Vol. 4, Terrey Hills NSW: Australian Geographic P/L, 1988.

<sup>30</sup>In the Preface, Guy Hocquenghem, *Homosexual Desire*, (trans) Daniella Dangoor, London: Allison & Busby, 1978, p11.

<sup>31</sup>The law remained in place until 1997 despite having been effectively overridden by the Commonwealth Parliament's *Human Rights (Sexual Conduct) Act* 1994 following petitioner Nicholas Toonen's successful appeal to the United Nations Human Rights Committee. These facts are taken from the *Australian Law Encyclopaedia* and from the *Australian Law Journal* Vol. 69, State Library of N.S.W.

<sup>32</sup>The description forms part of the title of a book by Peter Coleman on the history of censorship in Australia published in 1962.

<sup>33</sup>Martin Boyd appears to transmit his own view through his character Mabel Allman: 'In this blighted land all the old sex-taboos and religious taboos are stronger than in England...there is no independence of thought'. *The Montforts*, Melbourne: Landsdowne Press, 1975, p223. Further citations from this edition will be given by page number in the text.

<sup>34</sup>As recently as 1982, the AIDS scare in Australia saw the start of what was to become a virulent homophobic backlash.

for him. On the pseudo-scientific side, Boyd evidently took the trouble to familiarize himself with the psychological/psychoanalytical views on sexuality espoused by medical researchers and theorists such as Freud and Alfred Adler. On the other hand, the artist in him gravitated towards the literature of aestheticism, represented by Swinburne, Pater and Wilde among others, a movement in art which developed, in certain defiant and whimsical ways, in reaction to 'the ugliness and philistinism of the mid-Victorian era'.<sup>35</sup> The mystery and essence<sup>36</sup> of Boyd, it seems to me, lies somewhere between — or alternatively, in the ability to incorporate — the conventional, outwardly circumspect man who, from a refinement of taste rather than any moral squeamishness, is impatient of putting sex under the microscope in order to psychologize personality, and the aesthete/bohemian of mildly transgressive and non-conformist impulses.

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<sup>35</sup>*Everyman's Encyclopaedia Vol. I*, p108.

<sup>36</sup>In the current anti-essentialist climate, I use 'essence' advisedly, borrowing from Boyd's frequent allusions to the 'essential self' to convey the sense of what is 'truest'.

## CHAPTER TWO: *Freud: attitudes and antipathies*

The attempt to reconceptualise, or perhaps merely to re-articulate Martin Boyd in terms of a homosocial/homosexual, possibly bisexual paradigm<sup>1</sup> would be remiss, if not negligent, without reference to this century's pioneer in psycho-sexual pathology, Sigmund Freud. If there were no other justification for doing so, the very obvious disquiet caused to Boyd by things Freudian would seem reason enough to essay not, I hasten to say, a psychoanalytical verdict but an examination of the contextual material to discover/uncover its relatedness to the psychoanalytical framework. Considering the prevalence of homosocial/homosexual themes and tonings in Boyd's novels — whether coded, covert or openly candid — it seems commonsensical to suppose they represent a major causal link to his pronouncements against Freud. Certainly his denunciations, even those that have a playful edge to them, are revealing to the extent that they expose/disclose what we can only speculate is for him a controversial area. At the same time it should not be overlooked that his adversarial stance may simply have been a Bloomsbury-style fashion statement — if we accept, that is, that the publication of Freud's sexual theories 'aroused anger because of their unheard-of novelty in a "Victorian" society', an account disputed by Ellenberger in *The Discovery of the Unconscious*<sup>2</sup> (according to Ellenberger the documentary evidence is to the contrary: Freud's *Three Essays* appeared 'in the midst of a flood of contemporary literature on sexology and were favorably received' p508). It is difficult to know whether Boyd actually read Freud, or whether he relied on hearsay. His own writings in their allusions to notions such as dream theory, repression, neurosis, sublimation, narcissism and the Oedipus complex display more than a passing familiarity with the psychoanalytical project; his dismissive references to 'inversion', on the other hand, while they suggest that Boyd did in fact read Freud on that particular topic, also hint at an imperfect grasp of the subtle complexity of Freud's ideas on the subject (see below).<sup>3</sup> Boyd was better read than he pretended, yet because he read randomly and discarded books as rapidly as he read them, in keeping with his itinerant, 'travel-light' life-style,<sup>4</sup> the idea suggests itself that in common with Norman Lindsay his reading was 'wide rather than deep'.<sup>5</sup> In any event there was plenty of material available. Besides comprehensive coverage of Freudian theory by sexual and social commentators such as Havelock Ellis and Fritz Wittels in the early 1930s,<sup>6</sup> various of Freud's tracts were available in translation well before what appears to be Boyd's first direct reference to him in *The Picnic* in

<sup>1</sup>Where the emphasis is on emotional states as opposed to physical activity.

<sup>2</sup>Henri F. Ellenberger, *The Discovery of the Unconscious*, London: Allen Lane The Penguin Press, 1970, p508. Ellenberger cites authors August Forel, Zilboorg, Maupassant, Schnitzler, Wedekind and Schopenhauer as evidence that continental Europe of 1905 (when *Three Essays* appeared) was marked by a laxity of sexual mores. As well, the new science of sexual pathology had received its decisive impetus thirty years earlier with the publication of Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis* (pp502-3). Further citations from *The Discovery of the Unconscious* will be given by page number in the text.

<sup>3</sup>The phenomenon of 'inversion' was not new, of course, having been the object of scientific study since the end of the eighteenth century (Havelock Ellis, *Psychology of Sex*, London: Pan Books, 1961 (1933), p192). Ellis himself published a study called *Sexual Inversion* in 1897. Boyd's usage of the term, however, invariably seems linked with Freud, and besides, he makes no reference to other sexual theorists.

<sup>4</sup>According to Brenda Niall, in conversation 30/5/96.

<sup>5</sup>Lindsay's reading habits are described thus in John Hetherington, *Norman Lindsay: The Embattled Olympian*, Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1973, p56.

<sup>6</sup>Fritz Wittels produced *Freud and His Time* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap) in 1931 and Havelock Ellis first published his *Psychology of Sex* (London: Heinemann) in 1933.

1937.<sup>7</sup> These publications, which ranged through subjects such as psycho-neurosis, the interpretation of dreams, infantile sexuality, repression, the unconscious, the ego, the id and the pleasure principle, included *Three Contributions to the Sexual Theory* (1910), the very same *Three Essays* which reputedly caused a furore on its release in 1905.

Even supposing Ellenberger is right about Freud's public reception, Boyd's temperament was not naturally disposed to take kindly to a scientist of exclusivist, sexually-obsessed orientation. This at least is offered in explanation for an attitudinal aversion which makes itself felt in most of the registers between light-hearted raillery and barely-disguised irritation: an example in *Much Else in Italy*, where Freud is described as 'surely the dreariest and most squalid of apostles', could be said to hit the lower end of the scale. An overview of Freudian theory relevant to homosexuality will be given later in the chapter in an effort to isolate and clarify, as well as speculate on, points of difference and conjunction between the theorist and his critic. In the meantime, however, and always making allowances for an amateur, and therefore less than adequate, assessment in terms of any psychoanalytical yardstick, it nevertheless may be enlightening and/or constructive to a psychological conception/perception of Boyd to take his various references to Freud, and using the tools provided by the psychoanalyst, submit them to the interrogative and interpretive process.

If we go first to Boyd's autobiographical *Day of My Delight* (1965), we find that Boyd's use of the word 'inversion', because it is inserted into a Freudian context, suggests knowledge of, and interest in, Freud's theories on homosexuality: the sense being that not only has he lifted the term from Freud, but that he is distancing himself from Freud's categorisation. Speaking of a friendship with Dick Hoskins, the grocer's boy, during time spent on the Sussex Coast in 1925, Boyd describes their 'essential selves [as] in harmony' and relates how the 'vernal quality' of his novel *Scandal of Spring* (1934) was sourced in this friendship: a 'kind of poetic inspiration which has nothing to do with "inversion"' (*Day* 145).<sup>8</sup> Similarly, in a later fictional work, *The Picnic* (1937), Boyd appears through his character Wilfred Westlake — popularly acknowledged as a young and naive version of himself — to rebuke Freud for stigmatizing male-male relationships. Wilfred is seduced by Sylvia Rounsefell ('enjoyably continental and Bohemian')<sup>9</sup> into revealing

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<sup>7</sup>*The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, translated under the editorship of James Strachey, in collaboration with Anna Freud (London: Hogarth Press, twenty-four volumes), of which *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* was the first volume, did not begin publication until 1953.

<sup>8</sup>The outcome of that novel is illuminating. After an attempted elopement and 'the pain of disenchantment', the young protagonist John Vazetti is re-united with his friend Dick Harding. The setting is romantic: 'long mists of the meadow, and the moon rising like a huge red penny. John came close to Dick and took his arm...If that past madness and hunger were love, he did not want it — not for a long time. But he did not believe that it was. He believed that in this tried comradeship and security of understanding lay the best part of love'. *Scandal of Spring*, London: J. M. Dent, 1934, p245. Further citations from *Scandal of Spring* will be given by page number in the text.

<sup>9</sup>The Rounsefells are Bloomsbury-influenced with progressive views, holding, for instance, that 'not only marriage but sexual differentiation was a thing of the past' (*Picnic* p134). Aelred, a publisher of minor erotica, takes his name from an English twelfth century saint and religious mystic who posited gay love, preferably chaste, as a basis for monastic life. See John Boswell., *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality*, Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1980, pp 221-226; and Stephen Coote (ed), *The Penguin Book of Homosexual Verse*, London: Penguin, 1986, p37.

his admiration for the head master, his warm-hearted friendship with Higgins Minor. [Both] were given the correct Freudian diagnosis. He could not see why his mild hero-worship and his companionable love for Higgins were mental diseases.<sup>10</sup>

Both remarks appear casual, almost as throwaway lines; yet they indicate a compulsion to dissociate from Freud, even (in the second example) to render him nonsensical and worthy of derision. Curiously enough, however, at the same time as rejecting Freud's ideas, they betray an indisputable engagement with those very ideas.

Familiar though he might be with Freudian doctrine Boyd, at least concerning the examples quoted above, reveals himself as not only resistant to Freud, but as imbued with an element of defensiveness.<sup>11</sup> It is worth noting, for instance, the immediate follow-up to the 'inversion' reference. In these three or four paragraphs Boyd may well be stating a credo of sorts:

Here I might say something about friendship and love for boys, which also comes into my novels. Young people, boys and girls, are the most beautiful of all the creation that we know. They show the perfection of the human body before it is disfigured by the burdens and diseases of life, and their eyes have the liveliness and candour of those whose responses are still instinctive and true.

Since the industrial revolution it has been said that good looks are wasted in a boy. It was certainly not said in any previous civilisation, and they are not wasted in any of God's creatures, a horse, a dog, a tiger, or a flight of cockatoos, let alone a human being, who is the image of God, in which the Greek and the Christian myths are agreed....

Thomas Traherne has written how a man whose faculties are controlled by his Holy Ghost will see the world: 'Young men were glittering and sparkling angels, and maids strange seraphic pieces of life and beauty. Boys and girls, tumbling in the street and playing, were moving jewels'.

Wordsworth wrote:

'Shades of the prison house begin to close  
Upon the growing Boy,  
But he beholds the light and whence it flows,  
He sees it in his joy.  
The Youth, who daily farther from the east  
Must travel, still is Nature's priest,

<sup>10</sup>*The Picnic*, Australia: Penguin Books, 1985, p137. First published by J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1937. Further citations from this work will be given by page number in the text.

<sup>11</sup>Directed against sexual ideas, the defense (sic) is a common feature in neurosis according to Ellenberger, *The Discovery of the Unconscious*, p486.

If at times I appear to make synonymous the views of the author with opinions expressed by his characters (in this case, one Wilfred Westlake), it is because I am making a calculated judgment based on Boyd's own declarations: first, that 'a book cannot help being an expression of personality' and second, on his endorsement of Bernard Shaw's definition of a first-rate book as 'one in which the author's morality is his own. He does not judge the actions of his characters by any ready-made yardstick' ('Dubious Cartography' p12). At the same time I own that Boyd is capable of presenting views which are apparently both consciously — or even unconsciously — and mischievously inconsistent.

And by the vision splendid  
Is on his way attended?

And so the greatest poets, sages and artists, Socrates, Shakespeare, Michelangelo and Christ Himself, have loved these creatures from whose eyes the vision of delight has not yet faded. (*Day* 145-46)

It is an inconclusive statement, where ‘love for boys’ is inextricably interwoven with notions of beauty-worship (and noteworthy is the slide by stealth from the concept of ‘youth’ as a collective term for both boys and girls to the emphatic and capitalized ‘Boy’). Nevertheless Boyd’s purpose is reasonably transparent: that is, to sanitize his ‘love for boys’, to decontaminate it from any suggestion of carnality or sexuality. According to this view, youth and beauty should exist — ideally — in a pure state. Here are the young gods — corporeal yet aestheticized, even spiritualized — essential to Boyd’s vision of the natural world, a vision which is born of a horror of corruption, of an almost infantile wish to keep the world safe from evil:

They [these creatures] are capable of generosities which the cautious man would regard as madness, but they are steadily inculcated by their teachers and parents with ideas of self-interest, violence and social superiority. The hatreds of dead generations and the obstinate vanities of their rulers are fastened on to them to be expiated with their blood. Even if they survive, their bright spirits fade into the light of common day. (*Day* 146)

Boyd’s books abound with visual impressions of the youthful male body: the naked male, usually observed swimming, is a recurring motif, but more often than not he takes up the form of an actual work of art. In *A Single Flame*, for instance, Boyd tells of a reproduction he bought and hung in the dormitory at school: a picture by Frank Dicksee called ‘The Ideal’, showing a

brown and beautiful young man stretching his arms upwards towards an ethereal creature who was eluding him among soft and creamy clouds. It expressed perfectly the Tennysonian idea of the maiden passion for a maid. The spiritual aspiration was given a sensual form, and forgetting for the time my celibate intentions, I was deeply satisfied by this unity. (*Flame* 38-39)

It is an intriguing passage, offering the enigmatic blend of ingenuousness and anomaly which surfaces periodically in Boyd. Ingenuous because, despite the subject matter of a yearned-for ‘ethereal creature’ which is elusively God or maid, the real focus of this picture, both for the reader and for the schoolboy Boyd, rests in the ‘sensual form’ of the ‘brown and beautiful young man’. It is the sensual element — underlined by the setting aside of celibate intentions — which gives satisfaction: primarily of itself, and only secondarily because it lends a dimension to spirituality. And there can be no overlooking the fact that Boyd’s phrasing, whether deliberately or accidentally (in the manner of a Freudian slip?), links the concept of non-celibacy with sensuality as it is embodied in the beautiful young man. This is where the anomaly comes in, in the form of a subtle subversiveness which works against, and therefore subordinates, the idea of ‘the maiden passion for a maid’: a phrase not only redolent of the virginal, the meek, the idealistic, and of ultimately unfulfilled desires, but succinctly eloquent of the older Boyd’s own, for the most part, sexually neutral attitude to women (a topic to be touched on later in this discussion).

Given that by the evidence in his books, Boyd derived considerable pleasure and satisfaction in the contemplation of the beautiful, preferably unadorned, male body (also to be discussed later), it seems appropriate at this point to wonder whether he was acquainted with Freud's view that pleasurable 'visual impressions remain the most frequent pathway along which libidinal excitation is aroused'.<sup>12</sup> It is usual, according to Freud, 'for most normal people to linger to some extent over the intermediate sexual aim of a looking [scopophilia] that has a sexual tinge to it; indeed, this offers them a possibility of directing some proportion of their libido on to higher artistic aims' (*Essays* 69-70). (Freud adds to this in a footnote: "There is to my mind no doubt that the concept of 'beautiful' has its roots in sexual excitation and that its original meaning was "sexually stimulating" — not necessarily a notion that Boyd would have appreciated). However, he went on to say that 'this pleasure in looking becomes a perversion if [among other reasons], instead of being *preparatory* to the normal sexual aim, it supplants it' (*Essays* 70). Freudian edict dictates, therefore, that contemplation of the beautiful object is an activity with simultaneous potential for libidinal sublimation and for perversion, depending no doubt on the psychological propensity of the viewer/voyeur. On the subject of perversion, it remains to be considered whether there could be a hint of voyeurism, of delight in the forbidden, in the visual pleasure Boyd takes in the naked male form. His concentrated (possibly ardent?) gaze, perverse or otherwise, is not voyeuristic by Freudian standards, however: to Freud voyeurs are those intent on witnessing *unpleasant* things.

The second example of Boyd's allusion to Freud given above (in his novel *The Picnic*) also requires further examination of what follows (the issue of 'mental disease' I will take up later). Having been submitted to intensive questioning by Sylvia Rounsefell and subsequently diagnosed along Freudian lines, Wilfred Westlake experiences a 'deflowering' of the spirit:

...it was as if he had undergone an operation, as if his spiritual inside had been taken out, pawed over, and put back again, which was exactly what had happened...It was the...exposure, the judicial assessing of his secret loves and hopes, his moral struggles and yieldings, which had provoked this incredible weariness. No mere physical seduction could have left him so drained. (*Picnic* 138)

The sincerity of Wilfred's reaction is indisputable. And although it would be a mistake to overlook the possibility that the author is, at the same time as he ridicules Freud, not incapable of introducing a note of sly mockery into his dramatisation of the assault to a delicate young man's sensibilities, Wilfred's self-exposure can be read as directly analogous to the kind of affront Freud represents for Boyd. Indirectly, too, it is a gauge of Freud's impact, an indication of the disturbance and/or anxiety he is capable of provoking. Reticent and circumspect in his private life, Boyd in his personal writings allows himself only the passing scathing remark regarding Freud; fiction, on the other hand, appears to offer scope for a less repressed, more revelatory account.

Freud's greatest crime, from Boyd's standpoint, would assuredly have been his accent on sexuality as the driving, motivating factor behind human behaviour. Sexual libido as theorised by Freud is a dynamic force which is self-seeking, self-gratifying, aggressively masculine, destructive

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<sup>12</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality (Vol 7)*, London: Penguin Books, 1991, p69. Further citations from *Three Essays* will be given by page number in the text.

and even sadistic: 'the individual's interests are for Freud intrinsically opposed to the interests of any and all other individuals'.<sup>13</sup> Even the unconscious (the 'id'), to which Freud assigned paramount importance, is in his view determined by physiological drives and genetic input from the past. What is more, Freud's synopsis depleted the self 'by making the ego the mere battleground for the superego and the id'; the eclipse of the self amounted to 'psychology without a soul' (Ansbacher 62). The exaltation of sex at the expense of the soul would have been anathema to Boyd; such a proposition was the antithesis of his most dearly held beliefs and an affront to his notion of responsible Christian and/or classical morality. However much he may have oscillated — or at least showed signs of inconsistency — in many of his views, he remained unwavering throughout his life in his anti-positivism, his distrust of the purely scientific. He would have found quite unacceptable an approach to psychology which laid stress on biological, external, objective causation — an approach which even Freud's one-time colleague Alfred Adler found reductive, mechanistic and deterministic. Boyd believed in the indivisibility of body and soul; their unitedness related to his vision of a created world elevated to a state of unassailable harmony.<sup>14</sup> The novelist's 'proper subject', he tells us in his *Meanjin* article 'Dubious Cartography',<sup>15</sup> is 'the interplay of human souls and bodies'; and the Catholic Church he found alluring precisely because its emphasis on the eternal mysteries, on ritual and symbolism appealed to his romantic spirit.<sup>16</sup> Most importantly, he held a strong conviction that the realm of the spirit was the region in which art flourished. In the circumstances it is easy to conclude that Boyd's verdict on Freud must have closely approximated the opinion expressed by William James: that 'he was pessimistic, irreligious, fatalistic, and hardheaded' (Ansbacher 7).<sup>17</sup>

It is possible then to construct a sound and rational hypothesis to explain Boyd's somewhat irrational outbursts against Freud. That said, and striving for as much objectivity as possible, it also needs to be hazarded that Freud's views on sexuality, on homosexuality and on the related topic of the Oedipus complex — even those on repression — may have been confronting for Boyd, and might explain a certain defensiveness already alluded to above. I propose that behind his rebuff to Freud lies a genuine plea against being misunderstood, misinterpreted in his own and his characters' homosocial relations, attachments which may at times insinuate sexual tonings but which manifestly fall short of overt sexual outcomes (and what is true for his fiction is likely to be substantially true — theoretically at least — for his private life). A tentative hypothesis at this point is that in the final analysis Boyd may have been, or may have progressively developed as either too

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<sup>13</sup>Heinz L. Ansbacher & Rowena R. Ansbacher (eds), *The Individual Psychology of Alfred Adler*, New York: Harper & Row, 1964, p3. Further citations from this work will be given by page number in the text.

<sup>14</sup>Boyd's attitude in this respect is probably best summed up in the Tchekhov epigraph to *A Single Flame*: '...in addition to physical strength you have a divine spirit; a sacred fire, by which you are distinguished from an ass or a reptile and brought nigh to God. This sacred fire has been kept alight for thousands of years by the best of mankind..'

<sup>15</sup>'Dubious Cartography', *Meanjin Quarterly*, Vol. 23, No. 1, 1964, p7.

<sup>16</sup>Freud opined, on the other hand, that 'A priest will never admit that men and animals have the same nature, since he cannot do without the immortality of the soul, which he requires as the basis for moral precepts' ('The Sexual Enlightenment of Children', in *Three Essays*, p181).

<sup>17</sup>James made a memorable distinction between the tough-minded and the tender-minded temperaments, according to the Ansbachers (*The Individual Psychology of Alfred Adler*). Their extrapolation from this is that the 'objective psychologist is apt to be tough-minded, the subjective psychologist tender-minded', p5.

fastidious (and therefore inhibited) or too asexual (from which an inference of impotence can be drawn) to be a fully practising sexual being.

This last is not a supposition entirely without foundation. In *A Single Flame*, Boyd makes illuminating comments about his sexual nature. They are given in the amusing context of an encounter he has as a schoolboy with the parish priest at his first confession, and the voice is that of the reminiscing adult:

[The priest] sat in a surplice at the altar rails, while I knelt before him and recited a list of vague and tepid misdemeanours, none of them sexual. This apparently strained his credulity, as when I had finished he said: "I suppose I must take your confession as true".

I was amazed and accepted his absolution in a simmer of resentment that he had questioned my sincerity. Actually I had not confessed that five years earlier I had been in bed with a clutter of other boys; nor that I had hit Winsland on the head with a jerry; nor that Winsland had kissed me under the elm trees. The first two incidents I had at the time forgotten, while the last had been so delightful that I could not imagine it wrong. However, I came out of the church feeling technically free from sin which was rather exhilarating. (*Flame* 41-42)

At this stage the author turns the incident into an occasion for making a confession to his readers. As a personal statement related to his own perceived sexuality, it is probably the least guarded and most explicit of anything to be found in Boyd:<sup>18</sup>

If I had really been confessing what was wrong with me, I might have said something like this: 'I am suffering from emotional frustration which leads me to escape the realities of life in the contemplation of an imaginary world.

'My nature is not very sensual but it is extremely sensuous, and until this sensuousness is allowed a reasonable degree of satisfaction I cannot pay full attention to my work, as I waste too much time in day-dreams.

*'I am not sufficiently animal, and so am unable to take as robust an attitude towards my fellows as is necessary. My longing for union with Christ is almost pathological...'*  
(*Flame* 42, my italics)

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<sup>18</sup>It is interesting to note here that in his expatiation on 'the incitement to discourse' regarding sexuality, Foucault asks his readers to consider the evolution of the Catholic pastoral and the sacrament of penance after the Council of Trent. While the nakedness of the questions formulated by the confession manuals of the Middle Ages was gradually veiled and the language refined, 'the scope of the confession — the confession of the flesh — continually increased...the Counter Reformation...attributed more and more importance in penance...to all the insinuations of the flesh: thoughts, desires, voluptuous imaginings, delectations, combined movements of the body and the soul...According to the new pastoral, sex must not be named imprudently, but its aspects, its correlations, and its effects must be pursued down to their slenderest ramifications: a shadow in a daydream, an image too slowly dispelled, a badly exorcised complicity between the body's mechanics and the mind's complacency: everything had to be told...the most important moment of transgression [was shifted] from the act itself to the stirrings — so difficult to perceive and formulate — of desire'. *The History of Sexuality Vol. I*, pp19-20.

Several interesting points emerge from this ‘confession’: the sense of emotional frustration, the intriguing and seemingly pedantic quibble over the distinction between ‘sensual’ and ‘sensuous’,<sup>19</sup> the suggestion of sexual inadequacy or indifference, and the subtext of the sublimation of his animal instincts to an obsessive passion for Christ. The overt, overall intention appears unambiguous; that is, to stress the primacy of his emotional, imaginative and spiritual life over the physical. And yet — and here Boyd’s predilection for ambivalence is very much to the fore — it is only the physical in the sense of the ‘robust’ and the ‘sensual’ (and here, presumably, he is using the dictionary meaning of ‘carnal’, ‘lewd’, ‘worldly’) that gets a lower order of billing. His susceptibility to the world of the senses, on the other hand, is very much alive and demanding a ‘degree of satisfaction’. Bearing in mind the kiss from Winsland, it is reasonable to assume that he means *all* of the senses. Moreover, Boyd’s closing sentence is quite startling. For all that he has just denied possessing a healthy libido, the effect of the juxtaposition of ideas is to suggest a blend of the erotic and the spiritual, a desire for Christ as a lover. And considering the abrupt swerve of longing from boy to Christ, the question arises as to which passion is subordinated to the other: in other words, whether Christ is important or just an occasion for the obsessive passion. If Christ *is* important in this context, then it needs to be postulated whether there is an element of rhapsodic, active appreciation to the worshipper/lover’s ardour, as opposed to the more passive exultation of the ecstatic.

Certain references Boyd makes to Freud tend to reinforce the impression that, for all his seemingly radical liberalism, his professed abhorrence of prudes and puritanism, his pleasure in ‘the full-blooded passion of the natural world’ (*Day* 282), he balks at the notion of sodomy. Clues to this may be found in his second autobiographical memoir, *Day of My Delight*, where Boyd, lamenting that post-war he has ‘lost the one thing essential to my nature, the company of my own kind, young men engaged in the same activity, with the same interests and the same desires’ (*Day* 108), recalls his friendship with the Irish pilot O’Connel. As in the Dick Hoskins episode in *A Single Flame*, their ‘essential selves [are] in harmony’; they also share an appreciation of Rupert Brooke, ‘the poet of friendship and the English countryside....before the sneer came in with Lytton Strachey and the sewer with Freud’ (*Day* 104). Elsewhere in the same volume he recalls a brief friendship with a subaltern named Hazelrigg. He describes an evening, when walking across a harvest field, how

...our awareness of a mutual fate gave us a sense of romantic identity. We did not speak much, but we said that we would volunteer together for the next raid. This was a kind of vow of love till death. It may have a bogus Freudian explanation, but it was the same emotion that inspired the Greek heroes. At that moment life seemed to me noble and dangerous and beautiful. If I had known the Freudian explanation of my emotion which, thank God, I did not, I do not think its quality would have been less. We do not think a rose less beautiful because we know that the garden is manured. (*Day* 86)

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<sup>19</sup>The distinction made between ‘not very sensual’ — a description which allows for a degree of sensuality in the sense of ‘given to the pleasures of sense’ as distinct from participation of the mind (and Boyd’s endorsement of, if not active participation in God-given physical ‘pleasure’ is legion) — and ‘extremely sensuous’, presumably meaning alive to the senses in a perceptive, affective and intelligent way is in fact important for Boyd — even if his declaration as reproduced leaves room for ambiguity: ultimately, it is for him the crucial distinction between a physical and an artistic nature.

There are two versions of Boyd registered here: the young soldier/poet in full romantic flight, caught up in fantasies of Greek heroism and the idealised 'love which can exist between men who are comrades in battle';<sup>20</sup> and the older, more sophisticated and aware author anxious lest his youthful idyll be sullied or misrepresented by the application of a Freudian slant.<sup>21</sup> The anxiety shows itself in the use of the term 'manured'; this, coupled with the previous reference to 'the sewer', ensures but a short conceptual leap to the idea of the anus. There is more at stake here than a simple wish to desexualize his imagery; Boyd seems consciously to need to register a recoil from 'the love which dare not speak its name'. Freud is implicated because, naturally enough, he writes of anal eroticism in his treatise on homosexuals. According to Freud, constitutional peculiarities, whose 'most essential characteristics seem to be a coming into operation of *narcissistic object-choice* and a *retention* of the erotic significance of the *anal zone* [a carry-over from the pre-genital period of childhood]' are regularly to be found in inverted types (*Essays* 57).

Yet it is in this context that Freud makes his distinction between the sexual object and the sexual aim. Importantly, he says, 'no one single [sexual] aim can be laid down as applying in cases of inversion. Among men, he says, 'intercourse *per anum* by no means coincides with inversion...it is even true that restrictions of the sexual aim — *to the point of its being limited to simple outpourings of emotion* (my italics) — are commoner among them than among heterosexual lovers' (*Essays* 58-9). One suspects that Boyd may not have perused his Freud as thoroughly as he might have. If he had read Freud's monograph on Leonardo Da Vinci, for instance, he would have discovered, not only a mind receptive to the potential for nuance in the male-male relationship, but the description of a psycho-sexual personality closely paralleling his own. For here, in a remarkable piece of conjectural analysis, Freud surmises that the 'atrophy of his sexual life' and the sublimation of his libido restricted Leonardo to 'what is called 'ideal [sublimated] homosexuality'; the historical probability was, Freud concludes, that Leonardo behaved in his life 'as one who was emotionally homosexual' only.<sup>22</sup>

Boyd's reviling of Freud over notions of sodomy is readily explicable, as already canvassed, in terms of his personal relationships. But it should also be considered that, by his seeming over-reaction, he is expressing some deep-lying, educated repugnance which tallies with a Freudian reference to disgust, shame and morality as learned mental barriers capable of impeding the

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<sup>20</sup>Boyd takes his comment from Richard Aldington's *Death of a Hero*, and at the same time reveals his own sentiments: 'He [Aldington] writes rather as if he had discovered [the love], and as if some apology were needed for what was, after all, the motive power of Greek civilisation. It has nothing to do with effeminacy. It has to do with love for the highest when seen. It is difficult to speak of because it is linked up with those aspirations which are so idealistic that they can easily be made to appear ridiculous. It does not need a war for its manifestation, but it does need a concerted endeavour towards some selfless aim'. (*Day of My Delight* p86)

<sup>21</sup>The assumption here is that the autobiographical Boyd is recording genuine reactions, that he is not giving us one of 'the many fictional travesties of myself which I have scattered derisively through my novels, mocking not myself, but those who thought I was like that'. From 'Dubious Cartography', pp5-6.

<sup>22</sup>Both quotes are from 'Leonardo Da Vinci', Sigmund Freud, *Art and Literature Vol. 14*, London: Penguin Books, 1990, pp170 & 189. Further citations from *Art and Literature* will be given by page number in the text.

development of normal sexual instincts.<sup>23</sup> Freud's view was that 'if [these mental forces] develop in the individual before the sexual instinct has reached its full strength, it is no doubt that they will determine the course of its development' (*Essays* 76). The argument is not without its persuasiveness, and one which, if true for Boyd, could go a long way towards elucidating Boyd's self-confessed and often demonstrable difficulty in the expression of overt sexuality, that quality which led to the verdict of the more analytically minded of his West Wittering friends, according to Niall, that 'being too fastidious for casual sex, and with too strict a sense of honour to exploit the innocent, he probably repressed and aestheticized (anaesthetized as well perhaps?) his sexuality'.<sup>24</sup>

Yet the record of the nature of Boyd's formative psycho-sexual influences is inconclusive by way of suggesting undesirable developmental interference: on the one hand we learn that Emma Minnie Boyd was not prudish, that 'she did not burden her children with sexual prohibitions' (*A Life* 45); on the other hand, it is reasonable to assume that the young Boyd unconsciously absorbed puritan traits from his mother, to whom he appears to have been greatly attached. By all accounts Minnie was intensely religious; according to Brenda Niall, her Anglicanism was such that it was 'uncompromising[ly] fundamentalist' in its literal interpretation of the Bible and commitment to absolute beliefs such as good and evil, heaven and hell (*A Life* 7).<sup>25</sup> Boyd says in *Day of My Delight* that he had tended to exaggerate his mother's puritanism (p19), that it became more evident later in life; nevertheless, her enthusiasm 'for any pleasure that was not disapproved by her Low Church religion' (*Flame* 21) would indicate an exclusion of those pleasures unconstrained by notions of the aesthetic and the artistic. And while there is little doubt of her influence on Boyd's unconscious, there were other, countervailing, forces at work on his young perceptions: the evidence he provides, for instance, of growing up in a liberal household which fostered a spirit of 'enlightened' and 'benevolent' anarchy (*Flame* 15 & 23). The latter may help to explain why Boyd's conscious mind — with only the occasional regression — was later to denounce puritanism in its harshest form; though in this respect the probability of a natural rebelliousness, acting in concert with the masculine imperative to oppose and separate from the feminine — in psychoanalytic theory, the mother figure — should not be overlooked. The blend of circumstance in Boyd's background — the quirky admixture of simultaneous repression and open-mindedness — makes for a certain confusion: a situation quite possibly ideal for the germination of the seeds of ambivalence and conflict which were to crop up from time to time in Boyd's writings. As for his lack of sexual *savoir*

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<sup>23</sup>Through a long series of generations the genitals too have been objects of shame, and even of disgust, according to Freud. Yet, he says, 'in the primaevial days of the human race it was a different story...originally the genitals were the pride and hope of living beings; they were worshipped as gods and transmitted the divine nature of their functions to all newly learned human activities' ('Leonardo Da Vinci', *Art and Literature* p188). Later I will investigate the paganism inherent in Boyd's philosophy and its relation to the 'perfect animal splendour' of the human body (*Much Else in Italy*, London: Macmillan, 1958, p36. Further citations from this work will be given by page number in the text).

<sup>24</sup>Niall, *Martin Boyd: A Life*, p107.

<sup>25</sup>Perhaps the Biblical injunction against sodomy is relevant here. At the same time we do well to remember that Boyd rejected literal interpretations of the Bible.

*faire*, the fact remains that Boyd goes to great lengths to stress his youthful naivete and what appears to be its correlative, a constitutional lack of robust animality.<sup>26</sup>

Looked at from another angle entirely, Boyd's emotional distaste for the vexed issue of sodomy belies his rational stance. Intellectually, his viewpoint on the subject is inclined to the worldly and tolerant, with an element of jokiness. For example, told that 'the bulk of the [British] aristocracy and the higher officials [including the prime minister]...were given to unnatural vice', Boyd responds by suggesting 'it was better to be guided to peace and prosperity by a rake, than to be led to chaos by a pure-minded fool' (*Flame* 149). Again, he tells us of Brother Ambrose, founder of a Franciscan community in Dorset, who is 'obliged to leave owing to a sudden desublimation of his sexual instincts' (*Flame* 173). Boyd attributes this to 'a pathetic indulgence, which if he had not looked at it with a distorted vision, would probably have done him a lot of good' (*Flame* 176). In *Day of My Delight*, in another version of the same incident, Brother Ambrose is reported as having committed 'what Brother Claude called his "sin", which was no more important than if he had sneezed' (and Boyd has been at pains to tell us that 'my estimate of "sin" was very different from the average clergyman's' (*Flame* 181)). The resort to jokes, to a lightening-up in play language, could be interpreted as a form of defensiveness.<sup>27</sup> But the homily Lady Elizabeth Woodforde's departing husband delivers in *The Picnic* (in a voice that is strongly evocative of Martin Boyd's) is without facetiousness, and reads like a statement of general principle:

You seem to suffer from the prevalent disease of middle-class gentlewomen. You are too fastidious to seek sensual gratifications, and too respectable to be genuinely religious, so you are cut off from life at both its sources, the flesh and the spirit.  
(*Picnic* 175)

Passages like these make it abundantly clear that Boyd's rational self chooses neither to moralise about, nor to place restrictions and limitations upon, the full range of human sexual activity — at least in the abstract or when applied to other people. Objections — and ambivalences — creep in only in refutation of (imagined) insinuations of sexual licence attaching to his ideally-conceived relationships, fictional or otherwise.

Further reflections of Freud's concerning psycho-neuroses stemming from the over-repression of sexual instinctual forces may be useful here ('hysteric' was a term he applied to anyone with neurotic symptoms):

The character of hysterics shows a degree of *sexual repression* in excess of the normal quantity, an intensification of resistance against the sexual instinct (which we have

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<sup>26</sup>Possibly Coppélia Kahn's observation that 'the boy's sense of self begins in union with the feminine, his sense of masculinity arises against it' applies here (cited by Sedgwick, *Between Men* p25). Boyd wanted to both retain and reject his feminine component: the former compulsion is most evident in his condemnation of overly aggressive masculine traits.

<sup>27</sup>Boyd's occasional playfulness with words reflects a play instinct he retained into maturity: the Adeney and Fausset children called him 'Floppy' for his habit of collapsing on the floor in mock exhaustion, for example (*Martin Boyd: A Life*, p106). The 'long duration' of Leonardo's play instinct, says Freud, 'can teach us how slowly anyone tears himself from his childhood if in his childhood days he has enjoyed the highest erotic bliss, which is never again attained'. *Art & Literature*, p222.

already met with in the form of shame, disgust and morality), and what seems like an instinctive aversion on their part to any intellectual consideration of sexual problems. As a result of this, in especially marked cases, the patients remain in complete ignorance of sexual matters right into the period of sexual maturity. (*Essays* 78-79)

According to Boyd's account, his sexual development to puberty was entirely normal. It was only *after* this that repression in the form of sublimation takes place, a condition which in all probability was never fully reversed, and which was to have profound ramifications for his young manhood.

As Boyd tells it, he discovered religion and a transformation took place, again possibly quite normal in an impressionable and imaginative adolescent. The 'devil' reference is expressive both of youthful perturbation exacerbated by an internalised puritanism and of the insight and humour afforded by distance and the recognition of folly:

When I was thirteen I was tormented by sexual desires and for six months or so my mind seethed with erotic images. Then I was confirmed at school and my eroticism was sublimated. The devil, if this instinct is the devil, left me for a number of years and I went through my school-days vaguely aware that there was such a thing as sex, but quite untroubled by its urgency. (*Flame* 24, duplicated in *Day* 22)

During this period of sublimation there began the first of those emotional attachments to his fellows — ardent but chaste — which were to characterize Boyd's mature life (a perhaps relevant and interesting Freudian observation is that the conditions for homosexuality are laid down in puberty). Later at theological college he was again troubled by sexual stirrings after reading 'one of those filthy little ecclesiastical books on purity':

All my sublimation, my search for self-realization in beauty and religion and romantic friendship came sinking down like a deflated balloon, and in its place rose the urgent pagan body...The devil having left me for six years returned with vigour to the attack. (*Flame* 52)

Immediately following, however, Boyd's imagery loses its urgency and retreats into the kind of soft-focus, passive, idealised mode dictated by classical or romantic convention:

My reveries were no longer of Fra Angelico heavens, but of woodland streams and seductive nymphs. My desires were still more absorbed into the imagination than intent on action. I still wanted them twopence-coloured with poetry...My animal desires were, heaven knows, genuine enough, but I had to clothe them with classical imagery, which seemed to spring fully developed into my mind, though I had of course been absorbing it for years from Virgil and Catullus. If I gave myself up to erotic imagination, behind myself and the impersonal female was always some grassy bank of asphodel, or a broken temple gleaming above a wine-dark sea'. (*Flame* 52-53)

The 'erotic', mixed as it is with classical allusion, appears to have become more cerebral and literary than sensual, indicating that the mechanism of sublimation may have done its work too well. Or is the sensation of a loss of impetus and resolve due perhaps to another cause, a slight uneasiness with the heterosexual role? The diffidence Boyd exhibits in that role seems more studied than accidental; the female of his bucolic fantasies is, after all, invariably 'impersonal'. And what are we

to infer from the extraordinary last sentence, following on ‘wine-dark sea’, with which Boyd undercuts his reverie: ‘I did not look much at the girls I passed in the street’?<sup>28</sup> Imaginary or real, the female is rendered necessarily notional and anonymous. The dominant impression here is one of ambivalence: of a conflict between conscious and unconscious as conveyed by overt and covert messages.

By the time Boyd at twenty-two embarks for England in 1915 in order to take up an army commission, the picture he gives us is of someone romantic but gauche, possessing an ignorance and naivete out of keeping with his years. In *A Single Flame* he relates how ‘just before the ship sailed occurred *one of the most shameful incidents of my life*’ (my italics) when he finds himself ‘too inhibited’ to kiss goodbye a girl ‘with whom I was in love, though it was undeclared’ (*Flame* 73).<sup>29</sup> When later on board a young man named Lord talks ‘not only of women but of boys with equally interested appraisal’ and tells him of ‘the prevalence of homo-sexuality among public-school boys, sailors, and Egyptians’, the young Boyd admits to being both ‘startled’ and ‘surprised’. He reacts by saying ‘I thought this rather more funny than shocking and said: “Then really it’s quite virtuous just to go with a woman”’ (*Flame* 75). Both incidents, if we can trust the teller of the tale, seem designed to stress the inexperience, inhibition and innocence of Boyd’s heterosexual persona, suggesting that a certain amount of repression of the sexual instinct must have taken place. At the same time, the extent to which they also very subtly (and perhaps unconsciously) subvert the notion of heterosexuality is curious: first, by a form of self-reproach for failing to measure up to expectations of normal heterosexual behaviour; and second, by the use of the deflationary ‘just’ — thus robbing the female role of primary significance — to describe a sexual tryst with a woman. Taken together with the content of the previous paragraph, a pattern starts to emerge: the simultaneous privileging and undermining of the heterosexual norm.

Let us suppose that a further reason for Boyd’s antipathy to Freud lies in a fear, or at least an anxiety, concerning the unconscious and its theorised harbouring of repression. Where sublimation represented a positive, a conversion of sexual drive and energy into creative and artistic pursuits, repression meant the burying of conscious representations, of ideas and emotions, only to have them resurface in fantasy and anxiety. Boyd indulges very little in introspection; he may hint in passing at psychological tribulation or melancholy — the picture he gives us of the under-nine-year-old ‘sitting on the edge of the bath and wishing that I might die, as the mental suffering which life entailed seemed more than I could face’ (*Flame* 8) is abruptly incongruous, for instance, in the context of what is presented as a sunny and congenial childhood; he may even give us flashes of his normally masked psychic self in the sufferings of his fictional characters Dominic Langton or Stephen Brayford. But his doubts and uncertainties are never made autobiographically explicit; nor are we privy to his dreams. We do know that he harboured murderous impulses towards two or

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<sup>28</sup>Significantly, perhaps, this sentence is omitted from the revised autobiography.

<sup>29</sup>This is the only time Boyd, in his personal memoirs, alludes to kissing a girl. Adler might classify this incident as the kind of ‘restricted approach’ applicable to the perversions. A normal sexual approach is either not present at all in such cases, he says, or else appears to be hindered. Avoidance of sexual difficulty brings a certain satisfaction (though in Boyd’s case he seems more shamed than relieved), and is directed towards overcoming a sense of inferiority. Alfred Adler & F. G. Crookshank, *Individual Psychology and Sexual Difficulties (II)*, London: The C. W. Daniel Company, September, 1934, p29.

three of his fellow officers during World War I for what he saw as slights and insults. We are also told of a momentary lapse into gratuitous savagery when he urges his men on to feats of brutality and violence in the interests of 'keeping the blood-lust simmering' (*Flame* 123). Briefly disposed of as they are, these episodes are moderately shocking because they sit awkwardly with the ostensibly peaceable man who, self-professedly, was 'all for sweetness and light' (*Flame* 205). They allow us a rare glimpse of Boyd's darker side, an aspect of himself he guards carefully. That he does not care to betray his fortified inner self was stated forcefully to Fitzpatrick when she said of him: 'he has had little contact with the fundamental struggles, the ritual passionate activities of mankind'. He replied: '...I have had my share of vicissitudes, passionate struggles, burdens and responsibilities, of which my critics can know nothing'.<sup>30</sup>

Revelations of an uncharacteristic capacity for acts of revenge, cruelty and violence suggest that Boyd shared an awareness with Freud of the unbidden and arbitrary intrusion into consciousness of repressed emotions, a recognition that no amount of civilization can tame man's primitive unconscious, his natural state as a 'brutish and murderous being'.<sup>31</sup> Beyond hinting at an understanding of these forces, however, Boyd shows a reluctance, a wariness towards further exploration, preferring to fall back into the rather glib, and smart, dismissal mode he habitually adopts for Freud. When he declares, for instance, that the minds of the Bloomsbury artists 'were freer than those of any one I had met hitherto', and goes on to say

though I think that some of the Freudian dogmas they accepted were as arbitrary and superstitious as any Catholic's. It is no more fantastic to assert that the Virgin Mary was caught up into heaven, than that in a dream a staircase is a sexual symbol.... (*Flame* 206)

his attitude calls to mind the kinds of 'distorted pseudo-Freudian concepts...widely vulgarized through...popular literature' (Ellenberger 547). The comment also raises a number of interesting questions, hinting at perhaps more careless spleen and defensiveness than logic; even interpreted as light-hearted jocular sarcasm, it still presents as mildly defensive. Boyd appears to have fallen back on his mother's prejudice against Catholicism, a prejudice he did not share, although he always maintained a belief in the symbolic rather than the literal truth of Catholic doctrine. By this reasoning Boyd would normally entertain, not a supernatural interpretation of Mary's Assumption, but rather its symbolic transfiguring of the temporal to the eternal. And if Boyd is not against symbolism *per se*, his obvious irritation at the notion of a dream staircase as phallic signifier betrays either his general irritation with Freud or a rarely-revealed streak of sexual anxiety. We should

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<sup>30</sup>Kathleen Fitzpatrick's original comment, using Boyd's own words to compare him to his character Raoul in *The Montforts*, was made in her critical study *Martin Boyd*, p28. Boyd's reply is recorded in 'Dubious Cartography', p6.

<sup>31</sup>Freud took from Darwin the picture of primitive men as brutish, an idea shared by criminologist Cesare Lombroso who believed that the 'born criminal' was a resurgence of prehistoric man. From Ellenberger, *The Discovery of the Unconscious*, p541.

probably accept the remark as personalized, since Freud had many predecessors in this field,<sup>32</sup> and Boyd himself was well aware of writings which linked even religious symbolism to sexual origins.<sup>33</sup> When one reads of Dominic's dream — one of the very few dreams to be discovered in Boyd's writing — on the train back to the front-line in *When Blackbirds Sing* (1961):

He fell asleep again and had confused and odd dreams. He knew that there was violence in his nature, and that it was said to be inherited from a Spaniard who had strangled altar boys in the crypts of his castle, the ancestor who was a joke to his brothers. To Dominic he was no joke, but a horror latent in his blood. In his dream he was still hearing the staff captain talking...He was saying: '*We must have the orgasm, the orgasm of killing. Never mind women. Pierce another man with a sword. Don't release the seed of life, but the blood of death*' (my italics).

Dominic woke up with a jolt, sweating and nauseated. He believed that he had met the evil in himself face to face, and he was afraid to go to sleep again....<sup>34</sup>

it seems probable that Boyd was expressing mock disbelief over Freudian dream theory.<sup>35</sup> If not, he had come around to appropriating it with a vengeance. For here he has given us, in what must be the most macabre image of his *oeuvre*,<sup>36</sup> a stark choreography of blood-lust and brutality in simulation of homosexual physical congress (with the sword a phallic instrument of wounding and destruction), a sick metaphor to brand that activity as ultimately sterile, murderously aggressive, and orgiastic not by a 'little death' but by annihilation.<sup>37</sup>

To Freud, dreams were 'the vicarious fulfillment of a repressed, unacceptable sexual wish' (Ellenberger 492) which manifested themselves in censored or disguised form; they signified a regression from 'the conscious to the unconscious...from the level of language to that of pictorial

<sup>32</sup>Ellenberger tells us that according to Laignel-Lavastine and Vinchon, a dream book of the Renaissance, that of Pierus, describes dreams of serpents, trees, flowers, gardens, teeth, columns, and grottoes, having meanings similar to those of Freudian symbols. The first objective study of dream symbolism was by Scherner, says Ellenberger, 'and we recall that the symbols found by him as being sexual were identical to those described thirty-nine years later in Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams*'. In *The Discovery of the Unconscious*, p506.

<sup>33</sup>In a novel published five years before *A Single Flame*, John Vazetti's father is to be found 'reinforcing his scepticism' by 'reading a book which proved that all religious symbolism had sexual origins'. *Scandal of Spring*, p88.

<sup>34</sup>*When Blackbirds Sing*, Melbourne: Lansdowne Press, 1972, pp106-7. Further citations from this work will be given by page number in the text.

<sup>35</sup>Boyd's narratorial view was that 'In dreams we are the passive mirrors of involuntary imagination' (*Lucinda Brayford* p524), a notion, it seems to me, not necessarily exclusive of symbolism.

<sup>36</sup>Stephen Brayford's dream in the Glasshouse prison is only marginally less brutal: past 'innocent and happy visions' become 'scenes in hell', peopled by Glasshouse inmates and Dunkirk corpses; and significantly for Freudian theory, the sergeant who daily strips and beats him out of 'provoked but unacknowledged lust', becomes merged in the dream with the angelic Brian, the end chorister (*Lucinda Brayford* pp524-26).

<sup>37</sup>It is not unreasonable to assume here a veiled allusion to Oscar Wilde's 'Ballad of Reading Gaol', 1:7: 'Yet each man kills the thing he loves...The coward does it with a kiss,/ The brave man with a sword!' The dream becomes a prefiguring of Dominic's subsequent sexually charged encounter with, and slaying of, a young German soldier: 'In an instant of mutual human recognition, with eye open to eye, he shot the boy. He stood for a moment, bewildered, and another German soldier stepped over his dead companion and plunged a bayonet into Dominic's body. His part in the orgasm had become passive' (*When Blackbirds Sing* p119), a passage which sums up, metaphorically, Dominic's ability to migrate between sexualities.

and symbolic representations'. What would Freud have made of this dream, one wonders? Its complexities, one suspects, would escape any but the most discerning psychoanalysis. On the other hand, Freud has supplied enough of an interpretive framework for dream theory to facilitate comment — however speculative and incomplete — which may assist with insights into the hidden unconscious content of Boyd's imagination — always assuming that there may be an element of the accidental in the dream's disclosures essential to the discernment of unconscious forces and repressed sexuality. Objections will be raised immediately that this is Dominic's dream, not Boyd's, and while the truth of that observation must be granted, I would counter by saying that it is also the product of the mind which created it.<sup>38</sup> Confirmation of a preoccupation held in common with his fictional character may also be found in the dream's unmistakable connection to Boyd's fascination with the military valour and comrades-at-arms fraternity of his idealised Greek heroes. Further, while in the Langton series of novels which recreate the Boyd-à Beckett family history, Dominic is the figure popularly supposed to represent Martin's older brother Merric, my own strong intuition is that the character of Dominic is a partially disguised portrait of Martin's darker self, a strategy devised as an outlet or channel for his own passionate and inadmissible feelings and idiosyncrasies.<sup>39</sup>

Dominic's dream is disturbing enough to trip the fail-safe mechanism of sleep guardianship and register it as a nightmare. To the reader it presents as a conundrum, intriguing because superficially, at least, it contains a kernel of ambivalence, the floating of two simultaneous and slightly divergent notions. At its most transparent the image of masculine supremacism hell-bent on self-destruction evokes the Adlerian 'masculine protest', an idea Adler, a one-time colleague of Freud's, held as central to neurosis. Believing it to be an outward manifestation of an anxiety caused by physical weakness or inferiority, Adler theorized this protest as 'an exaggerated emphasis on the masculine side of things', thus leading to an 'over-compensation in the direction of aggression and restless striving for triumphs' (*Masculinities* 16). Dominic's fearful reaction to the dream where this idea has been allowed to run amok is analogous, if on a somewhat exaggerated scale, to Boyd's own aversion to the cult of hyper-masculinity. Yet viewed from a slightly different angle the dream might be seen as endorsing its voice's irrational urging for capitulation to violence and anarchy, the imperative towards overbalancing the Freudian compromise between Eros and Thanatos in favour of dissolution and death. Especially as, with the emphasis on a misogynist masculine world without women — a world where the libido, designated by Freud as fundamentally masculine, is unchallenged in its aggressive primacy — there is paraded here more than a hint of exhilaration and defiance; nor in this scenario, it needs to be mentioned, has the sadistic phallus been discharged entirely of its eroticism. Within the Freudian schema the dream at this level would be seen to

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<sup>38</sup>Albert Mordell argues that the author is 'always unconsciously in his work'. *The Erotic Motive in Literature*, New York: Collier Books, 1962, pp47-64.

<sup>39</sup>Boyd's biographer Brenda Niall is also of this opinion: 'In later years when ostensibly at least [Boyd] writes about his older brother, there is a sense of identification as well as of otherness. Dominic and Guy...at first appear to be versions of Merric and Martin, and to represent two very different personalities. The older brother is active, intense, passionate; the younger is amiable and ineffectual. But the portrait of Dominic is only superficially Merric's; and one may conjecture that the qualities which define Dominic were suppressed from early childhood in Martin as a response to Minnie Boyd's attitude towards her first two sons'. *Martin Boyd: A Life*, p7.

function as a release mechanism for aggressive or erotic feelings (though it goes without saying that Freud would also have noted the repressed fear embodied in the imagery).

An indication of the dream's power, in spite of its brevity and a certain elusiveness, is its suggestibility, its apparent infinite malleability to interpretive variants. An example is the infiltration of an already alluded-to sadism, a theme with potential for exhaustive psychoanalytical probing into the hostile unconscious.<sup>40</sup> Also, in faithful adherence to the psychoanalytic notion that sadism is almost invariably yoked to masochism, the dream evokes a decided flicker of what Freud called 'primary masochism', a characteristic embodying the unconscious desire to be dominated and damaged. In the event of making so bold as to extrapolate from these particular observations to Boyd's personal life, it would be fair to say that Boyd was capable of a rage and anger he kept for the most part under careful control.<sup>41</sup> However, even in his more pacifist, and therefore feminized incarnations, there is no tangible evidence for supposing he was masochistic (unless, perhaps, we take into account his less-than-satisfactory, even pathetic, attachment to the young Luciano Trombini during his final years in Rome).<sup>42</sup> More apposite, feasibly, is a further partially obscured reference thrown up by Dominic's nightmare. By the device of discrediting homosexuality on three counts — the murdering disposition of the deviant Spanish antecedent who strangled altar-boys and whom Dominic is said to resemble, the glorification of the male-on-male death impulse, and Dominic's confrontation with 'the evil in himself' — Boyd in Dominic's dreamscape deftly encapsulates the potential for homophobic fear which can haunt the avowedly 'straight' male. For all the dream's brevity and elusiveness, this is Boyd at his most suggestive and insightful, his least inhibited. He manages to dispense with the literature of self-deception, the need for optimism and consolation:<sup>43</sup> he recognises with candour the dark forces, mankind at its most destructive and imperfect.

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<sup>40</sup>Mordell cites Dr. H. W. Frink as saying: "The repression of the sadistic impulse produces not its annihilation but merely its transfer from consciousness to unconsciousness. And there, withheld from the neutralizing influence of conscious reasoning, the impulse and the phantasies derived from it are not only preserved without deterioration but may even grow in vigor and intensity. [This], despite the fact that in many instances the individual's conscious life is apparently singularly irreproachable..." *The Erotic Motive in Literature*, pp106-7.

<sup>41</sup>Niall's belief, already alluded to, is that Martin suppressed his own strong feelings, his capacity for anger, in a bid to please his mother. Importantly, she is also of the opinion that *When Blackbirds Sing* 'must have been the most difficult novel Martin Boyd ever wrote. Not only did it revive the moral questions of war service through his memories of the trenches in 1916, it made him look at his submerged self...now it was acknowledged that the tormented, passionate Dominic was an essential aspect of the author, and Guy his amiable and frivolous disguise'. *Martin Boyd: A Life*, pp7 & 180.

<sup>42</sup>Boyd has a curious comment to make on this topic, based on his schooldays. Writing of the public schoolboy's anxiety to conform, he says: 'If we had believed that this involved making incantations to Buddha or whipping ourselves with scorpions we should have done these things. You can make a wretched, aspiring, vulnerable boy do anything if you tell him that it will bring him securely into identity with his species'. *A Single Flame*, p30.

<sup>43</sup>According to Mordell, the literature of self-deception is nearly always consolatory, and derives its value as a defence mechanism. Authors who are victims of misfortune tend to write works to buoy themselves up. 'All the literary works wherein...asceticism and death and celibacy are vaunted, are usually unconsciously insincere', says Mordell (*The Erotic Motive in Literature*, p65).

An area possibly offering scope for speculation of a more substantial and productive nature is Martin Boyd in the context of Freud's findings concerning the Oedipus complex. Given Boyd's particular belief system and therefore the plausibility of assuming his strong resistance to predominantly sexually-based interpretations of human behaviour and motivation, there is every reason to conjecture an unwillingness on Boyd's part to accept — or at least a high degree of sensitivity to — Freud's notion of the infant's erotic bond with the mother, and of the centrality of that bond in influencing adult sexuality. An outcome of Freud's systemization of the idea that the sexual instinct undergoes its first phases of development in infancy, the Oedipus complex — rather startlingly structured as it is around the boy's incestuous feelings towards his mother, his murderous rivalry with the father, and his subsequent fear of punishment by castration — represented for Freud 'the great importance of the images of the mother and father for the future love-life of the individual' (Ellenberger 505).<sup>44</sup> He saw it as a natural and normal developmental stage, within limits. Failure to negotiate successfully the intricacies of the Oedipal paradigm, however, meant falling a victim to neurosis. An attachment to the mother that was over-intensive and of an over-long duration, for instance, especially in the absence of a strong father-figure, not infrequently created a typically pre-existing condition for inversion, according to Freud. Freud's aforementioned monograph on Leonardo da Vinci, which cogently argues for these two factors as determinants for Leonardo's highly individualised style of sublimated homosexuality, provides an extraordinary corollary for Martin Boyd's personal life in terms of the similarity of infantile causes and asexual outcomes. Leonardo sublimated his sexuality and fostered a genius for scientific invention and painting; in Boyd's case, sublimation manifested itself in literary products in which male friendship is exalted.<sup>45</sup>

It is self-evident from Boyd's autobiographies that Minnie Boyd took pride of place in her son's memories and affections. Her influence on his habit of mind, his belief in justice, virtue and 'simple natural pleasures' is unquestionable; he even shared her wit and ability to 'annihilate what she thought absurd' (*Day* 20). Not unremarkably Boyd also imbibed, no doubt out of admiration and respect, something of her puritan outlook; and although his conscious (and rebellious) mature self was later to reject the rigidity of puritanism — her association of Roman Catholicism with 'superstition, sadism, craftiness and lies' (*Flame* 21), for instance (and indeed, he championed anti-puritanism with missionary zeal at a certain stage of his career), his proneness to the occasional prudish and moralising outburst as he grew older pinpoints one of the more curious of Boyd's inherent ambivalences: one which led a friend of the 'sixties to observe that 'he was a puritan critic of puritanism, with as strong a sense of the reality of evil as the fundamentalist Minnie Boyd' (*A Life* 197). There is ample reason to believe, as well, that Boyd adapted his personality to gain his mother's approval. Deeply conscious of the fact that he was a disappointment to her in being born a fourth son instead of the coveted daughter, and needing to make reparation over the death through a riding accident of the eldest and idolized Gilbert, the young Boyd cultivated an amiable exterior in an effort to compensate for the volatilities of Merric, the son who subsequently

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<sup>44</sup>Nietzsche also believed that 'every man bears in himself the image of his mother, and on the quality of that image will depend his future attitude to women'. Quoted by Ellenberger, *The Discovery of the Unconscious*, p505.

<sup>45</sup>Mordell observes that this is a not uncommon consequence of homosexual sublimation. *The Erotic Motive in Literature*, p104.

preoccupied his mother. How much he succeeded in securing for himself a place in his mother's affections is difficult to tell: one is struck by the sad fact that, as related in Niall's biography, Martin seems to have occupied a largely unremarked and unobtrusive position in the family's anecdotal records.

In his early autobiography Boyd devotes quite a lot of space to describing the personality and eccentricities of his maternal grandfather, W. A. C. à Beckett, a man given to 'kicking over the bourgeois traces...and dislike of the aggressively respectable' who, he said, 'was the dominating figure of my early youth' (*Flame* 15). By contrast, we learn little of his father, the gentleman painter Arthur Merric Boyd, until the revised autobiography, and then only that he was 'just' and 'generous', and therefore a benevolent rather than an authoritarian presence. Given the evidence of this scant treatment, and judging by Martin's comment that 'My relations with my father were polite and amiable, but we were never close friends' (*Day* 21), it is easy enough to make the assumption that Arthur Boyd qualifies as, if not the classic 'absent' father hypothesized by Freud as contributing to homosexuality, certainly a distant one from his youngest son's point of view. One cannot know for sure, but it is possible that rivalry for the mother entered into Martin's perception of his father; it is also possible that Arthur, having intuited his son as 'different', may have mildly ridiculed, or even rejected him to a degree.<sup>46</sup> Boyd tells us, for example, that 'again I had the sense of being a misfit' on the occasion his father told him he was 'curiously constituted' because he did not relish the prospect of fighting in the war (*Flame* 69); and it is probable that his father is implicated when he says: 'Occasionally I was made to feel that I ought to be more of a man, mostly by my uncles by marriage' (*Flame* 32). Boyd's public verdict on the parental impact on his psyche is, nevertheless, even-handed and generous if a mite defensive: 'It may seem wilfully obscurantist nowadays to write an autobiography in which there is no grouse against one's parents and masters, but I have none. They did me as little psychological injury as was possible to people of their degree of enlightenment, and I think of them with a strong bourgeois affection' (*Flame* 28).

Boyd alludes to the Oedipus complex in two of his novels. There are two fleeting and oblique references in *The Picnic*, first where Wilfred Westlake is said to have 'a generous boy's hot unreasoning loyalty to his mother...the sensitiveness of a critical mind to her idiosyncrasies' (p109), and then when we are told that 'Wilfred loved [his mother] more than anybody and...felt an urgent need to repudiate the thing he loved' (p299). In *Night of the Party*, however, by means of caricature and distortion, Boyd manages a spoof of Freudian mystique in general and of the Oedipal triangle in particular. The family in question consists of an artist Gavin Leigh, a remote, self-absorbed and thwarted free spirit; his wife Ella, a controlling, puritanical preserver of the moral decencies; and their foppish and narcissistic son Daryl, a young man his father thinks of as 'an absolute Oedipus'<sup>47</sup> and whose morals, according to his Aunt Lucinda, are 'ancient Greek'. The variation on the theme is, of course, that Boyd's portrait of Ella is a long way from the desired and indispensable creature

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<sup>46</sup>Gay activist and writer Peter Blazey verifies that it is common for gay men to have a distant relationship with the father: 'He rejects the son because he intuitively realises they are a bit queer and he doesn't want to know about it. The rage of the boy at the rejection can affect his life'. ('Good Weekend', *SMH Magazine*, 12/8/95, p46).

<sup>47</sup>For comparison, Boyd's Rome diary (5/5/63) records his friend John Fitchett as saying that Luciano 'has an inverted Oedipus complex about me'.

of Oedipal fantasy. What he gives us instead is the mother metamorphosed into a monster, an all-devouring female 'as tough and inexhaustible as — bindweed' (*Night* 224). From Gavin's viewpoint she is inimical and destructive to his talent; and Daryl is astute enough to see that she uses her maternal love as a weapon. Ella's catalogue of defects includes possessiveness and a form of naive self-deception, expressed, for instance, in her thoughts on Daryl:

He used a lot of this silly, modern pseudo-psychological jargon, and he had become rather vain about his appearance...but he was rather good-looking. Thank goodness he did not seem to go after girls. She was glad, too, that he had that nice friend David...who...was interested in literature and Boy Scouts, and who had a most attractive sympathetic deference towards herself.... (*Night* 24-25)

as well as a wilful blindness to the disposition of her husband. Her efforts to make Gavin over into 'a decent, God-fearing Englishman' make no allowance for his creative need to experience the disreputable and the squalid. Perhaps her worst sin in her husband's eyes is her anathema to sex. He not only accuses her of being an 'antiseptic housekeeper, for whom love-making was only a horrible secret necessity' (*Night* 264), but elsewhere chastises her because she doesn't 'lie abandoned, part of the throbbing natural rhythm of life' (*Night* 201). As well as being faithful to, and inhibited by, the moral rigidities handed down from Victorianism, Ella shies away from anything touching on the 'psychology of sex'. To Daryl she explains:

'We were positive before the War...We had faith in the nobility of life. We didn't always interpret the highest in terms of the lowest'. (*Night* 96)

When Daryl asks her what she means, Ella replies: 'It means Freud for one thing, and D. H. Lawrence, and surrealism, and all the silliness of your modern suicide club' (*Night* 97). The picture we have of Ella is not thoroughly unredeemed; nevertheless, in presenting her as fundamentally stuffy, narrow-minded and manipulative — even monstrous — Boyd appears to be quite self-consciously satirizing Freudian notions to do with the emasculating woman.<sup>48</sup> Alternatively, or perhaps additionally, in Ella Boyd has created a personification of woman that lends credence to Gavin's belief in 'a bond of friendly love, of deep male comradeship', one which 'denied that a woman could be all in all to a man' (*Night* 153).

Ella Leigh is essentially an enigma: in one respect she epitomizes an image of 'unimpeachable moral purity' necessary (according to Freud) to the belief of the idealizing, mother-

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<sup>48</sup>For example, the clear-sighted Lucinda tells Gavin: 'She [Ella] won't allow you to express your god. She'll try and kill it. She hates it. She hated that lovely drawing you did of the boys bathing and you tore it up for her. She'll go on till you tear up all your best work' (*Night of the Party* p224). And Gavin muses: '...he hadn't lived. To use the psychologist's jargon, his libido had been neither expended and ecstasized in love, nor sublimated into artistic creation, and it was these two things that had been the substance of his youthful dreams, the focus of his ambition' (p315).

fixated son; like Minnie Boyd, she has a life-affirming passion for ‘beauty and praise’ (*A Life* 45).<sup>49</sup> Yet her puritanical aspect seems too extreme, too drearily distasteful and negative for any meaningful comparison with Minnie, despite Martin having written of his mother in *A Single Flame* that ‘a world populated only by her type would bring about an immediate but rather arid millenium’ (p21). Although he was to recant the latter remark, there is a remote possibility that Ella’s doubleness reflects something of Martin’s devoted, but nevertheless ambivalent feelings toward his mother. Some ambivalence also attaches to Daryl in *Night of The Party*: a sense of conflict is signalled in the description of Daryl Leigh as an ‘absolute Oedipus’ as against his resentment at his mother’s power over him. And although the novel does not suggest that Daryl dislikes his mother, Ella’s exaggerated characterization, her petty rigidities, serve to indicate that she is unwittingly preparing the ground for an archetypal severance of the kind cited by some psychological textbooks as contributing to homosexual identity: a rejection by the son (a rejection sometimes extended to all women) based on hostility and hatred.<sup>50</sup> If one were looking to connect Ella with Boyd’s personal experience, it seems that she is based directly on Edith Anderson, married to his favourite brother Penleigh, a woman whom, it appears, he disliked intensely.<sup>51</sup> Niall points out in her biography that there are too many correspondences with the fictional Ella to suggest otherwise: the name Leigh for one; the fact that like Ella, Edith was ten years older than her husband and met him in similar circumstances; the coincidence that each called her husband ‘Boy’; and a shared disposition to domesticate and trivialise whatever genius their husbands possessed. Niall is careful to add that insofar as this is intended as a portrait of Edith, it is an unfair one (*A Life* 97).

In *Night of the Party* the topic of narcissism is present but unobtrusive. It announces itself in Daryl’s concern with his appearance, his box of theatrical make-up, his yearning for a dress-suit, his many portraits of himself as an ‘exotic faun’ — one thinks here of Boyd’s own paintings of naked, gliding boys, in particular a watercolour he did called ‘Athlete’s Head’ reproduced in *Day of My Delight* — and significantly, in the pocket mirror he carries with which to examine his face (albeit for pimples). In Boyd’s early books desirable young men conform to a certain type reminiscent of the physiognomy of Rupert Brooke (and clearly Boyd is signalling the beautiful face as an index to the beautiful mind); they possess one or more of the following attributes: golden or ‘floppy’ hair,

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<sup>49</sup>Boyd allows Ella the following homily, one which could be interpreted as an echo of his own sentiments: ‘I don’t think any one has [been clear-sighted] since [1914], except a few who refuse to look at their ideals through the smoky glasses of sex. The whole world was clear and vivid and beautiful to us then...it was because we still had faith in life, because we weren’t too jaded and cynical and blase to appreciate what was *simply* beautiful. You must have goodness in you, your spirit must be a pure flame, for you to appreciate beauty, otherwise your dreary soul only wants sensation’ (*Night of the Party* p97).

<sup>50</sup>Feelings like these are not confined to homosexual men, of course. According to the sexologist Shere Hite, dissociation from the mother ‘while simultaneously experiencing the beginnings of strong sexual feelings causes a peculiar love-hate response to develop in many boys in relation to women: a sexuality connected to guilt and angst’ (‘In Search of a New Male Heroism’, *SMH*, Spectrum 6A, 15/4/95). Peripheral to this, but nevertheless instructive, is Don Anderson’s comment in his review of Gore Vidal’s memoir *Palimpsest*: ‘Any boy, homoerotic or otherwise, who has ever hated his mother, will take comfort from Gore Vidal. Tennessee Williams, Jack Kerouac, friends of Vidal, would have delighted in it. The Patrick White of [the short story] ‘The Letters’ would have found a kindred spirit in it...Mothers ought to avoid this book like the plague’ (*SMH*, Spectrum 11A, 25/11/95).

<sup>51</sup>Martin’s word for Edith was ‘puritanical’, which, in his terminology, often means intolerant of sexual transgressions, according to Niall, *Martin Boyd: A Life*, p97.

good looks, laughing eyes and a sensual mouth. It is probably fair to say that the description approximates the appearance of Boyd as a young man. He tells us that a schoolmaster detested his 'pretty face' (*Flame* 34); and how a yearning for love is stimulated by the sight of his own face: 'I remember catching sight of my face in the glass and being surprised at its touch of adolescent beauty...Now I felt the longing for some caress, to express my body in some gesture of love' (*Flame* 52). Because the element of narcissism *is* noticeable in Boyd's writings (and in one novel in particular, *Dearest Idol*, it is the dominant theme, as I will be discussing), and because the description fits so well with the picture of Boyd as it is developing, it might not be inappropriate, indeed it might be helpful, to consider Boyd and his sexuality in the context of Freud's thoughts on the subject:

In all the cases we have examined we have established the fact that the future inverts, in the earliest years of their childhood, pass through a phase of very intense but short-lived fixation to a woman (usually their mother), and that, after leaving this behind, they identify themselves with a woman and take *themselves* as their sexual object. That is to say, proceeding from a basis of narcissism, they look for a young man who resembles themselves and whom *they* may love as their mother loved *them*. (*Essays* 56)

By slipping back to a preliminary stage of infancy, auto-erotism, in order to revive himself in childhood as the model towards which, acting in the capacity of his mother, he can direct his love or desire, the boy/young man has become a homosexual. Freud elaborates elsewhere, in his study of Leonardo, that the attachment to the mother is encouraged by too much tenderness on her part and reinforced by the small part played by the father during childhood (*Art & Literature* 190); the stage at which the boy puts himself in his mother's place is the stage where his love for his mother 'cannot continue to develop consciously any further' and succumbs, first to repression and then to substitution (*Art & Literature* 91). Freud's follow-up to the quote given above also, according to my reading, suggests an uncanny applicability to Boyd:

Moreover, we have frequently found that alleged inverts have been by no means insusceptible to the charms of women, but have continually transposed the excitation aroused by women on to a male object. They have thus repeated all through their lives the mechanism by which their inversion arose. Their compulsive longing for men has turned out to be determined by their ceaseless flight from women. (*Essays* 56)

Linked to this claim is the notion, stemming from the Oedipus complex, of the unique and irreplaceable mother and by extension, of the impossibility of replacing her. Psychoanalysis teaches us, says Ellenberger, 'that the notion of something irreplaceable, when it is active in the unconscious, frequently appears as broken up into an endless series: endless for the reason that every surrogate nevertheless fails to provide the desired satisfaction' (p236). Hence, presumably, the 'ceaseless flight from women'. In the narcissistic model, satisfaction comes via an unconscious regression to infancy which attempts, through self-love, to reconstruct the original, and unrepeatable, experience of unconditional love. The idea of the sexual instinct being directed toward the subject itself instead of toward an exterior object is not new. As Ellenberger has noted,

Freud had his antecedents in this as well as in other fields; his particular achievement *vis-à-vis* narcissism was to incorporate it into his systematization of infant sexuality.

The reasons for aligning Boyd with Freud's explanation for the origins of homosexuality, and in particular with his assertion (as with Leonardo) that it is emotional attitude rather than actual behaviour that defines the 'invert' (*Art & Literature* 178), are to be discerned in both the autobiographical and fictional texts. For the moment, prompted by Boyd's rather generalised and vague expressions of prejudice, I shall confine myself to giving some space to a wider contextualisation of Freud's views on homosexuality. As already suggested, Boyd's jibes at Freud could indicate either the conscious adoption of a Bloomsbury 'put-down' in the style of the gently caricatured Rounsefells of *The Picnic*, the fictional counterparts of his artistic Sussex friends the Adeneys; or a rudimentary reading — unlikely, considering the extent of Boyd's knowledge of Freud's ideas; or again, the possibility that Freud's formulations and conclusions may have touched a raw nerve. Boyd's assigning of 'dogma and superstition' to Freud, for example, is more antagonistic than well-founded. It is true that Freud, in proposing that a boy's psychosexual development and entry into masculinity is determined by his negotiation of the Oedipus complex — with the father postulated as the key agent — was theorising in terms of an unvarying, universal and transhistorical application, a finding which has undergone considerable challenge.<sup>52</sup> As for the superstition Boyd appears to attribute to Freud's interpretation of dreams, however, it has already been established that Freud belongs to a long tradition of similar dream analysis. Similarly, on the subject of perversions in general and homosexuality in particular, it needs to be stated that Freud's views are characterized to a high degree by flexibility, scepticism and open-mindedness.

Freud's attribution of an innate bisexuality to human nature has already been noted.<sup>53</sup> A footnote added in 1915 to his chapter on sexual aberrations in *Three Essays on Sexuality* (1905) is worth quoting for its illumination of Freud's supple approach to homosexuality:

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<sup>52</sup>Freud's Oedipalisation of the familial triangle reinforces the patriarchal, orderly, reproductive capitalist unit at the same time as marginalizing the homosexual. Guy Hocquenghem in *Homosexual Desire* queries the relationship of sexual identity to patriarchal structures and the fit between patriarchy and capitalism. He argues for a depreciation of the phallus rather than the centrality and symbolic authority afforded it in the Oedipal schema. Nor, according to Jeffrey Weeks in the Preface, does Hocquenghem accede to the notion of, as Juliet Mitchell has put it, the phallus as the very mark of human desire. He argues instead for a differentiation of desire that includes the anus [symbolic of the private, of all that must be dismissed from the individual's life]: as Weeks puts it, 'when homosexuals as a group publicly reject their labels, they are in fact rejecting Oedipus, rejecting the artificial entrapment of desire, rejecting sexuality focused on the Phallus. And they are rejecting the Symbolic Order [the entry into language predicated on the law of the Father]'. As Weeks acknowledges, the emphasis on the anal 'has clearly a metaphorical rather than a properly scientific meaning...as all the empirical evidence (such as Kinsey's) suggests that anal intercourse is still the exception even among homosexuals'.

Deleuze and Guattari also mount a challenge to psychiatric orthodoxies in their book *L'Anti-Oedipe: Capitalisme et Schizophrénie*, first published in 1972. They reject the Oedipal structuring of desire on the grounds of artificial restrictions on the unconscious, where everything is in fact infinitely open. According to Weeks, Deleuze and Guattari see man as constituted by 'desiring machines': there is...no given "self", only the cacophony of desiring machines' (Preface, *Homosexual Desire*).

<sup>53</sup>He was not the first to do so. Freud adopted from Wilhelm Fliess the fundamental bisexuality of human beings. Plato also taught the original bisexuality of humankind (Ellenberger, pp502-503).

Psychoanalytic research is most decidedly opposed to any attempt at separating off homosexuals from the rest of mankind as a group of a special character. By studying sexual excitations other than those that are manifestly displayed, it has found that all human beings are capable of making a homosexual object-choice and have in fact made one in their unconscious. Indeed, libidinal attachments to persons of the same sex play no less a part as factors in normal mental life, and a greater part as a motive force for illness, than do similar attachments to the opposite sex. *On the contrary, psychoanalysis considers that a choice of an object independently of its sex — freedom to range equally over male and female objects — as it is found in childhood, in primitive states of society and early periods of history, is the original basis from which, as a result of restriction in one direction or the other, both the normal and the inverted types develop.* Thus from the point of view of psycho-analysis the exclusive sexual interest felt by men for women is also a problem that needs elucidating and is not a self-evident fact based upon an attraction that is ultimately of a chemical nature. *A person's final sexual attitude is not decided until after puberty and is the result of a number of factors, not all of which are yet known; some are of a constitutional nature but others are accidental.*  
(*Essays* 56-57, my italics)

Freud's contradiction of the conventional premise that the sexual instinct is heterosexually based — often more poetically expressed as a man and a woman as two halves 'always striving to unite again in love',<sup>54</sup> a trope of dividedness made whole — is characteristic of his non-fixated, one might say lateral-minded, approach to the question of sexualities in general and of homosexualities in particular. His conviction that no one account of homosexuality can have universal application is another example: 'The nature of inversion is explained neither by the hypothesis that it is innate nor by the alternative hypothesis that it is acquired', he notes. Nor does he accept unreservedly, despite his theory of bisexual *biological* determinism, a corresponding factor of *psychical* hermaphroditism to explain inversion in all its varieties. For while he stands by his claim that 'a bisexual disposition is somehow concerned in inversion' (*Essays* 55), and while in his view *psychosexual* hermaphroditism typifies one form of homosexual behaviour and announces itself by the choice of sexual objects from either sex (the other behavioural patterns isolated by Freud were those of the 'absolute' and 'contingent' inverts),<sup>55</sup> he considers unsatisfactory the popularized theory of its psychical counterpart — the inverted man who 'is like a woman in being subject to the charm that proceeds from masculine attributes both physical and mental: [who] feels he is a woman in search of a man' (*Essays* 55) — in his opinion crudely expressed in Ulrichs' formulation 'a feminine brain in a masculine body'. However well this applies to quite a number of inverts, he says, there can be no doubt that in men 'the most complete mental masculinity can be combined with inversion' (*Essays* 53). In such an event they look for feminine mental traits in their sexual object (*Essays* 55).<sup>56</sup> On the question of stigmatization, Freud says that some homosexuals insist that inversion is as legitimate as the normal attitude; others 'rebel against their inversion and feel it as a pathological compulsion' (*Essays* 47).

<sup>54</sup>*Three Essays*, p46. Freud states in a footnote that this is no doubt an allusion to the theory expounded by Aristophanes in Plato's *Symposium*.

<sup>55</sup>Absolute inverts Freud categorised as those whose sexual objects are exclusively of their own sex; contingent inverts, on the other hand, are those who under certain external conditions will take as sexual object someone of their own sex (*Three Essays* pp46-47).

<sup>56</sup>Freud is either uncharacteristically humble or else sardonic at this point, saying only 'But we are ignorant of what characterizes a feminine brain' (*Three Essays* p54).

To substantiate this hypothesis of the masculinized, rather than feminized homosexual, Freud takes as his exemplar the civilization of ancient Greece:

It is clear that in Greece, where the most masculine men were numbered among the inverts, what excited a man's love was not the masculine character of a boy, but his physical resemblance to a woman as well as his feminine mental qualities — his shyness, his modesty and his need for instruction and assistance. As soon as the boy became a man he ceased to be a sexual object for men and himself, perhaps, became a lover of boys. In this instance, therefore, as in many others, the sexual object is not someone of the same sex but someone who combines the characters of both sexes; there is, as it were, a compromise between an impulse that seeks for a man and one that seeks for a woman, while it remains a paramount condition that the object's body (i.e. genitals) shall be masculine. Thus the sexual object is a kind of reflection of the subject's own bisexual nature. (*Essays* 55-56)

It is an observation which offers an opportunity for a digression back to Martin Boyd as centrepiece of this discussion. Taken as a whole it ramifies in an unexpectedly satisfying way with Freud's supposition as to the origins of homosexuality, where, it will be recalled, Freud suggested a cathexis, first by the infant to the irreplaceable mother and later to the substitute self in the form of narcissism. It was the model he used to analyse Leonardo as a homosexual — albeit a passive and emotional one — a model already touched on in this study as a possible aid to understanding Boyd. In the explication of Greek homosexual love reproduced above, Freud devises a paradigm whose implications, even divested of explicit sexual connotations as they must be in this case, would also seem to be remarkably significant for Boyd's projected self-image. The two models are quite compatible, it seems to me; each is explicable in the terms of the other. Narcissism could be claimed, for instance, for the man who takes a boy as his sexual object; it could be said that he is seeking in the boy's image a recreation of himself when young. As for whether Boyd would have been comfortable with Freud's psycho-sexual insights into Greek manly love, it is tempting to speculate that it was precisely the training of Freud's sexualising, and therefore desacralizing, focus on this particular subject which raised Boyd's ire. Boyd's conscious mind, at least, assessed Greek male comradeship in idealised terms; his view, to be expanded upon below, appears to duplicate that of Plato, who 'valued homosexual love above heterosexual, and considered the sublimation of a homosexual love as the origin of all higher feelings' (Ellenberger 503). Boyd's recurrent referral to a belief in aspiring to 'the highest when seen' is no accident, I believe; it is intimately connected not only to Greek philosophy, but to the notion of an idealised masculine fraternity. In this respect, however, it is difficult to overlook the fact that many writers, both before and after Freud, have dilated on the sexual aspect of Greek manly love, a fact about which Boyd cannot have been unaware.

Allegations of dogmatism are easy enough to level against Freud, particularly if we take into account the exclusively sexual motive power which drives psychoanalytic theory, the patriarchal bias, and the conviction behind a statement such as the following:

The unconscious mental life of all neurotics (without exception) shows inverted impulses, fixation of their libido upon persons of their own sex. It would be impossible without deep discussion to give any adequate appreciation of the

importance of this factor in determining the form taken by the symptoms of the illness. I can only insist that an unconscious tendency to inversion is never absent and is of particular value in throwing light upon hysteria in men. (*Essays* 80)

In other words, for Freud inversion (and, indeed, any kind of sexual deviation or perversion) was a form of neurosis, the underlying causes of which could be one or more of a number of contributing factors such as repression, inhibition, frustration, moral censure or resistance to the sexual instinct, a compliant constitution, precocity, disturbance or impairment of normal sexual development. Yet the association of inversion with 'illness' is unusual, and the only example I can detect in the dissertation on homosexuality in Freud's 'Three Essays on Sexuality'. It is more common to find Freud making the kind of equivocal statement<sup>57</sup> with which he ends *Three Essays*:

The unsatisfactory conclusion, however, that emerges from these investigations of the disturbances of sexual life is that we know far too little of the biological processes constituting the essence of sexuality to be able to construct from our fragmentary information a theory adequate to the understanding alike of normal and pathological conditions. (*Essays* 169)

Freud's absence of dogma, and in this case of opprobrium as well, is also apparent in this observation on perversions: 'No healthy person, it appears, can fail to make some addition that might be called perverse to the normal sexual aim; and the universality of this finding is in itself enough to show how inappropriate it is to use the word perversion as a term of reproach' (*Essays* 74). Similarly, he notes that 'neurotics in themselves constitute a very numerous class...[indicating] that an unbroken chain bridges the gap between the neuroses in all their manifestations and normality'. He adds: 'After all, Moebius could say with justice that we are all to some extent hysterics' (*Essays* 86). Freud's increasing distance from the idea of neurotic 'illness' in respect to homosexuality towards a more malleable and forgiving approach — in line with his habit of constantly modifying his stance — is borne out by his remarks a little later, in 1910,<sup>58</sup> regarding Leonardo:

We must expressly insist that we have never reckoned Leonardo as a neurotic or a 'nerve case'.... Anyone who protests at our so much as daring to examine him in the light of discoveries gained in the field of pathology is still clinging to prejudices which we have to-day rightly abandoned. We no longer think that health and illness, normal and neurotic people, are to be sharply distinguished from each other, and that neurotic traits must necessarily be taken as proofs of a general inferiority. To-day we know that neurotic symptoms are structures which are substitutes for certain achievements of repression that we have to carry out in the course of our development from a child to a civilized human being. (*Art and Literature* 224)

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<sup>57</sup>Freud's equivocation in this case is that of the wary would-be scientist, designed to avoid commitment rather than to mislead where there is room for doubt. By contrast Martin Boyd, like Walt Whitman, has the artist's capacity for ambivalence: 'Do I contradict myself?/ Very well then I contradict myself,/ (I am large, I contain multitudes)'. From 'Song of Myself', *A Choice of Whitman's Verse*, (ed) Donald Hall, London: Faber, 1968.

<sup>58</sup>The date *Eine Kindheitserinnerung Des Leonardo Da Vinci* was first published by Deuticke in Leipzig and Vienna. The first English translations appeared in 1916 (trans A. A. Brill, New York: Moffat, Yard) and in 1922, London: Kegan Paul (same translator, with a preface by Ernest Jones).

The fundamental findings contained in this passage are substantially the same as those expressed in *Three Essays*. The emphasis has changed, however, and seemingly the sensibility of the author. Whether real or apparent, the effect is to convey a shift in thinking on the issue. It was not unknown, as history affirms and Freud himself admits, for the founder of psychoanalysis to revise or change his opinions. It is doubtful whether Boyd, prejudiced against Freud as he was, ever read Freud's sensitive analysis of the etiology of Leonardo's sexual disposition. Had he done so, his intellectual honesty must surely have led him to a greater appreciation.

Along with his refusal to typecast homosexuals according to an overly rigid system of classification and cause, and as further support for his placing of neuroses towards the normal end of the health spectrum, Freud could not agree with medical opinion which saw inversion as an indication of nervous degeneracy or disease. He argued that inversion is found in people who exhibit no other serious deviations from the normal, whose 'efficiency is unimpaired, and who are indeed distinguished by specially high intellectual development and ethical culture', who comprised 'an institution charged with important functions among the peoples of antiquity at the height of their civilization', and who were widely in evidence amongst many savage and primitive races — 'whereas the concept of degeneracy is usually restricted to states of high civilization'. 'Even amongst the civilized peoples of Europe', added Freud, 'climate and race exercise the most powerful influence on the prevalence of inversion and upon the attitude adopted towards it' (*Essays* 49-50). This latter remark brings to mind Sir Richard Burton's observation, quoted by Sedgwick, on what he called the 'Sotadic Zone', within which, he said:

the Vice [pederasty] is popular and endemic, held at the worst to be a mere peccadillo, whilst the races to the North and South of the limits here defined practise it only sporadically amid the opprobrium of their fellows who, as a rule, are physically incapable of performing the operation and look upon it with the liveliest disgust. (*BM* 183) <sup>59</sup>

Thus, according to Sedgwick, the most exploratory of Victorians drew the borders of male homosexual culture to include exclusively, and almost exhaustively, the Mediterranean and the economically exploitable Third World. He insisted, however, that the influence of the Sotadic Zone on 'the Vice' was 'geographical and climatic, not racial'; nevertheless, colonials could 'go' native under the influence of climate, morale, or ethos. Martin Boyd has his own contribution to make to the subject. His comment is cryptic in its owning of an ambivalence perceived by Fitzpatrick as a 'double alienation': 'My inner division, if I have one, is the age-long one of the European, between the Mediterranean and the north, the Classic and the Gothic worlds' (*Day* 239).<sup>60</sup> The distinction he makes here is no doubt that of the humanitarian ideal that seeks perfection versus the darkly romantic and passionate impulse. But he could also be describing, at a deeper and more atavistic level, a psyche split between the dour and restrained sobrieties of his British heritage and a more ancient legacy of a Graeco-Roman world replete with art, exuberance, colour and sensuality: a

<sup>59</sup>From 'Terminal Essay', *Thousand Nights and a Night* (1885-88), cited by Sedgwick, *Between Men*, p183.

<sup>60</sup>Martin Duwell draws attention to W. H. Auden's 'great poem, *Goodbye to the Mezzogiorno*, [in which he] contrasted the sensibility of the Mediterranean world with that of the Gothic, Protestant one north of the Danube. The north, he says, sees life as a journey, a *bildungsroman*, a continuous adventure of development: in the south to live means "to-be-visible-now". *The Australian Weekend Review* 3-4 February, 1996, p7.

world seemingly intrinsic to his sensibility, so frequently is it conjured up in his writings. Boyd's remark, understated as it is, starts to gather in a multitude of ramifications and connotations. His 'inner division' becomes not one merely of the intellect and conscious choice, nor is heredity or life history necessarily implicated; constitutional emotions, instincts — even a form of psycho-sexual divisiveness — are involved the moment his oft-reiterated allusions to Homeric male friendship are recalled.

The sketchy indication given here of the scope, intricacy, insightfulness and psychological dexterity of Freudian thought and methods has been for the purpose of providing the kind of reasoned and objective approach to Freud which I believe is lacking in Boyd. Freud was necessarily constrained by his own narrowly medical perspective and the accumulated weight of nineteenth-century preconceptions; and while it is readily acknowledged that some of Freud's formulations were extreme and exclusivist — an insistence on the parent-child relationship as reducible to unconscious sexual drives that would permit neither deviation nor compromise, for instance<sup>61</sup> — he sought, in later years, to reach 'beyond his own framework of thought'.<sup>62</sup> Paradoxically, notes Progoff, although it began as part of the protest against religion, the net result of modern psychology and Freud's work has been to recall man to an awareness of his inner life and spiritual being.<sup>63</sup>

It is ironic that Boyd should so have disparaged a man with whom he shared so many predilections. Freud was a man of letters, gifted, according to Ellenberger (p466), with the 'intellectual curiosity that impels a writer to observe his fellow men to try to penetrate their lives, their loves, their intimate attitudes'. He was also a Romantic: 'It is as though Freud identified himself with the Byronic figure of the lonely hero struggling against a host of enemies and difficulties', says Ellenberger. He modelled his writing style on that of Goethe, with whom he shared a love of art, beauty and nature; he often quoted the Greek tragedians, Shakespeare, Schiller, Heine and many others. Instead of using 'his deep, intuitive knowledge of the human soul for the creation of literary works', he attempted by formulation and systematization to turn it to scientific advantage (Ellenberger 466-67), the implication being that he lost something in the process. Freud's scientific elimination of the soul fuels Martin Boyd's anti-positivism; yet Boyd's antipathy to Freud would appear, on the evidence presented, to reside in a prejudice more pressing than the metaphysical. The acute discomfort registered by Boyd, as ascertained above, in the presence of Freudian symbolism and theory is, I suggest, more directly attributable to Freud's central concern with the repressed and pathological in man, his desire to make conscious the patient's hidden unconscious and his correlation of deviant sexuality with anxiety neurosis.<sup>64</sup>

Nevertheless, the emphasis on these latter issues should not obscure the doubtless highly significant relevance to Boyd of Freud's unrepentant atheism. An associated and equally disconcerting matter might have been the anachronistic project, related to Freud's emphasis on

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<sup>61</sup>Ira Progoff, *The Death & Rebirth of Psychology*, U.S.A.: McGraw-Hill, 1973, p8.

<sup>62</sup>Progoff, *The Death & Rebirth of Psychology*, p1.

<sup>63</sup>Progoff, *The Death & Rebirth of Psychology*, p3.

<sup>64</sup>Also relevant is the fact that Boyd was also very much a construct of his 'class', whereby a gentleman's dealings with the opposite sex were governed by a code of honour and/or silence.

determinism, which claimed Freud as a radical postmodernist: explicitly, Jacques Lacan's more recent recovery of Freud's subversiveness, of his discovery of the individual subject as 'de-centred' — that is, with no given centre or consciousness — 'dominated by a law which he does not create but which creates him'.<sup>65</sup> Weeks notes that the undermining of the coherent 'self' so implicit in our language and ideologies, begun by Freud and developed by Lacan, fits neatly with the marxist insistence that the individual human subject is not the 'centre' of history. Boyd was not, however, in need of a Lacanian interpretive framework to lend dismay to his own intuitive readings. After all, the uppermost reason for what can only be perceived as a championing of Adlerian over Freudian psychoanalysis — even though this amounts to, disappointingly from the point of view of this study, one small sentence — is most likely to lie in Adler's holistic approach to the human individual. The purpose of the next chapter is to uncover those points of reference in Adler's scheme of thought with which Boyd may have empathised, and indeed, from which he may have drawn both intellectual enlightenment and psychological reassurance.

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<sup>65</sup>Jeffrey Weeks in the Preface to Guy Hocquenghem, *Homosexual Desire*, p13.

### CHAPTER THREE: Adler: *a dissenting masculinity*

While to essay a linkage between Boyd and Adler on the strength of a single sentence may seem at best tenuous and at worst foolhardy, the investigative process into Adlerian theory has revealed what is to me a great deal of connective tissue of relevant and even profound significance for Boyd's personal psychology and formative influences. The sentence which provides the key to unlocking this interrelation may be found in *A Single Flame*. It begins: 'A psychological text-book by Adler greatly helped me at the same time to straighten out my personal tangles...' (p207). The cryptic quality of this remark, its teasing refusal to concede explanation or elaboration, borders on the disingenuously ambiguous. Boyd is admitting to a troubled, possibly confused inner life (where 'personal' also conjures up the possibility of the 'interpersonal'), but the exact nature of his problems, whether intellectual, spiritual, relational, emotional, sexual, or a combination of some or all of these, is left obscure. Even so, meagre though it be, it is to my mind the most divulgently confessional glimpse Boyd affords us of a disturbed psyche (if we discount his owing to 'mental suffering' and wanting to die when young). The statement is tantalizing in its suggestion of revelations withheld; its laconic quality challenges like the throwing down of a gauntlet; inevitably it incites speculation. Its context — the remark is prefaced by Boyd's reference to his gaining an insight into spiritual regeneration through reading Dostoevsky's (sic) *The Brothers Karamazov*, and concludes 'while the wind from Bloomsbury blew away much of the chaff with which I was stuffed, even if a good deal of the grain went with it' — is indicative of a seminal period for Boyd, a time of profound self-questioning, honest appraisal and the sloughing of conventional values stimulated very probably by his association with the free-thinking Bloomsbury artists. And while he may not have shared that group's acceptance of Freudian 'dogma', it is probable that one or more of its members influenced him in the direction of Adler. This claim takes into account the Bloomsbury context in which Adler is mentioned in *A Single Flame*, the advice Boyd receives from the Bloomsbury set about following his innermost convictions/compulsions (see below), and the coincidence of the unproductive or 'useless' period of 1928-33, during which he read both Dostoevsky and Adler, with the time he spent in Sussex amongst his literary and artistic West Wittering friends.

The revised autobiography omits the mention of Adler and the author's psychological dilemma. In *Day of My Delight*, however, Boyd's meditations on the Bloomsbury group include a new, and significant, sentence. 'From them', he says, 'I learned...a dependence on one's own personal sensibility' (*Day* 160).<sup>1</sup> That this sentence relates directly to the one discussed above revealing the happy discovery of Adler, is but a short step in logic, it being fair to assume that Boyd is making a statement about *difference* in both instances. In the first case, the assumption is made on the basis that the revelation functions as a climactic moment to the litany of words Boyd uses throughout both memoirs and fiction to express a personal experience of alienation: those words such as 'misfit', 'curiously constituted', 'incorrigible', 'unwholesome', 'weird', 'pacifist', 'intuitive',

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<sup>1</sup>The paragraph continues: 'In people like themselves with a solid basis of culture and fine creative gifts, this resulted in beautiful sensitive work, particularly evident in Noël's still-life paintings. They brought a sudden patch of life and colour into my life, also they taught me to look for the essential value behind any words or painting and to abhor anything slick?.'

‘emotional’, and ‘sensitive’ which tend to reassert themselves in the phrase ‘personal tangles’. By contrast, the reference to ‘personal sensibility’, related as it is to his exemplary Bloomsbury friends, their ‘solid basis of culture...fine creative gifts...[and] beautiful sensitive work’, indicates a coming to terms with difference, with an acceptance of his own creative, sensitive and artistic leanings. Important here is that the Bloomsbury influence, aided by the Adlerian treatise on individual psychology, gave him licence to be an individual. Even more crucial for the perspective of this study, it is my contention that these influences gave him freedom from conformity to male stereotyping or the compulsion to be, in today’s parlance, a ‘regular bloke’ bound by the rigidities of acceptable male behaviour.

My interpretation of Boyd’s internal struggles goes something like this: he was in a sense groping, in some inchoate and never fully articulated way, toward a new definition of masculinity, towards establishing an identity not necessarily coterminous with the traditional male culture with its emphasis on action, aggression, potency, power and dominance. It was a predicament which was complicated early by his encounter with the exceedingly ‘machismo’ elements of Australian masculinity — a culture fundamentally anti-intellectual, anti-art, associated with toughness and misogyny — something he experienced in his early development in the form of subtle verbal chastisement for not measuring up to received standards of manliness. A little later it was the turn of the public school system, an institutional hegemony whose construction around practices of alliance, dominance and subordination created particularised definitions and reproductions of masculinity — or as Connell phrases it (*Masculinities* 37), a gender politics within masculinity (we think of Boyd’s description of himself as ‘unboyish’ and ‘unathletic’, for example): a system damned by Boyd for, among other things, its ‘culture of compulsory beatings’ and ‘regulated animalism’ (*Day* 32). He would never have said so in so many words, but all the indications are that (and here I must claim the benefit of hindsight and modern terminology) Boyd was looking to put a new spin on gender, to reinvent or reconstruct for himself a form of masculinity which, while retaining those virtues of courage, chivalry, nobility and heroism given prominence by the Hellenic fraternity model, was able to provide accommodation for difference. Something of Boyd’s dilemma, if one can call it that, is conveyed, I believe, in the following reference he makes to Dominic, in *When Blackbirds Sing*:

He had not, like so many boys with a more conventional education, had his ideas of ‘manliness’ and his limits of allowable perception fixed at the age of fifteen. He was not one of the permanent or petrified adolescents, who have come absolutely to terms with the surface of life; and who call themselves, with perhaps a regret for that lost glimpse of a greater reality, ‘old boys’ until life itself is ended. *He continued experimenting, emotional, searching for some kind of truth which he felt that everyone else possessed and which was the secret of happiness.* So he remained adolescent, which at least gave him the chance of reaching a complete, and not merely an external, maturity.  
(*WBS* 22, my italics)

In this kind of context the allusion to Adler becomes a vital clue; it signals not only the enabling of a process of self-realisation for Boyd, but the opportunity for a reconciliation with, and valorization of, the ‘soft’ side of his nature: those traits of sensitivity, creativity, shyness and emotionalism traditionally associated with the feminine and therefore, according to Adler, consistently

undervalued by society.<sup>2</sup> Adler's usefulness to Boyd, and the reasons therein, do seem in the circumstances to warrant exploration. The proposal, therefore, is to delineate those aspects of Adler's thought which, as well as can be judged, accord most closely with the Boyd we know — his personality traits, his familial and societal circumstances, his fundamental beliefs — through his own writings, his explicators and his critics.

In the broad sense Boyd's attraction to, and empathy with Adler is self-evident. Whereas Freud places his emphasis on man's basic ambivalence, on conflicts between the conscious and the unconscious, the ego, the id, and the superego, Adler's 'individual psychology' stresses not only the uniqueness of the human being<sup>3</sup> but the indivisibility of the mind-body relationship. Also, unlike Freud (and again, Boyd could have written the prescription), Adler theorizes man as self-determining, teleologic or goal-directed, free and responsible: a view, according to Paul Rom, which came more and more to supplant machine and animal as models to explain human behaviour.<sup>4</sup> Significantly, and here again he differs from Freud, Adler follows Marx in perceiving man as primarily a social being, as inseparable from his cultural and historical matrix; the social factor becomes instrumental, therefore, as Ellenberger notes, in the origin of neurosis and its social defects (p607). Marx's influence, his belief that 'an individual is a complete man only when intimately related to his fellow men and to nature',<sup>5</sup> is also readily apparent in the promotion by Adler of the principle of cosmic influence, his equation of community feeling with the general interdependence of the cosmos (Ellenberger 609). In addition, and no doubt of peripheral relevance to the reticent if not secretive Boyd, Adler's system is radically different from Freudian psychoanalysis in that it is pragmatic or concrete; that is, it does not pretend to go into matters very deeply, but provides principles and methods by which to acquire practical knowledge of human behaviour (Ellenberger 608). It needs to be noted, too, that in general Adler demonstrates an anti-sexual bias, displaying a tendency to symbolic rather than literal interpretations (Ansbacher 70).

Generally speaking then, Adler's guiding principles found a sympathetic and corresponding echo in Boyd's outlook on life, what Dorothy Green has called his 'carefully thought-out ultimate convictions'.<sup>6</sup> A good example is Adler's idea of community and cosmos (where the community creates logic, language, proverbs and folklore): essentially, a 'dynamics of inter-personal relationships' which considers the individual not as an isolated case, 'but sees him in the light of his actions and of the reactions of his environment' (Ellenberger 610). As Ellenberger explains it,

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<sup>2</sup>Boyd's ambivalence in this respect is illustrated first, by his statement (in *A Single Flame* p261): 'I was not sure that I was a gentleman, partly because I had no knightly love of violence' and second, by his demand for 'the honourable satisfaction of drawn blood' following an insult from his company commander Wells (*A Single Flame* p118).

The paragraph quoted above is significant for Dominic's determination never to deteriorate into anything resembling the 'pickled boys' — 'adolescents kept in water-glass of which there seemed to be so many in England' — of *A Difficult Young Man*, men like Guy's housemaster and Colonel Rodgers who, it is implied, have become sour and shrivelled, their unfulfilled lust channelled into violence and sadism.

<sup>3</sup>As the Romantics had done before him and the Existentialists were to do after him (Ellenberger p624).

<sup>4</sup>Paul Rom, *Alfred Adler's Individual Psychology and its History*, Individual Psychology Pamphlets No.1, London: The Adlerian Society of Great Britain, 1976.

<sup>5</sup>Rom, *Alfred Adler's Individual Psychology and its History* (unpaginated pamphlet).

<sup>6</sup>Dorothy Green, 'From Yarra Glen to Rome', p246.

community feeling ‘endows us with the faculty to feel into, that is to empathize with other beings’. It has nothing to do with the ability to mix with others or loyalty to a group or cause; nor does it imply ‘the abdication of an individual’s personality or morality to the hands of a community’ (pp609-10). Notions such as these dovetail nicely with Boyd’s commitment, reiterated in essays, memoirs and fiction, to and feeling of connectedness with the ‘entire created world’, with his belief in a moral duty (along with D. H. Lawrence) not to deface or poison that world,<sup>7</sup> and with a ‘longing for complete human fellowship’ (*WBS* 6).<sup>8</sup> Coincidence of thought becomes less marked, however, in the area of religion. Adler’s system, as compared to Freud’s, may well have deserved the tag ‘psychology with a soul’, but by soul Adler meant simply the unique self irrespective of religious connotations. In fact, his attitude to religion was at first hostile, or at least indifferent. According to Ellenberger,

In Adler’s view man is essentially bound to the earth; religion is a manifestation of community feeling; cure of souls is an anticipation of psycho-therapy, God is the materialization of the idea of perfection and the highest of all thinkable ideas; man is neither good nor wicked, it depends upon the evolution of his community feeling; the evil is an error in life style; grace consists of realizing and correcting one’s erroneous life style ‘within the limits of immanence’ (that is with human help only). (Ellenberger 625)

Adler did, however, in the opinion of Lutheran pastor Dr. Ernst Jahn<sup>9</sup> undergo an evolution in his position on the subject. Jahn thought that Adler may have been a positivist, but that at the same time ‘he honestly searched for a confrontation with Christianity’ (Ellenberger 625). Boyd the anti-positivist, on the other hand, while he largely eschewed the ‘externalities of religion’, was convinced of ‘its necessary poetic truth — the central Myth of death to the self and re-birth’.<sup>10</sup> The two attitudes may manifest a certain, if subtle, convergence; it is nevertheless ironic that Boyd, a man with a well-developed spiritual yearning, should draw some comfort from a psychologist who for much of his life appears to have been a positivist.

It is safe to assume that, having established that Adlerian doctrine provided an underlying similarity of outlook and philosophy, notwithstanding minor qualifications, Boyd was prepared to pay credence to, and presumably to trust, his mentor’s psychological insights. It also seems reasonable to imagine that Boyd, judging by his reference to ‘personal tangles’, was concerned with questions of personality, even perhaps of personality disorder. The intention of this chapter is to show that this claim is not a tenuous one: the proposal is to substantiate it by resource to known facts about Boyd’s childhood and background, to autobiographical self-revelation, and by attention

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<sup>7</sup>Boyd continues: ‘This was the teaching of the Greeks, and also of the Gospels, with their references to the sparrows and the lilies, and their imagery taken from all living things’. From ‘Dubious Cartography’, p12.

<sup>8</sup>Though in *When Blackbirds Sing* this sentiment is expressed by Dominic it can be taken as an echo of Boyd’s own feelings. It was Boyd’s habit to inject authorial convictions into his works; we are reminded of his belief in Bernard Shaw’s dictum that ‘the definition of a first-rate book [is] one in which the author’s morality is his own’ (‘Dubious Cartography’, p12).

<sup>9</sup>Reverend Jahn acknowledged, notes Ellenberger, that Adler rediscovered one of Luther’s essential assertions, that egocentric love is the basic attitude of man. Jahn and Adler jointly wrote a book confronting cure of souls and individual psychology. It was published in 1933 but was seized by the Nazis and destroyed (*Discovery of the Unconscious* p625).

<sup>10</sup>Dorothy Green, ‘From Yarra Glen to Rome’, p246.

to such factors as an emotional life oriented predominately towards members of his own sex and an undercurrent, detectable throughout his writings, of concern with received notions of masculinity. When Boyd read Adler he was probably depressed;<sup>11</sup> it was a low point in his life, ‘a hell of boredom’ (*Flame* 207). At the same time the phrase ‘personal tangles’ suggests confusion rather than depression; and the resort to a psychological textbook primarily devoted to issues of neuroses and the problematics of masculinity would seem to speak for itself. The circumstances would suggest that Boyd may have come, like his friend Robert Lindsay,<sup>12</sup> to question his sexual identity.

At this point it is necessary to consider those of Adler’s specific theories which Boyd may have found relevant and helpful. The assumption being, considering the homosexual undertones in many of Boyd’s books, that a principal interest was to read about homosexuality, while at the same time acknowledging that Adler’s analysis offers material for comparison with Boyd that is difficult to ignore. Again, as with Freud, it is unknown which particular tract of Adler’s Boyd may have read. Of those works available in translation, four stand out as likely contenders: *The Neurotic Constitution* (direct translation: *The Nervous Character*) published in New York in 1917; *Understanding Human Nature*, New York, 1927; *The Practice and Theory of Individual Psychology*, London, 1925; and *The Meaning of Life*, London, 1938 (also known as *Social Interest: A Challenge to Mankind*), a modification of his earlier *Understanding Human Nature*. *Individual Psychology* and *Understanding Human Nature* are Adler’s best-known works and cover much of the same ground: the former theorizes melancholia; it is the latter, however, an account of the sources of neurosis, which has been called ‘the most systematic exposé of his doctrine’ (Ellenberger 623). Surprisingly, it also, according to Connell, ‘made a clearer statement of a psychoanalytic case for feminism than was found anywhere else until the 1970s’ (*Masculinities* 16). If Freud was a postmodernist before his time, it seems that Adler was a proto-feminist.

Connell’s claim finds substantiation in Adler’s ideological shift in theorizing the masculine/feminine divide. It is well known that Adler’s split with Freud in 1911 was due to differing opinions on the subject of masculinity. Adler doubted that the theory of the libido and the Oedipal drama could provide a creditable analysis of masculinity in general; for him the ‘apparent Oedipus complex is only a small part of the overpowering neurotic dynamic, a stage of the masculine protest’ (Ansbacher 69). Neither (and here his anti-sexual bias is apparent) did he agree with Freud’s strictly literal interpretations of his observations, seeing them rather as symbolic forms of expression. For example, as Ansbacher notes:

he did not consider the boy’s desire for his mother literally in the sense of a sexual longing, but symbolically, as an expression of an insatiable desire to possess everything, to be on top. The death wish and masochism were not taken as manifestations of the desire to do away with one’s self, but as escapes from defeat and symbols of prevailing. Fear of castration was not the fear of losing one’s penis,

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<sup>11</sup>A tendency to depression seems to have intensified in Boyd’s later life: Niall refers to the ‘inner desolation’ expressed in his last diaries written in Italy (*Martin Boyd: A Life*, p205).

<sup>12</sup>This observation of Lindsay is made by Joanna Mendelssohn in her doctoral thesis *Norman Lindsay and His Family: Myths, Manuscripts and other Narratives* (Department of English, University of Sydney, December 1994, footnote 19, p130). She also mentions a love poem from Robert Lindsay to Martin Boyd, dated 1922, which is written in Lindsay’s copy of Boyd’s book of poems *Retrospect* (here reproduced on page 206).

but an expression of the fear of being unmanly, of becoming worthless. (Ansbacher 74)

The desire to ‘be on top’, to be first or best, ‘to be like a real man’ constituted the masculine protest — more formally defined as a striving from a position of inferiority to a position of superiority, totality, perfection (Ansbacher 1) — with which Adler replaced Freud’s libidinous sex drive.<sup>13</sup> It was a finding which derived from his habit of viewing humankind as constructed by its socio-political machinery, a factor which necessarily developed in him an acute consciousness of dominating masculinities. Left in no doubt as to the connections between masculinity, power and public violence, he was provoked to criticize ‘the arch evil of our culture, the excessive pre-eminence of manliness’ (*Masculinities* 16) — the ultimate, and logical expression of which was war. In 1918 and 1919, Ellenberger tells us, Adler tried ‘to elucidate the phenomenon of war and explained it by the criminally irresponsible attitude of those in power and the helplessness of the people when they became aware of the deception’. His conclusion was that war is a form of ‘mass psychosis provoked by a few men in search of power in their own selfish interests’ (p 611). Boyd’s own views on war are closely parallel. His war experience consolidated and confirmed his innate pacifism, leading him, philosophically, to object to his ‘body and soul’ being treated as ‘merely fodder for the economic mincing-machine’ (*Flame* 172); and practically, during World War II, to take issue with the Archbishop of Canterbury over the hypocrisy and inaction of the Church in connection with the continued bombing of German cities (*Day* 202-3). War occasioned Boyd’s contempt for the ‘brutes and fools’ in authority (*Day* 97); he lambasted the spirit of the offensive in the trenches, which taught that ‘the only useful Hun was a dead one’, commenting

I felt an angry repudiation, mixed with a depression which I could not then account for, but which I now recognize as the sensation I feel when the voice of authority is the voice of evil. (*Flame* 138)

He tells us that he wrote *When Blackbirds Sing* ‘with all the cold intensity of which I am capable...to spotlight the essential act of murder’ (*Day* 276), and he deplores the acceptance of the ‘tough’ ideal (which he associates with the collapse of Christian ethics): ‘Following “toughness”’, he says, ‘men are able to seize every selfish advantage for themselves, and to give a cheap effect of courage’ (*Flame* 267).<sup>14</sup>

Adler offers a critique of masculine ‘toughness’ and aggression which quite clearly would have been welcomed by Boyd. A similar reception may have been accorded his validation of the feminine. Adler’s active and determined deconstruction and denigration of the cult of masculine supremacy, a move that must have been regarded as strangely idiosyncratic and contentious in his time, was insightful, renegade and uncannily predictive of first-wave feminism. Adler believed strongly in the innate bisexuality of the human race; unlike Freud, he did not predicate his theory

<sup>13</sup>The masculine protest ‘thus replaced biological, external, objective causal explanation with psychological, internal, subjective causal explanation [and] it was this departure which strained his relationship with Freud critically, ultimately leading to the break in 1911’ (Ansbacher p9).

<sup>14</sup>Adler’s views on courage may be pertinent here. To him a man needs courage to overcome situations of inferiority: courage will also enable a man to change his life style after he has consciously changed his life goal (Ellenberger p609). Ellenberger also says that, according to Alexander Neuer, Adler called courage ‘that kind of higher psychic energy or *thymos* which the ancient Greeks considered the essence of the soul’.

on a capacity for undifferentiated sexual orientation, or choice in terms of sexual object; he posited instead the idea of psychical hermaphroditism based on a notion of composite masculine and feminine traits; traits, moreover, to which he gave equal value.<sup>15</sup> In *Understanding Human Nature*, however, Adler confronts some unpalatable truths:

All our institutions, our traditional attitudes (brotherhood, boys' clubs), our laws, our morals, our customs, give evidence they are determined and maintained by privileged males for the glory of male domination. Every human being is measured according to the standard of the privileged male.<sup>16</sup>

He perceives a 'civilization marked by prejudice' (HN 145) in which masculine/ feminine polarity is heavily weighted towards the masculine. In this inequitable equation, 'masculine' signifies the active and positive characteristics of being — for instance, worth-while, victorious, capable and courageous — whereas 'feminine' is identified with passivity, servility and subordination (HN 132), and therefore with weakness. In a world which places an exaggerated emphasis on masculine power and strength (hence the motivation away from weakness inherent in the 'masculine protest'), the woman is automatically underrated and devalued. Masculine culture not only perpetrates a calculated deception in its promotion of the 'fallacy of the inferiority of woman' (HN 145), but actively derogates woman 'as the source of all evil, as in the Biblical conception of original sin, or *The Iliad* of Homer' (HN 129).<sup>17</sup> The inevitable result of this skewing of polarities, Adler laments, is that it 'introduces an unusual tension into all erotic relationships...often entirely annihilating every chance for happiness between the sexes. Our whole love life is poisoned, distorted, and corroded by this tension' (HN 145).

Adler seems to be suggesting that in a perfect world where masculinity and femininity are valued equally the tension or psychic dissonance he describes would be largely eradicated. This is a little odd given that in Adler's view the adult personality is formed out of conflict, compromise, contradiction and 'exists under tension' (*Masculinities* 16) — a view only too logical considering his belief in bisexuality. Even in the first half of the twentieth century there was scientific, hormonal evidence to verify the truth of this assertion; however, proven data were superfluous to Adler's intuition that the developing child, in attempting to reconcile competing impulses of independence and submission, must of necessity deal with an internal contradiction between masculinity and femininity. Earliest childhood, according to this argument, becomes a time when children of both sexes, 'being weak *vis-à-vis* adults, are forced to inhabit the feminine position. They develop a sense of femininity and doubts about their ability to achieve masculinity' (*Masculinities* 16).<sup>18</sup> (I assume

<sup>15</sup>Alfred Adler, *The Practice and Theory of Individual Psychology*, (trans) P. Radin, London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co. Ltd., 1946, p21. Further citations from this work will be given by page number in the text.

<sup>16</sup>Alfred Adler, *Understanding Human Nature*, (trans) Walter Béran Wolfe, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1932, p123. Further citations from this work will be given by page number in the text.

<sup>17</sup>Though it is fair to say that Boyd gives us some outstandingly sympathetic female characters, it must be noted that neither is he averse to sprinkling his novels with females who are either decidedly perverse, for example Aunt Matilda, Mildy Langton, Ella Leigh and Heather Vane, or even faintly grotesque like Cousin Sarah and Aunt Baba; not forgetting 'Baroness Beetroot', reputedly a caricature of Barbara Baynton.

<sup>18</sup>Here it may be appropriate to invoke David Gilmore's aphorism that 'Psychologically masculinity is a defence against regression to pre-Oedipal identification with the mother'. Cited by Connell, *Masculinities*, p33.

that Connell does not mean here that girls wish to achieve masculinity, rather that they wish to achieve those of the masculine traits considered desirable). In cases of normal development, as Connell observes, some kind of balance is struck (*Masculinities* 16). In cases of variations from the norm, for instance if there is a weakness, or a perception of inferiority, there may ensue ‘that frequently unconscious urge toward a reinforced masculine protest which is to represent the solution for the disharmony’ (*IP* 22) — the ‘protest’ being, incidentally, a phenomenon not confined to males only. As for sexual perversions, they too indicate ‘a purposeful, although unconscious, device to enhance a lowered self-esteem’; furthermore, it is suggested that ‘inclinations toward perversion in men are compensatory tendencies to alleviate a feeling of inferiority in the face of the overrated power of women’ (Ansbacher 424). Feelings of inferiority and the struggle to overcome them are central to Adler’s theory of neurosis.<sup>19</sup> Organ inferiority also plays a large part in Adler’s thinking. From the little we know of Boyd’s formative years, it seems likely that some, if not all of these concerns, may be implicated in his initial, and crucial, self-concept.

As well as recognising (in *Individual Psychology*) that ‘every organism strives to overcome its existential difficulties’, Adler found in his practice as a physician that many patients ‘suffered...on account of their erroneous opinion of themselves’ coupled with a biased perception of their surroundings.<sup>20</sup> It has already been remarked here that Boyd uses a great many adjectives to describe himself as a misfit, as ‘different from the herd’<sup>21</sup> and as possibly eccentric. And it is true that despite giving a generalised impression of an idyllic childhood, he chooses to dwell on matters which do not reflect well on his sense of adequacy: for example, his rather pathetic helplessness as a young boy in wanting to be carried over the beach stones by his brothers Merric and Penleigh;<sup>22</sup> an outburst of anger against his father where he is made to feel ineffectual; his nicknames ‘Pompey’ and ‘the little Bishop’ which imply pompousness as well as absurdity and even ridicule; and again, his suicidal thoughts with their suggestion of deep melancholia. Within his family — no doubt because he felt unable to compete with the adored and brilliant Gilbert, the difficult and mercurial Merric and the gifted Penleigh — he took a back seat in what may have been an intuitive bid for acceptance. His grandmother Emma à Beckett describes him in her diaries, for instance, as ‘a quiet, companionable little boy who caused no trouble’ (*A Life* 4). As Niall observes:

...one of his characteristic images of his younger self is that of the listening child, silently engrossed in the conversation of adults. He is the little boy lying on the floor playing with dominoes...He is the child whom no one notices as he sits quietly beside his mother, listening and ‘picking up a vast amount of information about the family’

<sup>19</sup>Adler regarded man’s tendency to shift from a state of inferiority to one of superiority as part of the same process that drives the entire living nature from the first living cell to mankind and to the present world, a striving to challenge and conquer death itself. The concept is similar to those of Leibniz and Bergson (Ellenberger, *The Discovery of the Unconscious*, p624).

<sup>20</sup>According to Rom, *Alfred Adler’s Individual Psychology and its History*.

<sup>21</sup>This is how Boyd describes Dominic in *A Difficult Young Man*, p61.

<sup>22</sup>Adler might have interpreted young Martin’s habit of wailing ‘Carry me over the stones’ (*A Single Flame* p7) as a misuse of emotion. In *Understanding Human Nature* (p271) he says that ‘once a child has learned that he can tyrannize his environment by fury, or sadness, or weeping, arising out of a feeling of neglect, he will test this method of obtaining domination over his environment again and again’.

from the exchange of gossip when her brothers and sisters come to visit her. (*A Life* 16)

While the overall impression given here is one of passivity, of compliance and docility leavened with curiosity, it is not necessarily the whole story. The reminiscing Boyd of *A Single Flame* repudiates his seven-year-old self as an ‘ignoble little creature’, who, as he best recalls, appears to have been ‘greedy, timorous, credulous, morbid, priggish, and snobbish, but somewhat enlivened by a strain of rebellious high spirits’ (p9). Nevertheless, the image of Boyd as a spectator rather than an active participant is one which persists, and moreover, is how he frequently presents himself in his family fictions. His alter ego Guy Langton in *A Difficult Young Man*, for example, is described by his grandmother Alice Langton as ‘an odd little boy [who] seems to reflect more of other people’s feelings than to have any of his own’ (p45).<sup>23</sup>

From the evidence of his schooldays Boyd seems to have started early the business of repudiating the compulsory rough and tumble of an education system whose principal achievement seemed to be ‘admission to learned circles or to good society...[not by reason of] a scholarly mind or considerate manners, but by the ability to show a scarred behind’ (*Day* 32-33). He writes in *A Single Flame* that he was prudish and ‘timorous at school, afraid I would be bullied and hurt’ (pp30-31). Enlarging on this in *Day of My Delight*, he suggests not only a feminized version of himself as a schoolboy,<sup>24</sup> but paints a picture of a distinctly meagre physical specimen:

Although my life was so uniquely sheltered I was always conscious of the danger from the brute in my fellows. Like all my family I had a thin skull, so that sometimes on a scorching Australian morning I could hardly bear the dash from my house to the Big School. *I was poor as a physical organism*, and, in spite of my mother’s careful supervision of our diet, my teeth were wretched, and I had at monthly intervals throughout the whole of my schooldays to submit to the tortures of the dentist’s chair. I was not likely to become an admirer of the physically aggressive. When attention was drawn to my unboyish dislike of violence I was ashamed that I could not go about knocking out bullies... (*Day* 31, my italics)

Boyd hastens to say that his inability to ‘knock out bullies’ generally did not worry him much, just as being the ‘most frail’ among his schoolfellows — with a ‘completely unathletic nature’ and ‘exaggerated religious’ inclination — did not preclude him from popularity or acceptance as an equal. There is a sense, all the same, of dichotomy here: the emphasis on physiological inferiority, on ‘unboyishness’ and a feeling of shame, conveying as it does either an actual inadequacy, or at the very least an inadequate self-opinion motivated by the wish to ‘be at one with his fellows’, is at odds with the more sanguine reassurances about equality and respect. A cultural determinist or an Adlerian psychologist might argue that Boyd’s distaste for institutionalised bullying and vindictiveness, what he called ‘regulated animalism’, was a response to circumstance, in this case the circumstance of his perceived physical inferiority: the effect of such a rationalisation being to give him some moral leverage and ascendancy in a situation where he was physically at a disadvantage.

<sup>23</sup>If true of the young Boyd, one could argue that in such a non-assertive, receptive (feminized?) state — ‘without any irritable reaching after fact and reason’ — he was possessed of negative capability.

<sup>24</sup>Later at his Kew theological college, Boyd was perceived by his co-student John Hope as ‘a bit of a siss’. Louis Lodge, in conversation 11/5/98, reporting on a 1960s interview with Hope.

In actual fact many of the cultural imperatives dictating his attitude towards violence, cruelty and all forms of base and injudicious behaviour were already in place, instilled by his mother and in the process of being reinforced by his headmaster.<sup>25</sup> But to give Adler his due, it does seem possible that Boyd's physical weakness as a child may have been instrumental in his developing a mental strength which allowed him to step out of line and attempt to cultivate, subliminally at least, an ideology of masculinity which, while not priding itself on conventional notions of aggression and dominance, was not deficient in virtues such as courage, honour and an old-fashioned sense of chivalry.

Certain of Adler's insights in relation to organ inferiority make interesting reading when put alongside Boyd's, and his family's, account of his early life. Agreeing with Freud that the beginnings of disturbances to the psyche or nervous diseases are traceable to childhood, Adler goes on to say (and I am not suggesting that this is an approximate portrait of Boyd; only that there are certain affinities and coincidences):

Regularly and inexorably was it forced upon my attention that the possession of inherited inferior organs [and] organic systems...created a situation, in the early stages of a child's development, *whereby a normal feeling of weakness and helplessness had been enormously intensified and had grown into a deeply-felt sense of inferiority...*The infantile psychic picture often shows striking intensification of traits otherwise normal, such as infantile helplessness, the need for cuddling, for tenderness; and these then develop into anxiety, fear of being alone, timidity, shyness, fear of strangers and unknown people, hyper-sensitiveness to pain, prudishness, permanent fear of punishment and fear of the consequences of every act — in short into characteristics that impart *unmistakable feminine traits to the boy*.

It is not long before this *feeling of being pushed aside* comes to the front, markedly so in those children disposed to neurosis. Together with it there develops a *hyper-sensitiveness* which repeatedly disturbs the peaceful and even flow of the psyche. Children of this type desire to possess, eat, hear, see and know everything. They wish to surpass all others and accomplish everything alone. Their phantasy plays with all kinds of ideas of greatness. They wish to save other people, picture themselves as heroes, believe in an aristocratic origin and regard themselves as persecuted and hard-pressed...Under favourable circumstances an unquenchable thirst for knowledge may arise or that hot-house growth, the precocious child.

Adler goes on to say that, in the case of individuals with a neurotic disposition, passivity and submissiveness can be very abruptly displaced by hidden traits of defiance and rebellion, that is, by signs of resentment. Thus he hypothesizes a mixture of passive and active characteristics, an 'apparent double-life, which in the case of normal children remains within definite limits, and which enters into the formation of the character of mature individuals [but which] *does not permit the nervous person a single-minded pursuit of his goal and checks him in his decisions by means of constructions of his own making, anxiety and doubt*'. People afflicted by this twofold nature

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<sup>25</sup>Boyd opens *A Single Flame* with the words 'The teaching of my mother and my headmaster led me to believe that a life of absolute virtue was not only possible, but usual'. (He was later to say that they were not justified in doing so, *Flame* p260).

never attain to any harmony in their strivings, for...the apparent double-life of the neurotic ('double vie', 'dissociation', 'split-personality', of many authors), is definitely grounded in the fact that the psyche partakes of both feminine and masculine traits. Both appear to strive for unity but purposely fail in their synthesis in order to rescue the personality from colliding with reality. (*IP* 21)

Leaving aside the more exaggerated nature of some of these findings — the remarks about persecution with their suggestion of paranoia, for instance — and reiterating that I do not intend these observations to serve as any kind of definitive character analysis, the degree of concurrence they demonstrate with known facets of Boyd's personality is nevertheless remarkable. Significantly, they go some way towards clarifying the kinds of plausible foundational influences which might result in a double-life: in Boyd's case, what Manning Clark intuited as his 'divided nature', and what indeed for him was capable of multiplying into a cast of fictional characters, 'the many travesties of myself'. That this might involve the notion of some uneasy split, never fully resolved, between Boyd's masculine and feminine dispositions is plausibly at the forefront of his ambiguous gender consciousness/unconsciousness, the ability he displays to equivocate between categories and accommodate complexity: a situation where the refusal of the 'effeminate' and the tacit identification with the feminine exist together with the fear of being unmanly and the greater fear of an excess of manliness.

Many other parallels with Boyd's childhood persona may be discerned in these findings: helplessness, hyper-sensitiveness, anxiety and doubt, passivity and rebellion, precociousness and the insatiable appetite for knowledge (the latter again evoking Leonardo). Most extraordinary in its implications for Boyd is the fantasy life of the child as Adler describes it: 'They wish to save other people, picture themselves as heroes, believe in an aristocratic origin'.<sup>26</sup> Boyd's homage to the Greek model of male valour tends to align him, by association — and possibly by wishful thinking — with the idea of heroism, with achievement and the wish to excel. In his personal life it was also an ideal to which he aspired.<sup>27</sup> Even as a frail schoolboy, sheer courage and a romantically misplaced sense of heroism caused him to undergo a battering from the biggest specimen among his schoolfellows; while much later, during the first World War, perceiving a slight directed at his mother, he tried to provoke a duel with a fellow officer — a gesture of gentlemanly bravado which fortunately proved futile. The formidable heroes and saviours of his imagination, however, are there to be found in his books, notable among them the characters of Dominic Langton, Stephen Brayford and Jackie Blair, all of whom assume certain affinities with Christ. As for aristocratic origins, Boyd's forebears were more notable than noble; and while heredity is genuinely revered by

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<sup>26</sup>For Adler the 'desperate' desire to play the role of a saviour and hero was a compulsion, a refuge from anxiety and doubt (*The Practice and Theory of Individual Psychology*, p20). He also says that among youngest children 'we find active and capable individuals who have gone so far that they have become the saviors of their whole family' (*Understanding Human Nature*, p151). There is an element of the latter, perhaps, in Boyd's expensive buying and restoration of the Grange, his mother's childhood home outside Melbourne where he lived for three years from August 1948. Two purchases on, to Boyd's dismay it was sold for a quarry: 'The family home, which I had spent three years trying to save, I had ruined' (*Day of My Delight* p246).

<sup>27</sup>He tempered this with a disclaimer in favour of reality, however: 'If I had been given great physical and moral strength I might have become a Galahad or a Gladstone, but my physique was poor, I loved pleasure, and I had inherited an exaggerated, almost perverted sense of the ridiculous, which is an impediment to heroism' (*A Single Flame* p3).

him this is no guarantee that in his portrayal of fictional nobility he abstained from playing with notions of illegitimacy and scandal.

Concurrently with his theories concerned with organ inferiority, Adler developed an associated hypothesis concerned with the child's place in the family constellation, a phenomenon he called position psychology. According to his reasoning, the youngest child is the most vulnerable in terms of an inferiority complex: he is 'usually a peculiar type...evidenced by the countless fairy tales, legends, Biblical stories, in which the youngest always appears in the same light'. He points to the youngest's unique situation in being the smallest, the most in need of help, and the recipient of 'especially solicitous treatment'. Often, says Adler, he may act 'as though he were neglected and carried a feeling of inferiority within him'. Writing in *Understanding Human Nature*, Adler continues:

In our investigations we have always been able to find this feeling of inferiority and have been able also to deduce the quality and fashion of his psychic development from the presence of this torturing sentiment. *In this sense a youngest child is like a child who has come into the world with weak organs* (my italics). What the child *feels* need not actually be the case. It does not matter what really has happened, whether an individual is really inferior or not. What is important is his *interpretation* of his situation. (HN 149-151)<sup>28</sup>

Adler expands on this theme in *Individual Psychology*, declaring that the psychology of the youngest child can be extraordinarily complicated and contradictory. Prone to a sensation of oppressiveness and possessing an easily wounded vanity, the child may lose faith in himself and exhibit a 'special caution and resignation'. On the other hand, the very knowledge of his inferior position is likely, under propitious circumstances, to stimulate the child to prove not only that he can do everything but that he can accomplish more than those around him (*IP* 191): as an adult he is 'satisfied only with the very best' (immediately one thinks of Boyd's aesthetic interest in the good, the beautiful, the pleasurable, of his striving for 'the highest when seen'). Adler backs up his claims by citing the success stories of those historical figures, 'very frequently last-born children', who have made their names in the sphere of art.

Though strictly speaking Martin was not the last-born, for ten important formative years up until his sister Helen's birth he experienced himself as such. Taking into account the record of his childhood quirks and temperament, significant correspondences with the Adlerian youngest-child stereotype may be readily ascertained. Position psychology becomes of moment, therefore, in his psychic development, a factor very likely to have contributed to outcomes of 'doubleness' and contradictory traits. The youngest of four boys, born in lieu of the coveted daughter, these are factors which cannot have contributed greatly to his feeling of self-worth. His sense of his mother's keen disappointment expresses itself through the words of Guy Langton in *The Cardboard Crown*: 'It

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<sup>28</sup>Ellenberger notes that Adler's 1912 book, later published in 1917 in translation as *The Neurotic Constitution* (Ellenberger refers to it as *The Nervous Character*, a direct transcription from the German), which treated the opposition of masculinity/femininity at length, had for its epigraph Seneca's motto: '*Omnia ex opinione suspensa sunt*' (all things depend upon opinion). Paul Rom translates this as 'We depend on our opinions and are as miserable as we think we are'.

would have been nicer for everyone, except perhaps myself, if I had been a girl'.<sup>29</sup> Even the circumstances of his birth — its occurrence in Geneva while his parents were in transit and faced with the possibility of financial ruin — were not calculated to inspire confidence and certainty; on the contrary, they contributed to 'a lifelong sense of dispossession and homelessness' (*A Life* 2), the now-fashionable 'alienation' factor common to most neurotic symptoms.<sup>30</sup> Adler would say that from a feeling of inferiority Martin cultivated survival tactics: for instance, the strategy he developed, probably unconscious, for coping both with his mother's grief over the death of the eldest son Gilbert and with sibling rivalry, was to adopt the feminine role. The fastest route to love and acceptance appears to have been that of self-effacement: his self-perceived value lay in the predominance of inconspicuousness, compliance and tractability. The feminine, according to this schema, is rated positively. No doubt his 'pretty face' added to his feminized status and gained him some admiration; later, however, his own uncertainties may have caused him to write, in *The Montforts*, of Kenneth Blair's disappointment that 'Raoul, whose youth had been so full of liveliness and promise, [should] develop into an ineffectual dilettante' (p229). Martin, according to Niall, 'faced the idea that he was himself a disappointment to Arthur Boyd' (*A Life* 112).

The picture so far illustrates only one of the typologies Adler attributes to the youngest, the inclination towards caution, resignation, low self-esteem. It ignores those more dynamic factors of ambition, restlessness and a striving for excellence which were also part of Boyd's makeup. By Adler's reckoning Boyd was an amalgam of the two typologies Adler applied to the last-born; and it needs to be acknowledged that it provides an explanation as plausible as any other for the ambivalences, incompatibilities and contradictions detectable in Boyd's nature. In the documentation of his private life he hints periodically at a susceptibility to anxiety and doubt. Professionally, however, though he suffered many setbacks, his reputation as a writer and novelist does not ultimately support the idea of him as a failure. On the contrary there is ample evidence that, by dint of his accumulated gifts of inheritance, writerly skills, creative imagination and a natural if curbed rebelliousness, he was eventually able, in large degree, to establish himself as worthy of respect and recognition. And if it were possible to say that Martin Boyd effected the equivalent of a masculine protest in order to do this, it must of necessity have been of a complexion that was decorous and restrained, never strident.

With respect to Adler's views on homosexuality, one is struck by how closely they align with his analysis of the neurotic constitution and, in the process, corroborate Freud's finding that 'homosexual traits are present in every case of neurosis' (Ansbacher 46). Adler's treatment of homosexuality is also striking by reason of the number of correspondences which invite comparison and identification with Boyd. If we first compare a description of the neurotic made by Adler:

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<sup>29</sup>From Martin Boyd, *The Cardboard Crown, The Langton Quartet* (ed) Brian McFarlane, Richmond, Victoria: William Heinemann Australia, 1988, p133. Further citations from this work will be given by page number in the text.

<sup>30</sup>At this juncture one cannot help wondering whether Martin Boyd's oft-stated desire for the harmonious integration of man and nature can be seen as some kind of unconscious striving towards a compensation, even an overcompensation, for alienation.

Estranged from reality, the neurotic man lives a life of imagination and phantasy and employs a number of devices for enabling him to side-step the demands of reality and for reaching out toward an ideal situation.... (IP 23)

with one of his statements on homosexuality:

As a rule the homo-sexual *by excluding the conditions making for difficulties*, succeeds in creating for himself a type of existence to which he is either quite adapted or which he can more easily follow than that of hetero-sexuality, which continually throws him into the current of life and brings him into relation with all the problems, demands and difficulties of social existence.... (IP 188)

the similarities become manifest: both the neurotic and the homosexual (acknowledged as usually the same person) long to 'attain a future in which [they] will remain entirely untouched by the difficulties of life' (IP 189). The difference, if there is a difference, is that the homosexual is pointedly avoiding the dangers of normal sexual life, so much so that it becomes natural for him 'to recoil from all undertakings that would lead to an acquiescence in the (true) sexual role' (IP 196). He avoids sexual problems not by overcoming them, but by pushing them further away into the distance;<sup>31</sup> according to Ansbacher 'his perverted fantasies, even his active perversions, serve him only to keep him away from actual love. They serve as a substitute but only because he wants to play his hero role'. As a result sexuality may be devalued and eliminated as a factor altogether if this serves the tendency of the patient (Ansbacher 59). Alternatively, for those (male) neurotics for whom fear of women hinders a natural sexual relation, homosexuality becomes a way of mastering the situation (IP 367). And because psychological distance is less with persons of the same sex,<sup>32</sup> an exclusion preference may develop, a tendency for the homosexual to cut himself off from the opposite sex altogether. Adler's findings on the exclusion tendency illustrate his approach to the problem of homosexuality in general. In conformity with his belief in the importance of social factors in the construction of personality, Adler held a non-essentialist conviction that homosexuality had no physiopathological basis, that sexual perversions in general were an artificial product. The exclusion tendency in this view becomes an example of 'self-training', with Adler asserting that 'There can be no sexual perversion without preparation...Each person has formed it for himself; he has been directed to it by the psychological constitution he has himself created' (Ansbacher 424). As well, and predictably, Adler's homosexual paradigm complies with his theories of the inferiority/superiority opposition. He clearly regards homosexuality as a weakness, a condition which 'waxes and wanes in accordance with the strength of social connectedness' (Ansbacher 425). The homosexual to Adler is insufficient in the [normal] sexual relationship and 'does not live like someone who feels himself adequate to life': in compensation for his inferiority

<sup>31</sup>Alfred Adler & F. G. Crookshank, *Individual Psychology and Sexual Difficulties (II)*, London: The C. W. Daniel Company, September 1934, p28.

<sup>32</sup>So states Adler in his 75-page study of homosexuality published in German in 1917 and not available in translation (cited by Ellenberger, p217). It is a finding which resonates with Sedgwick's 'trope of gender separatism', that which 'tends to re-assimilate to one another identification and desire' (EC 87). Adler's view also denies the assumption of any innate heterosexuality of desire. And there is a possible link to the lesbian interpretive framework offered by Sedgwick to the effect that men who love men are seen as possibly more male than those whose desire crosses boundaries of gender. Sedgwick concludes from this, interestingly enough, that 'by analogy, male homosexuality could be, and often was, seen as the practice for which male supremacy was the theory' (EC 36).

complex he ‘aims at a fictitious feeling of superiority through the use of a trick...or a gesture of revolt [against the demands of social life]’ (Ansbacher 425).<sup>33</sup>

The preceding is necessarily a condensation of Adler’s approach to homosexuality, culled from various sources.<sup>34</sup> Many of the characteristics as presented nevertheless make for some not insubstantial analogies with Boyd’s lived experience and revelations. On the issue of detachment and estrangement from reality, for example, his experiment with the monastic life in a religious community at Batcombe, Dorset — an enterprise established to revive the spirit of St Francis in the Church of England — demonstrates that, while motivated by altruism and genuine religious feeling:

I felt that it was possible that this experiment at Batcombe might really prove, in spite of its discords and absurdities, to be the nucleus of a fresh flowering of spiritual values and disinterested love. So, moved by the desire to interfere, drugged a little by mediaevalism, thinking that as my life was useless I might as well give it to the service of my fellows, and also with a genuine wish to be of use, I decided to throw in my lot with the community... (*Day* 129)

there is also a suggestion of escape from self-recrimination of the ‘useless waster’ kind (*Day* 120)<sup>35</sup> to a life style which, although it could be interpreted as a form of Adlerian isolationism and psychic retreat, was adequately recompensed by its opportunity for idealism and ‘heroism in...washing tramps’ socks’ and administering to the socially ostracized. It was recompensed too by the presence of attractive young fellow disciples. In *A Single Flame* the declaration recorded above includes the words: ‘and, to be honest, influenced by the lively eyes of the undergraduates’ (p181), a clause which tends to explain the additional ‘[There was] a percentage of corruption in my motives’ recorded in both accounts. As for the issue of the avoidance of sexual problems, Boyd gives an indication of an early reticence in such matters by commenting: ‘The average boy suffers far more from inhibition than indulgence, and it is infinitely more difficult for him to have sexual intercourse than to remain chaste’ (*Flame* 43),<sup>36</sup> a statement which may say more about his own passivity and inhibition than that of his schoolfellows. His follow-up remark is less equivocal in its rejection of sexuality and, by implication, ‘the current of life’: ‘Also our minds were too filled with noble words and ambitions to be preoccupied with sex, *and that is the only way to avoid its dangers*’ (my italics). It is not the only time Boyd attempts to articulate and rationalize a problematical attitude to heterosexual intercourse,<sup>37</sup> an attitude which feasibly contains within it not only the desire to put distance between himself and the opposite sex, but possibly the wish, in Adlerian terms, to ‘devalue and eliminate’ sexuality altogether.

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<sup>33</sup>Adler observes (according to Ansbacher p425) that the revolt may originate in a belligerent, inimical position of the child in the family, an hypothesis with possibly tangential links to Boyd.

<sup>34</sup>*Individual Psychology*, for instance, has a section on homosexuality.

<sup>35</sup>This was compounded by his brother Penleigh’s death: ‘I was in the classical condition to renounce the world’ (*A Single Flame* p180).

<sup>36</sup>This is a curious echo of Adler’s statement on homosexuality: ‘We might say that it is so infinitely more difficult to be homo-sexual than normal that this fact alone should give us a measure of the tremendous expenditure of energy necessary for going through life as such’ (*Individual Psychology*, p186).

<sup>37</sup>By renouncing ‘the World, the Flesh and the Devil’ to become a clergyman, Boyd’s proxy Guy Langton tells us his action will delay ‘the machinery of reproduction which is implanted in us to disturb and often destroy our lives’ (*A Difficult Young Man*, p115).

The fact that women as objects of desire do not feature prominently in Boyd's memoirs would seem to support this. By his own account girls are never his playmates or companions in childhood; even in his school years he 'knew no girls at all' (*Flame* 36); later, though he dreams of the 'impersonal acquiescent girl waiting for me somewhere' (*Flame* 76) and fantasizes about unobtainable and idealised nymphs, he disregards the visible embodiments of young womanhood he passes in the street. The only girls who seem to have aroused his interest were his distant cousins Marian (Mim), Nancy and Joan Weigall, who, during the two years in which he wavered between Theological College and the study of architecture, constituted 'the delight' of his life (*Day* 45).<sup>38</sup> The girl he fails to kiss at the boat wharf, although nameless, is thought to be either Mim or Nancy; she may be the same girl<sup>39</sup> he mentions in reference to marriage:

I had come to the point where my life seemed neither useful nor enjoyable. This was partly brought about by the recrudescence of a love affair with an Australian girl who had been in London that summer, which had come to nothing owing to my own circumstances, and to the fact that she, a condition unusual in my Australian women friends, had no large private income. (*Flame* 179)

Coming out of the blue, this bizarre note falls somewhere between naïveté and opportunism, with possibly an element of self-delusion thrown in. It is easy enough to understand that Boyd may not have named the girl for reasons of chivalry and propriety,<sup>40</sup> but few such reservations are in evidence with regard to his male friendships.<sup>41</sup> Besides raising questions about differing standards, the episode has the curious effect of simultaneously rendering the girl mysterious and intriguing and yet of diminishing her importance in the scheme of things, the latter because she disappears entirely and thus never qualifies as part of a principal narrative. Boyd's feelings may well have been involved; nevertheless his cryptic allusion leaves the reader in little doubt that his interest was sustainable only in the event of her possessing an income which could support a 'future...untouched by the difficulties of life'. The affair seems more related to Boyd's fantasy life than to any realisable actuality. By contrast, and possibly because the application of a gentlemanly code is not relevant to the circumstances, Boyd does not shirk the physical reality of his only recorded sexual encounter, that with a prostitute: an event he relates, rather naively considering his unrealistic expectations, as highly unsatisfactory:

What I was really seeking was the release in an act of sensual worship of all the beauty I had seen and imagined, I believed that with the fusion of bodies would come the fusion of souls. I did not know that it was grotesque to expect this from a casual encounter. (*Flame* 86)

Thereafter, in wartime France, Boyd spent his time dodging membership of 'the brothel contingent': once because he was in a 'sublimated condition' owing to his tender regard for a young

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<sup>38</sup>The Weigall girls were to remain Boyd's close friends: 'If we meet after a gap of ten or twenty years, we take up the conversation...in tone and idiom where we left it off' (*Day of My Delight* pp45-46), and indeed, his Rome diaries record an on-going correspondence.

<sup>39</sup>Probably Nancy Weigall, according to Niall (*Martin Boyd: A Life* p96).

<sup>40</sup>The brevity and non-disclosure registered in this passage may screen, to my mind, more than a gentlemanly rectitude in affairs of the heart: a subtextual lack of passion and conviction, for instance, or even a sense of failure in the heterosexual role.

<sup>41</sup>With the notable exception of his relationship with Robert Lindsay, brother of Norman.

pilot named Everard, which, he said, inhibited him from sensual enjoyments, even those offered by the Folies Bergères (*Flame* 134-36); and on the second occasion when he ‘managed to hold out’ despite a free-of-charge offer (*Flame* 143). The temptation at this point to say that Boyd resembles Leonardo da Vinci insofar as it is doubtful whether he ‘ever embraced a woman in passion’ (*Art & Literature* 161) is difficult to resist.<sup>42</sup> However, while it seems true that never in his life ‘did he share a dwelling on equal terms with anyone’ (*A Life* 170), and that he ‘resisted commitment’ in his personal relationships (*A Life* 138), the claim by Margaret Mitchell, an upper-middle-class divorcee three years older than Martin, to have been his mistress during his West Wittering (Sussex) period deserves consideration. Unnamed in Niall’s biography, she claims, ‘persuasively’ according to Niall, that the liaison lasted three years (*A Life* 107);<sup>43</sup> Boyd’s friend Sam Wood puts a longer time-frame on what he calls ‘the friendship’, from about 1925 to 1940. In reference to the relationship Wood says, however: ‘I don’t think sex was important to Martin. I feel that it was a “mothering” kind of thing’.<sup>44</sup> The timing coincides with Boyd’s introduction to the Bloomsbury-style artists Bernard and Noel Adeney with their challenge to his ideas (*A Life* 106). It incorporates the years 1928-33, a period of stagnation between *The Montforts* (1928) and *Scandal of Spring* (1934) that Boyd referred to as ‘not only a hell of boredom, but useless’ (*Flame* 207). It was also the period, significantly perhaps, when his ‘personal tangles’ caused him to turn to Adler, leading to speculation that the by-then terminated or ongoing relationship with Mitchell (depending on whose version we believe) may have been problematical.<sup>45</sup> By contrast, no such potential ‘cloud of unknowing’ clings to Boyd’s last and undisputed attachment to the Italian boy Luciano, an emotional commitment which, uncharacteristically, appears to have left him ‘unguarded’ (*A Life* 178) and vulnerable. Adler, by Boyd’s own say-so, represented some kind of emotional watershed, some release into understanding. Adler’s linked social/behavioural analysis, his deconstruction of the masculine/feminine binary, his explanation of ‘doubleness’, some or all of these may have afforded the kinds of beneficial insights Boyd needed in order to accept and adjust to his own particular disposition free from the imperatives of conventional and/or normative stereotypes.<sup>46</sup>

Martin Boyd made no secret of a philosophy in which he extolled the pursuit of pleasure. Pleasure to Boyd was relatively innocent and idealistic; it was also a moral imperative, a force for good. He equated it with delight in the natural world, with aesthetic appreciation of beauty and

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<sup>42</sup>It is unlikely, however, that he was comparable to Leonardo in being unable to experience an ‘intimate mental relationship with a woman’ (*Art & Literature* p161).

<sup>43</sup>According to a 1986 letter to Sam Wood from one of the West Wittering circle. Cited by Niall, *Martin Boyd: A Life*, p230.

<sup>44</sup>In a letter to me dated 10th August, 1995.

<sup>45</sup>During the Sussex years Boyd dealt openly with homosexual themes in *Scandal of Spring*, in *Dearest Idol* (1929) and in the rejected, never-published *The Shepherd of Admetus*. It was during this time, too, that it occurred to certain of his friends’ children, namely Richard Adeney and Shelley Fausset, ‘that Martin Boyd might be homosexual’, though ‘he was no seducer’ (Niall, *Martin Boyd: A Life*, p107).

<sup>46</sup>Boyd writes how he suggested to a woman [Jean Campbell] he met in Cassis, France, that ‘The only important thing is to be adjusted to one’s environment’, to which she replied: ‘Indeed, it isn’t, the only important thing is to be adjusted to oneself’. ‘Up till 1930’, he says, ‘I had made no attempt to adjust myself to myself’ (*A Single Flame* p205).

truth, with a striving for the optimum utilization and enjoyment of body, intellect and spirit.<sup>47</sup> His idea of pleasure partakes most surely of the Nietzschean formula: 'because all pleasure wants eternity, wants deep, deep eternity'. It may also show affinities with Freud's insight that 'Man cannot forego any pleasure he has ever experienced'.<sup>48</sup> From an Adlerian perspective Boyd's dedicatory, almost fanatical adherence to the pleasure principle is part of his 'style of life', of his 'specific, selective perception of the world' (Ellenberger 615) and indicative of his uniqueness, self-consistency and creativity. More specifically, Adler holds that the striving for pleasure is an attempt at victory over pain, a compensation for a lack of harmonious social development: 'If this is true', he says, 'then we can regard the sexual perversions also from this angle',<sup>49</sup> implying that once again questions of inferiority and its polar opposites — subjective impressions such as exaltation and triumph — are involved (Ellenberger 607).

My intuition is that the psychological insights Boyd gained from reading Adler probably revolved mainly around questions of style of life, what Ansbacher in his introduction refers to as the 'self consistent personality structured from psychological processes'. A brief recapitulation will demonstrate that, after all, many of Adler's more significant perceptions are related to this analysis of personality: the theory, for example, that an individual's life style is dependent on his opinion of himself and the world, as well as on his socialization, his memories, dreams,<sup>50</sup> attitudes, adolescent wishes and the complex tactics he utilizes to reach his life goal or self-ideal. For a full evaluation of a man's personality Adler thought it necessary, according to Ellenberger

to find out about his organ insufficiencies, his early interpersonal relationships and family situation, whether he is a sensory or a motor type, his natural physical and mental energy, his free choices, and his courage. (p615)

Of particular interest to Boyd might have been Adler's belief (along with Marx's) that 'in diagnosing a life style the actions and behaviour of an individual are far more revealing than his words' (Ellenberger 615). Adler's *The Meaning of Life*, a book of modifications to former theories not translated until 1938, is unlikely to have been the text to which Boyd refers. In this book he would doubtless have been pleased to find Adler placing a new emphasis on the importance of creative power in the individual's construction of a life plan. The latter was no longer considered 'a mere reflection of early childhood situations' (Ellenberger 623); and the striving for superiority was revised as a normative ideal, one not antagonistic to community feeling. Adler also conceded that individuals such as homosexuals who abandoned the community ideal for a restricted field were not so much damned as acting according to 'private intelligence'. Whether or not Boyd, on reading Adler, would have perceived himself as conforming to any degree with the Adlerian neurotic/homosexual stereotype, he might at least have discovered that he was given permission to

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<sup>47</sup>Pleasure also had its practical side: 'Just think what marvellous lives we could all have if [our millions were] spent on the good things of the world, on gardens, on glorious buildings, on everything lovely and living...' (*Much Else in Italy*, p38).

<sup>48</sup>Both Nietzsche and Freud are cited by Ansbacher (eds), *The Individual Psychology of Alfred Adler*, p63.

<sup>49</sup>Adler & Crookshank, *Individual Psychology and Sexual Difficulties (II)*, p28.

<sup>50</sup>To Adler first memories have a 'great diagnostic value', whereas dreams, in allowing the temporary removal of social control, show that aspect of the individual 'that he wants to hide from his fellow men' (Ellenberger p615).

carve his individual pathway through life: he would have learned, as he said himself, 'a dependence on one's own personal sensibility'.

As a postscript, it may be merely a coincidence that Boyd tells us, immediately before his allusion to Adler, of a new appreciation of Dostoevsky during the difficult years 1928-33: 'I think that reading *The Brothers Karamazov* I glimpsed for the first time what was meant by spiritual regeneration' (*Flame* 207). Yet, although it is recognised that, unlike Freud, Adler intruded little upon the fields of art, literature and cultural history (Ellenberger 618), Adler does devote a chapter of his *Individual Psychology* to Dostoevsky in what turns out to be a remarkable character analysis of a complex and tormented artist. Dostoevsky is described as a man of 'eternal oscillations' and restlessness; as a hot-headed seeker after the furthestmost limits of experience and truth (and yet aware of the boundary line between the 'permissible and unpermissible'); and as someone whose contrasting nature 'impels him...toward an integrated interpretation of life'. Of the relationship between the artist's life and his work, Adler observes:

...we must remember first and foremost, that the orbit of artistic creation passes outside the battle of life. We may confidently assume that every artist will show a turning-off, a halt, a retreat, as soon as the normal expectations of society confront him. The artist who out of nothing, or let us say, out of an anxious attitude toward the facts of life, creates a world and who, instead of an answer in terms of practical life, gives us a puzzling artistic creation, such a man is averted from life, and its demands. 'Well, but I am a mystic and dreamer!' Dostoevsky tells us.  
(*IP* 284-85)

Of Dostoevsky's aspirations and goals, Adler says he had a presentiment that 'he would find the richest fulfilment of human worth in the form of fellow-love...this goal became of particular significance for his creative faculty and his ethical stand-point'. He attacked isolated heroism,

that heroism which he had experienced personally perhaps more keenly than anyone before him, recognized it as a diseased conceit, as self-love in contrast to that feeling of a common bond which to him was inherent in a love of one's fellowmen and in the logical demands of society.  
(*IP* 288)

Dostoevsky was also a God-seeker. In his confession of faith: 'For me Christ is the most beautiful and the most exalted person in the history of the world' lay his wish to 'be with Christ always, bear His wounds, fulfil His task' (*IP* 287-88), his longing for rapture and 'eternal harmony' in the proximity of God (*IP* 289). It is no exaggeration to say that, in their mutual stress on the supremacy of love of their fellow-man and a desire for a 'rapturous' unity with Christ, there is a similarity of thought (and desire) between Dostoevsky and Martin Boyd. If man wishes to transcend himself, if he wants to overcome the limitations imposed by actual or delusory inferiorities, he can aspire no higher than to amalgamate a love of man with a love of God. It is a transcendence and synthesis which goes to the heart of Adlerian theory, the experience of an 'inner integration between the self

and the other', and the very antithesis of the 'Neurosis [which] is the outcome of the refusal of a self-centered self to meet another self'.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>51</sup>Hanna Colm cited by Ansbacher, p16.

## CHAPTER FOUR: *Appropriating an Arcadian eros*

In the preceding two chapters, using the frames of reference provided by the Freudian psychoanalytic method and Adler's 'individual psychology', a schematic attempt was made, by means as discrepant and polarised as diagnosis<sup>1</sup> and speculation, to explore some of the complex issues suggested both by Martin Boyd's deeply conflicted psycho-sexual personality and by what may profitably be called a quest for identity and self-actualisation. The placement of Boyd within such paradigmatic constraints in the interests of enlightenment has not been undertaken lightly or arbitrarily. On the contrary, the methodology was logically and organically dictated by context: by Boyd's reactivity, in the case of Freud, and alternatively, by his endorsement of Adler as a therapeutic aid to self-understanding. The investigative challenge has thus far yielded certain correspondences and symptomatic symmetries with both systems of thought — not the least of these being the striking resemblance of Boyd to Freud's analysis of Leonardo as the archetypal 'emotional homosexual'. The present chapter addresses Boyd's preoccupation — one might almost call it an infatuation — with classical antiquity, and serves as an intersection point for the clash of the (perceived) inadequate self and the (ambitious) artistic imagination as projected in the declaration: 'I had no great opinion of my own character as it fell so far short of the ideal' (*Flame* 261). This remark, which notionally encapsulates the archetypal Adlerian trajectory from inferiority to transcendence, is for all its cryptic brevity eloquent of the dichotomy at Boyd's centre: of the insecure quotidian self desirous of self-betterment (complicated by a dualistic attitude towards the masculinist drive for superiority), coupled with the idealising self that aspires to creative freedom and unattainable human perfection. The latter as a goal provided Boyd with a compensatory fantasy in which to indulge his romantic and heroic inclinations; at a deeper level, however, it constitutes a guiding principle vital to his innermost being. Boyd's version of the 'ideal' was indissolubly linked to the Greek notion of excellence, beauty and truth, of 'the highest when seen' — and by association, with Plato's philosophic treatment of homosexual love which 'valued homosexual love above heterosexual, and considered the sublimation of a homosexual love as the origin of all higher feelings'.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>While 'diagnosis' as a term may be overly scientific it is not meant to imply findings which are beyond dispute; the acknowledgment is, that like the psychoanalytical project itself, it is capable of imprecision and imperception.

<sup>2</sup>Patrice Georgiades, *De Freud à Platon* (Paris: Fasquelle, 1934), cited by Ellenberger, *The Discovery of the Unconscious*, p503. It is an observation to which Freud might have responded in triumph:...'how closely the enlarged sexuality of psychoanalysis coincides with the Eros of the divine Plato!' From Preface to 4th Edition (1920), reproduced in Freud, Vol. 7, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, p43.

Boyd's love-affair with Greece was in one respect a belated legacy,<sup>3</sup> a carry-over from Victorian England's enthusiastic revival of Greek literature and appropriation of classical values, but it was also a natural extension of a childhood and adolescence sustained on a diet of myth and legend, heroes and great men:

History was taught as the gradual evolution...towards the state of individual liberty.  
The greatest heroes, Greek and English, were those who had resisted the  
tyrants...and we were the inheritors of what had been gained by the death and agony  
of noble men. (*Flame* 26)

Even some of the moral values absorbed at his mother's knee seem to have been inspired by classical rather than Christian precepts: he grew up with the conviction, for instance, that the voice of authority was not that of God but of the Good. His belief at thirteen that 'there was no incompatibility between a life of absolute virtue and [one of] absolute pleasure', and that 'reason had only to be stated to find a hearing' (*Flame* 23), seems to owe more to the classical philosophical mindset than to moralistic Christian teachings. Perhaps it was because he shared with liberal Anglicans a level of discomfort with the morality of the Bible and scepticism about its historical accuracy<sup>4</sup> — 'there was many a hiatus in my Christianity' (*Flame* 261) — that Boyd set such great store by what he called 'the classical morality':

Primarily, what is against reason and truth and justice is against the classical morality.  
It is against the classical morality to acquiesce in any retreat from truth and freedom.  
(*Flame* 263)

It is a heart-felt declaration which manages at the same time to capture the 'elevated ethical tone of the Greeks'.<sup>5</sup> It is also true to the spirit of Homer, for whom the supreme divine power was 'the same immortal lover of justice and the same hater of iniquity' as that conceived by Christians in the nineteenth century.<sup>6</sup> The phenomenon of divine ethics brought full circle is an indicator that some

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<sup>3</sup>It had been acknowledged by most observers that 'Hellenism and the romantic paideia of the English schools died on the battlefields of Flanders'. Noted by G. W. Clarke (ed) in *Rediscovering Hellenism: The Hellenic Inheritance and the English Imagination*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, p183. Clarke also notes, in a comment directly applicable to the experience of Martin Boyd, that in 1914 many of the privileged classes saw the First World War as the kind of romantic, Homeric adventure epitomized in Laurence Binyon's poem 'For the Fallen': 'They went with songs to the battle, they were young,/ Straight of limb, true of eye, steady and aglow./ They were staunch to the end against odds uncounted,/ They fell with their faces to the foe.' Boyd's willingness to succumb to this form of infectious romanticism is demonstrated by his quoting of Julian Grenfell's lines 'Who dies fighting hath increase' (*When Blackbirds Sing* p118). His later disillusionment, however, is more akin to the harsh reality expressed by Wilfred Owen in 'Anthem for Doomed Youth' in 1918 (also cited by Clarke): 'What passing-bells for those who die as cattle?/ Only the monstrous anger of the guns.'

<sup>4</sup>An observation made by Frank M. Turner in *The Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981, p156.

<sup>5</sup>Turner, *The Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain*, p156.

<sup>6</sup>James Anthony Froude, *Short Studies of Great Subjects* (1867), cited by Turner, *The Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain*, p157.

Greeks ‘may have shared in the wisdom of God that was finally revealed through Christianity’;<sup>7</sup> it also suggests that for all his unorthodoxies Boyd was possessed of some higher intuition in his striving to reconcile the classical and Christian worlds, to render them at once intellectually and spiritually coherent.<sup>8</sup> On the secular and sociopolitical plane, however, it needs to be acknowledged that Boyd’s vaunting of the ‘classical morality’, although undoubtedly a sincerely-held ideological position in line with ‘that beguilingly easy identification with the ancient Greeks which reached a climax in post-Enlightenment Germany, Second Empire France, and Victorian Britain’ — and for all that he may have believed, along with Shelley, that ‘We are all Greeks. Our laws, our literature, our religion, our arts, have their roots in Greece’<sup>9</sup> — makes no attempt to examine the gap between the rhetoric and the reality. In fairness, it should also be stressed that Boyd’s writing life, ending as it did before the 1970s, occupied an era where masculine privilege and the English class system were so entrenched as to be largely unquestioned, a time that pre-dated the post-structuralist revolution which was to fracture forever the exclusions and discriminations of the dominant hegemony. Patriarchal bias was likewise no stranger to classical antiquity. From an ideological and philosophical point of view the ancient Greeks may have evaluated justice and freedom positively, but in practice the definitions were narrow and there was no liberal democracy as we understand it. Political communities of the fourth and fifth centuries BC were institutionalised patriarchies catering only to the elite: that is, to citizens and members of an exclusive club called the *polis* who were free, adult and male. As Paul Cartledge notes, the classical world’s idea of democracy was ‘not compatible with the disfranchisement of women and the outright enslavement of many thousands’ (*The Greeks* 7). According to Aristotle’s ‘pure sexist ideology’, women were classified as opposite, inferior and ‘other’, criteria which were also applied to foreigners, barbarians and slaves (*The Greeks* 67).<sup>10</sup> Considering the context, therefore, it is ironic that although Aristotelian and Platonic philosophy as it was adopted by the Victorian age became a means of defence against utilitarianism and other rationalistic philosophies derived from the eighteenth century, it also provided a form of political elitism ‘legitimated by merit and by moral and intellectual superiority’.<sup>11</sup> In other words, adherence to the tenets of classical ideology acted to maintain and reinforce the authority, status

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<sup>7</sup>Turner enlarges on this thus: ‘If portions of Homeric and Greek culture could be drawn into providential history or could be understood as illustrating Christian truth, then all history and not just that recorded in the Bible could be regarded as prescriptively sacred...Just as Carlyle had discerned the wonder and splendor of the supernatural within finite physical nature, so the writers who linked the Greeks and the Hebrews found evidence of divine dispensation and perhaps even of revelation in secular history’ (*The Greek Heritage* p156).

<sup>8</sup>He was not alone. According to Turner, ‘F. D. Maurice, Charles Kingsley, and other Broad Churchmen were willing and eager to find such divine truth imparted outside the traditional limits of the Hebrew and Christian dispensations’ (*The Greek Heritage* p156).

<sup>9</sup>Both quotations are from Paul Cartledge, *The Greeks: A Portrait of Self and Others*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993, p175. P. B. Shelley’s declaration is taken from the Preface to *Hellas* (1822). Further citations from *The Greeks* will be given by page number in the text.

<sup>10</sup>Cartledge (*The Greeks* p17) finds these views of Aristotle’s to be ‘repellent features of Greek mentality and culture’, and concludes that in fundamental details the ancient Greeks or Athenians are ‘deeply alien’.

<sup>11</sup>Frank M. Turner, ‘Why the Greeks and not the Romans?’, in G. W. Clarke (ed), *Rediscovering Hellenism* pp77-78.

and privilege of the aristocracy or ruling class. It was a state of affairs that Boyd, with his patrician instincts and sympathies, would have accepted as part of the natural social order.<sup>12</sup>

For Boyd, a less problematical but equally seductive thematic of antiquity's moral philosophy — considering his insistence on the unity of body and soul — was undoubtedly that espoused by the German Hellenists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: that is, the notion that classical Greece represented an unsurpassed 'ideal of harmonious self-development'.<sup>13</sup> There could be no more eloquent elaboration of this notion than that set down by F. A. Wolf (in this extract copied by Matthew Arnold):

The Greek ideal is this: a purely human education, and elevation of all the powers of mind and soul to a beautiful harmony of the inner and outer man...As long as there exists in the world a generation who make this elevation their aim, so long will they turn to the ancients for instruction and encouragement in prosecuting it. The simplicity, the dignity, the grand comprehensive spirit of their works, will ever make them a source from which the human soul will draw perpetual youth.<sup>14</sup>

The description epitomizes paganism at its purest and most heretical: Arnold's promotion of Hellenism as the urge to inner self-perfection, notes James Bowen,<sup>15</sup> was in contrast to Hebraism and the drive for correct behaviour; while for the burgeoning Hellenic humanism of Europe, the new age was to find in the Greek ideal an image of perfection based, not on the Christian God who became man, but on man himself.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, Boyd's search for the 'Perfect Drawing' in *Much Else in Italy* owes as much to this latter idea as it does to any notion of redeemed perfection in the Christian sense: in his own words 'a young man's god must be the image of his own nature made perfect'; even more radically, and with more than a hint of narcissism— 'ultimately his god must appear to him as his own face in the mirror of perfection' (p42).

To judge by the place it occupies in his writings, the pagan world and the aesthetic ideal it embodied was a life-long passion of Boyd's. His classical education probably began typically with a volume such as Charles Kingsley's *The Heroes*; thereafter a traditional and liberal education and a disposition to hero-worship in the manner of the Victorians (a race of hero-worshippers, according

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<sup>12</sup>It may be worth noting here that Boyd's theory of an English social divide obeys the same binary structure as the Greek system of cultural classification, a system which operated according to a consensus that 'right was good and left was bad' (*The Greeks* p14). In Boyd's 'half-serious' definition (*Day of My Delight* pp196-97) of a society divided into Right and Left by the heraldic device of the 'pale', the people on the Right — the aristocracy, artists, craftsmen, clergymen, soldiers and sailors — are connected with the land, and their primary concern is with their occupation rather than with monetary gain. The group on the Left, by contrast, consists of those who are financiers, businessmen, factory workers — 'all men whose sole reason for working is to make money'. These thoughts are first expressed by Boyd in *The Cardboard Crown*, musings to which he adds a wry biblical note: 'Even at the Last Judgment the division is per pale, and those at the Left Hand of God are plunged into Hell' (pp7-8).

<sup>13</sup>Stephen Prickett in his essay "'Hebrew" versus "Hellene"' (in G. W. Clarke, *Rediscovering Hellenism*, p147) citing George Steiner, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation* (1975).

<sup>14</sup>David J. DeLaura, *Hebrew and Hellene in Victorian England*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1969, p188, citing from *The Note-books of Matthew Arnold* (1952), p40.

<sup>15</sup>James Bowen, 'Education, ideology and the ruling class', in G. W. Clarke (ed), *Rediscovering Hellenism*, p181.

<sup>16</sup>Friedrich Paulsen, cited by DeLaura, *Hebrew and Hellene in Victorian England*, p187.

to Richard Jenkyns)<sup>17</sup> were to ensure that the young Boyd's ingestion of classical ideals was commensurate with his Biblical instruction. Nothing else suffices to explain the powerful hold both pagan and Christian systems of thought were to exert on his imagination, or how — in emulation of neo-Platonist ideal theory — he struggled to keep them in balance and to bring them into harmony.<sup>18</sup> As he says, 'there are two stories which concern us':

We may live in the Christian story, we may accept it in good faith as the symbol of truth, but how can we live in the Greek story? We find that we have often done so, without any effort of will. The way we have accepted it, without strain or obligation, but from love of its humanity and wisdom and physical grace, is perhaps the way we should have accepted the Christian story. For many people have lived by the Greek story without theological speculation, without hatred and murder resulting from disagreement as to the nature of Zeus, Apollo, and Pallas; without damning eternally those who did not believe that Pallas sprang from the brain of Zeus, as the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father.  
(*Much Else* 7).

In a manner reminiscent of John Addington Symonds, who saw Christianity as 'the creed which destroyed the genius of Antiquity' (Aldrich 81), the passage is deeply and uncharacteristically critical of the Christian religion, whether in a spirit of resignation or frustration we cannot determine. Boyd does not try to conceal his disquiet at Christian dogma and the will-to-punish. In the circumstances his transformation of Christianity to the status of a 'story' can be read as a protest, a plea after the style of James Frazer (*The Golden Bough*) for 'a release and expansion of mind beyond the confines of a constricting dogmatism';<sup>19</sup> as an attempt at undercutting that dogmatism; and finally, as a recognition that the Christian story, like other 'stories', to some extent relies on 'the imaginative, spiritual, irrational, myth-making impulses of mankind'. In the spirit of Frazer, who

could trace sophisticated religious concepts such as incarnation and immortality to primitive mimetic rituals and misconceptions about natural phenomena, both of which were based, he said, on a faulty psychology of association....<sup>20</sup>

Boyd takes upon himself the assimilation of the two 'stories', going on to outline the continuities between the Greek and Christian religions and arguing that, as the Greek story 'has formed to a great extent the soul of the Western world', it is feasible to find that the Christian story has built on that foundation. He points to the Jesus/Mary analogy of Apollo, 'the source of all our light and beauty' and Latona his mother, who, 'like the Blessed Virgin, could find no place for his birth'; he also likens the trinity of Apollo, Pallas-Athene, and Zeus to that of the Son, the Holy Ghost, and the Father, claiming that they each merit worship as representative of 'the noumena of beauty,

<sup>17</sup>See Richard Jenkyns, *The Victorians and Ancient Greece*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980, p207.

<sup>18</sup>John Addington Symonds, whose autobiography detailed his homosexual development, also promoted (unconvincingly, according to Aldrich) a synthesis of Greek aesthetics and Christianity. In seeking a 'homosexual utopianism' Symonds attempted to assimilate pederasty and homosexual bonding to Christian ideals (Richard Aldrich, *The Seduction of the Mediterranean: Writing, Art and Homosexual Fantasy*, London: Routledge, 1993, pp80-81). Further citations from *The Seduction of the Mediterranean* will be given by page number in the text.

<sup>19</sup>John B. Vickery, *The Literary Impact of The Golden Bough*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1973, p5.

<sup>20</sup>Vickery, *The Literary Impact of the Golden Bough*, p25.

truth, and goodness' (*Much Else* 9).<sup>21</sup> According to Boyd the old gods were not 'evil noumena' or 'devils' as the early Church believed, they were merely unredeemed; and in his view it is essential that the pagan gods, like mankind, undergo redemption.

This last is a curious imperative considering that Boyd had just a few lines earlier expressed admiration for the 'humanity' of the Greeks and at the same time implicitly rejected the kind of doctrinaire Calvinism<sup>22</sup> which would categorise man as so unregenerate as to merit salvation only through the redeeming grace of God (and here there is the possibility of a subtextual anxiety concerning the 'displacement' of the homosexual in the Christian story contrasting with his acceptance and 'spiritualisation' in the pagan story). Taking into account that there does seem to be a strong competing strand in his writing — competing, that is, with the concept of a necessary redemption — that emphasises an idealised 'innocent, intuitive life' properly belonging in a prelapsarian world, Boyd would appear to be enmeshed in a form of religio-cultural schizophrenia. There is a clear sense, in the above paragraph at least, that the ancients had the better of the two worlds; in which case the compulsion he felt to bring together the Christian and pagan 'stories' through redemption — as, in his mythology, Ceres the goddess of corn was redeemed to become the body of Christ — betokens a struggle between rationality and faith. The dilemma Boyd experiences here may have been eased by recourse to the synthesis achieved by St Thomas Aquinas, who held that man's salvation was possible through divine revelation, a revelation available not only 'to the Jewish people who already know the existence of God on faith', but for gentiles (and presumably for pagans) as well.<sup>23</sup> Irrespective of complexities such as these, however, it needs to be stressed that at a fundamental level the two stories represent for Boyd related and contending priorities rather than antithetical polarities.

Boyd's more specific doctrinal ambivalences in respect to Anglican and Catholic sectarianism are not the concern of this chapter; the object is rather to explore what is meant by the 'classical morality' — and how this relates to Boyd's homosocial persona — in the context of a broad definition of Christianity, taking into account that each system of thought had its own complex philosophy of morality. A preliminary understanding of the cultural asymmetry involved may be gained, however, from a brief comparison of 'religions' before taking up the issue of differing moralities and their sometimes substantial, but more often tenuous, correlations.

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<sup>21</sup>Elsewhere, in *Scandal of Spring*, Boyd gently mocks his own earnestness via the historical perspective and comparative method of the sceptical Mr Vazetti: '...the ancient Greeks ate bread and drank wine and thought they were eating the flesh and blood of Dionysus. The Christians copied them and called it the flesh and blood of Christ. Probably two thousand years hence the people of the next civilization will be doing the same thing and calling it the flesh and blood of Bernard Shaw!' (pp84-85).

<sup>22</sup>Boyd reinforces an antipathy to Calvinism in several references: for instance, by his allusion to 'the black ghost of Cousin Sarah and her hell-born Calvinism' in *The Cardboard Crown* (p103); through Russell Lockwood's comment that 'when you get Calvinism superimposed on some ghastly northern gods the result is diabolical' (*Outbreak of Love* p402); and by an unmediated statement of his own: 'Worse...is the belief of Calvin and Luther that man is not merely imperfect, a drawing to be corrected, but evil in his essential nature, and so they do not look to the Perfection of Christ to redeem them...' (*Much Else in Italy* p69).

<sup>23</sup>Herman Reith, *The Metaphysics of St. Thomas Aquinas*, Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1962, pp172-73.

Foucault in *The Use of Pleasure* concedes that there were direct borrowings and strict continuities between the first Christian doctrines and the moral philosophy of antiquity: certain themes, anxieties and exigencies to be found in the Christian ethic and as part of the morality of modern European societies were, he says, already present at the core of Greek and Graeco-Roman thought.<sup>24</sup> Even so, the discontinuities appear to have been profound. Where Christianity, like its parent Judaism, is a spiritual monotheism ‘premissed upon faith in revelation that transcends rational belief’, a faith ‘anchored to the possession of uniquely sacred texts, a professional priesthood, and a Church’ (Cartledge 152), the Greeks were polytheists in that they enjoyed ‘a world full of gods’ where everything was considered to be ‘actually, not symbolically divine’.<sup>25</sup> Their faith was a matter of piety, cult-acts, public rituals and festivals, their religion a civic affair without sacred books and dogmas; they knew nothing of heresy, had no vocational priesthoods, and their *polis* (unlike Augustine’s City of God) was simultaneously a city of gods and a city of men: religion and politics as a consequence were ‘inextricably intermingled’ (Cartledge 153). And importantly for Boyd’s hedonistic impulse, where Christian communion granted the benefits of eternal life,<sup>26</sup> the Greeks accepted their mortality and lived predominantly for the here and now, investing immortality in their gods — those gods in the likeness of men who were deemed ‘forever deathless and ageless’ by the poets (Cartledge 154). Something of what he considers the ancient Greeks’ ‘otherness’, a sense of their being ‘desperately foreign’,<sup>27</sup> is captured in this observation by Cartledge:

The Greeks had no one-word equivalent of our ‘religion’ (derived from the Latin *ligare* ‘to bind’, owing to the sense of binding awe felt by humans in face of supernormal or supernatural phenomena). Nor did they distinguish in quite the ways we would the ‘sacred’ from the ‘profane’ or the ‘secular’. Their vocabulary of sanctity and piety revolved rather around concepts of appropriateness and order, and depended on matter and persons being allocated to and remaining in their proper places. (p 152)

The ‘concepts of appropriateness and order’ mentioned here are closely analogous to Arnold’s appropriation of Swift’s phrase ‘sweetness and light’ to indicate a mainstream, authoritarian culture in league with an Apollonian form of Hellenism, and is coincidentally relevant to Boyd’s choice of the Hellenic over the Hebraic in *A Single Flame* :

Fundamentally I accepted Matthew Arnold’s distinction between the Barbarian, the Philistine, and the Elect, between Hebraic ‘Fire and Strength’ and Hellenic

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<sup>24</sup>Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Vol 2: The Use of Pleasure* (trans) Robert Hurley, New York: Vintage Books, 1990, p15. ‘...for all that,’ Foucault continues ‘[these themes] do not have the same place or the same value within them. Socrates is not a desert Father struggling against temptation, and Nicocles is not a Christian husband; Aristophanes’ laughter at the expense of Agathon in drag has few traits in common with the disparagement of the invert that will be found much later in medical discourse’ (p21). Further citations from this work will be given by page number in the text.

<sup>25</sup>Carlo Levi (*Christ Stopped at Eboli*) cited by Cartledge, *The Greeks: A Portrait of Self and Others*, p152.

<sup>26</sup>Cartledge is here quoting from Edward Gibbon’s *Decline and Fall* (*The Greeks*, p154).

<sup>27</sup>Cartledge acknowledges, nevertheless, that ‘there is enough of the ancient Greek in our devotion to at any rate the ideology and rhetoric of freedom, equality, and democracy to make the cultural linkage abundantly plain’ (*The Greeks*, p176).

‘Sweetness and Light’. I was all for sweetness and light, but did not know where it lay. (*Flame* 205)

We are left to ponder exactly how it was that Boyd translated the phrase ‘sweetness and light’, whether ‘concepts of appropriateness and order’ played a part in his understanding, for instance. The context is not a frivolous one, nor is it possible to associate ‘light’ with entirely disinterested concepts of wisdom, of illumination, or even of truth. The wisdom implied here by Arnold is allied to a ‘genuine confidence’ in the collective wisdom of his Hellenic-European inheritance.<sup>28</sup> His ideal culture is therefore a synthesis of Augustan supremacist values, of those elements he shares in common with the German Hellenists who were looking to ‘supplant the mystical, backward-looking, Hebraic elements in Christianity, and to produce a new, Hellenized, and naturalistic religion totally compatible with the enlightened scientific consciousness of the times’,<sup>29</sup> and of his own brand of Apollonian Hellenism:

Greek art, again, Greek beauty, have their root in the same impulse to see things as they really are, in as much as Greek art and beauty rest on fidelity to nature — the *best* nature — and on a delicate discrimination of what this best nature is. To say we work for sweetness and light, then, is only another way of saying that we work for Hellenism.<sup>30</sup>

The question which prompts itself in relation to Boyd is whether, in his embracing of ‘sweetness and light’,<sup>31</sup> he was aware of the multiple implications: whether, for instance, he would have cared to trade the supernatural and metaphysical for so-called ‘enlightenment’. Some of his pronouncements do indeed suggest this might be so, in which case we are once more in familiar territory with Boyd disclosed as inconsistent and contradictory, stranded between his particular anathemas of science and superstition. As a positive alternative, it also needs to be considered that a conscious alignment with Arnold’s Apollonian streak might well have presented a way of discounting his own buried, and possibly troubling, Dionysian instincts.

The marked differentiation in terms of a dogmatic religious frame or strict orthodoxy between the Christian tradition and the religion of classical Greece correlates with the fact that, as noted by Cartledge, Christianity and paganism ‘allot morality a very different place in their respective systems’ (p154). According to Foucault, whereas the Church and the pastoral ministry ‘stressed the principle of a morality whose precepts were compulsory and whose scope was universal’ — as laid down by the Founding Fathers — in classical thought

the demands of austerity were not organised into a unified, coherent, authoritarian moral system that was imposed on everyone in the same manner; they were more in the nature of a supplement, a ‘luxury’ in relation to the commonly accepted morality. Further, they appeared in scattered centres whose origins were in different

<sup>28</sup>Stephen Prickett, “‘Hebrew’ versus ‘Hellene’”, *Rediscovering Hellenism*, p156.

<sup>29</sup>Prickett, “‘Hebrew versus ‘Hellene’”, *Rediscovering Hellenism*, p155.

<sup>30</sup>Matthew Arnold (*Culture and Anarchy*, 1965, p178), cited by Prickett, “‘Hebrew versus ‘Hellene’”, *Rediscovering Hellenism*, p156.

<sup>31</sup>It may be relevant here that Boyd’s character, artist Gavin Leigh, refers to Chesterton’s classification of the classic spirit as ‘light on’, to which Gavin adds: ‘Well, I like light on. But I like light on romanticized, not scientific’ (*Night of the Party*, p200).

philosophical or religious movements. They developed in the midst of many separate groups. They proposed, more than they imposed, different styles of moderation or strictness, each having its specific character or 'shape'. Pythagorean austerity was not the same as that of the Stoics, which was very different in turn from that recommended by Epicurus. (*Pleasure* 21)

Despite the lack of specificity, essentially both Cartledge and Foucault are addressing matters pertaining to sexual morality. In Greece, as Foucault demonstrates, sexual mores took on a regional colouration, a comparativist perspective that prompts Cartledge to define Greek society, at least between about the fifth and third centuries BC, as 'an abstraction' to which Herodotus was obliged to apply 'the fiction of genetic homogeneity and gloss over important differences of dialect, religion, and mores within the broadly "Hellenic" world' (p3). Nevertheless, Cartledge acknowledges that a single culture did exist, and he offers Aristotle as the crucial component of an argument for Greek cultural homogeneity (p8). Aristotle's mentor was the Athenian aristocrat Plato, and it is against the backdrop of Plato as philosopher, recorder and explicator of classical morality — the essentials of which are inseparable from antiquity's philosophical reflections on sexual morality as it applied to the nature of men's love for boys — that I am proposing to position Boyd.

Despite Foucault's warning against inferring that the sexual moralities of Christianity and of paganism form a continuity (*Pleasure* 20-21), it is in the realm of sexual morality rather than of religious belief and practice, in fact, that we find the two cultural paradigms sharing notable affinities and convergences. Both systems, for example, accorded high moral and spiritual value to abstinence, chastity, and virginity: renunciation represented the 'access to spiritual love and truth that sexual activity excludes' (*Pleasure* 14-20). Both systems were male dominated, they both subjugated women and prohibited incest. Both supported the rule of monogamous marriage for the purpose of procreation, both put prohibitions upon sexual relations between individuals of the same sex (the domain of male loves may have been 'free' in Greek antiquity, Foucault tells us (*Pleasure* 19-20), nevertheless there were early signs of negative reaction and stigmatization). But this is where the similarities end: in the Christian schema, as already suggested, the 'ethical subject' is bound by codification, by law and by rules of conduct, with penalties for infractions; in antiquity moral conceptions 'were much more oriented toward practices of the self and the question of *askesis*<sup>32</sup> than toward codifications of conducts and the strict definition of what is permitted and what is forbidden' (*Pleasure* 30). Laws and customs naturally required respect, according to Foucault, but what was more important was the attitude that caused one to respect them:

Accent was placed on the relationship with the self that enabled a person to keep from being carried away by the appetites and pleasures, to maintain a mastery and superiority over them, to keep his senses in a state of tranquility, to remain free from interior bondage to the passions, and to achieve a mode of being that could be defined by the full enjoyment of oneself, or the perfect supremacy of oneself over oneself. (*Pleasure* 31)

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<sup>32</sup>*Askesis* or ascesis is the philosophy relating to questions of self-training.

Such an attitude represented the apogee of self-restraint and self-mastery, the supreme achievement to be gained from the cultivation of sexual austerity, what Foucault refers to as an austerity formed around a 'quadri-thematics' of 'the life of the body, the institution of marriage, relations between men, and the existence of wisdom' (*Pleasure* 21). The healthy body and marital relations are not the concern of this study; the right conduct of pederasty and consequently, its potential for access to truth and wisdom is, however, suggested to be of enormous relevance to Boyd's idealism and to his endorsement of (probably platonic) affection and love, not only between men but between man and boy.

We need go no further than Plato's *Symposium* or the *Phaedrus* to discover the theme of austerity that was constructed around an ethics for men, an ethics

thought, written, and taught by men, and addressed to men — to free men...A male ethics...in which women figured only as objects, or, at most, as [domestic] partners...one of the most remarkable aspects of that moral reflection [was that] it did not try to define a field of conduct and a domain of valid rules...for the two sexes in common; it was an elaboration of masculine conduct carried out from the viewpoint of men in order to give form to *their* behavior. (*Pleasure* 22-23)

Moreover, it was an ethics devised in the process of an elaboration upon the topic of same-sex male love. Where in the Middle Ages Christian Europe was to develop a code of courtly or chivalric love which was heterosexually based, and which focussed on woman as the inspiration for an adoring yet spiritual devotion, in Greece it was the chiefly amorous, often sexual, relationships between men which were taken as normative and around which a philosophy and erotics of love was formulated. Similarly, where the Christian and modern cultures were to frame their attitudes to truth, love, and pleasure in terms of the man-woman relationship, the classical world's reflection on the reciprocal ties between truth and sexual austerity was primarily connected with the love of boys, taking place in a predominantly masculinist domain occupied by the *erastes*, the older man and experienced lover, and the *eromenos*, the beloved and inexperienced younger man.<sup>33</sup> And although, as Foucault notes, the Socratic-Platonic doctrine as formulated in the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus* was peculiar to Athens and cannot be taken as a standardised philosophy of Eros for all of classical Greece, it broached ethical questions that Christianity was to later both transform into 'a morality of renunciation' and reconstitute in 'a hermeneutics of desire' (*Pleasure* 230).

K. J. Dover, in his study *Greek Homosexuality*, has provided the historical perspective necessary to a modern understanding of, for instance, Plato's *Symposium* and its discursive concentration on the problematics of pederastic courtship and modes of behaviour. According to Dover, the evidence for overt (male) homosexuality in Greek culture can be dated to the sixth century BC. As a phenomenon, he claims, physical relations between men were neither repressed,

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<sup>33</sup>According to Foucault, who notes in the same context that it was around the issue of the love of boys that the Greeks developed the question of the relations between the use of pleasures and access to truth, a discourse which took the form of an inquiry into the nature of true love. He also offers Faust as a much later example 'of the way in which the question of pleasure and that of access to knowledge would be linked to the theme of love for woman, for her virginity, her purity, her fall, and her redemptive power' (*The Use of Pleasure* pp229-30).

latent or disguised, and offers in support the ‘uninhibited treatment of homosexual subjects in literature and the visual arts’.<sup>34</sup> Neither was there an assumption that individuals responded only to either homosexual or heterosexual stimuli. Love for one’s own sex and love for the other sex, Foucault reminds us, were not seen as opposites: because the structure of desire was not seen as ‘dual’, ‘bisexual’ or ‘ambivalent’, there were not ‘different or competing “drives” each claiming a share of men’s hearts or appetites’. On the contrary, desire, it seems, was omnipresent and omnivorous, ‘an appetite that nature had implanted in man’s heart for ‘beautiful’ human beings, whatever their sex might be’ (*Pleasure* 188). Nevertheless the *Symposium*’s treatment of desire is exclusively male-oriented; here Plato uses the idea of love and desire for the beautiful and ‘good’ to develop a metaphysics in which materiality is transcended in a progression ‘upwards’ by reason to the point where reason and love converge in an apotheosis of truth and wisdom: sexual practice is transfigured, accordingly, into an ethical domain. Plato’s conclusion, that homosexuality is legitimised and justified if it is the means to true love — arrived at by way of some deft philosophical conjuring and skilful rhetoric — raises interesting questions. For if Dover’s assumption is correct when he says that ‘we must leave open the possibility that [Plato’s] own homosexual emotion was abnormally intense and his heterosexual response abnormally deficient’,<sup>35</sup> it is possible to construe Plato’s philosophy of masculine love as a rationale for, and defence of, his own position.

At this juncture certain parallels suggest themselves in relation to Martin Boyd’s cultural affiliation with the Greeks. Boyd is not concerned to mask his own ‘easy beguilement’ by the classical world; on the contrary, and notwithstanding the proviso about redemption, his writings celebrate and pay homage to the pagan principle. In common with many a European gentleman whose primary emotional and erotic attachment was to his own sex, ancient Greek culture afforded him an exotic model by which he could ‘make sense of his feelings’.<sup>36</sup> Possibly it is no exaggeration to say that the classical world — by way of its literature, its art, its philosophies of morality and pleasure, and not least, by its (mostly) unambivalent depiction of homosexual love and friendship — provided Boyd with a fortuitous blueprint by which he could decipher his masculine anxieties, his sensual/spiritual split and his motivational complexity. Besides bequeathing him an inner, imaginative landscape, this world offered Boyd a domain of surrogacy: classical imagery with which to clothe his ‘animal desires’; idealised male love with which to compare his same-sex attachments; a mythology to enrich his allusions; a model of male beauty to appropriate for the embellishment of his male characters; an ethics of love whose goal of truth and knowledge corresponded to the Christian ideal; and, in the interests of sexual freedom, a fantasized escape from arid moral rigour of the kind implicit in, for example, St Paul’s Hebraic censure of ‘the intimate link between

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<sup>34</sup>K. J. Dover, *Greek Homosexuality*, London: Duckworth, 1978, p1.

<sup>35</sup>Dover, *Greek Homosexuality*, p12.

<sup>36</sup>Robert Dessaix (Introduction, *Australian Gay and Lesbian Writing: An Anthology*, Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1993, p9) speaks thus of the Englishman in Kenneth ‘Seaforth’ Mackenzie’s *The Young Desire It* (1937), a book Dessaix claims may merit the title of Australia’s ‘First Homosexual Novel’ (p10).

paganism and amorality' in the epistle to the Romans.<sup>37</sup> For, having commented in *Day of My Delight* on how little, mentally and physically, he was fitted for 'heroic moral freedom' (p40), Boyd quite obviously wished, nevertheless, for a choice in the matter. It is also suggested that Boyd's affinity with things Greek was at some vicarious and subliminal level related to the cult of the masculine: to the exclusivity of the all-male enclave and the frankly phallogocentric<sup>38</sup> ordering not only of sexual practice but of politics and society. Boyd's rejection of the domestic sphere is implicit in his sanctioning of heroic exploits and the Odyssean adventurer. In the circumstances Guy Langton's lugubrious pronouncement to the effect that 'the machinery of reproduction...is implanted in us to disturb and often destroy our lives' (*DYM* 115) can be seen to reflect an exaggeratedly nihilistic version of this outlook. Aptly, it also translates as an oblique corollary to an observation by Camille Paglia: 'In Homer as in Vergil (sic), woman is an obstacle to the heroic quest. The epic journey must free itself from female chains and delays. Aeneas must purify his masculinity'.<sup>39</sup>

Boyd comes close to characterizing himself — or perhaps caricaturing might be more appropriate — and at the same time allies himself with Greek culture, in this description of Raoul Montfort, a slightly effete young man who 'missed the comradeship' of the war:

Raoul was a lover of the highest when seen...of the type from which clergymen, architects, intellectuals, pederasts, and snobs are recruited; *the type which feels some urge beyond the conventional life of marriage, work, decay and death*. He had the somewhat austere sense of form which inspires the architect and the pederast, and the innate aspiration of the clergyman and the snob. (*The Montforts* (1975) 213-14, my italics)

In penning this portrait which is practically a pure distillation of himself, give or take a quibble or two, Boyd can hardly have been unconscious of the resemblance. Most noticeable is its sense of 'otherness', a detectable radicalism which places its emphasis on dissent and non-conformism. More prosaically, it encompasses those noble aspirations, already indicated, which include a belief in freedom and justice and a hunger for beauty and truth. It alludes to his own deeply religious streak, to his artistic temperament (he studied initially to be an architect), to his capacity for reasoned thought and understanding (though, strictly speaking, the larger part of Boyd's apprehension was more demonstrably achieved through emotion and intuition), to his

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<sup>37</sup>That the Jews were the first to recognise this link is recognised in Momigliano (ed), *The Conflict Between Paganism and Christianity in the Fourth Century* (1963), according to *Everyman's Encyclopaedia Vol 9*. London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1967, p404. As a corollary, it should be noted that, however much Boyd may have inclined to Hellenism over Hebraism, the point of the analogy is not to suggest antipathy on Boyd's part towards the Jews; its purpose is rather to convey a profound antagonism for the life-denying qualities of St Paul, he 'who never glanced at the lilies in the field, and would only boast in the Cross of Christ, not in his living humanity, and could only think in terms of the Old Testament, of the blood sacrifice to the tribal god'. Only Calvin earned more opprobrium in Boyd's book: '[he] took even the medicated honey of S. Paul and infused it with bitter hatred' (*Much Else in Italy* p152).

<sup>38</sup>Aldrich classifies Greek sex as 'extraordinarily phallogocentric' (*The Seduction of the Mediterranean*, p16) and quotes from David M. Halperin, *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality and Other Essays on Greek Love* (p102): 'It revolved around who had the phallus, was defined by what was done with the phallus, and was polarized by the distribution of phallic pleasure'.

<sup>39</sup>Camille Paglia, *Sexual Personae: Art and Decadence from Nefertiti to Emily Dickinson*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990, p129. Further citations from this work will be given by page number in the text.

preoccupation with beautiful boys (an interest which was probably chaste but nonetheless deeply suggestive of homoerotic desire), and to the ineradicable sense of elitism — self-acknowledged — conferred by inheritance, class and education. The phrase ‘austere sense of form which inspires...the pederast’ may be correlated (as I will be arguing) to the discussion in the *Symposium*, and indicates that Boyd was well aware of Plato’s moral reflection on male loves, that topic which in Greek culture, according to Foucault, inspired ‘a whole agitated production of ideas, observations and discussions’ (*Pleasure* 192).

The elaboration of codes of behaviour relating to pederasty was by no means unified or consistent: a diversity of judgments is offered in the *Symposium* and in the *Phaedrus*, for example, to the extent that complex rather than unequivocal patterns and attitudes emerge. That these deliberations were entirely under the sway of a male ethos is not a matter of dispute. Here it is that Pausanias, whom Dover suggests as representing Plato’s own ideas, takes the opportunity to postulate male love as superior. There are two kinds of love, he says, emanating from two goddesses: the younger, earthly Aphrodite, called Pandemus, daughter of Zeus and Dione,

governs the passions of the vulgar; for first, they are as much attracted by women as by boys; next, whoever they may love, their desires are of the body rather than of the soul; and finally, they take their pleasures where they find them, good and bad alike. This Aphrodite’s nature partakes of both male and female.<sup>40</sup>

Pausanias then cautions that the behaviour of the followers of the earthly love ‘has brought the name of Love into such disrepute that one has even heard it held to be degrading to yield to a lover’s solicitation’. He goes on: ‘There can be nothing derogatory in any conduct *which is sanctioned both by decency and custom*’ (my italics). Ethical and behavioural distinctions in the Athenian code become too problematical to properly disentangle after this point. For as Pausanias proceeds to delineate the attributes of the elder, heavenly or Uranian Aphrodite, who ‘springs from no mother’s womb but from the heavens themselves’ (*Five Dialogues* 27), who has ‘nothing of the female’, who is ‘innocent of any hint of lewdness’, and who inspires men to turn for love to the male, ‘preferring the more vigorous and intellectual bent’,<sup>41</sup> the touchstones and criteria become increasingly subtle and ambiguous. In the course of his dissertation, for instance, Pausanias speaks of the ‘latitude the law offers to the lover in the prosecution of his suit, and how he may be actually applauded for conduct which, in any other circumstances or in any other cause, would call down upon him the severest censure’; to which he adds: ‘We see what complete indulgence, not only human but divine, is accorded to the lover by our Athenian code’ (*Five Dialogues* 30).

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<sup>40</sup>From ‘The Symposium’, in A. D. Lindsay (ed), *Five Dialogues of Plato*, London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1949, p28. Further citations from this work will be given by page number in the text.

<sup>41</sup>It should be noted that in *Much Else in Italy* Boyd contradicts this assertion of a male monopoly on Uranian emotional, intellectual and spiritual superiority when, in answer to an awkward question in relation to a girl’s spiritual needs, he tells the Irish boy that ‘the Uranian Aphrodite...was, though predominantly male, also partly female’ and therefore able to provide for ‘a girl’s need to worship a woman’. To this he adds that everyone ‘had some modification from the other sex, and it was necessary that this ambiguity should also be found in the gods’ (p42).

The unwritten laws governing the status and *modus operandi* of the lovers were less ambivalent, however. The Athenian code sanctioned only the love of the older male, the *erastes*, for the youthful, adolescent male or *eromenos*. Males of a similar age were not encouraged in sexual relationships; nor was a same-sex relationship equal or reciprocal: one partner, the *erastes*, was seen as active, while the other, the *eromenos*, was passive. It was immoral to be an exploitative seducer just as it was immoral to surrender for financial or political reasons: a blameless voluntary submission was one ‘made for the sake of virtue’, meaning that the beloved devoted himself ‘to the service of another in the belief that through him he will find increase of wisdom...’ According to Pausanias, only a combination of the two laws — the one that deals with the love of boys and the one that deals with the pursuit of wisdom and other virtues — can justify the youth in yielding to his lover:

For it is only when lover and beloved come together, each governed by his own especial law — the former lawfully enslaving himself to the youth he loves, in return for his compliance: the latter lawfully devoting his services to the friend who is helping him to become wise and good — the one sharing his wealth of wisdom and virtue, and the other drawing, in his poverty, upon his friend for a liberal education — it is then, I say, and only then, when the observance of the two laws coincides, that it is right for the lover to have his way. (*Five Dialogues* 32)

It is fairly obvious from the speechifying of Pausanias, despite the imprecision of the language of eros,<sup>42</sup> that sexual relations between specified male lovers, provided they obeyed strict yet subtle codes of protocol and decorum, were permitted by laws and accepted by opinion. As Foucault observes, there was no institution, whether pastoral or medical, that claimed the right to determine what was permitted or forbidden, normal or abnormal, in that area (*Pleasure* 36). Rather, as already canvassed, the enjoyment of homosexual pleasure was considered to be an ethical problem, one that was ‘morally valorized by mastery and moderation’.

Here the distinctions start to blur again; for while mastery presupposes the presence of desires — ‘desires that are always apt to invade the soul’<sup>43</sup> — self-mastery signifies an asceticism capable of the practice of a virtuous life, ‘the life of a “free” man in the full, positive and political sense of the word’ (*Pleasure* 77) — an idea not far removed, perhaps, from the ideal of ‘physical and spiritual freedom’ imbibed by Stephen Brayford at Cambridge.<sup>44</sup> Moderation, on the other hand, is the distinguishing mark of the male principle, denoting an active self-control, a ‘virile stance...that enabled one to be stronger than oneself’ (*Pleasure* 84). The dividing line between a virile man and an effeminate man, Foucault tells us,

did not coincide with our opposition between hetero- and homosexuality; nor was it confined to the opposition between active and passive homosexuality. It marked the difference in people’s attitudes toward the pleasures; and the traditional signs of effeminacy — idleness, indolence, refusal to engage in the somewhat rough activities of sports, a fondness for perfumes and adornments, softness — were not necessarily associated with the individual who in the nineteenth century would be called an

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<sup>42</sup>The point is Dover’s, who adds that ‘from what Aiskhines says of Homer, reticence [around homosexual relationships] was *de rigneur*’ (*Greek Homosexuality* p53).

<sup>43</sup>Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure*, p74, citing from Plato’s *Republic*, IX.

<sup>44</sup>See *Lucinda Brayford*, p413.

‘invert’, but with the one who yielded to the pleasures that enticed him; he was under the power of his own appetites and those of others. (*Pleasure* 85)

According to these criteria not only does the concept of ‘the full enjoyment of oneself’ risk falling foul of the balance between restraint and gratification, but the idea of pleasure itself is, by implication, fraught with ambiguity. If by yielding to pleasure in refinement, in cultivated tastes, and presumably in the arts one could earn oneself the stigmatization of ‘effeminacy’ then by these particularised Greek standards Martin Boyd could be considered effeminate. Yet, as Foucault reminds us, *not* to participate carried its own stigma: for the Greeks ‘being passive in regard to the pleasures’ constituted ‘ethical negativity par excellence’ (*Pleasure* 85): the line between active and passive principles, between indulgence and indifference was a precarious one. Added to which any renunciation of phallic power and phallic pleasure — signifying male passivity — could also earn a man the epithet ‘feminised’.<sup>45</sup> On the other hand, according to Aristophanes (*Five Dialogues* 40), if a man exercised daring and fortitude in actively pursuing his pleasures and desires, at the same time as keeping them under control, he was considered the epitome of masculine virility. Aristophanes is speaking of bodily pleasures here, and specifically of the lovers who ‘lavish’ their love upon boys, for he continues: ‘[These men] have no natural inclination to marry and beget children. Indeed, they only do so in deference to the usage of society, for they would just as soon renounce marriage altogether and spend their lives with one another’ (*Five Dialogues* 41).

One can only speculate as to where the Greeks would have placed Boyd on the pleasure spectrum in terms of the feminine/masculine binary. Boyd himself would have steadfastly resisted any charge of effeminacy; and my argument here is that a principal, if not *the* principal, attraction of classical Greece for Boyd was its valorization and prioritization of the virility of the homosexual. By legitimising, indeed by honouring, a masculine eros the Greek world reinforced, rather than erased, the notion of homosexual virility, and at the same time evaluated the bond between men as infinitely superior, ‘their communion even more complete than that which comes of bringing children up, because they have created something lovelier and less mortal than human seed’.<sup>46</sup> As far as Boyd was concerned, the argument goes, it was a world which answered to the full compass of a nature both sensual and spiritual; a world where homosexuals were not regarded as metaphors of political and social alienation; a ‘golden age’, in fact, where the notion of himself as odd man out, or worse, as that fearful and ‘unnatural’ creature, the Victorian homosexual,<sup>47</sup> was automatically cancelled. Something of his identification and feeling of kinship with the ancient Greeks is doubtless duplicated in John Vazetti’s reflection as he watches naked male bathers on Hampstead Heath:

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<sup>45</sup>Female passivity was identified with the foreign, with the racially and culturally different. The feminised male, according to Leigh Dale, is a threat to the polarities by which gender and power are organised (‘Classical and Colonial: Reading the Homoerotic in Charles Jury’s *Icarus*’, *Meridian* Vol. 14, No. 1 May 1995, p54).

<sup>46</sup>So says Diotima, a ‘Mantinean woman’ responsible for the only female viewpoint at the Symposium, and even then she is not actually present but speaks through the medium of Socrates, raising questions about authenticity and tokenism perhaps? (*Five Dialogues* p64).

<sup>47</sup>Tom Gilling, reviewing Nina Auerbach’s *Our Vampires, Ourselves*, Spectrum Books, *SMH*, 17/8/96.

He had...the sensation of stepping into a different world, on a different plane, poetical and mysterious. [He experienced] a release and enlargement of life, but he did not feel that he was entering a romantic twilight, but more as if he had returned to the beginning of the world, to a clear golden age. He stood with his lips slightly parted, his body smiling in wonder. (*Scandal* 201)

With Boyd, as with John Vazetti, his apprehension of Greek mythology and culture represented not so much a romance with the past — such as was enjoyed by St Teresa when she read the novels of chivalry and imagined herself in the role of the knight<sup>48</sup> — as the discovery of a mirror for his own life. It is more than likely that when classical texts hinted at homosexuality or ‘deviant’ practices as the ground for a ‘loftier ideal than exclusive heterosexuality’,<sup>49</sup> they also offered a kind of supportive moral framework or permission to be homosexual. As well, theoretically at least, they could be seen as catering to an inherent and problematised ambivalence, promising both a qualified endorsement of homosocial desire and an idealised realm where pleasures could consist in pure and noble mental enjoyments. An ambivalence of this sort is rarely absent in Boyd’s writings. As with Adolf Brand, the male ‘friendships’ he portrays are meant to be more chaste than sexual, more spiritual than physical: for all that, like Brand, the suggestion of a ‘real sensual interest in young men’ is inescapable.<sup>50</sup> As I intend to discuss, even Boyd’s pleasure in the beautiful, iconographic male figure, for example, is rarely done with a dispassionate eye to pure form alone, usually managing, at the very least, a small breath of epicurean sensuality.

Something of the ambivalence attaching to Boyd’s yearnings and aspirations finds an echo in the *Phaedrus*, in the following extract from Socrates’ dissertation on love and desire:

Now that love is a kind of desire is clear to every one, and equally clear is it on the other hand, that without being in love we desire beautiful objects. How then are we to mark the lover? We should further observe, that in every one of us there are two ruling and directing principles, whose guidance we follow wherever they may lead, *the one being an innate desire of pleasure; the other, an acquired judgment which aspires after excellence*. Now these two principles at one time maintain harmony, while at another they are at feud within us, and now one and now the other obtains the mastery...When desire, having rejected reason and overpowered judgment which leads to right, is set in the direction of the pleasure which beauty can inspire, and when again under the influence of its kindred desires it is moved with violent motion towards the beauty of corporeal forms, it acquires a surname from this very violent motion, and is called love. (*Five Dialogues* 229-30, my italics)<sup>51</sup>

Boyd would probably have said that ‘pleasure’ and ‘excellence’ were the quintessential properties of a life well lived; whether he managed to reconcile them satisfactorily is a matter for conjecture. Like

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<sup>48</sup>Argentinian writer Alberto Manguel (*A History of Reading*) talking to Michele Field, Spectrum Books, *SMH*, 17/8/96.

<sup>49</sup>Stuart Kellogg (ed), in his Introduction to *Essays on Gay Literature*, New York: Harrington Park Press, 1985, p4.

<sup>50</sup>The comparison with Brand (1874-1945), who campaigned for the repeal of the German law which made homosexual acts illegal, is made using the observations of Aldrich, *The Seduction of the Mediterranean*, p111.

<sup>51</sup>Socrates also refers in the *Phaedrus* to the fable of the soul as a team consisting of a charioteer driving two horses, one noble and one wicked, with the wicked horse needing to be restrained from making indecent proposals to beautiful boys (*Five Dialogues* p251).

Socrates, however — despite his energetic advocacy of physical pleasure, his celebration of ‘the beauty of corporeal forms’ and his delight in ‘the pleasure which beauty can inspire’ — he would have been opposed to the notion of sensual passion being allowed to run to excess. Socrates makes a clear distinction between love of the soul and love of the body: true love is deemed as love for the soul, with the highly prized *philia* or friendship (meaning male friendship) — called by Foucault ‘the principle that gives value to every relation’ (*Pleasure* 233) — coming a close second. Foucault notes how the higher love, as Diotima shows Socrates in the *Symposium*,

seeks to beget spiritual children, and to contemplate ‘absolute beauty’ in its true nature, in its unalloyed purity, and in the ‘oneness of its form’.... (*Pleasure* 238)

and adds that Socrates himself, in the *Phaedrus*, shows ‘how the soul...will attach itself to the beloved object only insofar as the latter reflects and imitates beauty itself’ (*Pleasure* 238). Plato’s formulation of eros as a relation to truth differs to an important degree by reversing the passive object-role assigned to the beloved in courtship and instead constituting him as a subject in the love relation: a ‘dialectic of love’ is thus constructed which, by creating two equal movements towards truth, ‘resolves the dissymmetries, the disparities, the resistances, and the evasion that organized the always difficult relations between the...active and the pursued...in the practice of love’ (*Pleasure* 242). Martin Boyd demonstrates how fully conversant he is with Socratic/Platonic erotic thematics when, in *Nuns in Jeopardy*, Mr Smith tells Joe the Australian — he who declares that his nature ‘seems to be all wrong’ — that only a certain lack of harmony prevents him from belonging to Dick Corkery ‘by the law of the spirit’ (pp137-38). But as Mr Smith is later to point out, it is Dick who proves unworthy and so unable to provide that harmony:

‘Joe loved an image of a perfect man which he had conceived in his heart. He loved the idea of the noble mind and the generous heart in the beautiful body...his imagination clothed you [in] human divinity. But when [you failed him] you were no longer the beautiful incarnation of the spirit he was seeking...the adventure was too great for you. He then realized that it was the spirit he was seeking, and that...you are not that spirit, nor could you hold...his exclusive love’. (*Nuns* 179)

The relationship between the two young men — one not entirely bereft of physical attraction — is doomed because it seems that, by the laws of Platonic erotics at least, there is a failure of will on Dick’s part and, as a consequence, a mismatch of souls: in a climactic episode which puts to the test his courage and his loyalty, Dick denies by implication the mythological and metaphysical union. A further dimension to the story lies in its biblical intimations, in its suggested parallel with the indissolubly ‘knit’ souls of Jonathan and David (I Samuel 18:1), or alternatively, in its elliptical evocation of the young men as Christ figures — or even combining to form a composite — with Dick representing a failed (and human) Christ and Joe a glorious and sacrificial one.

The demonstration of a marked interconnectedness with the Greek philosophy of eros, even what might be called an appropriation of certain classical themes and references in his more homoerotic passages, leads one to assume close links as well between classical thought and Boyd’s

religio/philosophic/creative aesthetic.<sup>52</sup> And indeed, closer inspection reveals what could be classed as a conspicuous relatedness. Exemplary of this is the way in which the themes of beauty, pleasure and form, components which give vital coherence and meaning to the Platonic dialogues on love, are also continuously called into consciousness by Martin Boyd. He displays an empathy, for instance, with the *Symposium's* overt acknowledgment of the allure of the beautiful boy — an allure more frankly sexual than aesthetic — and shares in the concomitant appreciation of loveliness of form. And his familiarity with the idea that, in an ideal world, the candidate for initiation into the mysteries of love progresses to love of the beautiful soul, is well supported in the quotation from *Nuns in Jeopardy*. Apropos love of the soul, it may even be conjectured that the more elevated state of mind, despite giving the lie to his stated personal preference for a body/soul synthesis, held a great deal of appeal for the ascetic/aesthetic component of Boyd's nature. His endorsement of pleasure, however, though clearly consonant with Plato's aesthetic analysis in its finding that pure pleasures, subject to reason and limit, are associated with the good life — as indeed are beauty and proportion — would have found utterly unacceptable Plato's categorical exclusion, from his compendium of pleasures, of any sensory apprehension of living creatures, of the products of the fine arts, and of the beauties of nature. For all his aestheticism — and we need to remember that the actual word derives from the Greek and means 'things perceptible to the senses'<sup>53</sup> — beauty and form do not exist for Boyd solely on a rarified metaphysical plane; his reality — or perhaps one should say the reality he creates through his writing — is God's created earth, a reality he, through his characters, is capable of embracing with senses that are so far from being attenuated as to be steeped in epicurean zeal. His Irish boy in *Much Else in Italy* — introduced as a device, it would seem, to convey a younger, ingenue version of Boyd himself — is expressive, for instance, of a sensual engagement with the world, here presented as a conflation of the pagan and Christian:

The Irish boy declared that he intended to enjoy his body to its fullest extent, not in mere beefy exercise, but in love and all good pleasures...He thought that sex at its best should have a ravishing beauty; it would be like returning to live with the gods in the morning of the world...It is ignoble and mean to reject [the Creator's] glorious gift by leading a deliberately deprived and emaciated life, which is much more a form of devil-worship than a full-blooded acceptance of the Apollo of Veii<sup>54</sup> ...Our duty to God is to live happily in this marvellous world, following the natural laws... (*Much Else* 36-38)

Similarly, the Satan/saint figure Mr Smith could be echoing some deep-felt conviction — as well as a semi-parallel life history — of Boyd's when he declares:

I have been many things. An architect, a painter, a flautist...I love knowledge and the admission of truth. But most of all I love life. I love it wherever it breaks out into

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<sup>52</sup>An interest in Greek aesthetics may have preceded and stimulated, in fact, what was to be demonstrably an enthusiastic adoption by Boyd of the cultural apparatus of the Aesthetic Movement, or at least, its more rarified, less showy, side.

<sup>53</sup>J. A. Cuddon, *A Dictionary of Literary Terms*, London: Penguin Books, 1982, p17.

<sup>54</sup>The Apollo of Veii is a Pan figure, the first among the three faces selected by Boyd in his hunt for the Perfect Drawing: in the absence of a Fall his significance is his ability to enjoy his pagan 'animal well-being' without corruption, doubt, or a sense of guilt. Boyd asks 'should...not [the developed soul] recover for its dwelling this perfect animal splendour?' (*Much Else in Italy* pp35-36).

beauty or free movement. I love it from the first cry of a baby to the happy death of a good man or the tragic death of a bad one. And I love all the things in between. I love the obvious beauty of flowers, and all the exquisite sentimentalities of adolescent love. And I love to see a group of boys robbing an orchard, and a stallion leap on a mare, and to hear young men shouting. I love to see everything acting according to its nature. I love the bounding heart and the teeming brain. But the bounding heart must come first. You must become all that your natural self is capable of being before you can stop to think about it, otherwise you just shrivel up. You mustn't prune the seedling.  
(*Nuns* 213-14)

Perhaps the closest we get to a comparable *cri de coeur* detailing pure joy in life that is directly attributable to Boyd himself is his reaction, at Cassis in 1926, to 'the first dazzling impact of Mediterranean life':

On the first morning when I went down to the sea, the golden brown bathers to me were sparkling angels and strange seraphic pieces of life. The young men wore the briefest slips, instead of the stuffy costumes of my youth. It was the first time I had seen this, and I felt that I had walked into the Parthenon frieze. When I bathed, the water was so clear that looking down my feet seemed to be encased in glass. (*Day* 147)

The scene may be Provence but it answers to Boyd's dearest Hellenic and homosocial imaginings. No wonder that he adds: 'The sense of physical liberation was exhilarating beyond description'.

Love of earthly delights is foremost in the imaginary transition Boyd is able to make, as an author, into Greek contextuality. As already intimated, given his ready enthrallment to romance, to the Gothic tonings of medievalism, and to paganism in particular with its stories of heroes, gods, philosophers and warriors who loved other men (see Aldrich 14) it is safe to say he needed no prompting in order to enter that pagan world. We have assumed that Boyd's classical sensibility was formed early. When he tells us that he read Virgil and Catullus, there is a probability that he did so in the original Latin, as he was schooled in the classics almost to matriculation standard; and, although he does not say so, his mythic sensibility suggests that he took in the Homeric epics. There is a very real likelihood that the texts he read were 'suitably expurgated of sexual references', a practice common amongst publishers in the late nineteenth if not in the early twentieth centuries (Aldrich 13).<sup>55</sup> Boyd's highly developed affinity with the Greek *zeitgeist* suggests, however, that he was well qualified for inclusion in that band of educated men, writers, artists and composers to whom, according to Aldrich, classical 'homosexuality' was especially evident because they were themselves attracted to their own sex, and for whom Greek antecedents were 'a justification for what others regarded as perversion' (pp13-14). It is difficult to find evidence of perversion in Homer; scholars agree in the main on his 'reticence' and decorum on the subject of the bond of

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<sup>55</sup>A similar situation obtained in the English public school system (and it is safe to assume that the same conditions applied within Australian private schools) — training in the classics at Oxbridge may have been an exception — where according to Clarke (*Rediscovering Hellenism*, p180), Homer and Plato were promoted in antiseptic fashion: 'Romanticized paideia was the cardinal quality and Greek reality was never approached...Public schoolboys were not informed of the impressive collection of erotic and obscene Greek pottery being gathered in the British Museum and in every major museum in Europe and the United States'.

‘martial comradeship’ between Achilles and Patroclus, for example, and suggest that sexual allusion is discernible only to the acutest of sensibilities. Virgil, however, is a different matter. Considered by some a poor copy of Homer, Virgil as he is presented in Paglia’s pen-sketch has intriguing implications for Boyd:

Eight hundred years intervene between Homer and Vergil. When Vergil picks up the epic genre, it no longer obeys poetic command. Epic plot, the male trajectory of history, is the weakest thing in the *Aeneid*...The *Aeneid* is closet drama. Vergil was melancholic, reclusive, possibly homosexual. His nickname was Parthenias, ‘the maidenly man’...[His] detachment and connoisseurship, so damaging to epic’s male pyrotechnics, intensify the erotic aura around persons and things. (*Sexual Personae* 129)

There is no doubt that Virgil wrote about homosexual love; Byrne R. S. Fone has called his *Second Eclogue* one of the great poems in the homosexual tradition.<sup>56</sup> Paglia’s version of Catullus is also intriguing, and possibly just as relevant:

As the republic ends, Catullus records the jazzy promiscuity of Rome’s chic set. [Decadence has driven out] those happy pagan days, romping in green meadows...Catullus, like Baudelaire, savors imagery of squalor and filth...[he] turns [Sappho’s] emotional ambivalence into sadomasochism. (*Sexual Personae* 131)

Boyd’s aestheticism might mark him as a man of ‘detachment and connoisseurship’, but the exploratory artist in him is capable of introducing, in his works at least, notions such as Baudelarian decadence — related, after all, to the decadence which followed so closely in the wake of the Aesthetic Movement — and sadomasochism. For the present, however, it is enough that we should allow him a ‘romp in green meadows’.

Stuart Kellogg suggests in *Essays on Gay Literature* that four reasons why an author might treat the phenomenon of homosexuality may be categorized as Arcadian, political, sociological, and psychological.<sup>57</sup> All four motives/motifs apply in various measure in Boyd’s case: for an example of the political, for instance, we have only to recall that his novel *The Shepherd of Admetus* was rejected because it failed to make a moral condemnation of homosexuality.<sup>58</sup> For the moment, however, the focus will be on Boyd’s appropriation, whether deliberate or subconscious, of Arcadia as a trope for homosocial/homosexual love and companionship. The symbolism of Arcadia, of its mythical place in the archaic/Hellenic world, needs little elaboration: it is variously depicted as a ‘secret Eden, a happy valley, a blessed isle, a pastoral retreat, a green forest fastness’<sup>59</sup> or a garden, a metaphorical landscape which for lovers represents tranquillity, happiness and fulfilled desires. In the homosexual literary tradition the Arcadian ideal has been used, Fone suggests, in a fashion that

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<sup>56</sup>Byrne R. S. Fone, ‘This Other Eden: Arcadia and the Homosexual Imagination’, *Essays on Gay Literature*, p14.

<sup>57</sup>Stuart Kellogg (ed), *Essays on Gay Literature*, p3.

<sup>58</sup>By Kellogg’s lights, Boyd’s habitual references to Greek comradeship and to artists and writers such as Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, Wilde, Pater and others constitutes a ‘political’ prohomosexual stance, ‘as if to exonerate homosexuality by calling on its saints’ (*Essays on Gay Literature*, p6).

<sup>59</sup>Fone, ‘This Other Eden’, *Essays on Gay Literature*, p13.

speaks directly to the gay sensibility. Why this is so, according to Fone, is because Arcadia offers a haven free from prohibition and censure; because it makes provision for ‘the sexual fraternity of men, and the washing away of societal guilt’; because it enables homosexuality the status of a lofty ideal, ‘a divinely sanctioned means to an understanding of the good and the beautiful’ and an endorsement of the search for ‘the Ideal Friend [as] one of the major undertakings of homosexual life’; and because it is a means whereby the gay sensibility may exist in a text ‘that otherwise makes no explicit statement about homosexuality’.<sup>60</sup> An important rider in its implications for Boyd is Kellogg’s observation that Arcadia offers the chance to be ‘included among the innocent’.<sup>61</sup> For Boyd’s imaginary life, as for that of others, among them Winckelmann, Pater, Byron, Wilde and Swinburne, Arcadia represents a magical/mythical/immortal land of wish-fulfilment and fantasy, a utopian dream — just as Italy, in real life, was to supply him in his last years with a home where he could bask in cultural enrichment and a climate unhindered by moralising and puritanism.<sup>62</sup>

Boyd achieves a variation on the ritual fraternizing of men in the following autobiographical passage which manages to transpose on to the English countryside an Arcadian trope surely borrowed in the interests of creating an innocent utopia:

We did route marches and night operations in the beautiful woods round Ashridge and on the high downs above Tring. A fellow cadet, whom I met fifty years later, told me that I used to stop on route marches and pick flowers...A luminous pool of bluebells...startled me with their colour when I was deploying through the trees in some mimic attack. Later, one summer morning, I was on a before-breakfast run with my company. Through the woods on either side of the lane was that filtering light and misty stillness which precedes a hot summer day. I felt that this green, intimate country and these young men running beside me were the environment and the associates for which I had been seeking all my life. (*Day* 64)

Gone are the explicit references to the ‘broken temple gleaming above a wine-dark sea’ and seductive nymphs frolicking beside woodland streams. Yet the imagery is just as potently Arcadian, with its delineation of woods, downs, bluebells, summer and green ‘intimate’ country. It also contains paradox: superimposed over a life-death binary is a male/female dynamic which acts obliquely to destabilize the masculine endeavour by the juxtaposition of a soft, sweet, gentle and ‘feminine’ natural environment, of flowers symbolizing passive love objects, over and against the implied athleticism, strength and valour of the battle-trained masculine figures who move effortlessly across this landscape. The mission of these potential war heroes is valour, victory and sacrifice, their running action a symbolic refusal of ensnarement by feminine wiles. Only Boyd stops to pick flowers, those coded remnants of Arcadian myth; and recalling how a ‘gift of flowers’ from one man to another raised the ire of his publisher, one might ask whether by so doing he compromises his masculinity. In a passage where the predominant impression is of male bonding in eternal friendship or *philia*, Boyd emerges, because he has been feminized by association, as the

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<sup>60</sup>Fone, ‘This Other Eden’, *Essays on Gay Literature*, p13.

<sup>61</sup>Kellogg, *Essays on Gay Literature*, p4.

<sup>62</sup>According to Boyd, writing in *Day of My Delight* (p283-4), crimes against children are ‘unknown’ in Italy: ‘There is no puritanism in the children’s upbringing, of which another consequence is that a psychoanalyst cannot make a living here. Their children are suffocated with kisses for the first six years of their life, and seem to thrive on it’.

symbolic embodiment of both lover and beloved, giver and receiver. It is also noteworthy that by using an Arcadian setting against which to enact the bonding-in-love of warrior/comrades — the love that was, as Boyd himself said, ‘after all, the motive power of Greek civilisation’ — he introduces a certain lack of orthodoxy to his conflation of classical tropes.

The gesturing at heroic narrative, towards that realm where ‘man takes his first step beyond the necessary, into...risk, defiance, shrewdness, deceit, art’, is a recurrent ploy of Boyd’s. As Roberto Calasso notes:

The love of one man for another appears with the heroes and immediately reaches its perfect expression. Only the heroes — and precisely because they were heroes — could have overcome what so far for the Greeks had been an insurmountable obstacle to such a love: the rigid distinction between separate roles, the obstinate asymmetry between *erastes* and *eromenos*, lover and beloved, which had condemned love relationships to being painfully short and stifled by the strictest rules.<sup>63</sup>

Consensus has it that the love relationships of the Greek heroes were not always of the ‘higher’ or platonic variety; the warriors Achilles and Patroclus, for instance, were demonstrably physical lovers despite Homer’s downplaying of the situation. And although one of Boyd’s encoded methods of indicating an intensity of feeling and physical attraction between men is to characterise them as warrior-comrades in imitation of the Greeks, he confines himself as a rule to a mild eroticization of relationships, underwriting desire in the same breath as he writes out or negates the possibility of a real, as opposed to a metaphorical, physical consummation. A good example of this is the personal reminiscence, already encountered, of his war-time friendship with the subaltern Hazelrigg, in which he gives the relationship a thoroughly romantic cast: caught up in ‘the same emotion that inspired the Greek heroes’, the two young soldiers pledge themselves, by ‘volunteer[ing] together for the next raid’, to ‘a kind of vow of love till death’. Even so, and recalling Boyd’s invoking of Freud and ‘inversion’ in this context, it seems safe to assume that Boyd was aware that homosexual eros was an acceptable component of military life in certain Greek states, even if he chooses to focus only on those aspects of that eros — such as courage, nobility, selflessness — which the Greeks exploited for military purposes. As Dover explains it:

In any Greek state, when an eromenos was old enough to serve as a soldier (and at Athens this liability began at 18...) erastes and eromenos could find themselves fighting the same battle; the desire of the erastes to excel in the eyes of his eromenos was a spur to his courage. If the eromenos responded to the sentiment of the erastes with love and admiration, the eromenos, for his part, wished to live up to the example set by the erastes; that was *his* spur to courage...erastes and eromenos could dedicate themselves to a joint enterprise requiring the utmost heroism. (*Greek Homosexuality* 191)

Dover tells us that in Elis and Boiotia it was the custom to post *erastes* and *eromenos* beside each other in battle;<sup>64</sup> both states, he says, exploited the homosexual ethos for military purposes.

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<sup>63</sup>Roberto Calasso, (trans) Tim Parks, *The Marriage of Cadmus and Harmony*, London: Vintage, 1994, pp70-71. Further citations from this work will be given by page number in the text.

<sup>64</sup>Dover is citing Xenophon, the *Symposium* (*Greek Homosexuality* p192).

According to him the ‘Sacred Band’ of Thebes, formed circa 378 BC, was composed entirely of homosexual lovers selected on a criterion of beauty, though he hastens to add that the Thebans ‘were not the first to exploit the anxiety of men to show off their prowess to the young and handsome’. The hard core of the Boiotian army, the Theban Band ‘died to a man’ at Khaironeia in 338 when Philip II of Macedon crushed Greek opposition (*Greek Homosexuality* 192). Classical literature is awash with tales of homosexual military sacrifices, and Boyd himself shows a familiarity with the importance placed on aesthetics as a military prerequisite when he writes of the Greek soldier who would ‘spare the life of a beautiful youth in battle’ (*Much Else* 61).<sup>65</sup> And while Homer ‘nowhere speaks of an erotic relationship between Achilles and Patroklos’, to Aiskhines and to other Greeks of the classical period, as Dover observes:

the extravagance of Achilles’ emotion when Patroklos is killed, combined with the injunction when Achilles too dies their ashes should be interred together, signified homosexual eros, and Aiskhines treats Homer’s reticence as a sign of cultivated sensitivity. (*Greek Homosexuality* 197)<sup>66</sup>

To this Dover adds that in the *Iliad* Achilles is the *eromenos* who ‘so honoured his *erastes* Patroklos that he was ready to die in avenging him’. Boyd’s treatment of Dominic’s relationship with the soldier Hollis in *When Blackbirds Sing*, a subaltern who effectively reduplicates, though in much greater detail, the Hazelrigg of Boyd’s memoirs, reads as a substantial borrowing of this notion.

Hollis is introduced to the reader as young — ‘just nineteen’ — and as possessing a ‘naive sensual innocence’; with his baby face and his military accoutrements he resembles ‘a putto in an Italian painting, wearing the helmet and playing with the lance of Mars’. He is represented as the ‘poetic conjunction of the ideas of youth and death’ (*Blackbirds* 67), but he is also quite manifestly a specimen of both tyro god-figure and idealised *eromenos*.<sup>67</sup> The Béthune orchard wherein he and Dominic experience an epiphany of sorts is an amplified and metamorphosed re-enactment of the occasion in the English harvest field — a location and image resonant of ‘the literature that finds “groves, hills and fields” part of the geography of Arcadia’ and a place where ‘lovers can tell their love or ratify it’<sup>68</sup> — on which Boyd and Hazelrigg were stimulated to exchange their silent ‘vow of love until death’ (*Day* 86). The apple orchard of *When Blackbirds Sing*, once its surface of Arcadian purity and innocence is penetrated, is more explicitly freighted with the metaphor of homosexual discourse. In this garden of Eden the blossoms both promise and refuse the realisation of fulfilment. Yet no Eden is exempt from connotations of a fall from innocence, and this one is no exception in its subtextual signalling of initiation into knowledge — a moment which announces itself in an articulated and seemingly mutual acceptance of ‘the manly love of comrades’. Nor is the scene designed as one entirely without sexual charge, taking place as it does immediately after Hollis, a virgin, has been dissuaded from visiting a whore on account of Dominic’s ‘poetic feeling

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<sup>65</sup>Dover marks the anecdote from the fourth century BC in which Xenophon tells of a man willing to die for a youth about whom he knew no more than the visual stimulus of bodily beauty could tell him (*Greek Homosexuality* p50-51).

<sup>66</sup>Dover goes on to claim that Aiskhylos’s trilogy *Myrmidons*, *Nereids* and *Phrygians*, was the mainstay of the erotic interpretation of the central motif of the *Iliad* (*Greek Homosexuality*, p197).

<sup>67</sup>Boyd writes: ‘Dominic felt that he had taken Hollis under his protection’ (*When Blackbirds Sing* p70).

<sup>68</sup>Both quotations are from Fone, ‘This Other Eden’, *Essays on Gay Literature*, pp16 & 21.

that Hollis's innocence should not be wasted on a prostitute' (*Blackbirds* 77). In the scene, both young men undress, motivated, it would seem, by some pagan, primordial imperative — the Arcadian dweller's desire, perhaps, to be 'free and natural, completely himself':<sup>69</sup>

The two young men stood naked, restored to innocence in the stillness of the natural world. There was no sound, and yet it seemed that the stillness was full of sound beyond their perception, the sound of life growing in the trees, and thrusting up the young blades of grass. Hollis was going to say: 'We are like the Greeks', but he could not speak. There was something in the night far beyond this allusion, and he felt not only would it be wrong to speak, but that if he did his voice would break beyond his control. 'I wish we could stay here for ever', he said at last.  
(*Blackbirds* 79)

Here it is surely no accident that the subtext is defining the innocent text: Boyd's suggestive use of metaphor, for instance, in 'the sound of life growing in the trees, and thrusting up the young blades of grass'. When later Hollis is wounded in battle (just as Hazelrigg was killed in real life, preventing Boyd from romantically 'mingling his blood' with that of Hazelrigg's in no-man's-land), he has half his face blown away, a disfigurement which will alter Dominic's attitude to him in a significant way. Dominic, in emulation of the heroic style — that is, at great risk to his own life — avenges Hollis's terrible injury by shooting dead a young German soldier. It is a momentous act destined to haunt Dominic, not least because it is complicated by notions of 'orgiastic satisfaction' and by the fact that the German boy resembles Hollis. By Dominic's reckoning, in avenging Hollis he has had to shoot his double, an act which forces upon him a realisation of the German boy's essential humanity and beauty. This complex moment is exploited by Boyd to underline his own feelings about the insanity of war: his subliminal invocation of the ancients' warrior code suggests that vengeance for Dominic is necessarily a two-edged sword, its momentary note of triumph subsumed to the self-violation implicit in his failure to live up to that ideal which would spare the life of the beautiful youth in battle. Not surprisingly, the event is to become the catalyst for Dominic's conversion to pacifism.

When Dominic and Hollis meet again as convalescents, it is evident that Hollis's half-mutilated face is a prohibitive factor in their relationship. Yet a form of inchoate desire exists still, manifesting itself in Hollis's almost pathetic wish to re-actuate the orchard experience, this time at St. Hilary in England, and in Dominic's sensation of 'faint interest, almost an excitement at the image of the orchard in bloom', plus his realisation that this 'was not [the] impulse towards innocence which had made him walk along the bush track in his boyhood'. Surprisingly, in this context even the exotic 'bush track' is endowed with Arcadian notions of unfettered freedom, since only a few lines before Boyd had written of Dominic:

Two or three times in his life he had had this impulse to strip himself and walk naked under the stars in some remote sylvan place — along an Australian bush road, on a cliff above Port Phillip Bay, and then, so much later, in the orchard near Béthune. He did not know why he obeyed this impulse, which had sometimes equally been felt by saints and poets. At the time it gave him a feeling of serenity,

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<sup>69</sup>Fone, 'This Other Eden', *Essays on Gay Literature*, p17.

that with his clothes all evil was shed away. When he remembered it afterwards he was ashamed, because of the puritan instruction of his childhood. (*Blackbirds* 166)

The mention of ‘serenity’ and of ‘all evil...shed away’ is an indication that Boyd in all consciousness may have subscribed to a notion of Arcadia as a place untouched by puritan reprisal and moral restrictions, and therefore as offering an opportunity not only of liberation from societal prejudice and encumbrance, but a chance to be ‘included among the innocent’.

The sense of Arcadia as a retreat ‘beyond the solid enclosures of convention’, as a place remote from ‘the ordinary moral sense...[and] self-regarding virtues’<sup>70</sup> is, perversely, both reinforced and overturned in Boyd’s novel *The Lemon Farm*. The story reads, interestingly enough, as a plea for unconventional love, and it may or may not be significant that this love, being heterosexual, is doomed to tragedy and failure. It can also be seen as putting an enigmatic and ambiguous slant on the biblical expulsion from Paradise. On the one hand the protagonists are misfits, an Adam and Eve ‘forced outside the walls of social edifice into the insecurity of the wilderness’ (*Farm* 193); on the other, the mere fact of their unconventionality, the sense of their being beyond the sanctions of society, enables them to find in that wilderness their Arcadia. The Arcadian (and pagan) resonances are inescapable: for a brief and blissful period Boyd allows them to epitomise ‘the supreme expression of humanity abandoned in ecstasy to the rhythms of nature...the human soul escaped to freedom’, an observation he makes, in *Much Else in Italy*, of a winged boy on a dolphin he comes across in Rome (p10). And when Davina Chelgrove voices her belief that ‘When we live in love we live in good, not in evil. It is the only good’, she is endorsing erotic love (and incidentally, Platonic ideals which equate love with the highest good) in much the same way as Boyd acknowledges the ‘lively appetites’ when he asks ‘Is not chastity a purely negative virtue?’ (*Much Else* 25). The imagery here is lifted directly from the Renaissance and from antiquity. She is a Venus figure, a Botticelli painting: ‘Eyes set wide apart, very blue...really lovely. Her hair was rather straggly, with lank curls which blew in the wind’ (*Farm* 23); Michael Kaye by contrast is the archetypal noble savage, ‘wild and disreputable’, an ‘archaic god’ or Pan figure reminiscent of the Apollo of Veii — also featured in *Much Else in Italy* — he has ‘slanting eyes, strong white teeth, [a] full-lipped mouth’ and his smile has a ‘gay, animal liveliness’ (*Farm* 28).<sup>71</sup> Still an ephebe, a ‘sulky immature boy’, he aspires to hero status by attempting to rescue Davina from a lifeless marriage; she, on the other hand, invests her hopes in him as a ‘strong, free [man]’. Their trysting place is a small island off the coast of Sussex, an idyll they dream of supplanting with a real Greek island, Cyprus, there to grow a lemon farm: ‘They wanted the lemon farm not for its scented trees and brilliant skies, but as a place where love could be secure’ (*Farm* 157).<sup>72</sup> The novel’s climax is

<sup>70</sup>Martin Boyd, *The Lemon Farm*, Melbourne: Sun Books, 1973, p96. Further citations from this work will be published by page number in the text.

<sup>71</sup>The Pan archetype is not only a pervasive motif in Boyd's works but exerts a seductively primitive magnetism. This is how Nijinsky, for instance, is described by the narrator of *Lucinda Brayford*, an image which sees Paul Brayford mesmerised and rapt: ‘His high-cheek bones, his long, obliquely set eyes, intensified the savage life which he expressed in every gesture’. Nijinski’s relationship to classicism is reinforced by Paul’s comment to Lucinda: ‘If you watch Nijinsky you won’t see him at any moment when his body does not form a perfect pattern. If you were to freeze him into stone at any second, even during the most rapid movement, you would have a perfect statue’. *Lucinda Brayford*, Ringwood, Victoria: Penguin, 1985, pp150-151. Further citations from this work will be given by page number in the text.

<sup>72</sup>The place the lovers choose for their lemon farm is Paphos, where Venus was born.

Davina's death by drowning, a strange twist of fate that is not unproductive in its effect on Michael. In a sacrifice redemptive of his humanity and his manhood, she is instrumental in 'proving his strength', awakening his soul and in teaching him 'to suffer for love' (*Farm* 208). Sacrifice, love, and suffering are, of course, intrinsic to Christian teaching; but with the awareness that in a climate of secrecy and repression they are also motifs inescapably linked to the homosexual enterprise, one needs to entertain the possibility that, particularly with suffering in mind, Boyd is effecting here a subtle displacement onto heterosexual love.

Five years later Boyd returned to the Arcadia which privileges homosexuality in *Nuns in Jeopardy* (1940), except that in this case, following his tendency to blend the 'two stories', the Arcadian ambience is the deep structure underlying the more prominent 'Christianised' concern, the Garden of Eden turned degenerate. The setting for this novel is also an island, this time somewhere in the Pacific South Seas. Its Eden is a study in elemental prodigality to outrival the Marvellian garden, a tropical paradise calculated to release in the souls of his 'half-pagan, half-Christian' castaways the more primitive of their impulses and desires, to provoke in the event an unaccustomed 'stirring of life [to disturb] their normal economy' (*Nuns* 102).<sup>73</sup> In its proleptic evocation of William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* (1954)<sup>74</sup> — except that here the protagonists are a group of nuns, a native islander, some sailors and a child — the novel is a darkly ironic commentary on humankind reduced to a barbaric state, stripped of social convention and the civilizing influences. The metaphor of Arcadia as the archetypal homosexual haven which lies at its heart offers transformative and redeeming elements, but the overall focus has expanded to include a wider universe, taking on a deal of complexity in its capacity to work as first, a 'parable of dispossession' (a prescient one surely?) in relation to the state of Europe in 1939;<sup>75</sup> second, as a commentary on a 'hermetic' or globally isolated Australia; third, as a re-creation, with a larger cast, of the thematics of the Fall and of redemption; and lastly, as an attempt at a syncretic blending of the Christian and pagan traditions. In keeping with the concerns expressed here, the concentration for the moment will be on the latter and on the novel's homosocial/homosexual component.

Harry the islander is exemplary of the reconciliation of Christian and pagan motifs, evoking at once a beautiful primitive god and the principle of incarnation. To Winifred he seems like

some strange dark god...the only one of them who really belonged there — the only one whose body, carved in wild bronze, as well as his soul, was in harmony with

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<sup>73</sup>To Sister Agatha (*Nuns in Jeopardy* pp85-86), 'These fruits and flowers, so huge and brilliant, so wanton, so voluptuous, so suggestive in their shapes and colours, hardly seemed to be the creation of God but rather of some genius of lust'. Similarly, 'the fish flapping...seemed to switch on an electric current between herself and the garden, releasing in her forces of life and desire which hitherto she had not known to exist, and which were likely to strangle in their sinewy grasp all her aspiration towards virtue and peace'.

<sup>74</sup>*Nuns in Jeopardy* in fact continues the tradition of the romantic island idyll popularised (and occasionally satirized) in the '30s by writers like H. De Vere Stackpool (*Blue Lagoon*) and Norman Lindsay (*Age of Consent* and *The Cautious Amorisist*), except that here the thematics are complicated by heaven/hell, utopia/dystopia dichotomies in the manner of, say, Bernard Shaw's *Man and Superman* which takes as its premise a state of existence 'far more abundantly vital than anything yet experienced by mankind' (*Everyman's Encyclopaedia Vol. 11*).

<sup>75</sup>As Brenda Niall proposes in *Martin Boyd: A Life*, p125.

those superb fruits and brilliant flowers....  
(*Nuns* 132)

while to Sister Agatha in a revelatory moment he appears as ‘God...imprisoned in animal flesh...[as]...somehow...the Incarnation of God, the ecstatic, terrible union of the spirit and the flesh’ (*Nuns* 52). In his physical appearance, and indeed his actions, Dick too achieves an amalgam of the two traditions: after Joe’s death he is shown as a suffering Christ-like figure:

...his face was a darker brown than the bleached gold of his hair and beard, which framed it like a startling aureole, a kind of sun-burst — and his blue eyes were arresting, staring tragically from the dark face....  
(*Nuns* 152)

who performs for Winifred religious rites touched by chivalry:

She opened her eyes and saw Dick bending over her. The sensation of water in her mouth was so ineffable, that when she saw the silver chalice held to her lips by a young man with a golden beard, she thought at first that she must really have died and that Christ was administering the sacrament to her in Heaven.... (*Nuns* 74)

and also as someone more primitive: ‘His body, naked, shining, superbly developed, was like that of a native...It destroyed his identity as Dick Corkery, a Devonshire farmer’s son, and identified him with some kind of ancient European savage, a Tartar or a Scythian’ (*Nuns* 52). Dick and his friend Joe are similarly compromised when Mr Smith paints them as full-length, naked apostles on the altar-piece of his newly-built Chapel of the Transfiguration. We have already seen that Joe and Dick are the friends/lovers categorised by Mr Smith as belonging to each other by the ‘law of the spirit’: their relationship is such that it threatens to subvert that of Dick and Winifred.<sup>66</sup> As Winifred tells Dick: ‘Perhaps your love only came to you from Joe, and without him you cannot really love...I can see from your face that your soul has left me’ (*Nuns* 172). And Dick has to exorcise Joe — ‘Oh, damn Joe!’ — in order to feel close to Winifred. His distress and confusion are exemplary of a core conflict common to several of Boyd’s characters and one possibly applicable to Boyd himself. Dick feels

as if he were in hell, while lust and revulsion were in conflict in him...He did not know from what he wanted to escape. He only knew he wanted his life to be simplified, with his love turned unconfusedly in one direction...What had made him complex? (*Nuns* 175)

Nor does Joe’s death in the river, where he is taken by an alligator in an attempt to keep Dick out of danger, fully resolve things for Dick. Joe’s is the supreme sacrifice eulogised in the epic literature of Greek manly love — Dick has been ‘redeemed from death by the love and death of a friend’ (*Nuns* 207) — the sacrifice to be later articulated in the Bible thus: ‘Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends’ (John 15:13). Dick might manage to kill the octopus in the pool in a biblical eye-for-an-eye retaliation: ‘The only way he could get even...was by

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<sup>66</sup>This represents an innovation on the Sedgwick triangulation theory: Winifred is not acting so much in the capacity of a facilitator for male bonding, but she *is* having to accept a lower order of priority in Dick’s feelings.

killing the octopus. He had visited the sins of the alligator on the octopus' (*Nuns* 159); yet, just as Joe's death is not innocent of deeper meaning, so the account of this incident does not read like an excerpt from a *Boys' Own Annual* adventure story. On the contrary, above and beyond Dick's act of 'revenge', the images of river, pool and octopus are reverberant with sexual, spiritual, religious and mythological implications to an extent which leads one to believe that they are deliberately and knowingly, rather than accidentally, contrived.

It is difficult, in fact, to escape the impression that Boyd has appropriated acknowledged tropes, metaphors and myths from classical homosexual discourse in order to add a certain nuanced complexity to his story, 'one of the best I have written'. There is also a high probability that Boyd was well aware that, as noted by Fone, 'the rites of the sea, of purification and transformation by water, are one of the central rituals of Arcadian life'. According to Fone:

With this ceremony will go symbolic union: that marriage of which Plato speaks, celebrated now in Arcadia. We have seen it in its most poetic form in the pages of [Thomas Mann's] *Death in Venice*. But we have also seen something of the symbolic event in [Gore Vidal's] *The City and the Pillar* and [Nial Kent's] *The Divided Path*: the sexual union is consummated only after a baptismal dip in the swimming hole...<sup>67</sup>

and indeed, it is suggested that Boyd's persistent use of water as a medium for the naked male body, in paying homage to its transformational, sensual and sacramental powers, is inspirationally identical to the spirit motivating the Reverend Beebe's response to the bathing pool in E. M. Forster's *Room With a View*: 'It had been a call to the blood, and to the relaxed will, a passing benediction whose influence did not pass, a holiness, a spell, a momentary chalice of youth'.<sup>68</sup>

The Greeks were not alone in their devotion to water. The Roman lyric poets, according to Charles Sprawson, believed that:

Water...was a mysterious element, divine and health-giving, musical and electric as it flowed, seductive, particularly when still, and sometimes sinister in its effects.<sup>69</sup>

The river that is witness to Joe's sacrificial rite in *Nuns in Jeopardy* may be 'sinister in its effects', but it is also transformative, a means by which Joe is enabled to die transcendently.

Joe's pain and his joy became one thing. He saw all the good and evil he had known as one thing, and then he realized that he himself was one, and there was no more doubt nor conflict in him. His body and mind seemed to dissolve into the light, and he was no longer an individual, but only a vibration, a note of music, a beam of light. (*Nuns* 150)

Dick, as we have seen, fails the spiritual commitment required for symbolic union; his hesitant 'dithering' on the bank is a symptom as well of his sexual confusion, what he calls his 'complexity'. In this context, recalling how the amorous nymph Salmacis entices the beautiful boy

<sup>67</sup>Fone, 'This Other Eden', *Essays on Gay Literature*, p25.

<sup>68</sup>E. M. Forster, *Room With a View*, London: Edward Arnold & Co., 1947, p163.

<sup>69</sup>Charles Sprawson, *Modern Painters*, London: Fine Arts Journals Ltd., Spring '93, p69.

Hermaphroditus into her pool and entwines him ‘like an octopus, his body united thereafter with hers to form that mysterious figure, half-man, half-woman, elevated and enigmatic, spiritual and carnal, that haunted the Greek imagination [and] informed their ideal of physical beauty’,<sup>70</sup> Dick’s preoccupation with destroying the octopus seems linked, despite the inversion of the sexual union, to its potential symbolism, the notion of an inextricable physical melding. Its ghastly death means, then, not only Dick’s final exorcism of Joe but also his forceful denial of the latent sexual component in his and Joe’s relationship. Yet the metaphorical implications of the octopus are not so easily erased: when Dick returns to the settlement to witness a scene of general debauchery he is arrested by the sight of Cecilia, one of the nuns, ‘lying across the body of Harry the islander’:

He stared at them, hypnotized, and then their black and white enlaced limbs became the black and white of the octopus in the pool, and the revulsion he had felt at the octopus returned to him and slowly strangled his desire, so that he felt as though he were in hell, while lust and revulsion were in conflict in him. (*Nuns* 175)

Now it would seem that it is the originary mythical significance of the octopus, heterosexual union, which is causing him torment. The image is compromised and complicated, however, by its reference to yet another source of ambivalence and conflict, the memory of Joe. Paradoxically, despite having sought to finalise the tie to Joe by the ritualistic killing of the octopus, Dick is destined, in his union with Winifred, to be haunted by its symbolism of enduring love and everlasting loss:

He wanted to put his head between Winifred’s breasts and to weep there — not to make love to her, but to be comforted — not to make love to her because he had killed the octopus, the living thing, and he felt that he would bring death with his love. (*Nuns* 159)

One is left wondering whether the novel’s final revelation of the birth of twins to Winifred and Dick, in its oblique and possibly mischievous recapitulation of the theme of twin souls or divided selves, is meant not only as a form of recompense and reparation for Dick, but as the concrete representation of human duality as a metaphysical constant.

At times when Boyd writes on the subject of ‘soul mates’ he displays not only a familiarity with Plato but with Aristophanes as well. According to Aristophanes’ comical conception, human males, females and hermaphrodites were originally created as four-legged, globe-like creatures in the images of the sun, the earth and the moon: ‘they were round and they *went* round’. Subsequent to these people’s arrogance in trying to ‘scale the heights of heaven and set upon the gods’<sup>71</sup> Zeus punished them by cutting them all in half: thereafter the tendency has been for each half to seek an original state of wholeness, to heal his or her dissevered nature:

...we are all like pieces of the coins that children break in half for keepsakes — making two out of one, like the flat-fish — and each of us is for ever seeking the half that will tally with himself...when...any lover...is fortunate enough to meet his other half, they are both so intoxicated with affection, with friendship, and with love,

<sup>70</sup>Sprawson’s description, *Modern Painters*, p70.

<sup>71</sup>Both quotes are by Aristophanes, ‘Symposium’, *Five Dialogues of Plato*, pp38-39.

that they ...[are impelled] to spend their lives together, although they may be hard put to it to say what they really want with one another; and indeed, the purely sexual pleasures of their friendship could hardly account for the huge delight they take in one another's company. (*Five Dialogues* 41)

A number of Boyd's male characters, even those who are ostensibly heterosexual, as well as his own impersonation of someone who prefers the company of men, accord with Aristophanes' idea that 'men who are slices of the male are followers of the male, and show their masculinity throughout their boyhood by the way they make friends with men...theirs is the most virile constitution' (*Five Dialogues* 40-41). They are also the most troubled and complex of his young men, often exhibiting signs, like Boyd himself, of a divided, or at least an unintegrated (sliced?) nature.<sup>72</sup> It is ironic, therefore — though to be quite so explicit in a same-sex context might have broken the bounds of propriety — that Boyd comes closest to articulating Aristophanes' thoughts on the matter in an 'hermaphroditic' context, that of Richard Montfort's musings on his feelings for Aïda de Moya: 'They talk of the attraction of opposites. It is nothing to the attraction of those who are alike. I think one's soul is always putting out feelers, as it were, to meet another soul with which it is completely in accord, or which is its counterpart. If it meets that soul it expands more, becomes greater and finer' (*Montforts* 168).

Closely related to the mutual recognition of kindred souls is the emphasis — and again the visual element is very much to the fore — the Greeks placed on the revelatory moment when lovers first make eye contact. Foucault notes that many Greek texts attribute importance to the gaze and to the eyes in the genesis of desire or love, adding 'it is not that the pleasure of the gaze is self-indulgent; rather, it is thought to make an opening through which the soul is reached'.<sup>73</sup> The terrible moment in *When Blackbirds Sing* when Dominic shoots the German boy who bears an 'odd resemblance' to Hollis seems to draw directly on this notion: 'In an instant of mutual human recognition, with eye open to eye, he shot the boy' (*Blackbirds* 119): a mystical battlefield communion which goes on to develop mythical proportions and repercussions. Dominic can no longer meet the eyes of Sylvia or feel any contact with her; he loses direction, feeling that 'his life belonged to the boy whom he had shot' (*Blackbirds* 131); he is in anguish, believing that

he had violated every good thing he knew, all his passion for the beauty of the created world...More, that glance came from the recognition of their deepest selves, a recognition of kind, which wiped out all the material obligation of their opposed circumstances. In that act he had violated the two things to which his whole being responded in worship; the beauty of a living human body, all the miracle of its movement and thought; and the relation of two souls in brotherhood. (*Blackbirds* 137)

The German boy is, in effect, the headstone Dominic erects to a senseless war; while over his personal loss hangs the shadow of what, in a different and ideal world, might have been the beginning of the kind of indestructible friendship and love relation Xenophon describes when he

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<sup>72</sup>Two who suggest themselves either as incomplete or one half of a whole are the Langton brothers, Guy and Dominic.

<sup>73</sup>A footnote of Foucault's, *The Use of Pleasure*, pp40-41, in which the reference is to Xenophon's *Memorabilia*.

‘portrays two lovers who look into each other’s faces, converse, confide in one another, rejoice together or feel a common distress over successes and failures, and look after each other’.<sup>74</sup>

The title alone of Boyd’s rejected ‘homosexual novel’ *The Shepherd of Admetus* leads one to believe that in this book he attempted to integrate, even if only metaphorically, his romance with classicism and a declared interest in the kind of manly love based on attraction, deep affection and camaraderie such as that described above. The title is both challenging and provocative, alluding as it does to a pair of mythological lovers whose story is altogether more obscure and more bizarre than that of, say, a better known heroic duo such as Achilles and Patroclus: it sets up expectations of daring hardly fulfilled by the recorded breach of protocol occasioned by a gift of flowers. One might have anticipated, at the very least, a vestigial trace of the myth involving the king of Thessaly, his slave-lover the mighty god Apollo, and a love affair ‘even more arcane’ than Apollo’s often fatal ventures into love (*Cadmus* 71).<sup>75</sup> Admetus, according to Calasso, was young, handsome, famous for his herds of cattle, loved sumptuous feasts and possessed the gift of hospitality. For love of him ‘the proudest of gods’ Apollo became his willing hireling, a ‘mere herdsman [who took] a provincial king’s cattle out to graze’ (*Cadmus* 72); he also placed himself — and here the paradoxes compound, with Apollo exhibiting more than a touch of Dionysian exuberance<sup>76</sup> — in the class of prostitutes and ‘perverts’ traditionally despised by the Greeks by accepting payment from his beloved. An intriguing aspect of what Calasso calls ‘this elusive, because supernatural, story’ is that Admetus — whose name means ‘indomitable’ — as the object of love is ‘the point of maximum impenetrability’ (*Cadmus* 73). By a process of deduction, however, working from his knowledge of Admetus as hospitable, as expecting others to substitute for him in death — as well as from evidence that his daughter’s name Pheraia is a local name for Hecate the underworld goddess, and that Apollo’s stay in Thessaly is nine years or a time-cycle in Hades — Calasso concludes that Admetus is the lord of the dead and Thessaly a brooding landscape of shadows. His summation,

Now we see how truly extreme Apollo’s love is, more so even than it had seemed: out of love, Apollo tries to save the king of the dead from death. Now the love of...Apollo...reveals itself as thoroughly provocative: it is a love for the shadow that steals all away...we [end by discovering]...that the god of the invisible is...a lover too, (*Cadmus* 76)

raises questions as to how far Boyd may have been aware of the darker implications of the myth he appears to have appropriated. It is improbable that he deciphered the story in Calasso’s terms. But even without Calasso’s insights, the name of Admetus in the core story is ineluctably steeped in notions of death and mortality, prompting one to surmise that Boyd may have capitalised on the myth to write of the homosexual enterprise in Wildean terms, that is, as inherently dangerous. Much more likely, of course, is that he chose to be non-controversial and wrote instead of one man’s devoted and selfless passion for another. For the only possible clue we have to Boyd’s perspective on the Apollo who loved Admetus, however, we have to be content with his account

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<sup>74</sup>Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure*, p201, drawing on Xenophon’s *Memorabilia*.

<sup>75</sup>Calasso gives an example of two of Apollo’s lovers for whom love ended in death: the boy Hyacinthus, whose skull was shattered by a discus hurled by the god, and Cyparissus, who turned himself into a cypress to forestall Apollo’s advances (*The Marriage of Cadmus and Harmony*, pp72-73).

<sup>76</sup>It is even possible that Boyd would have appreciated an Apollo capable of the pleasures of the flesh.

of, and contribution to, the Irish boy's reaction on coming across the statue of the Apollo of Tevere in Rome:

...at this stage in his search he believed that the face of this statue satisfied his ideal...The eyes are reflective and the mouth...gentle. It is not the Apollo who flayed Marsyas, but it might be the shepherd of Admetus. The forehead is wide and the thick hair covers his head like a cap. His strength and vitality are assured. It is not an intellectual head, but something far better, that of a man whose spirit is one with the flesh. (*Much Else* 40-41)

The description makes it clear that Boyd understands very well that in the 'shepherd' of Admetus the pattern of the monster-slaying hero was reversed: portrayed here is the Apollo capable of sacrifice, the Apollo whose 'love was so great that in trying to snatch Admetus from death he...risked what for a god is the equivalent of death: exile' (*Cadmus* 73).<sup>77</sup> In this Apollo too we see the evidence of the god who was led 'by longing and desire to found the arts of archery, healing, and divination: who was 'a scholar in the school of Love'.<sup>78</sup> And curiously enough, in the face of this ancient and delectable god reproduced in *Much Else in Italy*, we are presented with one of Boyd's characteristic crossovers between cultures: in its serenity and beauty the Apollo of Tevere most nearly resembles the peaceful Christ of Michelangelo's *Pietà*, the face which finally satisfies the quest by Boyd and his companion for the Perfect Drawing.

A number of Boyd's novels are peopled by young men whose descriptions are clearly designed to identify them as replicas or reincarnations of Greek gods such as Apollo: the predictability of their recurrence suggests them as reliable (imaginary) friends and companions invoked in order to maintain the classical world as viable and tangible.<sup>89</sup> His early works in particular tend to invest unambiguously in the homosocial/homosexual ethos, in tales of the erotically tinged friendships of beautiful youths barely out of adolescence.<sup>90</sup> By the time he comes to the more mature *Lucinda Brayford*, however, Boyd's obsession with the Greek ideal receives its most comprehensive, sustained yet sceptical treatment: it is as if he is making an 'heroic effort of mind' at objectivity and the detachment required, perhaps, for a sociological treatment.<sup>91</sup> For example, Paul Brayford's declaration: 'I'm...a leaf on the eternal olive, the sacred tree of Athena, the ever-green tree of humanity and civilization' (*Brayford* 302) is on the one hand an echo of Boyd's own Graecophilia; whereas Lucinda's deflationary remarks, both about Paul:

<sup>77</sup>We are reminded by Agathon in the 'Symposium' that Apollo was led by longing and desire to found the arts of archery, healing, and divination: he was 'a scholar in the school of Love'. (*Five Dialogues* p47)

<sup>78</sup>So says Agathon in the 'Symposium', *Five Dialogues* p47.

<sup>89</sup>Adherence to a traditional world is likened in *The Golden Bough* to a 'strong tower sheltering man from life and reality' according to Vickery, *The Literary Impact of The Golden Bough*, p8.

<sup>90</sup>For example, in his pseudonymous *Dearest Idol* (Walter Beckett), Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1929, Boyd writes: 'In their youth there had been just sufficient physical attraction between [Tony and Boris] to give stimulus to their friendship (p270); and, recording Tony's thoughts, he writes: 'The sort of friendship we had...so often ends at about twenty...I wanted something real and lasting to come out of it' (p272). Further citations from this work will be given by page number in the text.

<sup>91</sup>Stuart Kellogg, *Essays on Gay Literature* (pp6-7), in noting that the law of distance can serve a sociological purpose in literature, says that the outsider is in a good position to 'record the structure and manners of a civilization'. Boyd is too close to, too caught up with the glamour of his antecedents to produce, in *Lucinda Brayford*, a savage portrait of English county society. Nonetheless, he is not uncritical.

Paul lives in a quite unreal world...a sort of mixture of the Middle Ages and ancient Greece. He could only do it by hiding himself down in Provence. None of his theories fit life as it is. He feels that he has achieved nothing in life, so he says that the conditions of life are wrong, and he looks back to other centuries when he pretends they were perfect, though he knows quite well that they were hideous....  
(*Brayford* 410)

and to her son Stephen: ‘You cannot find in the modern world any place where you can live in that sort of golden age of physical and spiritual freedom’ (*Brayford* 412) qualify, by contrast, as a self-knowing, realistic appraisal by the author of the author, especially when we consider Lucinda’s rider to her comments about Paul: ‘He’s always acting a little. You must allow for that’. Similarly, while the narrator of *Lucinda Brayford* attempts to dignify Paul’s homosexuality by clothing it in aristocratic eccentricity he also feels compelled, it seems, to satirize Paul’s, and by implication, Martin Boyd’s situation: ‘One must always have an attachment or one is half dead...I want the soul of a Doestoevsky character in the body of a Greek athlete. My taste in people is as difficult and expensive to gratify as my taste in furniture’ (*Brayford* 361). The gentle — and not so gentle — spoofing of Paul Brayford is offset to a great extent by the *gravitas* Boyd is able to bring to the parallel story of Stephen Brayford and his conversion, through love of a young choirboy, to the joint principles of pacifism and the preservation of fellowship and communion, the latter a passion which will see him die, Christ-like, in a metaphorical crucifixion. The closing note, however, of *Lucinda Brayford* is that of resurrection, a truly transcendental moment in Boyd’s treatment of, in this case, the brotherhood of man.

In the case of Stephen Brayford the Christian purist might say that the idea of a ‘brotherhood’ has been compromised by his thrilled emotional capitulation to the looks, demeanour and voice of Brian, a Kings College choirboy. Yet Stephen worships from afar, and the love-object’s potential for exciting sensuality, though undoubtedly deriving from a stimulus pertaining to the flesh,<sup>92</sup> is never allowed to exceed those boundaries of protocol within which Aristotle defined his theory of ‘self-indulgence’, a theory which, while forbidding touch and contact, did not exclude the pleasures of sight, hearing and smell. Foucault describes Aristotle’s view thus:

It is not self-indulgent to ‘delight in’...colors, shapes, or paintings, nor in theater or music; one can, without self-indulgence, delight in the scent of fruit, roses, or incense; and, he says in the *Eudemian Ethics*, anyone who would become so intensely absorbed in looking at a statue or in listening to a song as to lose his appetite or taste for lovemaking could not be reproached for self-indulgence, any more than could someone who let himself be seduced by the Sirens... (*Pleasure* 40).

Insofar as Stephen is seduced by Brian’s Siren song, it is incumbent upon us to consider whether it is possible to see his final annihilation in *Lucinda Brayford* as a kind of transfiguring of same-sex desire into an ultimate and fully sought-after spiritual consummation with Christ. Stephen’s death, as suggested, is itself exemplary of Christ: as a military prisoner and martyr to pacifism he is

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<sup>92</sup>This is a reference to St Augustine, who in his *Confessions* wondered if his youthful ‘seemingly innocent’ friendships, affections and pleasures were not related to that ‘glue’ which attaches us to the flesh. Cited by Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure*, p40.

tormented by nightmares in which his sadistic jailer — he of the ‘provoked but unacknowledged lust’ (*Brayford* 526)<sup>93</sup> — and Brian the chorister are confused and conflated to the extent that he imagines himself ‘nailed to a cross made of love and hatred [so that] he had to reconcile the two things in himself’ (*Brayford* 524) — and here there lurks a subtextual suggestion that he may also need to reconcile his own opposing impulses of spiritual love and physical lust; he dies at Easter; and he sacrifices himself to the noble cause of suffering humanity. A generalised love of man has become for him ‘a reason to die for’.<sup>94</sup>

Literal, sexual love for his fellow man always remained a shadowy and improbable alternative for Stephen Brayford. Stephen is an impressionable child of his era: same-sex liaisons are likely to carry the stigma of shame, disgrace, annihilation. Furthermore, his genealogical classification as an *arriviste* rather than as a true aristocrat prevents him from claiming the immunity from damaging criticism enjoyed by Paul Brayford. Besides, Stephen’s affinity with the chorister Brian, despite its underpinning of eroticism, is predominantly spiritual or ‘other’. There could be no more explicit confirmation of this than Stephen’s determination, once Brian has died at Dunkirk—his hand joined to Stephen’s — to follow suit, even though it involves a process of refusal to fight, incarceration and torture. Stephen is motivated by his conviction that Brian represents for him an ‘instinctive recognition’ of a ‘common fate’, as intimated in his final question to Paul: ‘...do you think it could possibly be a scientific fact that this linking of fate could be acknowledged beforehand in an exchanged glance?’ (*Brayford* 537-8).<sup>95</sup> That Boyd redeploys here the pagan motif of indivisible twin souls makes possible, in fact, an entire recasting of Stephen’s death, removing it from the wider sphere of public renunciation and sacrifice to the equally legitimate but private domain of a very personal, romanticised and mystical sorrow. With its capacity for (at least) two distinct and seemingly unambivalent interpretations, the episode is graphically illustrative of the skill with which Boyd is able to balance and contain ambiguity, to render plausible the inclusiveness of contending possibilities.

The motivation for the expatiation upon the climax/anti-climax to *Lucinda Brayford* has been to underline its exemplary bearing on the sense of double acculturation Boyd manages to achieve in many of his novels: the refusal on the one hand of unconditional acceptance of the notion that one form of religion or moral paradigm is capable of containing the whole truth; and the flexibility on the other to interpolate into his known and contemporary world a parallel universe provocative by virtue of its reputation for difference and (homosocial) desirability. His balancing act in *Lucinda Brayford* is near perfect: Stephen simultaneously acts as a committed Christian and as a pleasure-loving pagan capable of transformation to the godlike status of a (here) seductive Pan or Orpheus:

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<sup>93</sup> Stephen's jailer's physical cruelty is analogous with a painting Boyd mentions, by Diego de Sanchez in the Fitzwilliam Museum, 'in which a brutal soldier is punching Christ as He carries the Cross' (*Day of My Delight* p87).

<sup>94</sup> Contrary to Foucault's updated assertion that 'the truth and sovereignty of sex' has supplanted love as 'worth dying for'. See *The History of Sexuality Vol. I*, p156.

<sup>95</sup> Paul's reply is an exercise in anti-Freudianism: 'We can't tell scientifically...what are the recognitions of the soul. The mysteries of the human heart are the mysteries of God. They can't be analysed and labelled like the contents of a sewer, whatever Herr Freud may say'. (*Lucinda Brayford* p538).

Stephen, sitting wet and naked in the sunlight, playing his flute by the reedy bank, awoke some dim recognition in Heather...this moment stirred in her a longing wonder. She felt about Stephen...that he was real, that he did nothing for effect but only what he naturally enjoyed. She looked at him almost with worship. (*Brayford* 408) <sup>96</sup>

Comparable in its assimilation of one to the other is the way Boyd is able to graft the perception of an ancient Mediterranean culture on to the Australian landscape. In a memorable scene from *Lucinda Brayford*, for example, in the midst of the ‘terribly ancient’, harsh and by implication decidedly *inhospitable* environs of the Christmas Hills, we are given, in a deft stroke which renders the two worlds profoundly coterminous — as sharing in fact a common and enduring heritage — a sudden intimate glimpse of old-world hospitality and civilized values:

[Lucinda and Hugo] went for water to a tiny clay-built cottage with a bark roof and tangled passionfruit and grape vines sprawling over it. *There was something eternal about this cottage*, utterly different from the average Australian shack with its weather-board and galvanised-iron roof. A toothless old woman charged them threepence for the water, but gave them three pounds of large purple grapes and several passion fruit for the same sum. (*Brayford* 140, my italics)

Similarly, something of the allure of the Mediterranean, the picturesque vibrancy enthused over by the painter Gavin Leigh (surely a mouthpiece for Boyd): ‘I love the sun on hot stones, and brilliant seas...I like melons and zinnias and figs, and blue Portuguese boats painted in patterns, and old yellow sails, and half-naked people the colour of peaches’ (*Night* 200) is transposed — admittedly in a pared-down version — to the Australian scene at Flinders where Lucinda watches with sensuous enjoyment the boys Bill and Blake frolicking above a golden beach: ‘...the sea with its dazzling white horses, the hot expanse of the Tarpeian Rock, and the two sprawling sunburnt boys with their oranges...she [was to remember] always the feel of the cool wind as it caressed her arms and lifted her hair’ (*Brayford* 56-57). And lest we miss the connection, the sea at nearby Cape Furze is described as ‘wine-dark and vivid’ (*Brayford* 63). Very likely the effect on Tony Duff of the country around Flinders is also an autobiographical effect: ‘He did not know how vividly this harsh and wistful landscape was to remain photographed in his mind all the days of his life’ (*Brayford* 47). If this is indeed true, then it is probably to a large extent nostalgia which compels Boyd, through the instrumentality of cultural and literary allusion, to refine and familiarise that Australian imagery which might otherwise have seemed alien and barbaric. Sentiment is not allowed to cloud his sense of the ironic, however: the emphasis may be on discovering a synthesis of experiential universes in terms of the natural world and benign custom, yet the reference to the Tarpeian Rock and its basking boys signals not only the old and the ‘new’ worlds’ shared history of brutal savagery (with the added implication of hard justice for unacceptable behaviour), but manages to establish at the same time the suggestion of an unbroken homoerotic convention stretching back to the Graeco-Roman era.

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<sup>96</sup>Despite the ‘Arcadian idyll’ setting, the heterosexual pairing of Stephen and Heather is destined for failure.

In his adaptation of classical forms, models and themes and their blending with Australian settings and characters<sup>97</sup> Boyd was not alone among Australian writers. The cultural vision of academic, poet and playwright Charles Rischbieth Jury, born in 1893 — coincidentally the same year as Boyd — was, according to D. C. Muecke,<sup>98</sup> dominated by Greek literature and culture, and like Boyd, who travelled on the Continent and lived for the last fifteen years of his life in and around Rome, the Mediterranean exerted its influence to the extent that Jury spent much of his time abroad living and travelling in Greece, Italy and Sicily. Again like Boyd, his writing was prone to the depiction of ‘thinly disguised Greek gods’,<sup>99</sup> but there it seems the similarities start to blur. Jury’s engagement with the question of homosexuality was overtly and robustly political: his play *Icarus*, for instance, is addressed to the relative legitimacy of homosexual and heterosexual love, its key passage a long monologue by the eponymous hero in which he opens the defence of his sexuality with the words ‘Nature, what am I’ — but it is a fair guess that this particular play’s setting in context, that is, in ancient Greece, ensured its immunity from censure. Boyd’s literary negotiation with the homosexual dilemma was, by contrast, in keeping with his nature: more guarded, more oblique, as if conscious with Virginia Woolf that ‘The transaction between a writer and the spirit of the age is one of infinite delicacy, and upon a nice arrangement between the two the whole fortune of his work depends’.<sup>100</sup> Nevertheless, he cannot be said to have shirked the political. Boyd may not, like Charles Jury, have brought the topic of sexual variance into open debate, but his consistent championing of the Greek ideal of masculine bonding in devotion and self-sacrifice, his obvious admiration for a culture which would bend the rules of combat to spare the beautiful youth, and even more pertinently, the recruitment to his cause of names like Michelangelo, Socrates and Shakespeare (see *Day* 146), together with his strategy of resorting to the Arcadian trope as a means to dignify, legitimise and ‘make natural’ male love and friendship, are the characteristics of an individual who is seeking acceptance and tolerance of homosexuality as an honourable estate: one who, according to Kellogg, is asking in effect ‘might not society at least condone homosexuality if homosexuals were careful to remain strictly spiritual and nonphysical?’.<sup>101</sup>

Put into perspective, Boyd’s imaginative excursions into this erotically charged and (by the standards of his day) controversial territory, with their peculiar mix of relative bloodlessness and emotional fervour, exhibit nothing more or less than a familiarity and conformity with a long literary tradition. The tradition boasts many homosexual proponents: their works date from the *Idylls* of Theocritus (born *circa* 310 BC), the first pastoral poet, and continue down the centuries with compositions such as the *Second Eclogue* of Virgil — one of the great poems in the homosexual canon — where Corydon courts Alexis in much the same way as Daphnis will later entreat Ganymede<sup>102</sup> in Richard Barnfield’s pastoral ‘The Affectionate Shepherd: The Teares of an Affectionate Shepherd Sicke for Love’ (1594); and with Christopher Marlowe’s better known ‘The

<sup>97</sup>Boyd’s adoption of Greek themes was not, of course, confined to the Australian component of his novels.

<sup>98</sup>Muecke, in his Introduction to Jury’s *The Sun in Servitude and Other Plays*, Melbourne: Cheshire, 1961, p1x, is cited by Leigh Dale, ‘Classical and Colonial: Reading the Homoerotic in Charles Jury’s *Icarus*’, p49.

<sup>99</sup>Dale, ‘Classical and Colonial’, p49.

<sup>100</sup>Kellogg, *Essays on Gay Literature*, p6.

<sup>101</sup>Kellogg, *Essays on Gay Literature*, p5.

<sup>102</sup>According to Fone, Ganymede (who because of his great beauty was carried off by Zeus to serve as his cup-bearer), had by the Renaissance come to be as much a code word for a homosexual as Arcadia had come to be indicative of homosexuality. ‘This Other Eden’, *Essays on Gay Literature*, p14.

Passionate Shepherd' of 1588 — whose 'linguistic oddities' prompt Fone to place it firmly in the homosexual tradition. More contemporaneously, the tradition's Arcadian roots and complexion have been not merely maintained but celebrated in works by the English Uranian poets as well as by a range of novelists and poets such as Bayard Taylor, E. M. Forster, Gore Vidal, Nial Kent, Xavier Mayne, Thomas Mann, Gerard Manly Hopkins and Walt Whitman. Fone suggests that the myth of Arcadia is almost a quasi-religious requirement of the human psyche, in all climes and cultures, and whatever the sexual preference. 'But for gay people', he says,

— or homosexuals, or Uranians, or whatever name we have used for ourselves at various times in history — Arcadia has seemed to be a special kind of metaphor, relevant to the conditions of our lives and spirits. We have adapted it to our own needs, to express the yearnings and secret desires of a sexual, emotional, and intellectual minority, embellishing it with the products of our pen.<sup>103</sup>

The purpose of this chapter has been to demonstrate that we do not need to look far to discover evidence of Boyd making use of archaic Greek and Hellenic art, literature mythology and philosophy for the homosocial project. Indeed I am persuaded that Boyd's physical and spiritual yearnings, his perhaps otherwise 'secret' and hidden desires were often disguised as, and displaced onto, classical allusion and Arcadian metaphor. It is not disputed that Boyd's interest in classical culture was multifarious: that, for instance, its standards of virtue — the 'highest of the high' with an implicit emphasis on superiority and 'the best' (disregarding for the moment the tangential homosexual implications) — held an appeal for his naturally snobbish nature, or concominantly, that he found immense intellectual and spiritual satisfaction in the Greek advocacy of freedom of body and soul as well as in the Apollonian virtues of harmony, beauty, and truth. Nor, if we heed an enthusiasm such as the following, can we argue other than that the ardent romantic in him was drawn to dwell in a past he made magnificent by resort to the vivid technicolour of chivalric rhetoric:

History...at school...seemed more full of drama than the present, or...the drama was more colourful. The cloths were more rich and fantastic; friendships more passionate; love was more illuminated; heroism more noble; and the Greeks walked about in naked beauty.<sup>104</sup>

Yet even here, it will be noted, where the references seem to be to Graeco-Roman and/or medieval and Renaissance mythologies, Boyd's Hellenic rapture is not entirely disembodied, not unconnected to a Dionysian strain resonant with pleasure and the senses: a strain which in Boyd's case registers as a 'gay sensibility' I am suggesting is a highly important, possibly pre-eminent motivator in terms of his classical preoccupation. It is a sensibility not totally hidden, neither is it proclaimed. In keeping with Walt Whitman's phrase it is redolent of the 'life that does not exhibit itself',<sup>105</sup> the life homosexuals were obliged to lead not only in the nineteenth century but also for much of the twentieth; and as with Whitman, it demanded a retreat from the real world to a safe and secluded spot.

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<sup>103</sup>Fone, 'This Other Eden', *Essays on Gay Literature*, p32.

<sup>104</sup>Boyd, 'Preoccupations and Intentions', p84.

<sup>105</sup>Quoted by Fone, 'This Other Eden', in *Essays on Gay Literature*, p30.

An interesting sidelight on the issue of the greenwood as a refuge from puritanism is the curious psychological and philosophical resemblance between Martin Boyd and Rupert Brooke, the charismatic and sexually troubled poet — Frances Darwin described him as ‘A young Apollo, golden-haired’<sup>106</sup> — whose work Boyd obviously admired<sup>107</sup> and who was only six years older than himself. Brooke was central in 1908 to the formation of a Cambridge group of intellectual coevals whom Virginia Woolf was later (in 1911) to dub the Neo-pagans. The ideology and practice of this elitist band in many ways epitomised Boyd’s own struggle with conformism, his questing after an ideal of innocence and perfection. Before its members were forced to ‘grow up’ and face reality, and as a counter to Victorian convention and the tide of modernism, the Neo-pagans offered a euphoric form of pastoral escapism, a back-to-nature romanticism where the emphasis was on chaste, unchaperoned mixed-sex companionship, idealistic love and simple pleasures such as camping and nude bathing. They were marked by Edwardian optimism, a belief that they were ‘the Earth’s best’,<sup>108</sup> ‘Children of the Sun exempt from care and responsibility alike’.<sup>109</sup> Brooke captures their essence in his poem ‘The Old Vicarage, Grantchester’:

...In Grantchester their skins are white;  
They bathe by day, they bathe by night;  
The women there do all they ought;  
The men observe the Rules of Thought.  
They love the Good; they worship Truth;  
They laugh uproariously in youth...<sup>110</sup>

For all too brief a time these inheritors of privilege attempted to recreate, in corners of rural England, a literal sense of the golden age, an Arnoldian vision where ‘The ideal, cheerful, sensuous, pagan life is not sick or sorry’.<sup>111</sup> An abiding feature of Neo-paganism was its cult of youth and the body beautiful, a cult which, however, carried its own taboo: Neo-pagans were allowed to ‘know each other’s nakedness — to touch it, even — but never to seize and enjoy it’.<sup>112</sup> An appropriate moment, perhaps, at which to turn to Boyd, a kindred spirit of the Neo-pagans if ever there was

<sup>106</sup>The poem continues, somewhat proleptically: ‘Stands dreaming on the verge of strife/ Magnificently unprepared/ For the long littleness of life’. Cited by Paul Delany, *The Neo-pagans: Friendship and Love in the Rupert Brooke Circle*, London: Macmillan, 1987, pp45-46. Delany comments that ‘Frances had grasped the contradiction in Rupert’s position: the golden boy of his tribe who could not live up to his pedestal, fatally undermined by his own weakness and by the adulation he provoked’ (p46). There is an air of unreality too in D. H. Lawrence’s eulogy: ‘...a Greek God under a Japanese Sunshade, reading poetry in his pyjamas, at Grantchester, at Grantchester, upon the lawns where the river goes’, cited by Delany, pxvi.

<sup>107</sup>There are four references to Brooke in *Day of My Delight*, including the comment that Brooke stayed with Boyd’s aunt in Fiji, ‘and shocked her by coming to dinner in his bedroom slippers’; and an observation that his brother Penleigh Boyd shared with Brooke an ability to express ‘with a lyrical loveliness that is anathema today’ a closeness to and love of the natural world (pp11 & 111).

<sup>108</sup>The words are those of Brooke, spoken by the lovers in his poem ‘The Hill’ in *Rupert Brooke: The Complete Poems*, London: Sidgwick & Jackson Ltd., 1942, p55.

<sup>109</sup>Delany, Introduction to *The Neo-pagans* p xv. The reference to ‘Children of the Sun’ is taken from Geoffrey Keynes, who ‘sentimentalised over Rupert as one of the “wise and childlike children of the sun”’, Delany p207. The phrase attributed to Keynes occurs in a letter from James Strachey to Rupert Brooke, 7 Dec. 1909.

<sup>110</sup>*Rupert Brooke, The Complete Poems*, pp93-97.

<sup>111</sup>Matthew Arnold, *The Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold*, Vol. III (ed) R. H. Super, p222, cited by David J. DeLaura, *Hebrew and Hellene in Victorian England*, p251.

<sup>112</sup>Paul Delany, *The Neo-pagans*, p147.

one, and his contemplation of, and aesthetic/erotic ensnarement by, the masculine body beautiful as it derived from Greek art. It was, after all, he who wrote 'For our physical life the Greek myths are enough' (*Day* 294).

## CHAPTER FIVE: *Body as icon and rapture*

Martin Boyd's philosophical, romantic and homoerotic affiliation with — even, one might venture, his creative and emotional dependency upon — the cultural legacy of ancient Greece has been by now clearly and reliably established.<sup>1</sup> And even if we discern an exemplary tonal shift in *Lucinda Brayford*, for instance, towards a more sophisticated form of self-reflexive satire than is usual in Boyd on the subject of Greek culture, it should not be taken as a defection, but simply as an advance in the author's confidence and maturity. For there is no doubt that at bottom Martin Boyd shares with Charles Jury a belief 'not only that Greece had created beauty at a higher imaginative and artistic level than any other European civilisation, but also that what Greece had achieved was still valid for us'.<sup>2</sup> Nor can it be disputed that Boyd also shares, with the classical Greeks this time, an obsessiveness with the beauty of the young male form: in both cases an appreciation supposedly aesthetic but nonetheless almost always inscribed with undertones of carnality. It has been postulated that in all probability Boyd sublimated and theorised his own sexual feelings in terms of the Platonic ideal. But working against this is a niggling and countervailing subversiveness in both his body/soul refrain and his voyeuristic pleasure in the naked ephebe. Even Plato, Foucault tells us, 'does not trace a clear, definitive, and uncrossable dividing line between the bad love of the body and the glorious love of the soul' (*Use of Pleasure* 238). Added to which we need to consider that, just as Plato is discovered making a sexual analogy when he compares 'the ecstasy with which "true" eros rewards philosophical perseverance' to the ecstasy of genital orgasm, 'the reward of persistence in sexual courtship', the overall conclusion of the *Symposium* is that 'the most direct road to philosophical achievement' is initially stimulated by the powerful emotional response elicited by the beauty of a young male (*Greek Homosexuality* 165).

When, as a pilgrim in Italy, Boyd travels metaphorically from the pagan world to that of Renaissance Christianity seeking the 'perfect drawing' which will harmonise and reconcile in one human face the animalistic and the other-worldly, his quest is predominantly spiritual, ostensibly at least, and his concentration is on the male visage. When he shifts his gaze to encompass the masculine body in its entirety, however, his reactions, the tonal resonances elicited by the encounter, are apt to slide into a subtly different register. This is especially evident in the effect on him of 'an engaging and lovely Hermes' in 'Bramante's noble Court of the Belvedere [in the Vatican]'. His spontaneous response is an unalloyed *physical* appraisal, a frank concurrence with Nicholas Poussin that this Hermes is the possessor of 'the most perfect young male body in the world'; nor, with his declaration that such is the Hermes' beauty that modesty has decreed his retirement to a secluded niche (*Much Else* 46), is his sense of humour far behind. Admiration and attraction — and with them, the potential for sensual arousal — appear uppermost. Boyd goes on to reverence the 'lovely Hermes' in terms of 'this innocent and integrated youth in whom soul and

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<sup>1</sup>It is a legacy he happily acknowledges, in phrases dotted throughout his novels, to have been inherited by the Italians: in Russell Lockwood's declaration, for instance, that 'Wherever one lives outside Rome, one is in a province...' and his claim that 'All civilized Englishmen [live] in Italy in their minds'. *Outbreak of Love, The Langton Quartet*, (ed) Brian McFarlane, Richmond, Victoria: William Heinemann Australia, 1988, pp375 & 385. Further citations from this work will be given by page number in the text.

<sup>2</sup>Muecke, as cited by Dale, 'Classical and Colonial: Reading the Homoerotic in Charles Jury's *Icarus*', p49.

body are one', a perception whose enthusiasm and sincerity are never in doubt but which might have difficulty meeting the requirements of more rigorous artistic criteria. My argument is that Boyd's aesthetic exuberance — and to some extent his angry passion against the priests — suggests his observations are also aimed, probably unconsciously, at deflecting and/or subduing the stirrings of erotic destabilization.

Boyd's complicity in the pronouncement on the Belvedere Hermes<sup>3</sup> as the world's most perfect young male body cannot help but challenge the analytic investigator interested in the more mysterious workings of his psycho-sexual constitution. To start with, there is the complication that by his whole-hearted approval Boyd has implicitly owned to making the wide comparisons that would enable him to arrive at such a conclusion. Also significant is the elegant sleight of hand by which he both sets up his ideal, and communicates the fact, without actually using words to that effect. The observation he does make — and notice how he is careful to nominate Poussin as the source — cannot be taken merely as a casual intellectual estimation; neither is it, in my judgment, an impromptu finding relying solely on questions of aesthetics. If we take into account that the Hermes body-type belongs to an aesthetic-erotic tradition extending back to Greek antiquity it is difficult to avoid the intuition that this is an emotionally ambiguous moment for Boyd. Granted, from a purely aesthetic point of view the sculpted youth affords him immense visual pleasure: his tacit approval of Poussin's judgment would indicate that its happy conjunction of line, form and rhythm speaks to his deeply sensory nature. But we also have to assume another factor, given the nature of the sculpture: to wit that, even if only at a subliminal level, the beautiful youth represents for Boyd an unsettling confrontation with the classically validated homoerotic ideal, and that as such it is capable of speaking — in language which is likely to be at best incoherent and at worst disruptive — to his latent homosexuality. In the spirit of the modern painter Francis Bacon's assertion that 'you can't make an image without it creating a mood',<sup>4</sup> Boyd momentarily, and perhaps unwittingly, allows us a glimpse of his wholehearted sensual appreciation of a particularised and three-dimensional corporeal image: an image where the emphasis is first and foremost on the *body*, and as it turns out, on the *bodily components* of this youth who to Boyd represents unsurpassed beauty.

Given Boyd's heightened preoccupation with the marble youth, and taking into account that preoccupation's presumed libidinal dislocations, it is but a short step to imagining the influence of these factors on the vehemence with which he attacks the Church fathers for their desecration of the sculpture. For the Hermes is physically perfect only to the mind's eye; in reality, because its genitals are obscured by a plaster figleaf, Boyd sees it as inexcusably flawed,<sup>5</sup> a defilement which

<sup>3</sup>This Hermes, more correctly called Mercurius (Mercury) in the *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae* (LIMC), Vol. VI.2, Zurich und Munchen: Artemis Verlag, 1992, is not to be confused with the Hermes Belvedere (formerly called Antinous) after Praxiteles, also in the Vatican.

<sup>4</sup>Here Bacon appears to be revisiting Clive Bell's notion of 'aesthetic emotion' as it relates to 'significant form' (see Chapter 7).

<sup>5</sup>Some of Boyd's novels suggest that he found imperfection problematical, a function, no doubt, of his sympathy with a *fin de siècle* aestheticism which dismissed ugliness and stupidity as repugnant. Dollimore ('Arts Today', ABC Radio National 10/7/98) relates this attitude to the 'fascist sensibility' promulgated by Nietzsche, who held that the weak, the ugly and the unattractive had to be brushed aside. See page 143 for Paglia's comments on this topic.

excites in him the language of outrage and a resort to terms such as ‘cruel ravishment’, ‘mutilation’, ‘obscenity’ and priestly ‘perversion’ (*Much Else* 46). Then again, it is not difficult to imagine the kinds of issues which are at stake here. A major consideration must be Boyd’s passionate body-affirming liberalism, an attitude which owes its roots in equal proportion to both paganism and Christianity. His neo-pagan emphasis on the purity and freedom of the unclad body parallels, for instance, Kenneth Clark’s observation that to the early Greeks the cult of absolute nakedness was of great psychological importance because it implied the conquest of ‘civilized’ inhibitions and the denial of original sin.<sup>6</sup> It has already been noted how Boyd shares antiquity’s confidence in the body as expressing ‘above all’ a sense of human wholeness, a ‘feeling that the spirit and body are one’ (*The Nude* 21).<sup>7</sup> As well, there have been indications that his bodily focus — on masculine variation, for instance — is related to questions of embodiment as it affects social/sexual identity, the philosophy which reworks the ‘body as mirror of the soul’ argument by proposing that ‘we not only *have* but in a sense *are* our bodies’.<sup>8</sup> And considering the frequent eroticisation of the male body as it occurs in his books, there remains always the possibility that, like Michelangelo as well as the Greeks, Boyd himself was passionately stirred by male beauty.<sup>9</sup>

Familiarity, then, with Boyd’s predilections and sensibilities allows, perhaps, for certain assumptions concerning his reaction to the Hermes figure: for example, that in part his affront is caused by the Church’s aesthetic dereliction in failing to recognise that the ‘greatest guarantee of innocence is the aura of High Art’;<sup>10</sup> that he was further dismayed because, as he saw it, the Catholic priests had transgressed against the sexualised body and by implication, against human sexuality in general (one senses that he feels his own sexuality is under attack, his comment being that ‘the Irish boy could see the Church’s real intention towards his physical life’); and that to his way of thinking the Church has failed to acknowledge its indebtedness to an earlier culture, as represented by the idealised Hermes, for its role in providing a precursor to the principle of the glorification of the body as preached by Christianity.<sup>11</sup> That the figleaf epitomises for Boyd a form of body-denying asceticism properly belonging to a medieval Christian mentality<sup>12</sup> is borne out by his censure of the priests for having sinned against the Incarnation — the notion of human and divine combined, of the Word made flesh. As he says, ‘All those mutilated statues deny the doctrine of the Incarnation’:

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<sup>6</sup>Kenneth Clark, *The Nude: A Study of Ideal Art*, London: John Murray, 1957, p20. Further citations from *The Nude* will be given by page number in the text.

<sup>7</sup>Clark adds that for the Greeks nothing which related to the whole man could be isolated or evaded; and that ‘this serious awareness of how much was implied in physical beauty saved them from the two evils of sensuality and aestheticism’. *The Nude*, p21.

<sup>8</sup>Kenneth R. Dutton, expanding on his theory of the body as focal point of our individual identity. In *The Perfectible Body: The Western Ideal of Physical Development*, London: Cassell, 1995, p11. Further citations from this work will be given by page number in the text.

<sup>9</sup>According to Clark, no man since the fourth-century Greeks felt so certain of the godlike character of the male body as Michelangelo: ‘It was a belief born of emotion...and with his serious, Platonic cast of mind he was bound to identify his emotions with ideas’. (*The Nude*, p54).

<sup>10</sup>Art critic John McDonald attributes this belief to photographer Bill Henson, and adds that it is ‘the operatic power that finally disarms all but his most trenchant critics’ (*Spectrum Arts*, *SMH*, 20/4/96, p14).

<sup>11</sup>That is, the glorification of the body in the future resurrection life: Dutton, *The Perfectible Body*, p53.

<sup>12</sup>Dutton contends that Medieval Christianity had so divorced soul and body that open celebration of ‘the flesh’ was a custom restricted to the diversions of the lower orders. *The Perfectible Body*, p59.

Our bodies are the phenomena of noumena in the mind of the Creator, conceived by him in their desires and in every detail, beautiful, perfect, and good. The Hermes in the court of the Belvedere is as near as we can imagine to that perfect conception...Our whole aim is to recover that double perfection [body and intellect], and so that we might have the pattern, God recreated man in innocence, the Second Adam.  
(*Much Else* 47)

Thus it is that Boyd deftly transforms and deflects contemplation of the Hermes into a religio-aesthetic aside where once again the Church, at least insofar as an honest depiction of the naked body is concerned, is taken to task. Yet, as already postulated, we cannot ignore the possibility that the strength and intemperance of his anti-clerical outburst may be an unconscious attempt at camouflaging erotic interest and susceptibility: a manoeuvre which is betrayed by an excessive and unguarded reaction indicative of passion. Indeed it is this uncharacteristic overt passion which invites speculation that the attack is not dictated solely by the injury to his core beliefs, but is otherwise complicated by emotional and erotic tensions. Such an hypothesis would posit that for him to be *unaffected* in this case by ambiguities and ambivalences of an erotic nature, for him to be safely immune to impulses which suggest the transgressive/ libidinal, or at the very least the poetic/romantic — to, at any rate, the kind of impulses which would support Lyn Hatherly Wilson's contention that 'Love/desire [as] represented in antiquity is itself disturbing and disordering' by virtue of its 'usually' homosexual content<sup>13</sup> — would constitute the greater improbability.

Of the aesthetic impairment by figleaf Boyd has this to say: 'On this Hermes, whose jaunty hat was surely sufficient clothing, and whose marble is of a beautiful honey-gold texture, the contrast [of the white plaster] is grotesque' (*Much Else* 46).<sup>14</sup> Further than that he is reticent about the physical attributes of the youth, instead enlisting Aristotelian principles of goodness and perfection to enunciate on 'this innocent and integrated youth, in whom soul and body are one'. Here we have to assume that Boyd is talking of the unified personality; any claim that the Hermes marks a revelatory milestone in his progress towards the beauties of the soul as embodied in a single work of art — which he does not attempt on this occasion — would be inappropriate. For — and here it is that elements of irony and paradox start to assert themselves — by any objective aesthetic standard this Hermes is not convincing as an exemplar of integrated virtues, nor does it suggest 'the perfectible body become the visible emblem of the human spirit'.<sup>15</sup> To begin with, his extreme youth militates against any claim to completed spiritual perfection; added to which he exhibits none of the transcendent sublimity, the hint of the immanent divine so transparently

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<sup>13</sup>Wilson's remark is made in the context of Greek lyric poetry but seems equally applicable here. Lyn Hatherly Wilson, *Sappho's Sweetbitter Songs: Configurations of female and male in ancient Greek Lyric*, London: Routledge, 1996, p43.

<sup>14</sup>Elsewhere, in *The Picnic* (p112), Aelred Rounsefell expands this theme: 'The most distasteful of all aesthetic attitudes...is that of the man who puts the fig-leaves on the statues. One should either view beauty whole or not at all'.

<sup>15</sup>The phrase is Dutton's: it is preceded by the observation that 'It is primarily to the Renaissance that we owe the formulation of a language of the body in which the Greek hero-figure becomes the prototype of the Christian hero...' *The Perfectible Body*, p63.

evident in the face and physical presence of the Phidias-influenced Apollo Tevere, for example,<sup>16</sup> the figure revered elsewhere by Boyd and classified by Clark as ‘transfigured by divine authority’; nor does he approach the Hermes of Praxiteles, a figure representative of ‘the last triumph of the Greek idea of wholeness’ whom Clark defines as ‘physical beauty [at] one with strength, grace, gentleness and benevolence’ (*The Nude* 39). In actuality it is doubtful that the iconographic status of the Belvedere Hermes qualifies for inclusion in the high classic Greek artistic category as defined by Clark; on the contrary, its affinities appear to be with the Hellenistic beautiful boy who is endangered, in Paglia's terms, by devitalization and decadence (*Personae* 123). Certainly in his pared-down refinement, his prettiness and his complacency, Boyd's Hermes has little in common with the sculpted athletes of Polyclitus with their incorporation of a vestigial *cuirasse esthétique* and their pronounced suggestion of muscular vigour.<sup>17</sup>

On the contrary, there are elements of naturalism in the execution of the Hermes: his figure is boyish but post-pubertal, his adolescence proclaimed by stylised pubic hair; he is slender, slim-hipped and well-proportioned, his head a close cap of corkscrew curls; he shares with Donatello's David what Clark perceives as the undeveloped chest and unrounded flank of a real boy (*The Nude* 49). His right arm is held out in greeting, his left holds a *caduceus* and a *chlamys* adorns his shoulders; his small penis 'is an index of modesty and subordination, an abjuration of sexual initiative or sexual rivalry...';<sup>18</sup> and like the David figure he is depicted in the flexible contrapposto pose of a young Dionysus. According to Paglia, contrapposto ‘was erotic from the start’: as a style it entered Greek female iconography to become a ‘vivid symbol of desire’; and the effect of its translation into the hip-shot poses of the Hellenistic epebes was to render them ‘ripe with sexual solicitation’ (*Personae* 123). The Belvedere Hermes may extend his right hand in friendship or solicitation, but his stance does not compare in terms of ‘epicene’ provocation and liveliness to that of Donatello's David.<sup>19</sup> He is by contrast languorous, softened, and despite a direct gaze which confronts the viewer — unlike that of the nearby Apollo Belvedere<sup>20</sup> — alluringly indifferent. In terms of period he is difficult to pinpoint. His blend of 'sublime and restrained' Athenian eroticism in the manner of major classical sculpture,<sup>21</sup> together with the suggestion of 'feminisation' Paglia

<sup>16</sup>In Clark's opinion the Apollo of the Tiber is a beautiful piece of marble...It shows most clearly the difference between Polyclitan athlete and Phidian god. This Apollo is taller and more graceful, and still bears a trace of hieratic frontality, consciously preserved to enhance his god-like remoteness. The flat, square shoulders seem lifted up into a different plane, from which the head looks down with a calm and dreamy interest; the torso, less insistently schematic than those of Polyclitus, renders vividly the tautness of skin stretched over muscle. If only this figure had been known to Winckelmann instead of the Apollo Belvedere, his insight and gift of literary recreation would have been better supported by the sculptural qualities of his subject. The Apollo of the Tiber is worthy of the 'maker of Gods', the title by which Phidias is described in ancient literature...! *The Nude*, p38.

<sup>17</sup>The personal opinions expressed here are based on first-hand experience of the Hermes in 1994 and on a photograph I took at the time.

<sup>18</sup>K. J. Dover, *Greek Homosexuality*, pp134-135. He adds that the artists' adoption of the ideal youthful penis as the standard for men, heroes and gods was an item in their general tendency to 'youthen' everyone.

<sup>19</sup>An evaluation by Paglia, *Sexual Personae*, p123.

<sup>20</sup>Apollo's head is turned: according to Clark, 'He seems to look beyond the enclosed Greek world, as if awaiting an answering glance of recognition from the great romantics of the early 16th century'. (*The Nude*, p45).

<sup>21</sup>Paglia makes the point here that Athenian eroticism was only pornographically explicit in tavern pottery (*Sexual Personae*, p124).

indicates is associated with the incipient decadence of Hellenistic sculpture, would seem to indicate late classicism.<sup>22</sup> Of one thing we can be certain, however: that in the context of his influence as a prototype of male/female ambiguity, this Hermes was a forerunner of, and inspiration for, Donatello's compelling Renaissance image.

If it were not already a foregone conclusion, the purpose of the detailed description of the Belvedere Hermes has been to establish that the sculpture with the power to move Boyd to exclamations of delight is by consensus the archetypal beautiful boy of homosexual tradition. Idealised, stylised and androgynised, he is what Paglia has described as 'the representational paradigm of high classic Athens...pure Apollonian objectification, a public sex object' (*Personae* 123). His body-type contradicts and rejects Western notions of physical dominance as a sign of superiority, of the muscular body as pleasure-symbol: it reflects instead the artistic convention which 'youthens' and softens the masculine image in order to mitigate 'the threatening symbolism of hyper-masculinity' (*Perfectible Body* 45) so antithetical to the Greek homosexual aesthetic. Classical figure sculpture may have preferred the adult body but, as Foucault notes, in the sphere of sexual ethics it was the juvenile body with its peculiar charm that was regularly suggested as the 'right object' of pleasure: moreover, it was a requirement that the mark of physical virility should be absent from it except 'as a precocious form and as a promise of future behavior' (*Use of Pleasure* 200). In this context Dutton reminds us that the beautiful youth was an 'inherently inferior being, ordained by the gods to serve the needs of heroes and men' (*Perfectible Body* 45). Whether inferior or charismatic, sex-object or god, the essential ambiguity of the Belvedere Hermes is embodied in his positioning between active/passive principles of movement and stasis, in his poised stance signifying the beautiful boy's necessary oscillation between strength and grace, between precocious virility and feminine delicacy. It is thus, in his capacity to 'perfectly harmonize masculine and feminine', that he fulfills Paglia's paradigmatic criteria for those young men who, as objects of desire, are sponsored by the male-born Uranian Aphrodite whom Plato identifies with homosexual love. As Paglia says: 'The beautiful boy is an androgyne, luminously masculine and feminine. He has male muscle structure but a dewy girlishness' (*Personae* 110). Generally depicted in traditional art as 'dreamy, remote, autistic; lost in a world of androgynous self-completion' (*Personae* 120), the beautiful boy was elevated by the ancient world to a cult status:

In Greece he inhabited the world of hard masculine action. His body was on view, striving nude in the palestra...For three hundred years, Greek art is filled with beautiful boys, in stone and bronze...The kouros stands heroically bare in Apollonian externality and visibility...he invites the strolling spectator to admire him in the round. He is not king or god but human youth. Divinity and stardom fall upon the beautiful boy. Epiphany is secularized and personality ritualized. [He represents] the first cult of personality in western history. [He is] an icon of the worship of beauty. (*Personae* 110-111)

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<sup>22</sup>Paglia is a trifle ambivalent here. On the one hand she says that the high classic beautiful boy perfectly harmonizes masculine and feminine. On the other she says that a sliding toward the feminine is a symptom of decadence: 'In the Hellenistic beautiful boy, grace drains strength: [the result is a] languid devitalization of the male victor-athlete' (*Sexual Personae*, p123). We could say, perhaps, that the Hermes figure gravitates between these two positions.

It would seem that in the sphere of archaic and classical art the interchange and blending of male and female characteristics was a two-way process.<sup>23</sup> We find, for instance, that the female body, considered by classic Athens to be 'fatty' and 'unbeautiful because it was not a visible instrument of action' (*Personae* 110), was itself prone to modulation and re-configuring in order to bring it into closer conformity with the homoerotic aesthetic criteria adopted in depicting the idealised youth. Noting this trend C. J. Bulliet declares: 'Greek sculptors immortalized the boys they loved, not only in the effeminate male figures of young athletes, Bacchuses, Ganymedes, Mercurys and Apollos, but in the slim, slender-hipped, small-breasted nymphs, Dianas, Graces, and Venuses'.<sup>24</sup> Ironically, while the general convergence of gendered form towards the physique approved by Athenian pederastic culture depended for its idealisation on the complete absence of bodily extremes of gender — denoted by hyper-masculinity and the excesses of femininity — there was a simultaneous requirement that boyish beauty be tempered by grace and vulnerability. As for the Belvedere Hermes, his physique and order of representation are so perfectly attuned to antiquity's homoerotic imagination in their ability to hold in equilibrium notions of male athleticism and female fragility that he stands to threaten the definition of gender.<sup>25</sup> Ostensibly, of course, his appeal to Boyd rides on the latter's perception of his physical beauty as a register of goodness, excellence, and virtue. But as Michael Hatt has pointed out, the ambiguities of homosocial viewing make for an instability in the alliance of muscles, morals and mind.<sup>26</sup> As far as Boyd is concerned the rest may be silence, nevertheless the fact of silence does not preclude the possibility of his own eroticized gaze; nor can it be taken as a reliable guide that the homoeroticism intrinsic to the sculpted nude has failed to make an impact.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>For instance, Dover says it is arguable that whereas down to the mid-fifth century women were commonly assimilated to men in vase painting, thereafter men, especially in their poses, were increasingly assimilated to women. Hellenistic poetry supports this view in that after the fourth century there was a certain shift of taste towards feminine characteristics in eromenoi. He also posits, however, that the presence of supple, undeveloped muscles in art commonly distinguished adolescence from maturity, not simply female from male, 'conveying a suggestion of soft living, delicacy and fastidiousness, and thus indirectly a suggestion of effeminacy, without specifically indicating a female physique'. From *Greek Homosexuality*, pp71 & 79.

<sup>24</sup>C. J. Bulliet (*Venus Castina*) is cited by Phyllis Chesler, *About Men*, London: The Women's Press, 1978, p104. It might be appropriate here to allude to Boyd's almost universal lack of written interest in the female form, although there are a few nude female sketches among his predominantly male nudes held in the National Library.

<sup>25</sup>Michael Hatt suggests, apropos the painting of a boxer by Thomas Eakins (*Salutat*, 1898), that gender is threatened in relation to 'the fragility of the new masculine ideal'. In 'Muscles, morals, mind', Kathleen Adler & Marcia Pointon (eds), *The Body Imaged: The Human Form and Visual Culture since the Renaissance*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, p69.

<sup>26</sup>Michael Hatt, 'Muscles, morals, mind', *The Body Imaged*, p69.

<sup>27</sup>Hatt says that male writers tend to write of a hero's 'beautiful nakedness' from a female viewpoint in order to 'counter the threat of the eroticisation of the male body'. A painting of a male nude is a different matter, he says. In this kind of 'male space' the female gaze is not appropriate (*The Body Imaged*, p68). Chesler is in agreement: 'The "magnificent" Greek and Renaissance sculptures of nude men — hairlessly marble, frontally nude — have never aroused my sexual interest. I did not think that "high art" was supposed to, and when I looked at all those well-developed heroes...I *knew* that it was "great art" because I could stare at male penises — shaped as perfectly, as beautifully, as male musculature — without the slightest twinge of lust. This was well before I understood that "high art", as well as pornography, was meant to appeal to male and not to female "prurient" interest' (*About Men*, p104).

This brings up the question of the problematical structure of the relationship between viewer and the object viewed. Art critics and connoisseurs seem unanimous in their opinion that a transaction of sorts invariably takes place between a work of art and its audience. Susan Sontag, writing from the artist's perspective in her essay 'The Aesthetics of Silence', comments that a 'priestly' aim of best art is to confirm 'the existence of a relatively passive, never fully initiated, voyeuristic laity', noting that 'the sensory or conceptual gap between the artist and his audience, the space of the missing or ruptured dialogue' can allow for an ascetic affirmation. 'But', according to Sontag,

there is no abolishing a minimal transaction, a minimal exchange of gifts — just as there is no talented and rigorous asceticism that, whatever its intention, doesn't produce a gain...in the capacity for pleasure.<sup>28</sup>

More likely than not, in her view, traditional artwork induced in the audience a certain sequence of experience: 'first arousing, then manipulating, and eventually fulfilling emotional expectations'. She speaks of the 'distance' art can establish between spectator and art object, between the spectator and his emotions, in terms which lend weight to the theory postulated in this chapter of converted and transferred emotional intensities in Boyd's encounter with the Belvedere Hermes. She does this by acknowledging the potential for art to create those intensities — suppressed, in this instance — in the first place:

...psychologically, distance often is linked with the most intense state of feeling, in which the coolness or impersonality with which something is treated measures the insatiable interest that thing has for us.<sup>29</sup>

Boyd's lapse into silence or refusal to enter into any explicit description of the Hermes may be compared, perhaps, to the silence Sontag sees as an extension of traditional classicism, 'the concern with modes of propriety, with standards of seemliness'. 'Silence', she says, 'is only "reticence" stepped up to the nth degree'.<sup>30</sup>

A good case for the tensions, resonances and unspoken eloquences that may inhabit the space between viewer and art object is made in an extraordinary illustration Boyd chose for the first edition of *Day of My Delight* (1965), a plate which was deleted in the subsequent hardcover edition of 1974 along with two other of his own drawings (one a group of three boys' heads, the other a sketch of a mother and young son entitled *Spartan Mother*). The illustration, called *Boy and Bronze*, shows the profiled, feminised head of a boy, his lips extended as if in a kiss, superimposed in such a way against a sculpted male torso that the two are on the brink of touching. The torso is a reinvention of the classical but is without the latter's cool stylisation: nominally it may be a bronze but its half-reclining pose is extremely naturalistic, if not voluptuous, an effect that Clark would surely claim indicates a 'heightened sensuality' on the part of its executor (see below); and while the actual distance between viewer and object is impossible to determine, the impression is of distance abolished, of a suspension or transgression of the laws governing the differentiation between the

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<sup>28</sup>Susan Sontag, *A Susan Sontag Reader*, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1987, p185.

<sup>29</sup>Sontag, *A Susan Sontag Reader*, p198.

<sup>30</sup>Sontag, *A Susan Sontag Reader*, p203.

tangible and the inaccessible, of an actual overbalance into a fragile form of intimacy embodying both the tender and the licentious. This *almost* consummated or perfected intimacy between boy and nude is palpable to us, the external audience, alerting us to the existence of a silent dialogue encompassing desire, frustration, and the multitude of possibilities which lie between the articulated and the ineffable.<sup>31</sup> By creating a frisson of erotic tension not only within the frame but without, by engaging our complicity in the allure of the naked body, Boyd's drawing effects a twofold resonance with Sontag's view of art as a dialectical transaction with consciousness, her perception that if art does not exist in a neutral zone, if it creates a 'situation' for sentient beings, then it is impossible for them to have no response, no stimulus, no arousal, no emotion.<sup>32</sup> Boyd's own recognition of the reality of a sensory interchange between art and audience<sup>33</sup> finds him taking this argument a step further to stipulate that the necessary function of art is to generate, as well as to embody, the erotic. The occasion is to be found in *The Picnic* when his character Aelred is heard to discourse on Botticelli's *The Birth of Venus*:

'The most satisfying works of art...are composed of erotic fragments. The purpose of painting is to reveal a condition of nature. The most illuminating condition we know is that of erotic awakening, therefore the work of art which has the most significance is that in which this theme is implicit'. (*Picnic* 111)

Of quite some relevance to this thesis is that Aelred goes on to note a resistance to the erotically-delineated work of art:

'Many people who want to appear cultivated refuse to allow the artist his own intention. They deny, for example, Shakespeare's obvious meaning in his sonnets. They ignore the erotic fragment in the statue or the painting, without which the artist could not have felt the urge to paint it. The truly constructive critic must enter wholly into the spirit of the artist, otherwise he makes a travesty of aesthetic appreciation'. (*Picnic* 112)

Boyd may be writing in his authorial capacity, but just as we know, because he tells us, that the morality expressed in his writings is his own, so the significance of these statements is nowhere better illustrated than in the instinct for the sensuous and the erotic so manifest in *Boy and Bronze*.

Sontag's remarks are generalised and directed at art in the abstract. Boyd's pencil sketch demonstrates how much more pertinent they may become when applied to the emotion-eliciting power of the nude. We need go no further than his representation of the sensuous male body to determine that Boyd is willing and able on occasion to assume the mantle of artist as exponent of erotica. This being the case, and considering his special interest in the male nude, when the situation is reversed and he becomes the onlooker — as in the instance of the Belvedere Hermes — it is natural to assume a heightened and sensitized reaction which extends beyond the simple appreciation of beauty. The protagonist who gazes at beautiful objects emulates the poet/singers

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<sup>31</sup>Boyd is producing something dialectical here, what Sontag would call 'a full void, an enriching emptiness, a resonating or eloquent silence' (*A Susan Sontag Reader* p187).

<sup>32</sup>Sontag, *A Susan Sontag Reader*, p186.

<sup>33</sup>In *Much Else in Italy* (p5) Boyd states: 'Whoever truly sees a picture or a statue must share something of the feeling the artist had in his heart'.

who represent the dynamics of those gazes in their songs, says Wilson in her book *Sappho's Sweetbitter Songs*. She suggests that these looks may be categorised as voyeuristic or scopophilic, and in querying whether they replicate conventional patterns of dominance and submission<sup>34</sup> touches inadvertently on Boyd's position *vis-à-vis* the Hermes: the question of whether he is granted a certain power, an enhanced male status, in the act of contemplating the androgynous and adolescent male,<sup>35</sup> or alternatively, whether his role qualifies as what Paglia terms the more feminised receptor or receptacle (*Personae* 121) of a work of art. Voyeurism is also a significant component for Paglia in our response to art. With characteristic extravagance she proclaims:

We are voyeurs at the perimeters of art, and there is a sadomasochistic sensuality in our responses to it. Art is a scandal, literally a 'stumbling block', to all moralism, whether on the Christian right or Rousseauist left. Pornography and art are inseparable, because there is voyeurism and voracity in all our sensations as seeing, feeling beings... (*Personae* 35)

and cites Edmund Spenser's Renaissance epic, *The Faerie Queene*, to support her argument.

When Paglia takes Sontag's apprehension of the sensuous and pleasurable in art a step further into the realm of the sexual and candidly erotic she pulls no punches: 'All the personae of art are sex objects', she states, and continues in a vein wherein, curiously enough, there are one or two distinct echoes of Boyd:

The emotional response of spectator or reader is inseparable from erotic response...our lives as physical beings are a Dionysian continuum of pleasure-pain. At every moment we are steeped in the sensory, even in sleep. Emotional arousal is sensual arousal; sensual arousal is sexual arousal. The idea that emotion can be separated from sex is a Christian illusion, one of the most ingenious but finally unworkable strategies in Christianity's ancient campaign against pagan nature. (*Personae* 35)

The officially sanctioned view of the seductive potential of the nude may be couched in less flamboyant terms than Paglia's, but in the essentials it would seem to be in agreement. Dutton, while noting that art historians are 'discreetly reticent as to erotic suggestiveness' in art in general, cites Clark's reference to 'tensions and transitions which make the youthful body [of Donatello's *David*] sensuously appealing' as the nearest he comes to an acknowledgment of erotic overtones in the nude (*Perfectible Body* 66). Yet this would appear to be a cursory reading of Clark, who writes that 'it is necessary to labour the obvious and say that no nude, however abstract, should fail to arouse in the spectator some vestige of erotic feeling, even although it be only the faintest shadow — and if it does not do so, it is bad art and false morals'.<sup>36</sup> To this he adds:

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<sup>34</sup>Wilson, *Sappho's Sweetbitter Songs*, p102.

<sup>35</sup>The Hermes here is in the role of the beautiful boy who, according to Paglia, is passive, inactive, 'desired but not desiring'. In convention, she says, 'his adult admirer could seek orgasm, while he remained unaroused'. *Sexual Personae*, p114.

<sup>36</sup>Clark was contradicting 'the high-minded theory...contrary to experience' of the philosopher Professor Alexander, whom he cites as saying: 'If the nude is so treated that it raises in the spectator ideas or desires appropriate to the material subject, it is false art, and bad morals'. *The Nude*, p6.

The desire to grasp and be united with another human body is so fundamental a part of our nature, that our judgment of what is known as ‘pure form’ is inevitably influenced by it; and one of the difficulties of the nude as a subject for art is that these instincts cannot lie hidden...but are dragged into the foreground, where they risk upsetting the unity of responses from which a work of art derives its independent life. Even so, the amount of erotic content which a work of art can hold in solution is very high. (*The Nude* 6)

Clark gives the temple sculptures of tenth century India — ‘an undisguised exaltation of physical desire’ — as examples of great works of art because the ‘whole philosophy’ behind their creation was inclusive of eroticism. The eroticism of the Greek nude may be more restrained, more austere, but in claiming the Ephebe of Kritios as ‘the first beautiful nude in art’, Clark makes us aware that the erotic idealism on display is not only a delight to the senses but is at one with the religio-mystical aesthetic which inspired it:

Here for the first time we feel the passionate pleasure in the human body which is familiar to all readers of Greek literature; for the eagerness with which the sculptor’s eye has followed every muscle, or watched the skin stretch and relax as it passes over a bone, could not have been achieved without a heightened sensuality... [In] Greek athletics...two powerful emotions... dominated: religious dedication and love. These gave to the cult of physical perfection a solemnity and a rapture which have not been experienced since. Greek athletes competed in almost the same poetical and chivalrous spirit as knights, before the eyes of their loves, jousted in the lists: but all that pride and devotion which mediaeval contestants expressed through the flashing symbolism of heraldry was, in the games of antiquity, concentrated in one object, the naked body.  
(*The Nude* 29)

Except that Clark’s enthusiasm is directed at the Kritios ephebe, his conclusions may be applied just as usefully to the effect on Boyd of the Belvedere Hermes. As an image of youthful and virginal beauty the Hermes may embody paradigmatic homosexual desire, but it is also a fusion point for the complexity of instincts and ideologies fuelling Boyd’s prepossession with the naked masculine body: an amalgam of interests and biases which, though they may be founded in sexuality, sensuality and emotional volatility, radiate beyond into mythology, medievalism and mysticism to include all those concepts related to the power of the physical ideal to induce ‘solemnity and rapture’ and, paradoxically, to embrace the notion of ‘religious dedication’ combined with chivalric love.

My own focus on the Belvedere Hermes is because I believe him pivotal to Boyd’s imaginative schema. His is the young and lissome figure which graces the pages of many of Boyd’s novels; his is the angelic face which dominates in the portraits of the novels’ youthful protagonists. He exists in books which precede by many years Boyd’s *Much Else in Italy* of 1958 and he is reproduced almost to perfection — both head and body — in the line-drawing called *Athlete’s Head* (1963) he included in the second edition of *Day of My Delight* (1965). It is a drawing that could well have been part of an exhibition he held at Cambridge sometime in the early 1960s of which he wrote:

The impulse behind my painting was to show man living untrammelled in delight in the natural world...Friends told me that entering the gallery with all these golden brown bodies in graceful antics round the wall, gave them a feeling of great cheerfulness. The vicar's wife said they were disgusting. (*Day* 278)

The same looks are also caught in the face of the boy-child in a second drawing of Boyd's called *Spartan Mother* (reproduced in the first edition of *Day of My Delight*); and strangely, they reappear again in the person of St John in a painting by Jacopo Bassano called *L'Ultima Cena* at the Villa Borghese in Rome with which Boyd was much taken. In this picture St John, 'the beloved disciple, the bored drowsy boy...content to be resting close to his god' (*Much Else* 81) is unique among the disciples in that he is shown as a fair, 'fresh and innocent youth' with cropped curls; Boyd describes him as 'love sleeping against the breast of wisdom' — 'Eros redeemed'. This youth, Boyd makes it clear, is the visible emanation of Christ's injunction 'to love what is young and beautiful' (*Much Else* 81-82), just as the Belvedere Hermes is the distillation point for all those golden boys already performed in Boyd's personal mythology. With the latter in mind, one may confidently suppose that a distinct sense of *déjà vu*, if not a shock of recognition, was among the sensations experienced by Boyd in his Bramante Court encounter (and here one should perhaps point out that he does not comment on the adjacent but much more definitively adult Apollo Belvedere). A bolder conjecture might essay that he felt something akin to the 'shudder of awe' said by Socrates to overcome the man who gazes upon 'a god-like countenance or physical form' representing a copy of 'true beauty'.<sup>37</sup> Or that, similarly, he may have been affected by the Hermes in much the way the doomed aesthete Aschenbach was tormented by glimpses of physical beauty in the form of Tadzio, the boy Thomas Mann described as 'virginally pure and austere...beautiful as a tender young god...[who conjured] up mythologies...[who was] like a primeval legend, handed down from the beginning of time, of the birth of form, of the origin of the gods'.<sup>38</sup> To those sceptics suspicious of such heady effusions it is perhaps important to emphasize at this juncture that amongst the classical and Hellenistic statuary of Rome the Hermes or Mercury which so captivates Boyd is, so far as I can discover, distinctively individual by reason of his elegant and rather mannered boyishness. He also quite manifestly conforms to some inner idealised paradigm which pre-exists in Boyd's visual repertoire.

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<sup>37</sup>Paglia is referring here to the *Phaedrus*, where Socrates goes on to equate erotic response to the beautiful form with religious awe: 'Beholding it, he reverences it as he would a god; and if he were not afraid of being accounted stark mad, he would offer sacrifice to the beloved as to a holy image of divinity'. Cited in *Sexual Personae*, pp120-121.

<sup>38</sup>Fone ('This Other Eden', *Essays on Gay Literature*) writing of Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice* (1925) has this to say: '*Death in Venice* is in its largest sense a tale of conflict between the demanding and limited virtues of a Christian morality, which would consider homosexuality abject and would scorn it as ridiculous and absurd, and the freer, open morality of classical paganism as represented for Aschenbach by Greek homo-sexuality, which would declare his love honorable and sacred' (p24). The attraction of this tale for Boyd is therefore self-evident. Niall records that Boyd read *Death in Venice* not long after meeting Luciano Trombini in Rome in 1957 (*A Life* p179). If it is the case that Boyd was not familiar with this text prior to 1957, then only a coincidence in terms of homoerotic convention — the kind of convention that 'links the miracle of transformation by water [or] homosexual baptism to legends of Greek mythology' (Fone p26) — can account for the parallel between Mann's description of Tadzio with 'dripping locks, beautiful as a tender young god' and Boyd's account — allowing for the fact that the pagan implications are transmuted into the Christian — of Harry the islander 'dripping with spray' and transformed into 'the Incarnation of God, the ecstatic, terrible union of the spirit and the flesh' (*Nuns in Jeopardy* pp52-53).

In Boyd's hands, however, the individual runs a risk of conforming to stereotype. This is most apparent in a selective catalogue of physical attributes such as the following which, despite variations on a theme, may be said to exhibit a marked tendency toward the obsessive:

- In *Love Gods* (1925) Christopher is described as an 'angel...quite lovely, cool and fresh and good, like spring in a meadow'. He is a 'youth of middle height, with flat, soft yellow hair, nondescript eyes, a wide laughing mouth, and skin like a girl's'. He is seen standing in 'a shaft of gold, a nimbus round his yellow head'.<sup>39</sup>
- In *The Montforts* (1975; 1928) the 'delicate-minded youngest son' Raoul's skin is described as 'clear and rosy, his hair pale gold, his eyes light blue, and his nose long and pointed' (p180).
- In *The Picnic* (1985; 1937) Wilfred Westlake is accredited with 'grace and beauty'. The narrator comments: 'If the God Hermes had taken advantage of a curate's wife, the result might have been something like Wilfred. His mercurial vivacity was restrained by an obvious gentlemanliness' (p43).
- In *A Difficult Young Man* (1972; 1955) Colonel Rodgers as a 'connoisseur of boys' is said to prefer the 'blue-eyed, the rosy and the fair, the non Angli sed angeli' who 'alas', as the author comments, 'so often grow up into prize bulls' (p109).
- In *When Blackbirds Sing* (1972; 1962) the subaltern Hollis is the possessor of 'rosy cheeks and shining hair' and a 'naive sensual innocence'. According to the narrator there is a 'piquancy in the contrast of his baby face with his accoutrements, like that of a putto in an Italian painting, wearing the helmet and playing with the lance of Mars' (pp67 & 69).

Then there are the variations:

- In *Scandal of Spring* (1934) the young Vazettis are 'like beautiful drawings by Leonardo da Vinci'. John Vazetti is said to be 'so fine and sensitive as to be of a different order of creation. Thurlow credited him with a mental fastidiousness, refined as the texture of his skin and hair' (pp6 & 46).
- In *The Lemon Farm* (1973; 1935) Michael Kaye is an 'unemployed public schoolboy' who has taken on the role of the noble savage. His looks are a blend of the Dionysian and Apollonian: he dances naked like 'some archaic god'; when he smiles 'his slightly smug air disappear[s] in a gay, animal liveliness...he look[s] oddly southern with his slanting eyes, strong white teeth, and full-lipped mouth' (pp25 & 28).
- In *Night of the Party* (1940; 1938) the 'vain' and 'good-looking' Daryl Leigh, he of 'the outlook and morals of an ancient Greek' and a drawerful of make-up (p49), paints portraits of himself as 'an exotic faun' (p29). His father Gavin, a 'sly' and 'boyish' artist, paints a picture described as

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<sup>39</sup>Martin Mills, *Love Gods*, London: Constable, 1925, pp19-20. Further citations from this work will be given by page number in the text.

‘sensuous and haunting’ of ‘naked boys, shameless and gay, yet somehow sad in their innocence’ (p298).

- In *Such Pleasure* (1949) Maurice, as the idealised Oxford undergraduate, is depicted as having a face of ‘perfect aristocratic beauty, not only in its features and texture, but in the expression of the eyes...and as he moved in surroundings which could stimulate a much duller heart and mind, his face was continually illuminated by the delight he found in living’.<sup>40</sup>

- And from *Nuns in Jeopardy* (1973; 1940) we have a duplication of Boyd’s response to the Hermes in Dick’s observation that Joe has transcended his physicality: ‘Joe seemed to have acquired an inner tranquillity which nothing could disturb...It was as if his whole body had been touched by some flame of poetry, as if his body and spirit had become perfectly poised and attuned to the natural world. All his movements were graceful and sure...’ (p149).

It should be obvious that in many of these characters there are demonstrable links to the Hermes of Belvedere as Boyd perceives him. Yet notwithstanding the genuine and enthusiastic homage paid to the Greek ideal or its Italian/Mediterranean counterpart that one finds only too readily in his memoirs, fiction and drawings, it would be remiss to overlook a pronounced tendency on Boyd’s part, and as the occasion called for it, to subvert his own indulgence with a knowing wit and self-awareness: the ‘angels’ who grow up to be ‘prize bulls’ are an example of this.

A similar deflation, this time of the maturer and burlier masculine form posing as Greek god, takes place in *The Picnic*. The novel revolves around Australian brothers, the Westlakes, newly settled in England with their mother. Wilfred is a graceful epebe, as indicated above; Christopher’s claim to Greek godhood and stardom, on the other hand, while irrefutable — he is described as ‘good-looking, with a superb, sunny resplendence. His blue eyes shone, glinted, or glowered, according to his mood, in a round, sanguine face. His hair was hyacinthine gold’<sup>41</sup> — is undermined, admittedly by a sophisticated and rather risqué assortment of Bloomsbury affiliates, with a lusty exuberance verging on the burlesque: they refer to him variously as ‘a magnificent blond beast’, ‘an agreeable morsel’, ‘a young Gweek’, ‘a young colt’, ‘my sunburst, my golden bull’, and, reaching the height of absurdity, as ‘a congested boar’ (the latter may be a reference to Christopher’s hinted-at primitive savagery, the sense of him as a trapped animal). With characteristic ambivalence, however, the narrator is reluctant to relinquish Christopher’s godlike qualities: when he tells us that there is ‘no spot of weakness or decay in his body’ (*Picnic* 56) he conveys immortality; and when Sylvia Rounsell muses:

There was something classic and Greek about his brow and hair, and something of refined negroid about his nose. An embrace from him, she felt, would have tremendous significance. It would combine an innocent but extreme African sensuality with a strange spiritual return to classic sunlight.... (*Picnic* 103)

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<sup>40</sup>*Such Pleasure*, London: The Cresset Press, 1949, p227.

<sup>41</sup>Coincidentally, Paglia comments that ‘the beautiful boy has flowing or richly textured hyacinthine hair...a nimbus, a pre-Christian halo’ (*Sexual Personae* p118).

she seems to do so without mockery. Robert Dessaix sees the male narrator of *The Picnic* as ‘joyfully eroticis[ing] the male body’ at the same time as immunising himself from criticism — in what Dessaix refers to as a ‘coyer age’ — by locating his subject’s attraction within the exotic context of either Africa or Greece.<sup>42</sup> Yet to my mind there is more of calculated parody than true eroticisation in Boyd’s treatment of Christopher.<sup>43</sup> If there was evidence elsewhere in his writings of adulation of the ‘congested boar’ male body type one might enlarge on Dessaix’s observation by suggesting, perhaps, that Boyd’s parodic technique in this instance is aimed at providing added protection against being seen to take an undue interest: a form of double indemnity, in other words. One should probably not rule out completely the possibility that Boyd harboured a penchant for ‘blond beasts’. Yet if there is one thing he seems entirely consistent about throughout his writings, it is his appreciation of the beautiful youth at the peak of his perfection and an active distaste for what he terms the ‘bullish’ and ‘beefy’ manifestations of maleness.

Boyd’s playful caricature, through Christopher, of the Greek youthful ideal past his prime or else entered upon muscular manhood to the degree of having shed his feminine delicacy, is an approach that tallies with Paglia’s observation that ‘the Greek boy, like the Christian saint, was a martyr, a victim of nature’s tyranny...his beauty could not last’ (*Personae* 114). The totem of Christopher is a recurring one (and here I use ‘totem’ advisedly, not in a superstitious sense but to indicate an outward symbol of an inward and intimate attitude of Boyd’s towards the kind of maleness Christopher represents). His alternative incarnations may be less physically exaggerated but they are just as liable to be undermined by mild detraction. There is a parallel in Hugo Brayford, for instance, whom Lucinda perceives initially as ‘tall...rather heavily built, with a sanguine face, light blue eyes and crisp golden hair’, ‘as not over-talkative...the acme of reliability’ (*Brayford* 173), but who degenerates into a man guilty of ‘a moment’s dullness of response, a hardness in the eye, [of] protective fat growing under the skin’ (*Brayford* 273), a man who seemingly earns Tony Duff’s accusation of ‘professional pig sticker’. More elliptically, there is Freddie Nichols of *Night of the Party*, whose ‘lively and intelligent’ face is qualified by the authorial comment ‘although a little in the blond beast or Greek god style, with curly fair hair’ (*Night* 110); and there is Nigel Chelgrove of *The Lemon Farm*, ‘large and blond and Nordic’ but somehow tainted by the perception that he is ‘like a Tennysonian knight who has made a fortune in cocoa’ (*Farm* 86). And of course there are the several fictional references to Australian uncles and cousins who are likely to rate as ‘coarse-featured [and] physically precocious’.<sup>44</sup> Boyd’s preoccupation with the physiological grace and beauty of the young male has been shown to reveal itself on numerous occasions in terms that are unambiguously eroticised. Frequently intertwined with such impressions are implications of the youthful body as innocent and incorruptible, as enjoying a state of spiritual elevation. Boyd’s overt antipathy to excessive male physicality, here expressed through his narrator responding to Michelangelo’s *Moses* in Rome’s St Pietro in Vincolo:

[Michelangelo] has become bogged down in the Old Testament, and has only produced pomposity. The Irish boy finds it entirely repulsive, the coarse nose, the gross beard, the thick-veined hands, and the inexplicable horns: or are they an

<sup>42</sup>Robert Dessaix (ed), *Australian Gay and Lesbian Writing: An Anthology*, p9.

<sup>43</sup>The description ‘congested boar’ is surely a joke rather than an eroticisation.

<sup>44</sup>A reference from *The Montforts*, p32.

indication that the Old Testament is woven through with devil worship? (*Much Else* 66)

is indivisible from his holistic belief in a body/soul congruence. (And of course, the remarks are also eloquent of Boyd's sceptical attitude to Calvinism). As Boyd's narrator explains:

A muscular Christian is a contradiction in terms, according to the Irish boy. To develop the muscles beyond a certain point is to try to escape the demands of the spirit. The Greek development of the body was proportionate and in its beauty an expression of the spirit, of man reflecting the Perfect Drawing, unfallen, close to the gates of Paradise. (*Much Else* 32).

Consolidating his theory, the narrator adds that muscle developed beyond the lines of grace and beauty 'is a growth that blocks the movement of the spirit'. There is another factor at stake here, a strongly implied demotion of the phallic. It is an attitude which throughout Boyd's works manifests itself in a rejection of the heroic, heavily-muscled body characterized by John Webb as symbolising phallic power (and presumably its effect of dominance)<sup>45</sup> and its corollary of 'inward rigidity and invulnerability'.<sup>46</sup>

If grace and beauty denote the good and the spiritual, they are also, according to Boyd's pagan leanings, unalterably aligned with pleasure. When Aubrey Tunstall in *The Cardboard Crown* (1988) remarks:

'One goes to look at Praxiteles's Faun, because there one sees the spring-time of the world, all the unconscious careless impudence of the young male expressed in a single beautiful body. It makes one laugh with pleasure...if you are filled with laughter and pleasure...you have increased your understanding, and that, as Blake says, brings you to Heaven'... (*Crown* 137)

he is reflecting Boyd's own pleasure in boyish beauty. There is also a sense that Tunstall is in effect allowing himself, according to Greek principle, to be dominated by the (masculine) beautiful person as work of art. By the act of looking he is reinforcing what Plato, in the *Phaedrus*, sets forth as 'homosexuality's ritualization of the eye', in that, as we are told by Paglia,

the eye elects a narcissistic personality as galvanizing object and formalizes the relation in art. The artist imposes a hieratic sexual character on the beloved, making himself the receptor (or more feminine receptacle) of the beloved's mana. (*Personae* 121)

To this Paglia adds: 'In the Greek cult of beauty there was mystical elevation and hierarchical submission, but significantly without moral obligation'. The absence of any rigorous moral code

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<sup>45</sup>This is illustrated in a literal sense by Austin Langton, who establishes a kind of hegemonic dynasty by fathering not only the children of his own marriage, but three boys by his cousin Hetty Mayhew whose husband Percy Dell is dismissed by the older Langton men as a 'bit of protoplasm'. Dell's only son Harold is, according to Austin's brother Arthur, 'Beside his brothers...like a white mouse beside a lot of prize stallions' (*Cardboard Crown* p69).

<sup>46</sup>John Webb, 'Reading Bodies', in *XY: Men, Sex, Politics*, Summer 1991/92, p15. Cited by Dutton, *The Perfectible Body*, p43.

helps to explain the Greeks' unequivocal ability — in Paglia's words — to honour beauty as sacred and to condemn ugliness or deformity as hateful, why 'Christ's ministry to the lepers was unthinkable in Greek terms' (*Personae* 121). Remarkably, for Boyd too the beauty/ugliness binary appears to have contained elements of the irreconcilable: this is a quirky area for Boyd where once again pagan influences and principles are seen to assert themselves over the Christian worldview. Boyd's highly developed aesthetic sensibility is widely acknowledged. Even so it may be derelict not to consider that his apparent emphasis on beauty as unsullied perfection may be related to a theory of beauty as formulated by Paglia, a belief that

the aesthetic sense...is a swerve from the chthonian. It is a displacement from one area of reality to another...The eye is preemptory in its judgments. It decides what to see and why. Each of our glances is as much exclusion as inclusion. We select, editorialize, and enhance. Our idea of the pretty is a limited notion that cannot possibly apply to earth's metamorphic underworld, a cataclysmic realm of chthonian violence. We choose not to see this violence on our daily strolls. Every time we say nature is beautiful, we are saying a prayer, fingering our worry beads. (*Personae* 15)

And while it would be inaccurate to categorise Boyd as avoiding violence in his novels, his memoirs attest to an abhorrence of brutality: in this light the implication of 'lechery and savagery'<sup>47</sup> portrayed through dream and symbol in *When Blackbirds Sing* should perhaps be considered as a way of ameliorating and/or displacing the horror or more finally, as an exercise in catharsis. Yet we also need to consider that an innate inability to deal equably with the ugly, the cruel and the unspeakable may well have been a component of Boyd's aestheticism, even of an over-refined sensibility.<sup>48</sup> Where the beautiful male body is concerned, elements of homosexual refinement and personal preference are to be observed playing a part in colouring and slanting this aestheticism: they are implicit in Boyd's consistent and generalised lampooning of any male physiognomy suggestive of the degenerate and grotesque — and naturally enough in its opposite, the delight taken in masculine physical perfection. By way of illustration of the former, there are two specific, and similar, instances within his fiction where the physically flawed and unsightly — or aspects of the same — are radically devalued.

The first example is that of Hugo Brayford, regarded initially by his infatuated fiancée Lucinda as 'this resplendent young creature with his almost princely background' (*Brayford* 212) — but whose spirit is revealed as progressively more pedestrian and engrossing — who is injured during World War I to the extent that he has half his face blown away and ends up in a wheelchair. Lucinda's half-brother Bill ironises the conventional tale by commenting 'She married the fairy prince and he turned into the beast' — and Hugo's way of coping, or not coping as the case may be, is to retreat into a form of solitary confinement: a locked-up corner of the End House where only Lucinda may penetrate. When Lucinda reflects that 'It was becoming increasingly undesirable that [their young son] Stephen should be at the End House with its sinister mystery of the closed

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<sup>47</sup>The phrase comes from *The Montforts*, p205.

<sup>48</sup>There is evidence of this in Boyd's objection to Henry James's description (in *English Hours*) of a young drunkard as being 'a mere bag of liquor, too ponderous and too flaccid to be lifted...' on the grounds that it was inappropriate to write thus 'of what was basically the tragedy of a fellow human being'. 'De Gustibus', p6.

door' (*Brayford* 308), she summons shades of Charlotte Brontë's Rochester and the secret shame of his deranged and imprisoned wife. Then again, in his novel *When Blackbirds Sing*, Boyd creates a curious parallel situation with Hugo in that Dominic Langton's friend Hollis, ironically he of the angelic demeanour and looks of a *putto*, also has half his face blown away in trench warfare. In the convalescent hospital where the two friends rediscover each other, Hollis is at pains to hide his facial disfigurement from Dominic. From Dominic's point of view they take their walks 'always in darkness, and always with that beautiful profile turned to him, and the other hideous side of the face concealed beneath the jaunty hat' (*WBS* 167). In an unguarded emotional moment, when Hollis does turn to confront Dominic, the latter is repelled and uncertain as to how he should have acted:

He had a dreadful feeling of inadequacy. He should have said something, done something that Hollis expected. Should he like St Francis have bent and kissed that hideous cheek? Then he thought what a beastly thing that would have been — when the boy offered him his whole face, to kiss only the side that was distorted and horrible, ignoring what he still had of life and health, the smooth fresh skin of his youth. And that was what everyone was doing. They would only caress youth when it was wounded. (*WBS* 170)

Dominic will redress his omission by later asking to see Hollis's full face and then stroking 'gently his smooth unblemished cheek', an action rewarded by Hollis's 'look of surprise and then almost of happiness...as if something had been restored to him'. In each of these episodes neither man's disfigurement, being war-inflicted, is meant as a reflection on his character, but rather as an indictment of war as evil. In Hugo's case his predicament is too disproportionate to suggest retribution for any perceived moral or spiritual failing: nevertheless it is significant that his physical depreciation is accompanied by an utter loss of psychological self-worth. Thereafter he functions only as a symbolic simulacrum of Lucinda's newly ironic status, in that his entrapment becomes also her entrapment. Within the symbolic landscape of *When Blackbirds Sing*, Boyd also chooses to portray Hollis's divided face in terms of negativity: for Dominic's own troubled character it comes to represent 'doubleness' and 'confusion'.

Even the view of St Michael's Mount had become a sort of hallucination of duality, which had its exact and dreadful counterpart in Hollis's face. Outside of this place Venus and Mars had kept their separate identities, but here they were united into a horrible hermaphrodite. (*WBS* 167)

Dominic resolves his dilemma by making his escape: 'It was better to be imprisoned or shot than to be touched with madness'. The travails of Hollis, Dominic and Hugo tend to force the conclusion that the ravages of war and the despoliation of beauty are not compatible with love, with sanity, or even with self-love and self-respect.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>49</sup>Boyd gives a further impression of the futility of flawed perfection when he writes: "There was a young pilot in our squadron with colossal strength. He neither smoked nor drank nor thought of sex. He was a complete...Sir Galahad. At last he was terribly wounded, and we were told that he only pulled through owing to his strength and purity. But if his superb body, for which he had sacrificed pleasure, strength, and even intelligence, was left crooked and maimed, of what use was his life to him?" (*A Single Flame* p141).

If the foregoing illustrates Boyd's pagan-inspired valorization of the beautiful over the ugly, it also affords us a glimpse of an occasional lapse into a morbidity of near-gothic proportions. Yet a reference to just one of his books, *The Montforts*,<sup>50</sup> serves to demonstrate that Boyd, whilst a novelist of ideas, was as a rule not one to take himself too seriously. That novel's relevance to this chapter is in its implicit satirising of some of what we have come to think of as Boyd's cherished ideals in its portrait of Broom, a eugenicist discovered pursuing his vocation with scandalous and Pan-like zeal in the environs of Florence. Broom, whose real name is Plantaganet Montfort-Wrightson, is a skeleton (or new broom perhaps?) in the Montfort family closet and a distant cousin of Raoul's. His introduction to Raoul by Madeleine is unorthodox: 'Don't take any notice of Broom...He's corrupt. He filches all my young men, and he's a bachelor with nineteen children' (*Montforts* 232).<sup>51</sup> According to the imaginative Madeleine, Broom 'kept his assignations and performed his procreative rites on golden beaches, or by a forest stream' (*Montforts* 244). Nevertheless when Broom is heard to articulate his philosophy the result is reminiscent of Noel Coward out of Oscar Wilde, a paraphrase, perhaps, of Boyd's own desires and concerns taken to extremes of absurdity:

I live very simply...from the desire to extract the maximum of enjoyment from life...So many aesthetes apply their aestheticism only to their surroundings, and not to themselves. It is a crime not to have a beautiful body. No one should be physically distasteful to his fellows. A day should be appointed on which the unfit should be given hemlock. It is a tragedy of our age that the sane mind is never found in the beautiful body...

The perfection of the human mind and body is the only thing of the slightest consequence, the only reason for our existence. That is a platitude, but platitudes are the only truths. I govern my life by platitudes, and my friends consider me immoral and bizarre. Human existence will only be tolerable when the whole world is immoral and bizarre. (*Montforts* 235)

One wonders from this whether Broom is meant as the ultimate narcissist out to remake the world in his own image. As the narrator recounts, the conservative Raoul finds himself initially repelled rather than attracted by 'the urbanity and breadth of outlook he encounters here which discounts the earnest inconsistencies of revealed religion' (*Montforts* 237). Yet Broom's compelling presence succeeds in working in him a 'liberation of the spirit', an encouragement sufficient to accuse Broom of being an enemy of the human race because, as he puts it:

...'the human race is made up of those things which you condemn. I mean that so large a part of its spirit is formed by those superstitions, those rages of civilization you want to destroy. If you like the human race you must love its faults, and its absurdities, almost its diseases'.  
(*Montforts* 243)

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<sup>50</sup>*The Montforts* is the version of Boyd's thinly disguised family autobiography which preceded the Langton series, and Raoul Blair is one of a number of even more thinly disguised self-portraits scattered throughout his works, this time with some important variations.

<sup>51</sup>The narrator refers to Broom's 'perfected animalism' and to the 'bright, indecent, elemental forces' which surround him (*The Montforts* pp244-45). In Broom's view, Italy and Bloomsbury are the 'only possible habitats for civilized man', p233.

To which Broom, predictably, replies: 'There speaks the decadent artist. Love the poor, the leper, the maimed. I want to breed them out, and therefore am an enemy of the human race'. The character of Broom bears all the trademarks of an experiment, an exercise in re-examining the classical cult of bodily beauty and perfection in the context of the eugenics movement of fascist 1930s Europe. In desiring to 'breed' or to genetically engineer the perfect human being Broom is representative of eugenics theory carried to its logical and unedifying conclusion. Yet despite his fascist cant Broom is no monster: as a last-gasp eccentric and flouter of conventional bourgeois/religious precepts and morals he is, to Raoul at least, refreshing, interesting and amiable. There may be a moral here, a caution that the line between depravity and sanity is very fine indeed. Or Boyd may simply, by sending his otherwise carefully nurtured body-cult sky-high, be indulging in a little healthy self-deprecation. Whatever his purpose, this is Boyd at his most accomplished and ironic.

When Boyd turns his gaze on his favourite Hermes the erotic appeal to his sensibilities may be masked but his pleasure is conspicuously uninhibited. Indeed his habitual partiality for the nude is marked by a complete absence of restraint or coyness. His own drawings and watercolours have already been adverted to; and his enthusiasm makes itself felt in the works of art which feature in his writings. The memoir *A Single Flame* made reference to the nude young man of Frank Dicksee's *The Ideal*,<sup>52</sup> for instance. Then there are the ephebes and fauns who find their way into his fiction such as the Hermes of Praxiteles at Broom's villa in *The Montforts* and the Praxiteles faun in Canon Stilby's study in *The Tea-Time of Love* — minus head and arms and 'without a stitch of clothing' — who is presumably a replica of that faun in Rome Boyd alluded to as a 'happy human body devoid of a soul...the ideal of the Freudians' (*Much Else* 45). There are the paintings of children, such as the Medici print of a 'lot of naked sixteenth-century Italian children' over the Vicarage mantelpiece in *Scandal of Spring* (p31), the Sims painting of a naked youth and fruit also at Broom's villa, and the 'sympathetic and ribald' drawing of naked, frolicking boys<sup>53</sup> by Gavin Leigh in *Night of the Party* (p185). There is the winged boy on the dolphin and the Ephebe of Subiaco much admired by Boyd in *Much Else in Italy*, the latter a 'headless youth so perfect in its moulding and grace [it was] a symbol of physical perfection' (p39). And there is the awkward moment in *The Picnic* when aspiring art-lover Mrs Matty Westlake is faced with a conflict between 'art and uplift' when taken aback by a 'voluptuous riot' of Renaissance figures — 'This pagan fecundity and perversion, these shameless Ledas and complacent Ganymedes' (p40). The reference to 'shameless Ledas' is one of Boyd's rare

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<sup>52</sup>Sir Francis Bernard (Frank) Dicksee (1853-1928) was a Royal Academician who specialised in 'romantic and sentimental illustration'. *The Ideal* was considered among his best works (*Everyman's Encyclopaedia Vol. 4*).

<sup>53</sup>The most conspicuous part of his drawing', comments the narrator, 'was a boy's behind, as he clambered into the boat, his legs waving helplessly in the air' (*Night of the Party*, p185). In Fone's view (*Essays on Gay Literature* p26) scenes of boys bathing are 'unquestionably' a genre of homosexual art and literature, adding that Tuke's celebrated painting *August Blue* (1894), a picture of four boys, nude and sunbathing in a boat on the river, was the occasion of several poems by English Uranians. Also belonging to this genre are Cezanne's bather pictures — described by Catherine Lumby as 'a series of ambivalent, sexually loaded portraits of young boys' (Spectrum, *SMH* 20/7/96, p1). To this Dellamora adds his observation that drawings of boys could serve as a sign of forbidden love, citing such signifying as occurring at Oxford in the 1890s, 'when young men hung on their walls works such as Simeon Solomon's *Love Among the Schoolboys* (*Masculine Desire* pp45-46).

allusions to the naked female form, in art<sup>54</sup> or elsewhere, and the qualifier, though presented via the screen of Victorian-inflected feminine prudery, is noteworthy. Verona as painted by Gavin is an exception, and she is rendered sympathetically:

Verona's face [was] given a calm impersonality, made noble with the integrity of a wild animal, made eternally beautiful. The whole picture had a beauty something like that of Botticelli's Venus, the beauty of the human form unveiled against the background of the sea, made in some inexpressible way more sensuous and haunting by the presence of flowers. There were the naked boys, shameless and gay, yet somehow sad in their innocence; the virginal, waiting face of the woman, her body so much of the earth and so lovely. (*Night* 298-299)

Not so fortunate is that other exception, the headless nymph or 'lovely brainless body', struggling to free herself from the grip of a faun, whom Guy Langton encounters in a Rome museum. Guy is intrigued, and on closer inspection, captivated: 'It was even more candid than I had imagined, and the paganism, the innocent animalism that is in all of us awoke with joy. The nymph had pressed the right button...' (*Outbreak* 331). She becomes the centrepiece of a story Guy will later tell Cynthia, a fantasy of the perfect compliant female stripped of personality, autonomy and authority. Somewhat redundantly, Guy reflects afterwards that 'That was the nearest I ever came to a flirtation with one of the twins' (*Outbreak* 454). It is plain that Guy is one of Boyd's 'differently constituted' individuals, not appearing to be cut out for normal heterosexual involvement; on his own admission 'My education had made me very chivalrous towards women, except in moments of sensual reverie, but then my feelings were not directed towards any individual, only towards the headless nymph' (*Outbreak* 477).<sup>55</sup>

Clark in *The Nude* writes of how in Graeco-Roman art the gambolling of sea-gods functions to supersede the mind's rational faculties and to lull it out of its daily preoccupations:

...the half-magical buoyancy of these tritons and nereids, the ease with which they ride on each other's backs or recline in the trough of a wave, appeals to our instinctive rebellion against the most inhibiting restraints of our body. In our dreams we fly or swim, and attain thereby a rapturous freedom which, in our waking lives, we know only in love. So the body, to be a perfect motive for decoration, must be in ecstasy, not only because it is then on a different plane of reality, but because, when no longer confined by stasis, it can be used with greater rhythmic freedom. (*The Nude* 273)

Boyd's appropriation of the Arcadian trope of water to convey oneness with nature and an impression of physical and spiritual liberation has been noted. Indeed, his use of just such a mode to foreground the male nude has all the recurrent insistency of a mantra or leitmotif. His descriptions follow Clark in that they reveal a painterly eye alert to the decorative quotient of free-

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<sup>54</sup>In his memoirs (*A Single Flame* p142) he mentions having a plaster statuette of the Venus de Medici in his cockpit — 'bought in Paris to adorn my hut' — which does not survive a crash landing. This is the Venus with a reputation for modesty: both arms are strategically and rather stiffly placed. Clark finds her 'modish' elegance 'stilted and artificial' at every point (*The Nude*, p79).

<sup>55</sup>Guy's sentiment is similar to that of the young Boyd's when during his sea voyage to England he 'thought sensuously of the impersonal acquiescent girl waiting for me somewhere' (*A Single Flame* p76).

form weightlessness. They also strive to express the potential for ecstasy, as if searching symbolically to reproduce the Dionysian impulse, or what Clark refers to as the banishment of reason and its replacement by 'dreamy exultation and voluptuous instability'. For instance, there is something of the nude of ecstasy, or at least an experience akin to a neo-Pagan 'liberation of the spirit' in Raoul's shedding of his clothes on the beach at Brighton, where,

plunged into the cold sea, he had been moved by a desire, once more to reach beyond ideas, to penetrate into, and be part of, the forces of life and of nature...Once again he had that complete sense of liberation, that clarity of soul to soul, and with it had come a marvellous physical contentment. (*Montforts* 250)<sup>56</sup>

As the passage makes explicit, ecstasy here is indivisible from sexual ecstasy. A semiotics of sexual connotation is present in the steady accretion of signs: in words and phrases such as 'plunged', 'sea', 'moved', 'desire' and 'penetrate into' leading — by means of 'liberation' and 'marvellous physical contentment' — to implications of climax and release in post-coital satisfaction.

Michael Kaye of *The Lemon Farm* is similarly afflicted by an urge to bathe, and again, it is a transformative experience:

He was urgent to do something, but he did not know what...He went up to the sand-dunes and stripped off his clothes, then ran down again and plunged into the icy sea. He came up gasping and tore back to his clothes, dancing like some archaic god...He was sure that somehow from now on his life was going to be different. The period of stagnation was over. (*Farm* 25)

Another example of swimmers shows Boyd in a more painterly mode:

[At Teneriffe] the water was an opalescent blue, but clear as glass...The bodies of the young men were a golden brown, and as they fell like arrows into the sea, and moved about in marvellous patterns deep down in the opal clarity, Dominic's eyes glowed and darkened, as always when he saw something supremely beautiful, above all when it showed the freedom of men in the natural world. (*WBS* 11)<sup>57</sup>

The painterly and the transformative come together in Harry the islander as perceived by Sister Agatha:

He slipped off his slight clothing, and dived overboard, himself like a swift knife cutting the water, down among the sharks. He darted among them, below them, swifter than the fish...Harry [was] beautiful to watch, golden brown, perfect and sure in his movement, so that if at any moment he had been arrested and turned to bronze he would have been a lovely statue, a bronze enclosed in glass...There seemed to her a tragic innocence in that beautiful body, in which in some degree God must dwell imprisoned in animal flesh...even in this native was somehow seen the Incarnation of God, the ecstatic, terrible union of the spirit and the flesh. (*Nuns* 52-53)

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<sup>56</sup>The experience for Raoul is transformative: '[He] had never felt more amiably disposed toward humanity...To-night he could love mankind with the warts on its face' (*The Montforts* p250).

<sup>57</sup>This scene reproduces Boyd's own experience of calling at Teneriffe on his way to join up and witnessing the 'golden brown Spaniards' as they dived for coins. (*A Single Flame* p76).

Then again, we have a version in which the young hero as swimmer/lover is gently spoofed in Beryl Lapage's romantic novel *Adriatic Nights*:<sup>58</sup>

[Marcello] dived from the roof. In the moonlight his golden body showed nearly black, the phosphorous sparkled in his wake. Never have I seen such beauty, the moving bronze below the water, leaving its trail of stars. It was as if my lover were a bronze by Praxiteles...he was like some statue that has lain two thousand years beneath the sea, a black Apollo salvaged from the Adriatic, bringing with him all the magic of those far-off times, when passions were strange but bright with courage. I felt that in him I embraced all the great lovers of the past — Anthony, Abelard, Romeo. I felt that in him all human love was distilled to its archetype.<sup>59</sup>

And in *Night of the Party*, in a departure from the aesthetic/erotic thematics of the swimming nude,<sup>60</sup> a linkage of water and boats becomes significant: first to provide a background for Gavin's impudent painting of capering boys, and then as emblematic of a misogynist form of male to male bonding. Gavin tells Lucinda that he associates boats 'with all the things that have nothing to do with women', and continues:

I'll tell you the things...boats suggest to me — rough male comradeship and adventure, danger shared and casual nakedness, a complete absence of flattery, the peace you have from an absolutely honest relationship ...a woman always wants to be complimented, she's always a little provoking, and she always wants to preserve some of the decencies. A man can let the decencies go without being degraded.

Under these circumstances, in Gavin's book the advent of a storm, with its inevitable accompaniment of 'filthy language', would act to alienate a man and a woman but to bring two men together in 'a friendly love, a deep male comradeship' (*Night* 146-147). Understandably, Lucinda's reaction is one of pique: she resents the implication that the friendship of which he speaks denies that 'a woman could be all in all to a man' (*Night* 153). Gavin's arbitrary male-oriented law of the sea, his desire to 'go out into the wide light, to be exposed, to sail naked into the sea and the sun' (*Night* 147), is expressive of a wish to transcend heterosexual 'normalcy' and the confines of domesticity for the more daring pursuits of homosocial and nature bonding: objectives that are irrevocably bound up with a yearning to be 'gay [and] disreputable' like Verlaine or Ernest Dowson (*Night* 225). Using Gavin as a pretext, the author may well be making an explicit case for the sexual,

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<sup>58</sup>In Boyd's last book and light comedy *The Tea-Time of Love*, Mrs Lapage is represented in the tradition of a Mills and Boon pulp novelist.

<sup>59</sup>*The Tea-Time of Love: The Clarification of Miss Stilby*, London: Geoffrey Bles, 1969, p5.

<sup>60</sup>The body-in-water trope as employed by Boyd shares affinities with Nial Kent's homosexual novel *The Divided Path* (1949), specifically with Kent's reference to Michael watching the 'burnished bronze body' of the naked and bathing Paul 'as it moved with Arcadian naturalness'. Cited by Fone, 'This Other Eden', *Essays on Gay Literature*, p18.

political and artistic freedom of the outcast<sup>61</sup> — and by so doing, reinforcing a boyish impulse voiced by his friend Roger in the autobiographical *A Single Flame*.<sup>62</sup>

Boyd's fixation on body/water rhythmic imagery may also owe a debt to the poetry and imagery of Walt Whitman, to lines such as, for instance: 'The swimmer naked in the swimming-bath, seen as/ he swims through the transparent green-shine, or/ lies with his face up, and rolls silently to and fro/ in the heave of the water'.<sup>63</sup> His celebratory merging of the male body with water and landscape in an early novel, *Dearest Idol*, appears to gesture towards Whitman's relish of the physical world, a delight epitomised in the line 'To be surrounded by beautiful, curious, breathing, laughing flesh is enough'.<sup>64</sup> The book opens with Tony Dawson's immersion in a reverie of self-regard and libidinal sensuality bordering on the masturbatory which has parallels with Whitman's 'I dote on myself, there is a lot of me and all so luscious'.<sup>65</sup> Tony is a fifth-form boy, and the description is unusual in that much of the consciousness of pure being and unalloyed enjoyment comes from the protagonist himself. The ambience is that of a summer idyll: 'The sunlight was like a splashed liquid...spilled carelessly on the thick young foliage of the chestnuts...it fell in pools yellow on the grass, and...glittered on the brown surface of the stream' (*Idol* 11). Tony is paddling a canoe under the shade of chestnuts in a secluded backwater:

He was naked, and...when at intervals the canoe left the cool luminous shadows, the spilled sunlight clothed him temporarily with a beauty which stultified all art. He was not conscious of this, but he was conscious of an increased sense of well-being, of the fact that he was a pleasant animal...He had a queer delicious tingling all over him. He could almost feel himself growing — it was like sap rising in trees. Everything seemed bursting with growth this afternoon...He took a deep breath. The air was full of smells — the smell of trees, the smell of hot grass, the good smell of the river. He breathed again, almost in an ecstasy...

...He examined his body...It was lovely to be both naked and warm. Slowly he bent his right arm and felt his biceps. They were quite satisfactorily developed. He did not want to be too beefy. Some chaps were like bullocks...[Standing up to dive] he rested

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<sup>61</sup>As he also does through Guy Langton (*The Cardboard Crown* p7): '...that is what I've always longed for, the literary freedom of the outcast — to be like Verlaine or somebody who did not have to worry [about offending people] when he sat down to write...It would be a profound satisfaction...to write exactly what one believed to be true about all the things one knew best'.

<sup>62</sup>A schoolboy with whom Boyd goes sailing in Sussex, Roger suggests sailing off around the world with 'a black woman' on board (*Day of My Delight* p163). Boyd perceives this as a repudiation of bourgeois life and a 'Gauguin touch', but more than likely there are allusions here to Baudelaire, to those "'negresses lumineuses" who had expressed for him all the mystery and glamour of the tropics' (Sprawson, 'Plaints of Icarus', p70). Roger's refusal 'to live in the suburbs on a thousand a year' is an echo of Baudelaire's artistic longing 'to soar above the tawdry details of everyday life' (Sprawson, p71).

<sup>63</sup>Walt Whitman, 'I Sing the Body Electric', *Leaves of Grass: A Selection*, New York: Peter Pauper Press, 1968, p6.

<sup>64</sup>Whitman, 'I Sing the Body Electric', *Leaves of Grass*, p10.

<sup>65</sup>From 'Song of Myself', in *A Choice of Whitman's Verse*, selected and introduced by Donald Hall, London: Faber & Faber, 1968, p47. The comparison with Whitman falls down on the question of ego, however. Hall cautions that 'when Whitman sings of himself, he is removed from egotism precisely through inwardness; this self that he observes through imagination has become all selves; he *is* the multitude he called himself' (Introduction, p7).

a moment posed, a dazzling figure in the dazzling light, and then he leaped and disappeared in a shower of diamond spray. (*Idol* 11-15)

It is a point at which the narrator, as if conscious of over-indulgence, subverts the rampant narcissism and resorts to the parodic: Tony lands flat on his stomach, overturns the canoe, wets his clothes, and finds that the 'delicate sunburnt-peach color of his stomach had turned to an angry scarlet' (*Idol* 15).

*Dearest Idol* is a tale, possibly cautionary, of an ego turned in upon itself in utter self-absorption. Tony is a stereotypical Boydean protagonist — 'his color...reflected English roses, his eyes the blue of English heavens' (*Idol* 52): he is 'fastidious' and does 'not think very much about girls' (*Idol* 39). There is a passage in which he goes to the glass to brush his hair: 'The toweling has heightened the color of his cheeks, his skin was smooth and clear, his mouth a youthful scarlet, his eyes were limpid. For the first time, with a start of surprise, he noticed his extraordinary good looks...' which parallels exactly an experience of Boyd's in *A Single Flame* where he tells of catching sight of his face in the glass 'and being surprised at its touch of adolescent beauty' (*Flame* 52). The comparison is crucial, if only by reason of the fact that Tony's is a mirror-image of Boyd's own face — the evidence is there in the photographs of the twenty-something Boyd reproduced in Niall's biography:

His face was attractive when he laughed. His eyes, a bluish-gray were straight beneath level brows. Their expression in repose was hard, a little appraising, a little critical. His nose was long and fine but the nostrils appeared slightly pinched. His mouth was full and pleasure loving, and still turned up at the corners. His good looks were largely those lent by the soft contours, the fresh skin, the fine close hair of youth. (*Idol* 14)<sup>66</sup>

If Tony Dawson's face may be identified with Boyd's, and if these same features form the basis — give or take a detail or two — on which the ephebes of Boyd's novels are characteristically modelled and replicated, questions of self-identity and narcissism would appear to have reasserted themselves with a vengeance.

As we have seen, Freud's theory of narcissism postulated that it is common for 'perverts' and homosexuals to take as a love-object not a model of their mother but of their own selves.<sup>67</sup> 'They are plainly seeking *themselves* as a love-object', he says, 'and are exhibiting a type of object-choice which must be termed 'narcissistic'.<sup>68</sup> Narcissism, according to Freud, can arise as a result of a misdirected allocation of the libido, such as from the external world to the ego; at the same time he assumes the primary narcissism of children, and concedes that a certain degree of narcissism, redefined as 'the libidinal complement to the egoism of the instinct for self-preservation...may

<sup>66</sup>Boyd's pen-portrait of Raoul Blair resembles himself when older. Noting that despite his 'curved mouth and pointed nose' he is becoming 'spinsterly', Raoul mourns 'the soft curves and impish beauty of his boyhood' (*The Montforts* p247).

<sup>67</sup>As Freud says, they look for a young man who resembles themselves and whom *they* may love as their mother loved *them* (*Three Essays*, p56).

<sup>68</sup>Sigmund Freud, 'On Narcissism: An Introduction', *On Metapsychology: The Theory of Psychoanalysis* Vol. 11, London: Penguin, 1991, p75. Further citations from this work will be given by page number in the text.

justifiably be attributed to every living creature' ('On Narcissism' 60). Narcissism is also involved — and in my view this has no little relevance for Boyd — in the process of a man setting up 'an *ideal* in himself by which he measures his actual ego' ('On Narcissism' 82). This ideal ego, according to Freud, is now the target of the self-love which was enjoyed in childhood by the actual ego. The subject's narcissism is displaced on to this new ideal ego, which, 'like the infantile ego, finds itself possessed of every perfection that is of value'. As Freud explains:

As always where the libido is concerned, man has here again shown himself incapable of giving up a satisfaction he had once enjoyed. He is not willing to forgo the narcissistic perfection of his childhood; and when, as he grows up, he is disturbed by the admonitions of others and by the awakening of his own critical judgement, so that he can no longer retain that perfection, he seeks to recover it in the new form of an ego ideal. What he projects before him as his ideal is the substitute for the lost narcissism of his childhood in which he was his own ideal. ('On Narcissism' 82)

Being unwilling 'to forgo the narcissistic perfection of his childhood' — the period when, as part of his parents' narcissistic wishful dreams, the child is 'the centre and core of creation' ('On Narcissism' 79) — is an arresting concept. It is one which also implies a reluctance to forgo one's youth, or an adherence to a Peter Pan syndrome which may have a bearing on Boyd's accent on youthful beauty, on his commitment to an idealization of the young male, and on his affectionate and seemingly pedagogically-inspired friendships with much younger men — relationships chosen possibly on the basis of his own narcissistic ego-ideal. Freud speaks of an antithesis between ego-libido and object-libido: the highest phase of development of which the latter is capable is seen, he says, in the state of being in love, 'when the subject seems to give up his own personality in favour of an object-cathexis' ('On Narcissism' 62). That this involves 'an impoverishment of the ego as regards libido in favour of the love-object' is hinted at in *Dearest Idol* when the ego-driven Tony realizes that 'Boris had loved him most, for he had risked and given his life to restore the perfection of their friendship. In that flood of light *Tony's self-esteem revived and crept back once more to its throne*' (*Idol* 281, my italics).

Relevant to this is Freud's observation that complete object-love of the attachment type 'displays the marked sexual overvaluation which is doubtless derived from the child's original narcissism and thus corresponds to a transference of that narcissism to the sexual object' ('On Narcissism' 76). Sexual over-valuation of an object is an idealization of it: and Freud's definition of idealization is that it is a process whereby an object is 'aggrandized and exalted in the subject's mind' ('On Narcissism' 82). The necessary coupling of idealization and its object, plus the suggestion of a linkage to narcissism, brings us back to Boyd and his contemplation of the Herms. His idealizing reactions have already been recorded; they may not have been of the order of the 'phallic ecstasy and palpitations at male beauty'<sup>69</sup> accredited to Whitman, but his rapturous aesthetic

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<sup>69</sup>Tyrwhitt, 'Greek Spirit', p562, in Gerard Manley Hopkins, *Letters*, p155. Cited by Richard Dellamora, *Masculine Desire*, p87. Dellamora comments that since Robert K. Martin's major study, *The Homosexual Tradition in American Poetry* in 1979 a number of critics have recognized the importance for Whitman's poetry and politics of his commitment to desire between men (Footnote 4, p233).

response — which may have been accounted a slight misperception by Clark<sup>70</sup> — is skewed by a certain homoerotic fervour. The result is a transformation by subjectivity which may not be fully merited, at least in artistic terms.

We also need to consider whether the element of self-recognition hovers here too, and acknowledge that in body and face *type* the statue evokes not only Boyd himself when young but a remarkable number of his fictionalised ephebes. Boyd may, in some respects, have sublimated or deflected his sexuality into 'a heightened interest in the divine [or] in nature' ('On Narcissism' 67); he may have 'exchanged his narcissism for homage to a high ego ideal', but it does not follow in Freudian ideology that he necessarily succeeded in sublimating his libidinal instincts altogether ('On Narcissism' 83). His enthusiasm for the body, a trait he shares with Whitman, suggests otherwise. For him, as for Whitman — and here an observation by Harold Aspiz seems thoroughly appropriate — 'the body cannot be vile, for it is the sensuous link to the world of experience; it *is* the world of experience. It is the only context in which we may understand the world, apprehend the truth, or achieve a state of higher consciousness'. Earthy and spiritual correspondences alike, states Aspiz, were translated by Whitman into a 'sensuous, emotion-charged poetic language'.<sup>71</sup> Whitman's language was candid, highly original and often dangerously erotic by the standards of his time and bears little relation to Boyd's comparatively restrained and well-mannered prose. Nevertheless, Boyd shares with Whitman his philosophy of the body; and while Boyd's emotions and passions, his deeply-ingrained instinct for the sensuous, may be generally more constrained and disciplined — and where his treatment of the beautiful male body is concerned the evidence of this chapter indicates a gradual chronological shift away from open candour and exuberance to a greater circumspection — this is not to say that his writings are not informed and made vivacious by their presence. However, the virtually unchanging beautiful adolescent who persists throughout his pages, together with the male nudes who grace his more poetic passages, have about them the haunting quality of an *idée fixe* — a compensation by imagination, perhaps, for their possibly increasing remoteness and inaccessibility in relation to personal experience and encroaching age<sup>72</sup> — and their obsessive redeployment can be said to introduce a note of transgression, a rupturing of the usual restraints. The prominent hold these images have on Boyd's imagination is almost certainly sourced in his sexuality: it is as if he lavishes on the nude, for instance, all the yearnings of a (self-perceived) problematical psycho-sexual nature. In this hypothesised situation, the beautiful boy and the nude are conceits employed as both displacement vehicles for homoerotic feelings and as emblems or decoys of surrogate desire.

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<sup>70</sup>The execution of the Hermes shares something of the 'slack surfaces' and 'mechanical smoothness' Clark attributes to the reproduction of the Apollo Belvedere. (*The Nude* p45).

<sup>71</sup>Harold Aspiz, *Walt Whitman and the Body Beautiful*, Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1980, p248.

<sup>72</sup>There is a suggestion of mocking self-laceration, for instance, in the depiction of Paul Brayford as a 'waspy' and 'crusty old bachelor' reduced to picking up a 'half-derisive' boy in a bar (*Lucinda Brayford* pp358-9), and whose attempt to befriend children evacuated to Crittenden is met with insults: "They mimicked his voice and his limp, and...one of them, squinting at him with atrocious psychological discernment, said "You're not a man, you're a lady"" (*Lucinda Brayford* p527).

## CHAPTER SIX: *A thematics of obsession*

So far in this study reference has been made to the self-acknowledged romantic and sexual fantasies of the young Boyd made opaque by a characteristic inexplicitness of object-choice; to his expressed pleasure in the comradeship of war and the valorization and vicariation of that pleasure in fictional evocations of Arcadian, and therefore utopian, transparency; and to the erotic foregrounding of the beautiful male figure prominent in his work. All of these are topics indicative and illuminative of same-sex desire: yet almost uniformly,<sup>1</sup> critical analysis has remained obdurately silent on these matters, as if in confirmation of a perception that culture plays hostage to 'the volatile, fractured, dangerous relations of visibility and articulation around homosexual possibility' (EC 18). Borrowing from Sedgwick's formulation, the aim here has been to open 'channels of visibility...that might countervail somewhat against the terrible one-directionality of the culture's spectacularizing of gay men' (EC 60).

The concern of the previous chapter was to give substance to the claim that Martin Boyd's writings are fetishistic inasmuch as they demonstrate a pervasive and repercussive predictability in revealing an investment in the youthful, naked and/or beautiful male that is both emotional and aesthetic. The argument has gone something like this: that despite a susceptibility to paradox, there is a sense that the aestheticized and often lyrical, even sentimental, hyperbole Boyd brings to the description of these recurring images is somehow conflated with his feeling, desiring and sensual inner life. The obsessive quality to this interest could be said to have reached its culminating apotheosis in the admiring and celebratory gaze bestowed on the Belvedere Hermes, that representational conjoining of innocent ephebe and divinized god: it is a gaze, the argument runs, which gives rise to elements of sublimation and desublimation. It is also suggested that the desublimating component, an accentuated emphasis on idealised masculine physicality, points to certain unavoidable congruences between Boyd and the kind of body-oriented gay culture that today places a premium on sexual attractiveness.<sup>2</sup> Yet, as has been established, the loveliness of the Hermes in Boyd's eyes is not confined to the body alone: the sculpted facial features conform to a notion of the ideal as enunciated by Poussin and reinforced by Boyd; indeed, it is a specialised image which haunts the pages of many of Boyd's novels. In this context the potentially provocative proposal has been made that these features are in essence Boyd's own, or physiognomically at least, markedly similar, and that as a consequence their frequent foregrounding as a component of the unstated but presumably attractive and desirable male physique cannot fail to implicate — unconsciously motivated though such a narcissistic impulse may be — his own body and looks as an index to erotic and political meanings.

While it cannot be claimed that Boyd was guilty of actively or even unconsciously promoting his own body image, there is however a distinct correlation between himself and the bodily attributes of those good-looking, young and fairly type-cast protagonists favoured by his

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<sup>1</sup>Only now, with the publication of Robert Dessaix's anthology of *Australian Gay and Lesbian Writing* and Michael Hurley's *A Guide to Gay and Lesbian Writing in Australia*, has this position changed.

<sup>2</sup>The observation is Bettina Arndt's, in an article exploring different concepts of manhood, *The Australian Weekend Review*, 12-13 August, 1995.

fiction: attributes that obey some inner imperative of Boyd's in comprising a pleasing integration of facial beauty and graceful physique. Examples abound, among them Wilfred Westlake of *The Picnic*, Michael Kay of *The Lemon Farm*, and Tony Dawson of *Dearest Idol*, not forgetting the two young men Dick and Jim in *Nuns in Jeopardy*. That other 'real-life' example, the Belvedere Hermes, by providing both a concrete realisation of Boyd's preferred model of masculine integrated perfectibility and an approximate mirror-image of Boyd's own body-type and style, is another useful guide, as are his own drawings, towards a more precise visualisation of his idealised stereotypes. Yet in Boyd's treatment of bodily characteristics there is at times a curious differentiation that takes place between the face and the body, or rather, a concentration on one at the expense of the other. Naked male bodies may be absolutely depersonalised, for instance, treated as decorative tableaux or aestheticised as works of art. It is rare, on the other hand, to find that the beautiful, desirable face, for all its identity and autonomy, is accorded an explicitly desirable or sexualised body; most often the correspondence is taken for granted. Of course there are exceptions. Tony Dawson is one, while Michael Kay and Harry the islander each perform a double function as beautiful body and 'noble savage'. With faces in mind, it will be remembered that those most conspicuously favoured by Boyd — the '*non Angli sed angeli*' prototypes<sup>3</sup> — share essential features and distinctive marks to a point where they merge into virtual replicas of each other. The effect of this insistence on a generic style or model and its resultant endless proliferation of angelic looks, is to align Boyd — not for the first time — with Wilde, that 'magus in the worship of the "slim-rose-gilt"', thanks to whom, as Sedgwick notes, 'the individual...figure of the "slim thing, gold-haired like an angel"' came to stand for 'a sexuality, a class, and a narrowly English type' (*EC* 175).

The beautiful human face (read 'male' face), independent of its underpinnings, may in fact be claimed as constituting yet another of Boyd's obsessional preoccupations. We have considered briefly his pursuit of 'the Perfect Drawing' in connection with religious enlightenment in *Much Else in Italy*. Yet on the evidence of his books Boyd's enthusiasm for beauty, and particularly the idea of the beautiful human countenance, holds determined sway in the secular as well as in the religious sphere. So much so that Guy Langton's romantic search for 'the beautiful portrait of the human face, lost in the dissolution of our family and our religion' (*DYM* 161) seems indivisible from Boyd's own subtextual goals and compulsions. The reference is intriguing because it seems to promise further illumination, if indeed illumination were needed, as to the kind of male beauty eligible for inclusion in Boyd's version of an unassailable ideal. The narrative linking of Guy's lament to yet another extant and celebrated artistic image, this time a painting by Memling, cannot but invite speculation. Guy Langton — one of Boyd's 'travesties of myself' — sets great store by

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<sup>3</sup>A painting by this name, by Keeley Halswelle (1832-1891), purchased by the NSW Art Gallery in 1879, refers to the slave trade, and specifically, the fact of child exploitation, probably sexual, between medieval England and Italy. Four young, almost naked and very beautiful children are shown sprawled on some stone steps, the cynosure of several adults' gaze: they are English and they are to be sold in Rome's marketplace. Legend has it that the future Pope Gregory I (590-604) passed by: 'They were so pretty, with their blue eyes and pink and white faces, that he asked who they were. Angli, or English, he was told, but he said "Non Angli sed Angeli"'. According to the story these beautiful children inspired him to later send Augustine to christianise Britain. From Elizabeth O'Neill, *A Nursery History of England*, London & Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson & Sons, (circa 1950), p19. Boyd acknowledges the legend in *Much Else in Italy* (p61) with the comment: 'S Gregory...like the Greek soldier who would spare the life of a beautiful youth in battle...said [the English boys in the market-place] were too angelic to be damned, and sent S Augustine to save them'.

his ancestry: he is depicted as fascinated by the varying historical fortunes of his Scottish Byngham cousins, and delighted to find from his readings and from experience that Byngham boys worldwide conform to a 'round rosy-faced' formula. Of his Kilawly, County Sligo cousins, a 'cadet branch' of the family, Guy says specifically: 'Their faces were not darkened by Teba blood nor their noses pointed with Langton wit'. He speculates on their 'candour and simplicity' as ill-fitted for the modern warfare they may be called upon to fight. It is a circumstance in which, he further conjectures, 'we may soon find'

a young Byngham selling newspapers at the entrance to the Green Park Tube, who, when we ask for a copy of *Punch* which we occasionally buy in pious memory of our grandparents, apologizes with the greatest concern for our disappointment, and in an accent which was noble before the foundation of Oxford, though he addresses us as 'Governor', explains regretfully that he only sells the *Evening News*. We wonder how a youth with those level-lidded eyes and that manner can earn his living in such a way, not realizing that it is they which make all others impossible to him, and with this young Byngham we exchange a certain recognition, like two exiled gods, Zeus and Hermes, each seeing in the other's eyes a reflection of Olympus...(*DYM* 161)

Significantly, Guy goes on to say that 'the snob who takes his vice seriously would be more gratified to associate with the newsboy at the Green Park Tube than with any "leader of society", just as a collector will value more a stained and mildewed Memlinc found in the cellar, than a two-acre canvas by a Victorian Royal Academician'. It is then that he adds: 'That is really what I am seeking for throughout this book, the Memlinc in the cellar, the beautiful portrait of the human face'.

The assumption I need to make here is that Guy Langton, as Boyd's alter ego, shares his creator's taste in art. If this is indeed true, even approximately so, it follows that Boyd himself holds that Memlinc, or the German-born Hans Memling (1430-1494), was a portrait painter *sans pareil*, excelling in representations of comeliness and refinement. So that when Guy muses in ancestral mode on the 'stained and mildewed Memlinc in the cellar' and makes an implicit connection between it and the imaginary Byngham newsboy fallen on hard times, a curious doppelganger effect is created, one which places Guy's search and Boyd's yearning for beauty and perfection on a collision trajectory. Their collusion seems subsequently confirmed in Guy's likening of the splendid newsboy to an exiled god, a 'Hermes'. It is a comparison designed to ensure that ancestor, comely god and beautiful portrait are drawn into the one complicit circle, each an embodiment of reflecting, and reflected, glory. Once again the emphasis is on the complexity surrounding Boyd's passion for beauty — and in particular his obsession with a certain complexion of male beauty — in that 'the ideal' he desires, reproduces, and pays homage to, as well as coinciding with an emblematic Wildean construct, consists in an admixture of racial and mythological memory, Greek tenets of human perfectibility, and more immediately, his own disciplined aesthetic sensibility.

It would be instructive and helpful, of course, to know whether, in the juxtaposition of Byngham looks and Memling painting, Boyd had in mind a specific portrait of Memling's. A newly-released book on the artist entitled *Hans Memling: The Complete Works* boasts several portraits of young men, all of whom possess 'level-lidded eyes', but only one of which could be feasibly

matched to Boyd's description of the Bynghams. Called *Portrait of A Young Man at Prayer*,<sup>4</sup> the painting depicts a youth lost in meditation over a prayerbook or bible. Exquisitely androgynous, he is the essence of fair 'English' beauty: young, pale, with light-brown longish hair, wide-set eyes, a straight nose, sensuous lips, slender hands and the hint of a flush to his cheeks. Among Memling's portraits of young men this is the only one which may be found in the National Gallery in London, allowing Boyd probable familiarity with it. I am not proposing any unequivocal connection — there are many very fine Memling portraits Boyd may have admired, including several of Christ and one of St John the Evangelist (in the famous Sir John Donne triptych) that recalls the Bassano image — but in this respect we need always to consider questions of access and opportunity. It would be remiss, however, not to draw attention to a coincidence which seems too fortuitous to ignore.

It is apt to note here in passing Robert Dessaix's reaction, as recounted in his recently published *Night Letters*, on 'stumbling upon' the Memling *Portrait of a Young Man [in a Landscape]* in the Venice Accademia:

After all those Cecil B. de Mille extravaganzas, all that flesh in pain, all those Tintoretos and Bellinis and Venezianos and death, suddenly — and you'd only have to blink to miss it — here was this small, calm square of Flemish sobriety, an unassuming realism (not just in the painting's style, but in the young man's level-headed gaze) and a Protestant aloneness — I could hardly tear myself away from it.<sup>5</sup>

Dessaix's young man may be darker and swarthier than the acolyte described above — that is, more Mediterranean troubador than English rose — but his undeniable allure emanates from much the same source, a tranquil self-containment akin to the 'dreamy remoteness' Paglia ascribes to homoerotic iconography. The enthrallment recorded by Dessaix recalls Boyd's rapt attention before the Hermes. And while it is to be expected that specialised images are capable of a powerful and mesmeric appeal to the homosocial/homosexual imagination, it is nevertheless interesting to discover, in Boyd's and Dessaix's shared suggestibility to ravishment by Memling,<sup>6</sup> the existence of a measure of rapport in artistic and homoerotic sensibility which confounds mere coincidence. Nor should we be surprised that such a rapport operates regardless of the factors that separate these otherwise disparate Australian writers, considerations as momentous as a generation in time and a world revolutionised by an open and exhaustive dialectics of sexuality.

The persistence of the 'Memling' theme suggests a certain driven quality to Boyd's repetitious reliance on a predictably idealised and sentimentalised form of imagery. Some observations of Sedgwick's are feasibly of significant relevance to Boyd's erotic foregrounding of the male body. She suggests that the modernist impulse toward abstraction owes 'an incalculable

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<sup>4</sup>Not to be confused with two other of Memling's works similarly entitled: one of an older, more Italianate-looking man which was purchased from a private Scottish collection in 1938 and is now part of a Madrid collection; and the other, of a young, very dark and attractive young man, belonging to the Bearsted Collection, Banbury, which was exhibited several times in London between the 1920s and 1950s.

<sup>5</sup>Robert Dessaix, *Night Letters*, Sydney: Macmillan, 1996, p265.

<sup>6</sup>I am confident, having seen Dirk De Vos's *Hans Memling: The Complete Works* (Ghent: Ludion Press, 1994), that Boyd was 'ravished' by Memling, both for reasons cited above and because certain of his portraits of young men embody qualities Boyd enthused over in prose and attempted to capture in drawings and paintings.

part of its energy precisely to turn-of-the-century male homo/heterosexual definitional panic', and cites literary history 'from Wilde to Hopkins to James to Proust to Conrad to Eliot to Pound to Joyce to Hemingway to Faulkner to Stevens' to support her contention. To the extent, she says, that 'figuration' had to be abjected from modernist self-reflexive abstraction, it

was not the figuration of just *any* body, the figuration of figurality itself, but, rather, that represented in a very particular body, the desired male body. So as kitsch or sentimentality came to mean representation itself, what represented 'representation itself' came at the the same time signally to be a very particular, masculine object and subject of erotic desire.

(EC 167)

By appearing to collapse the categories of figuration, representation, sentimentality and desire into one and the same, or at the very least to render them interchangeable, Sedgwick is enlarging her hypothesis that the embodied male figure 'is a distinctive, thematic marker for the potent and devalued categories of kitsch and the sentimental in this century' (EC 142-3). The theme is pursued in her discussion of *Dorian Gray*,<sup>7</sup> certain of whose passages suggest to her 'the prefiguring manifesto of a modernist aesthetic according to which sentimentality inheres, not so much in the object figured, as in a prurient vulgarity associated with figuration itself' (EC 166). It is a provocative perspective that subjects figuration to the forces of the pejorative, the homophobic, and the prejudicial. In such circumstances figuration's inherent and associative sentimentality is inevitably devalued, reduced in meaning, according to Sedgwick, to the *insincere*, the *manipulative*, the *vicarious*, the *morbid*, the *knowing*, the *kitschy*, the *arch*.<sup>8</sup> Here Sedgwick is taking her cue from Nietzsche's 'ressentimentality', an interpretation of modern emotion as vicariousness and misrepresentation (EC 150): it is a view in which the sentimental spectator characteristically

misrepresents the quality or locus of her or his implicit participation in a scene — [misrepresents], for example, desire as pity, *Schadenfreude* as sympathy, envy as disapproval...(EC 151)

and so contributes to a situation in which vicariousness or identification through a spectatorial route — that constituent Sedgwick alleges is bound up with the definition of the sentimental — is allowed full play. There is no denying a certain irresistible logic to these insights into the viewer process: they have the kind of authority which enables us to approach Boyd's status as sentimental spectator from a marginally different angle. But interestingly, while the route may be different, the conclusion corroborates only what has already been surmised: that Boyd's investment in a cultural product, whether as audience or producer, is liable to misrepresentation to the extent that desire may become fused/confused with 'aesthetic' appeal.

It will be seen from the above that the issue of sentimentality's twentieth - century pejorative subcategories, which include the prurient and morbid (EC 151) besides the insincere, the kitschy, the knowing and so forth, begins to assume more than merely a superficial relevance for

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<sup>7</sup>Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* — a work she sees as 'a perfect rhetorical distillation of the open secret, the glass closet, shaped by the conjunction of an extravagance of deniability and an extravagance of flamboyant display' (*Epistemology of the Closet*, p165).

<sup>8</sup>The italicised terms are Sedgwick's, *Epistemology of the Closet*, p143.

Boyd (and may indeed be especially relevant to his poetry — see end of chapter). If we recall his manifestly figurative kitsch in *Athlete's Head* or in *Boy and Bronze* — always accepting that in using the epithet 'kitsch' I am guilty of claiming to exempt myself from what Sedgwick calls 'the contagion of the kitsch object' (*EC* 155)<sup>9</sup> — one is forced to the realisation that there could well have been a 'knowing' or 'arch' (and I use 'arch' here in the sense of 'waggish') component — a form of unconscious manipulation perhaps — to the exhibition of Boyd's paintings and drawings held at Cambridge in 1961 to show man 'untrammelled' in nature. The sincerity of Boyd's intention is not in question; nevertheless any painter who fills a gallery's walls with 'golden brown bodies in graceful antics' (*Day* 278), especially if the accent is on the sentimental and kitsch rather than on form for form's sake, is open to charges of catering to the cognoscenti, or even to 'kitsch man' (and it is surely significant that Boyd is careful to tell us that the vicar's wife found them 'disgusting'). It would not, however, be accurate or fair to wholeheartedly associate Boyd's sentimentalising *literary* sketches with the manipulative (unless we allow that the conscious charm that he brings to his descriptions of alluring young manhood is deliberately devised to enchant an audience): and in any case some reclamation of the sentimental in feminist or 'camp' terms to enable identification with a whole class of emotions traditionally devalued as belonging to women's characteristic experience and culture<sup>10</sup> — as opposed to what Sedgwick calls masculine heterosexuality's scapegoating tendency to project its own vitiated sentimentality on to gay men and all women<sup>11</sup> — seems called for. For just as feminism has partially succeeded in reversing the negative connotations of the domestic and the relational and their inbuilt implications of sentimentality, so Sedgwick thinks it is appropriate that gay male culture has in the last century, 'under different names including that of "camp"', sought to rehabilitate 'the sentimental'. Not only have the underpinnings of a gay male sentimentality long been in place, she says, having been 'densely grounded in centuries of homoerotic and homophobic intertextuality',<sup>12</sup> but there has been also a sentimental appropriation by the larger culture of male homosexuality as spectacle (*EC* 144-45). In the contemporary world we need go no further than the 'body fascists'<sup>13</sup> and the erotic male body-as-landscape artists like Robert Mapplethorpe and William Yang to concede the truth of her assertion. For gay male culture at least we may be confident that figuration reigns, that the displayed masculine body is the preferred contestant for the spectacularised space. As Sedgwick notes, this body

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<sup>9</sup>Identifying something as 'kitsch' is one way to redouble the aggressive power of the epithet 'sentimental', according to Sedgwick. Another, she says, is to posit the existence of a true kitsch consumer or 'kitsch-man': someone who is either uncritical towards the kitsch object and therefore manipulated by it, or else whose consciousness level enables him to recognise kitsch when he sees it, a kitsch attribution whereby 'it takes one to know one' (*Epistemology of the Closet*, pp155-56).

<sup>10</sup>That is, tied to the 'reproductive' and relational preoccupations of birth, socialisation, illness, and death. Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, p144.

<sup>11</sup>See Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, p145.

<sup>12</sup>Sedgwick cites Achilles and Patroclus, Virgilian shepherds, David and Jonathan, the iconography of St Sebastian, and 'the elegiac poetry of Milton, Tennyson, Whitman and Housman' to emphasize her point (*Epistemology of the Closet*, p144, footnote 14).

<sup>13</sup>Edmund White's term for the young gay people he knows, who are 'only interested in working out and going to the gym, piercing their ears, piercing their noses, and dancing all night on ecstasy'. As told to Andrew Billen, *The Australian Weekend Review*, 17-18 May, 1997, p3.

is not itself named as the place or topos of sentimentality, the way the home, the female body, and female reproductive labor had been in the mid-nineteenth century. Rather, the relations of figuration and perception that circulate around it, including antisentimentality, might instead be said to enact sentimentality as a trope. (EC 146)

Boyd's own artistic dedication to figuration is well documented, serving to complement and confirm his personal cult of the masculine body beautiful. The rupture or violation of that fundamental Vitruvian form from which architecture was to take its most pleasing proportions was anathema to him. His vehement distaste for modernism, for example, was grounded in something more than just a dispositional aversion to twentieth-century fads and fashions. Modernism connoted evil; it was the depraved product of a 'diseased puritanism dwelling in the mind of the artist' and somehow conjoined to sexual guilt and lust.<sup>14</sup> His distress and puzzlement are apparent as he tells of a renowned modern painter who sets out to create disgust by a Deposition in which the body of Christ is like "a great worm slithering down the Cross" (*Day* 283);<sup>15</sup> and his reaction to an exhibition of modernist paintings he saw in London verges on the histrionic: 'their effect was to make man disgusted with his own existence...the vilest crime one can commit' (*Day* 283).<sup>16</sup>

In tilting at what apparently he saw as unmediated iconoclasm, Boyd may have been misreading the more subtle nuances of modernism; even so, his commitment to the sanctity of humanity in its sheer physicality remains defiantly unchanged and possibly strengthened in the face of such *avant-gardism*. His own iconisation through figurative art, rooted as it is in classical purity and ideality, is as much a hedonistic valorisation and celebration of natural man and his pleasures as it is a subliminal endorsement of homoeroticism. In the interests of further validation of the claims made here, apropos Boyd's *oeuvre*, of homosocial desire and the homoerotic consciousness, the direction is now a shift away from ambiguous imagery to a broader perspective encompassing both preoccupying and predominant themes and subtilized undercurrents: more specifically, to a focus on the detail of homosocial content as opposed to heterosexual constructions, while at the same time always taking into consideration those narrative patterns of silence, secrecy and disclosure which evoke, and provoke, the suggestion of sexual indeterminacy and difference.

One productive means to a deconstruction of the tentative sexual psychology of the autobiographical Boyd — and its fictional mirroring in many of his male protagonists — seems indicated through the scrutiny of those already remarked lexical pointers which succeed in drawing a question mark over issues of sexual identity. A previous observation has been that the method utilised, a resort to adjectives such as 'curious', 'weird', 'unwholesome', 'odd', 'peculiar', 'queer',

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<sup>14</sup>The passage in which Boyd denounces modern art is a strange one. Following immediately after his comment about 'diseased puritanism', he continues: '[The artist's] sexual impulses still are joined to a sense of guilt, but being divorced from the natural world, have a hothouse intensity to which he must give expression; so like the woman committing adultery with a syringe, he paints, instead of with the lovely non-sensual eroticism of the Renaissance, hideous deformed creatures, naked women covered with sores, and so he satisfies his lust' (*Day of My Delight*, p283).

<sup>15</sup>He may be referring to Graham Sutherland's *The Deposition of Christ* (1946) which hangs in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, and is reproduced in Nicholas Usherwood (ed), *The Bible in 20th Century Art*, London: Pagoda, 1987.

<sup>16</sup>Boyd's final denunciation of modernism is bitter: 'in England the artistic world is half rotten with hoax and imbecility' (*Day of My Delight* p284).

'emotional' and 'sensitive' tended to underline a sense of alienation. If, however, an analogy is made between Boyd's methodology and similar semantic strategies noted by Sedgwick in Oscar Wilde's *Dorian Gray*, strategies or 'epistemological compactions' she identifies as having an effect that is at once both 'violently piquant and uninformative' (EC 174), the situation becomes more complicated. In explication, Sedgwick notes that Wilde recurrently uses the 'drug-tinged' adjectives 'curious' and 'subtle', two Paterian epithets she observes to 'trace in *Dorian Gray* the homosexual/homophobic path of simultaneous epistemological heightening and ontological evacuation' (EC 174). She points out that each of the words shares, as well, 'a built-in epistemological indecision or doubling' in that it carries both objective and subjective connotations: for example, 'curious' as ascribed to 'an object of interest' is attributed with meanings by the OED ranging from 'made with care or art, delicate, *recherché*...subtle [and] exquisite' to 'exciting curiosity' and 'queer'; while as a subjective quality of persons 'curious' can mean 'careful, attentive, anxious, cautious, inquisitive, prying, subtle' (EC 174).

Where Boyd employs the self-description 'curiously constituted' it is in the context of his father's view of his son's manliness, characterised by an (implied) unmasculine lack of aggression: in the circumstances those further accretions of meaning of 'curious' — 'careful', 'anxious', 'cautious' and 'exciting curiosity' — gain a deal of legitimacy. Taken together with the habit of styling himself as 'unwholesome', 'intuitive', 'incorrigible', 'pacifist' and 'a misfit' — 'cognate labels' that circulate freely throughout his autobiographical texts — a twofold semiotic effect emerges that in some ways parallels Sedgwick's identification of the 'empty' and 'open' or 'homosexual' secrets: the 'empty secret' being, according to her, a rhetorical structure whose purpose is to universalise, naturalize and thus substantially void elements of male homosexuality; with the 'homosexual secret' (or glass closet), on the other hand, acquiring its transparency, in Wilde's case at least, through 'an extravagance of deniability and...display' (EC 165). On many levels Boyd's self revelations, his aperçus, intuitions and recourse to coded signifiers collaborate to qualify him for both categories. For a start, there is no question that, superficially at least, he fits into the 'naturalizing' category: that is, his perceived differences may be easily encompassed within the spectrum of 'normality' (yet even here an epithet like 'unwholesome' achieves an aura of sexual uncertainty when placed beside Arthur Langton's conviction of Australia as a land demanding to be peopled by 'strong wholesome men' (*Outbreak* 407). At the same time, however, we are never allowed to lose sight of Boyd's oddities (oddities that tend to flow through to the most interesting of his male protagonists); his habits of, say, self-confessed 'morbidity' and 'incorrigibility' which, because they are never fully explained, make for an ellipsis in communication, a space where the incoherent, the silent and the hidden collude to create mystification and infinite suggestibility. Moreover, descriptions of non-conformity and difference tend to multiply: their accumulation may not be readily comparable to the overt expression of homoeroticism we recognise today in Wilde; nevertheless — and this is the factor that enables us to perceive Boyd as oscillating between categories — his insistence on the paraphernalia of peculiarity seems singularly deliberate. Indeed there are times when an innate disposition towards preterition — in rhetoric, a 'passing over' or a figure by which summary mention is made of a thing in professing to omit it (Boyd's styling of himself as a 'misfit' might be an encoded signal that masks the inadmissible homosexual secret, for example) — is subsumed to disclosure through reiterative force and the decoding effect of greater lexical 'fullness' and equivocation. It is a situation in which the stress falls not so much on what is negated and emptied

out, but on the positive and the pro-active: significantly, a critical point at which the writer is perceived as engaging in a *performance* of identity reminiscent of the 'open secret'.

Since we are talking of sexual definition, autobiography is probably the most fruitful site for locating the performative in Boyd. Immediately noticeable there is an habitual 'feminisation' of his persona, an unabashed self-attribution in terms of 'timorous', 'credulous', 'morbid', 'priggish', 'sensitive', 'vulnerable', 'prudish' and 'unathletic'. He tells us that he was afraid of being 'bullied and hurt' at school, that he was made to feel that he ought to be 'more of a man'. His earnest passions are for his schoolfellows, boys like Winsland and Hart; he knows 'no girls at all'. His adolescent and sensual reveries are anachronised, sentimentalised and sanitized by their removal to a distant time-frame, the sanctuary of a world imagined by Virgil and Catullus, a world wherein 'dreams of nymphs in olive groves' are never precisely translatable into a desire for real women in a real world. The companionable and affectionate relationships he finds during the war negate his sense of being a 'misfit'; his natural pacifism, strengthened by human empathy, enables a 'criminal amiability' toward the young soldiers who comprise the enemy. His only documented heterosexual experiment is with a prostitute and a disillusioning one at that (*Flame* 85); on leave in Paris, offered the chance of 'sensual enjoyments', he refuses women on account of an '*attendrissement*' for a young pilot named Everard and rationalises: 'I wanted sex, but I wanted it with love, and my love at that time could not turn in any possible direction' (*Flame* 136). Whatever may have been Boyd's personal inhibitions, scruples or confusions at the time, it may be safely said that he was not agonising over the specific presence of a prescribed and unfulfilled heterosexual desire. The evidence to the contrary, the prominent and undisguised flagging of a 'love of boys' and same-sex companionship, plus an inordinate interest in the beautiful male nude, appears overwhelmingly indicative, if not of unacceptable homosexual yearnings, then of at least the marginally less 'scandalous' homosocial desire.

Where Boyd at his most performative confesses to an uncertain or irresolute sexuality it is difficult to judge whether he is being naive (and therefore self-ignorant) or knowing (and therefore coy) or simply in the throes of self-questioning.<sup>17</sup> What *is* certain is that just as he passes on many of his declared traits of mildly effete 'difference' to characters such as Guy Langton and Wilfred Westlake, so others like Dominic Langton and Stephen Brayford are natural heirs to a sexuality which, though 'normal'-appearing, is strangely distorted by ambiguity and incoherence. Both Stephen and Dominic are extraordinary: each in his individual way is an attenuated Christ figure, each is conflicted by sexual indeterminacy, each yearns to reconcile the irreconcilable. Dominic's personality is the more remarkable due to sheer excess: fantastical, melodramatic, absurd, compelling, alternately romanticised and demonised, it bears the marks of an allegorical Everyman. A transgressive streak ensures an all-too-rapid intellectual transition from innocence to violence and may also contribute towards his mobilisation as a symbol of sexual disorientation and dislocation. Dominic's portrait evolves in many respects as Boyd himself writ large. Only exaggeration stands between it and the temptation to see its depiction of Dominic's tempestuous and 'divided soul' as a

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<sup>17</sup>Some of his self-consciousness on this score is relayed through Guy's confession of 'equivocality' in that he only pretends not to know (*A Difficult Young Man* p116). Guy also admits to an 'extraordinary mixture of knowing and not knowing' (*A Difficult Young Man* p136); in other words, to a form of false innocence.

cathartic exposure of the author's own dark forces and buried repressions. Should this claim seem over-imaginative, consideration of the finer detail should go some way towards substantiation.

Dominic attracts all the epithets Boyd applies to himself and then some: he is 'contradictory', 'inconsistent', 'confused and different', 'moody', 'restless', 'impulsive', 'priggish', 'an outcast', 'emotionally vulnerable', 'unbalanced', 'eccentric', 'tender', 'peculiar', 'untamed', 'unpredictable', 'unconventional', 'odd', 'irrational', 'a queer fish', 'a black sheep' and 'slightly foreign'. Boyd may paint him as a fanciful aggregate of extremist attributes — he emerges as a strange mix of Dostoevsky, Cervantes, missionary and knight-errant — nevertheless it is difficult to escape a sense that Dominic is designed to represent a highly-coloured, even picaresque version of his own most cherished fantasies, convictions, aspirations and self-perceptions. To start with, this young Australian is dangerously exotic and fey: Guy his narrator/brother describes him as 'full of Lawrence's dark god' (*DYM* 25); his looks are 'smouldering', 'Mediterranean', moodily beautiful in the El Greco style. The complication of a purported likeness to a Spanish ancestor, specifically the 'wicked' duque de Teba who strangled altar boys, adds an extravagant piquancy to his persona, encumbering him not only with the curse of a *damnosa hereditas* (*DYM* 93), but with the suggestion of perverse and hidden passions — the latter strengthened by the fact that Cousin Sarah destroys a portrait of the duque in the superstitious belief that there is 'some kind of Dorian Gray connection' between it and Dominic. The linkage with Wilde is further intensified by the incident in which the youthful Dominic rides his horse Tamburlaine to death and Diana is prompted to muse: 'Apparently the duke had killed the thing he loved, and now Dominic had done it' (*DYM* 72). The strongest impression we have of Dominic, however, is his sense of 'otherness' or alienation, his condition 'of exclusion from human society' (*DYM* 29) and 'separation from the world' (*DYM* 48); the emphasis being, as the narrator assures us, not on any ascetic denial but on the outcast's presumption of difference. His contradictions are also compelling. He is the 'lonely rebellious boy' given to black rages; he has 'odd phases of gentleness and submission' in which he weeps like 'the great heroes of antiquity, the saints and the noblest men of history' and cannot bear to kill a fly; he is the noble savage who walks naked by moonlight; and, as we have seen, he is capable of gross mistreatment of a beloved pony. As a curious mix of all that is honourable, fickle, arrogant, tender, charming, passionate, volatile, sexually confused, religiously demented and prescient of doom, it is no wonder his uncle Arthur perceives him as an *ame damnée* (*DYM* 56).

Arthur's comment is tied in with his perception of 'some inner conflict between [Dominic's] sensuality and his spiritual nature' (*DYM* 56) and in some measure serves as an intimation of Dominic's sexual complexity and discord. Dominic's sexual identity is ambivalent, or more accurately, it seems amenable, emotionally at least, to variations across the sexual spectrum.<sup>18</sup> Initially, and despite all prior hints of 'difference' generally, he fulfills the standard heterosexual requirements by marrying Helena and having an affair with Sylvia. We discover, however, that these

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<sup>18</sup>Guy Langton hints at Dominic's sexual ambivalence in *A Difficult Young Man* (p11): 'Women found Dominic extremely attractive, especially nice women. The other sort, though they may have at first been excited by his sombre handsome face, soon found something in his nature which bothered them, a requirement which made them feel inadequate and therefore angry' (my italics).

are arrangements that carry penalties and rewards in terms of Dominic's yearning to be with his own kind:

With Helena he was apart from other men. With Sylvia he had broken through into their company. He was the same as other satisfied, normally sensual men, which, he thought, he had always wanted to be. He was full of the delight of his body. (*WBS* 85)

Helena represents marriage and its necessary exclusions, Dominic seems to be saying; he might also be saying that marriage equates with sexual boredom. Sylvia on the other hand is seen to facilitate his access to the war-time brotherhood; she is, in Sedgwick's terms, the enabling conduit to the male company he craves. Similarly, Dominic rationalises his visit to a prostitute as 'affirming his friendship with Hollis': in sharing the woman, he is 'sharing a part of Hollis' (and as if to confirm the woman's role as a symbol, the narrator adds 'But he hardly treated her as another sentient human being' (*WBS* 117)). It is at this point that Dominic's homosocial affinities may be perceived as profoundly enmeshed with Boyd's, and in particular, his attraction to Hollis intuited as coterminous with Boyd's affection for Hazelrigg. More saliently, perhaps, the mechanism by which the narrator (who is himself inclined to indecisiveness when it comes to sex) conveys the increasingly overriding importance of Hollis to his brother's emotional equilibrium reads like a coded crystallisation of gradual heterosexual displacement and impotence. This verbal strategy, consisting in identifying a 'jam' in Dominic's brain to connote inaction and interference, operates to give pause to Dominic each time he is confronted with irreconcilable ideas.

Initially the jam occurs when Dominic receives simultaneous letters from Helena and Sylvia; later, distressed by Hollis's war injury, he experiences a 'slight stoppage in the brain' at the thought of seeing Sylvia — 'enough to keep him standing in indecision' (*WBS* 84); in Sylvia's company he finds that thinking of her in connection with the prostitute of Béthune brings about 'a kind of snap in his brain, as if the jam, the stoppage which so often he felt there, had been finally cleared away...' (*WBS* 87); back in France 'he thought about Hollis, almost the only person of whom he could think without confusion, without that kind of jam in his brain';<sup>19</sup> and later still, following the moment of mystical communion on the battlefield with the young German soldier and haunted by the boy's 'eyes in their split second of surprise awakening to friendship' (*WBS* 182), he 'saw no direction in which he could turn' — a perplexed lament with its counterpart in Boyd's own expression of sexual ambiguity: 'I wanted sex, but I wanted it with love, and my love at that time could not turn in any possible direction' (*Flame* 136). For Dominic the thought of Sylvia causes 'the jam at once [to come] violently down in his brain': '...in some curious fashion he now felt his life belonged [to the boy whom he had shot]. With that feeling the jam in his brain was eased' (*WBS* 131). As a metaphor for irresolution, Dominic's 'jam' also signals that his supposed heterosexuality is not a fixed and immutable actuality but a condition susceptible to diversity and transition. That this is so is clearly discernible in an intuition of Sylvia's —

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<sup>19</sup>Shere Hite identifies a similar condition in many pubescent males who, in order to enter the male world of (hetero)sexual prowess, must learn to dissociate themselves from love/desire of the mother: conflicting pressures which, she says, 'together cause a traffic jam in boys' minds and short-circuit their brains', and so fuse the concepts of desire and disdain together forever. From 'In Search of a New Male Heroism', *SMH*, 15/4/95.

He performed most of his actions without reasoning about them. He did not, having recognized the inconsistencies of life, keep them in separate watertight compartments, but left the doors open between them. This is what made him so unpredictable, but also so attractive. It gave him the integrity of something untamed, the kind of savage innocence of a creature still observing the laws of the natural world (*WBS* 65)<sup>20</sup> —

a perceptive insight that might be read as an extract from Boyd's own credo. The indecisiveness of Guy Langton, an inability to know complicated by ardent religiosity, also has implications for Boyd. The 'pure Christianity of my mental climate', Guy claims, has delayed his emotional development

and this had kept me sexually indeterminate...My tenderness of heart could be wounded by almost any creature. To me the perfect symbol of love was Our Lord with the beautiful youth lying on His Breast at supper, and all other love was an extension of this, an extension which included Colonel Rodger's attachment to Dominic, and George's lifelong devotion to Dolly Potts. This attitude, though on a lofty spiritual plane, could appear to a magistrate extremely immoral. (*DYM* 163)

It is a statement which refuses to discriminate between love in its many manifestations, a reflection perhaps of the author's system of idealism and its fervent impulse towards a cosmic inclusiveness. More significantly, it telegraphs Boyd's awareness of the potential for sensual and erotic dilemma posed by a passion for the Christ figure.

In Dominic, mental paralysis is symptomatic of a revolt against conformist notions of sexual behaviour and orientation. A prototype for a similar kind of affliction exists in Stephen Brayford, in that in the earlier work Stephen's 'mysterious illness, of which the chief symptom was a trance-like inertia followed by violent headaches' (*Brayford* 371) is also transparently psychosomatic. In Stephen's case the illness is conditional on ruptured idealism as well as on the irreconcilable: it is first triggered, for instance, by the offence to his pacifist instincts when, as a boy of fourteen, he is ceremoniously 'blooded' at the hunt. It returns with a vengeance at Cambridge when, just as Stephen imagines 'some singular bond' between himself and a chorister based on a 'tranquil, unfocused love which had recently brought a new illumination to his life' (*Brayford* 394), his fellow student Roland Roberts attacks him for 'ogling a choirboy'. His friend Hayman tries to comfort him by pointing out the average man's infuriation at any 'disinterested affection' that does not coincide with his own lust, yet Stephen is filled with hatred for Roland: 'He felt as if his hatred and his love had formed a cross on which he was stretched, and he had to reconcile the two things in his own body' (*Brayford* 394). The choirboy's effect on his life may be spiritually transforming, an uplifting adjustment 'to a different atmosphere', but it is not without its physical component: 'Always on entering the chapel he felt that more rapid beating of his heart' (*Brayford* 456). Even after (or should that be particularly after?) having decided to marry Heather Vane, when Stephen returns to Cambridge and sees 'the small top-hatted procession...scurrying across King's bridge', a sudden pain in his temple forces him back to his bedroom where he lies 'inert, icy, almost as if paralysed, for two days' (*Brayford* 455). As he explains to Roland: 'It begins in my head, generally when I am confronted with two...irreconcilable emotions'. His subsequent letter to Heather is described as 'far

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<sup>20</sup>Here Dominic assumes an affinity with Stephen Wonham, the illegitimate half-brother of Rickie Elliot and 'natural man' figure of E. M. Forster's *The Longest Journey* (1907).

less incoherent with passion that it [might otherwise] have been'. It is not until after the failure of his marriage and his part in the rescue operation at Dunkirk that the narrator explicitly links the presence of Stephen's occasional psychological powerlessness and stupefaction to the absence of male comradeship:

...Stephen felt intensely happy. For the first time since the war began, or even perhaps since Heather had left him, he felt himself to be reunited to the majority of his fellow-men. Of recent years he had felt himself in some way to be cut off from their sympathy, and the war had aggravated this condition. When he tried to adjust himself rationally to it, his brain became numbed and he could not think clearly.

Now all these feelings had gone. A rush of life had flooded his body and mind. He had the joy of being reunited to his fellows, not only in physical companionship but, he imagined, in belief and purpose. (*Brayford* 505)

The manner of Stephen's death, in its way-of-the-Cross and crucifixion-imitating symbolism, acts to effectively convey that the natural empathy he shares with his fellow men is transmuted into a Christ-like compassion. Paradoxically, however, the scene at Dunkirk where he rescues a wounded boy bears all the hallmarks of a romantic and sentimentalised encounter (and doubles as a precursor of today's 'buddy' movie perhaps?):

The boy, watching him, had a look of recognition in his eyes, and Stephen had the feeling that he had seen him before somewhere. 'How d'you feel? What is your name?' he asked. The boy smiled and held out his hand... 'Brian Wes...he began, but as he spoke his smile faded...He gave a compulsive grip of [Stephen's] hand. Then his head lolled sideways and he was dead. (*Brayford* 508)

We are told that Stephen was glad 'he had been able to hold [Brian the chorister's] hand at the end'.<sup>21</sup> The incident, with its emphasis on instant recognition between two souls, anticipates Dominic's battlefield encounter and helps to underline the proximity of their personalities, their shared idealism and aestheticism, their impetus towards the good, their strange 'otherness'. Stephen in some ways is Dominic in embryo, less complicated by dark and destructive urges; yet it is Stephen who acts out in his life the religious intensity Dominic is to achieve vicariously through his art. Their shared unfittedness for the twentieth-century world, however — Stephen is seen as a 'little mad', Dominic will be pronounced clinically mad (in *The Cardboard Crown*) — seems linked to their emotional openness to sexual variance, a transgression that will mark one down for an early death and doom the other to a lonely and reclusive life of artistic dementia.

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<sup>21</sup>By way of comparison, Boyd tells us how he stroked the cropped hair of a subaltern 'as I would a cat', a tender gesture which turned out to be 'the last caress of his life, his last human touch, a sort of viaticum' (*Day of My Delight*, pp77-78).

With certain of Boyd's male 'heterosexual' protagonists — those who have proved themselves the marrying kind — prone to sexual confusion and uncertainty,<sup>22</sup> or what Sedgwick defines as 'the Subtlest, most intimate warfare *within* a man' (EC 182)<sup>23</sup> what then do we make of his bachelor figures (and here I recognise two 'bachelor' classifications, the dedicated bachelor and the bachelor who, in counterfeiting desire for the opposite sex, masquerades as a potential marriage prospect)? Sedgwick suggests that a character classification of 'the bachelor' came into currency in the early and mid-Victorian writings of authors like J. M. Barrie, Thackeray, George Du Maurier and Henry James. The stereotypical Thackeray bachelor, for example, she sees as preferring 'atomized male individualism to the nuclear family' (with 'a corresponding demonization of women, especially mothers'); as rejecting genital sexuality towards objects male or female; and as placing 'a corresponding emphasis on the pleasures of the other senses' (EC 192). Sedgwick's analysis targets his persona as urban, timid, introspective and self-centred; she sees his habitual occupation of 'a pivotal class position between the respectable bourgeoisie and bohemia' as rendering him readily identifiable with the *flâneurs* of Poe, Baudelaire, Wilde and Benjamin (EC 193). In the books he inhabits he is typically 'circumscribed' and 'marginalised'. Also characterised by Sedgwick as domesticated, feminized, and mock-heroic, it is no surprise that he emerges as a diminished and parodic figure in terms of 'certain heroic and totalizing possibilities of generic [male] embodiment' (EC 189). It follows logically that 'the severing of his connections with a discourse of genital sexuality' (EC 190) relegates the bachelor to the taxonomic category of the 'homosexual man' as defined by medical and social-science models. At the same time his dubious embodiment is clarified as descriptive of male homosexual panic: a panic which may be acted out, according to Sedgwick, 'as a sometimes agonized sexual anesthesia... damaging to both its male subjects and its female non-objects' (EC 188). On the strength of Sedgwick's categories, some of Boyd's more prominent fictional bachelors would seem to beg investigation.

Always allowing that it may be overly unrealistic to expect Boyd's bachelor figures, as individuals, to align neatly and consistently with the literary model provided by Sedgwick, a comparison with her identifications is nonetheless enlightening. Neither should one overlook in the process the ways in which they resemble, indeed appear to be patterned on, their creator's own personality, proclivities and life-style. The temptation to see them as facets of the multiple personalities Boyd owns to, as perhaps manipulations and barely-contrived masks influenced by the Wildean belief that 'the masks are what we are',<sup>24</sup> is by any standard compelling; importantly, it also

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<sup>22</sup>In contrast, others of a more uncompromisingly heterosexual nature may be subjected to subtle undermining: the philanderer Wolfie von Flugel, for instance, who to his misunderstood wife Diana is 'a charming Labrador, which whimpers at the door to go out, or cheerfully sweeps a coffee cup on to the floor with its tail, or complacently eats up all the butter left on a low tea-table' (*Outbreak of Love* 386); or that novel's socially pretentious Freddy Thorpe who is portrayed as a 'brainless oaf' seeking to marry a fortune; or again, *Lucinda Brayford's* heroic military types Hugo Brayford and Pat Lanfranc whose initial and outward glamour is seen to conceal a barrenness of imagination and *caritas*.

<sup>23</sup>Sedgwick takes the quote 'the Subtlest, most intimate warfare' from D. H. Lawrence's letter to Jessie Chambers, August 1910, *The Collected Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, 1962.

<sup>24</sup>Actor Stephen Fry, commenting on Oscar Wilde's observation that 'when you peel off the reality, you find the mask beneath'. As told to Michele Field, *Spectrum*, *SMH*, 5/7/97. By having his narrator Guy Langton speak (in *A Difficult Young Man* p165) of using masks as a defence — presumably against reality — Boyd appears to concur with the concept that in the end there are only masks.

has the capacity to tap into a discourse on the overlapping categories of art and life. Guy Langton's eligibility as Boyd's fictional self has already had an airing here. On Sedgwick's bachelor register he qualifies as timorous, sexually inhibited, 'domesticated' and parodic. His self-characterization runs to descriptions of himself as, for example, 'the runaway curate', as trustworthy with girls,<sup>25</sup> and as 'having a proper regard' for brocades, china and chintzes. On the marginalisation scale, with the exception of a small role in *Outbreak of Love*, his status verges on the acute: despite a double act as both narrator and participant in the first three books of the Langton tetralogy, not only is he inscribed as largely peripheral to the family history but in practical terms his narratorial voice is frequently prone to hijacking by that of the omniscient author.<sup>26</sup> And considering his waverings between, on the one hand, sexual 'equivocation' and 'indeterminacy' and, on the other, the outright rejection of the flesh contained in references to his 'extreme chastity', his 'medieval exaltation of the virgin state' — and dramatically, his denunciation of the 'machinery of reproduction' and determination 'to renounce the World, the Flesh and the Devil and become a clergyman' (*DYM* 115)<sup>27</sup> — his divorce from the 'discourse of genital sexuality' would also appear to be critical. Finally, in his attitude to women — at least insofar as they impinge on his personal life — although more generally he is merely indifferent or somewhat sexist,<sup>28</sup> Guy is not above indulging in a touch of demonisation. This he achieves by speaking of his Aunt Mildy as 'envious and evil' (*Outbreak* 506), by representing himself as resenting the 'innumerable silken threads, the subtle blackmails with which she tried to hold me' (*Outbreak* 507) — thus suggesting that she is more suffocating than any mother — and most damningly, by comparing himself to 'a young antelope' that has been flung 'into the cage of a hungry tigress' (*Outbreak* 391).<sup>29</sup> He may take refuge from Mildy in (no doubt aesthetic) thoughts of 'Cynthia's lovely head in its fearless beauty, the nymph's head restored' (*Outbreak* 507),<sup>30</sup> but by the concentration on her head at the expense of the whole person (and here it must be emphasized that although the nymph's 'beautiful brainless' body is implied, there is a seemingly deliberate glossing over of Cynthia's body) — by denying, in short, her mind/body integrity, Guy merely reinforces what he has already established as a dualistic, and rather confused, viewpoint towards woman as object-of-desire.

Created twenty years earlier, Wilfred Westlake of *The Picnic* is another young man who shows decided symptoms of becoming a 'dedicated' bachelor. A central character in a novel that

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<sup>25</sup>Aunt Mildy says of him: 'Oh, Guy is not like other boys. I'd trust any girl with him, anywhere' (*A Difficult Young Man* p181).

<sup>26</sup>This is not to say that the reader is not made well aware of Guy's fundamental philosophies and attitudes to life.

<sup>27</sup>Elsewhere, in relation to the lovemaking of Wolfie and Mrs Montaubyn, Guy reveals a negativity towards matters sexual by speaking in the same breath of 'sensual stimulus' and 'the repugnances of the flesh' as if they were coterminous. Otherwise, he says, '[they] might have been beautiful to watch...' (*Outbreak of Love* p343).

<sup>28</sup>We already know of his reveries about an impersonal female and the 'headless nymph'.

<sup>29</sup>This may be seen, of course, as a facetious or parodic comment, nevertheless it bears comparison with Lucinda Brayford's more studied opinion of Heather Vane as a 'man-eating orchid' (*Lucinda Brayford* p439). In a similar vein, when Guy elsewhere speaks of feeling 'ravished' because of 'the devouring glance' Ariadne Dane casts on his youthful complexion one has the impression he is discomfited rather than flattered (*A Difficult Young Man* p175).

<sup>30</sup>Cynthia Langton is the more intellectual and aloof of Guy's twin cousins; Anthea, on the other hand, is characterised as witty, outspoken and 'guided by her feelings'.

argues the virtues of English antiquity and heritage, of high art and culture, of spirited debate, new ideas, and above all, of the importance of love, Wilfred is also an aesthete in the making. In many ways he is a duplicate of Guy Langton in his slight effeminacies, his 'eternal curate' demeanour (that which inspires the narrator to comment: 'If the god Hermes had taken advantage of a curate's wife, the result might have been something like Wilfred'), and his seeming lack of interest in girls. Where Guy is inclined to constraint and an occasional strain of puritanical prudishness, however, Wilfred as the progeny of Hermes is mercurial and overtly pleasure-loving: his attitude to life is 'founded on the firm conviction that the world was an orange or a pomegranate, full of scented colours and juicy pips for his delight' (*Picnic* 180). Impossibly blessed with 'grace and beauty', 'the romantic ardour of the poet', 'the gaiety of a fourteenth-century cavalier' and the logic of a judge, he anticipates some of Dominic's more picturesque traits. He also shares with Dominic a suggestion of the renegade, of otherness, in that he is guilty of what Aelred calls a 'misguided' passion for the poetry of Swinburne, the prose of Wilde and the paintings of Rossetti and Burne-Jones. Wilfred's cultivated and civilized enthusiasms mark him as the natural progenitor of two of Boyd's most persuasive, attractive and 'urbanised' counterfeit bachelors.

In many respects Aubrey Tunstall of *The Cardboard Crown* and Russell Lockwood of *Outbreak of Love* do fit neatly and conveniently the paradigm provided by Sedgwick. Each is marginal in the sense that he is not a principal protagonist; at the same time — and herein lies an irony — each is pivotal, through what one might call a lack of passionate commitment to the heterosexual romantic cause, in reinstating family solidarity. Although separated by twenty years, Aubrey and Russell as respective wooers of the Langton family members Alice and her daughter Diana are remarkably similar: both are urbane and cultivated, each takes Italy as the seat of civilization, each is 'feminised' by an apparent vocational connoisseurship in the arts. Each represents a temptation to the women involved to sever a long-standing marriage (Diana von Flugel even considers eloping with Russell), yet a shared quality of 'sexual anesthesia' works its blight on both women: for Alice, her courtship is sadly handicapped by an intuited emotional imbalance; for the more level-headed Diana her relationship with Russell is too 'sober' and 'convenient' to sweep her off her feet. In this context it is interesting that Aubrey Tunstall, as an earlier creation, seems more self-aware, or at least franker, about his reservations. His views on 'limitation and freedom in love and friendship', his objections to the categorical labelling of love in its many forms, his allotting of 'the proper physical expression for different kinds of affection', are recorded in Alice's diary (*Crown* 142). The narrator fills in the gaps:

...he wanted to be honest about it, and not to land himself in an intolerably false position. He was not physically attracted by women, and in those long talks he had with Alice...he emphasized the validity of all love up to its proper degree. He was both justifying his own inclinations, and trying to explain to her that if they were to live together there were definite limits in his affections... [their affinity of souls and minds] could not have been complete unless her own soul had been in the body, perhaps, of the youth in the footman's livery which was too big for him. (*Crown* 146-47)

Aubrey's scheme to persuade Alice to 'throw in her lot with him...to share his [Rome] apartment and restore his style of living' dies a natural death once she reveals the news of a reversal of her fortune.

Where Aubrey is at core unequivocal about his physical and emotional needs while prepared at the same time to make a marriage of convenience, the next generation's Russell Lockwood is more circumspect and ambiguous a figure. As portrayed by the narrator, Russell's cultural attributes are undistilled Boyd: psychologically, imaginatively and idealistically he is an habitue of 'a province of Rome', an aesthete and seeker after pleasure, delight and beauty, 'the highest' on offer — an over-refinement that jars with the Melbourne-based Arthur Langton who calls him a 'precious ass'.<sup>31</sup> Uncle Arthur's comment, however, merely hints at what the narrator more explicitly, if metaphorically, details as a deep malaise occasioned by emotional repression and as the imagery suggests, by sexual impotence:

His perfect manners were a gilded cage in which he kept the fluttering bird of his emotions...This feeling of emotion restrained...made him attractive to women. The trouble was that when he opened the door of the cage, the bird, confined for so long, was unable to spread its wings. (*Outbreak* 375)

The symbolism here is powerful: it helps to explain Russell Lockwood's inability to fulfill the conventional role of the dashing, disruptive and romantic hero; it also explains why Diana might have found any long-term association with him tepid if congenial. In the circumstances — disconcertingly — we can only assume that Russell's alternative plan to marry Miss Rockingham is similarly motivated by convenience and compatibility. Disconcerting, because the evidence is that Russell is more schemed against than scheming. Miss Rockingham with her 'foghorn' voice and face like a horse may be no match for Diana's beauty: but as a rich, cultured and snobbish spinster she is desperate to be married, being prepared to buy a husband 'as she would buy a fine horse' (*Outbreak* 356). The irony is that she is also a sensualist and seductress, a woman possessed of a beautiful figure, unusual grace and the ability to dance 'like an odalisque'. It is an irony made poignant by the fact that the marriage is liable to jeopardy unless Russell Lockwood's status as 'eligible' or 'counterfeit' bachelor is capable of undergoing a necessary and radical revision.

Among Boyd's 'bachelor' types is a small procession of clergymen who individually display some conformity in essence — a confused or feminised persona or a homosexually-inclined libido, say — if not in chapter and verse with the Sedgwick prescription. Take Father Grant's appearance (in *Love Gods*), for example, as it is conveyed by the young man Edward Browne — who is 'strangely drawn' to his image — in a tone close to voluptuous relish:

Father Grant reminded him of that portrait [of Sodoma in Siena]. He had the same full-lipped, refined, pleasure-loving mouth. The eyes, shaded by long lashes, were half sleepy, half smiling. Looking at them Edward felt that he knew every secret of the human heart, and that he found it evil, amusing, and lovable. His hair was dark

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<sup>31</sup>Arthur expands in a manner suggestive of authorial self-irony: 'He walks as if he were carrying his heart in an alabaster vase and is afraid of dropping it' (*Outbreak of Love* p361). And Diana's first impressions are of a 'rather precious bachelor with social ambitions' (p386).

and straight. The hand that he raised to sign himself was long and slender as a woman's. The light glistened on its polished nails...[His] voice was low, smooth, and musical...He spoke with colour and cadence, and it seemed with a dreamy regret, of the rites and mysteries of the Hellenic world.  
(*Love Gods* 112-13)

Apart from his seductive good looks, notable here is the introduction of the Catholic priest's unorthodox insistence on the virtues of paganism, an emphasis given sufficient of a subversive slant to reinforce the impression of him as exotic and 'other'. Something of barely suggested sexual ambiguity also hovers over the homilies on love offered by Mr Hodsall, *The Picnic's* vicar, at least so far as they are perceived by Wilfred:

'There's only one remedy for the difficulties and humiliations of human intercourse', said Mr Hodsall. 'What is that, sir?' Mr Hodsall hesitated a moment. 'Love', he said in a shy, sensitive voice. Wilfred did not reply. He did not know exactly what Mr Hodsall meant. As he was a clergyman he probably was speaking in a religious sense, but there was the awkward possibility that he might mean something else. (*Picnic* 116)

If Mr Hodsall, a married man with a 'bachelor' soul, is in some minor sense morally compromised by feelings of illicit love, the sincerity of Vicar Thurlow's 'spiritual seduction' of John Vazetti in *Scandal of Spring* is markedly more open to suggestions of compromise. Mr Thurlow is constructed as a flawed and very human man of God, a man intent on the conversion of souls yet disingenuous, or possibly merely self-deluded, in terms of his own inner desires. An aesthete who surrounds himself with beautiful material objects — Miss Bellairs chides him because he is 'not a man's parson'<sup>32</sup> — he professes to be 'interested only in human beings, preferably men and boys' (*Scandal* 24). Captivated by Vazetti's 'fine [and sensitive] Italian face' to the point of idealization, Thurlow is prey to 'a sudden, voracious appetite for souls, especially young ones', and marks Vazetti down for 'violent salvation' (and here, with the unmitigated depiction of Thurlow as some sort of religious vampire, one cannot help but suspect a deliberate spoof). His goal may be to 'turn lusty farm-hands into minor ascetics eager to slay their lower selves' (*Scandal* 44), but he is betrayed by his own eagerness to offer inducements, meals as 'godly snares' or in one memorable instance, sugared oranges and melons from the Mediterranean, aimed at Vazetti's consenting to serve at Mass. In his anxiety and haste to recruit Vazetti he is clumsy, and the narrator is motivated to reflect: 'There is in all seduction, whether physical or spiritual, the point where tenderness must be succeeded by demand. Success depends on the skill with which the transition is made' (*Scandal* 53). The attempt to bribe the boy with crystallized fruits is transparently importunate, and has a devastating effect on Vazetti:

John, in one of the French ducal chairs, on the floor beside him a five-pound box of enormous sugared fruits, suffered the most violent spiritual assault of his life hitherto. (*Scandal* 70)

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<sup>32</sup>She amplifies thus: 'If you were a man's parson the vicarage would be all creaking arm-chairs and pipe smoke, not polished walnut and priceless china'. (*Scandal of Spring* p74).

Even the vicar has the grace to acknowledge that '...their spiritual significance was as sticky and nauseating as their actuality. He knew the habits of the man who had sent them...' (*Scandal* 80). When the eighteen-year-old John Vazetti causes a scandal by 'eloping' with the fifteen-year-old Madge Harding it is Thurlow's turn to experience an 'awful spiritual disintegration. He felt as if an evil spirit had taken possession of him, and had already made him destroy the peace of his own household...' (*Scandal* 165). Nevertheless his reaction:

'The ungrateful young swine...I thought he was different...He has let me down — worse than I've ever been let down'. Into his mind had flashed a vivid picture of John and Madge, adventuring along those happy, normal paths which he had never known. His jealousy was like a physical pain.... (*Scandal* 159)

is that of a man coming to a gradual understanding that unless he can transmute the love in his heart for young Vazetti into something akin to divine love and forgiveness, he is as good as an outcast among his flock. His final decision to propose to Miss Bellairs is that of the isolate who wants to rejoin his kind: how he will fare in marriage, having previously stated a firm belief in his hatred of women (*Scandal* 165), is left open to conjecture.

Without doubt the most extraordinary in Boyd's repertoire of apparently confirmed bachelors, despite his history as a widower and father, is Colonel Rodgers. Rodgers is quite simply a grotesque, an outlandish caricature of a particular English type, the country-bred aristocrat and gentleman whose idea of civilization revolves around the boys' club and the noble art of killing: in effect he is the absolute antithesis of those stereotypes of cultivated refinement who elsewhere in Boyd's novels consolidate under the aegis of 'bachelorhood'. His bluff military exterior proclaims him as virilized, a 'man's man'; and judging by a carefully logged tally of corpses, both animal and human,<sup>33</sup> his instincts seem designed as promiscuously predatory, an impression reinforced to a large extent by the description of him as a dehumanised 'ant or some Asiatic rat' (*DYM* 104). Yet the analogy with insect/rodent life is also belittling, reducing the Colonel to a 'figure of fun' in line with a perception of him as ridiculously narrow, obsessive and emotionally volatile. When the narrator tells us that Rodgers is 'a connoisseur of boys in a way which nowadays would lay him open to the gravest, or perhaps it would be truer to say the most frivolous suspicions', the evocation of the Greek pedagogue/pederast tradition is unmistakable. And when, despite his preferment for 'the blue-eyed, the rosy and the fair' (*DYM* 109), he becomes infatuated with Dominic, he who is eighteen, tall, dark and 'indescribably beautiful' (*DYM* 138), the impression that Dominic represents for him a conquest, a trophy, a metaphoric scalp — albeit in the name of love — is also unavoidable. This because, although Rodgers is shown as experiencing all the inward emotions of a conventional and idyllic love affair or 'summer of happiness' — for example, he feels 'inordinate affection' and 'desire', his heart is 'as tender and blossoming as a schoolgirl's' (*DYM* 157), he becomes 'morose and irascible' (*DYM* 118) when crossed — his notion of social intercourse is singularly non-conformist and, in effect, highly suggestive. Metonymic of both love and war, it consists in an aggressively phallic, ritualised and possibly eroticised love-play — a knightly form of male bondage, perhaps — wherein 'the two of them wrapped themselves in

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<sup>33</sup>The walls of the colonel's dower-house at Waterpark are alarmingly decorated with 'the weapons of death' plus 'two shrivelled skulls' (*A Difficult Young Man* p112)..

stuffing and slashed at each other with broadswords or lunged with rapiers'. Presented in this way as a complex blend of male heroics and symbolic homosexual congress, the game both epitomises, and offers a tacit recognition of, the potential perilousness of the male-male sexual relationship. Colonel Rodgers himself, in contradistinction to his final diminishment as a pathetic 'ant in anguish' (DYM 140), is complicated by Satanic impulses: 'he had grappled [Dominic] too closely with hooks of steel to give him up' (DYM 118), and by an enthusiasm for the art of the bullfight:

'It needs the greatest skill to get [the matador's] sword into that thick muscle [at the back of the bull's neck] at exactly the right moment. That's the whole secret of the kill — that thick muscle'... (DYM 111)

which, in the context of the previously alluded-to sword-play as phallic action, throws a Freudian colouring over Dominic's characterisation of him as an 'apostle of splendour and death'. This phenomenon is further evidenced in Guy Langton's summation:

If he [Rodgers] had a dream of fulfilled passion it would have been that he and Dominic should stand face to face with loaded revolvers, and then sternly saluting, shoot each other through the heart...(DYM 136)

The consummation-in-death fantasy projected on to Rodgers has to it a Wildean extravagance already encountered in Dominic's battlefield nightmare as chronicled in *When Blackbirds Sing*. It plays on the notion of love and death as indivisible, yet its longing for extinguishment by mutual orgasm is grimly parodic, a violent reversal of the notion of sexual climax as a 'little death'. Apart from a 'master row', however, the actual parting of Dominic and the Colonel — over his pairing with Sylvia — is without histrionics, merely serving to round out the Greek analogy: '[There was no] enduring *rapprochement*, and the Eternal Triangle based on the Graeco-Roman model, faded out' (DYM 141).

The character of the Colonel may lend itself easily to satire, making him the butt of narratorial comments such as the following:

Colonel Rodgers spoke with a gruff note of command, which contained, however, like the faint motif of a rhinemaiden behind a blast of Wagnerian chords, the moral weakness of his affection (DYM 135)

but he also inspires sympathy and understanding. An older and more discerning Guy Langton, revisiting the Colonel some years later, is 'moved by compassion' to state:

...I realized that the most valuable thing he had left was the memory of this attachment, which, in spite of its absurdities, *was the truest and deepest of his life*, to Dominic, the son whom he had never had.  
(DYM 175, my italics)

The observation comes close to the end of *A Difficult Young Man*, first published in 1955. It was not until 3rd July, 1957, according to his diary entry, that Martin Boyd met the sixteen-year-old Luciano Trombini on the beach at Formia. It was an instant and evidently intense relationship which occupied the best part of an 'enchanted' five weeks' holiday and which was to continue on a regular

basis for the next five years. The father-son (and, tacitly, the instructor-pupil)<sup>34</sup> aspect to their mutual attraction is highlighted in the diary notes for 23rd July, a time when Boyd was ill and Luciano was in attendance: 'Luciano comes, Io lo baciai and he said I was Come mio padre'. The extent to which Boyd was smitten with the dark and angelic-looking youth (or so he appears in the photograph taped into the back cover of the 1955-60 *Diaries*) is revealed in his immediate post-Formia entries: '10 Aug. Miss my dearest Luciano; 11 Aug. But I want my Luciano; 13 Aug. Wrote two letters to Luciano'; and there is ample evidence thereafter that Luc became the vital centre of his Roman life. Later, in March 1966, after Luc is married and a father, Boyd was to write: 'Am overcome with memories of happy days with Luc — *the truest friendship of my life*' (my italics). The coincidence of sentiment as expressed here and as attributed to Rodgers is truly uncanny: is this simply a case of Life catching up with Art, one is prompted to ask? Given the conflicting time frames, logic dictates that the temptation to speculate that Boyd was still writing *A Difficult Young Man* when he met Luciano, that he may have recognised his emotional commitment immediately, even that he may have drawn Colonel Rodgers as a freakishly disguised and mocking self-portrait (Luciano does, after all, introduce him to some 'savage games'), founders at a practical level. Accepting the futility, therefore, of attempting an actual connection between Boyd's liaison and that of Rodgers and Dominic, the only alternative is to marvel at the odd resemblances between the two situations and at Boyd's talent for prescience and self-knowledge; while at the same time noting that beneath Rodgers' heightened tragi-comic peculiarities, his bluster and his girlish sulks, is an essentially homosocial/ homosexual man caught up in a thinly disguised *erastes/eromenos* scenario comparable to the almost daily, but for the most part unspecified, 'giochi' played by Boyd with the young Luciano.<sup>35</sup>

It is easy to assume that Dominic's role in the war games routine is purely that of the high-spirited young blood who welcomes the opportunity to release his feelings and his energy in letting off guns or slashing with sabres (*DYM* 157). Yet there is genuine affection on Dominic's part for his militaristic mentor, a sentiment revived briefly some years later when, on his return to Waterpark, Colonel Rodgers is evoked as a disturbing memory: 'He felt that he had missed something, had taken the wrong turning' (*WBS* 22). A sense of real involvement, and of his receptive (if not overall entirely passive) role as token *eromenos* in the relationship is captured, it is suggested, in an impulsive outburst following a broadsword bout which finds him muttering 'I'd like to be wounded'. From all perspectives it is a bizarre statement. His brother Guy as narrator offers several explanations: first, that 'he was already mad, if he ever was'; second, that he was not necessarily masochistic, but 'wanted to wear the outward signs of his courage'; third, 'it was a recognition that the violence of his nature caused suffering and death to others, and that he would rather bear it himself' (Guy's addendum: 'To this extent only was he suicidal or sacrificial' seems an oblique allusion both to Dominic's religious fanaticism and to his occasional portrayal as a suffering Christ figure). However, given the subliminally Freudian context of the (s)word play, given the

<sup>34</sup>Louis Lodge reports (in conversation, 11/5/98) that, interviewed by Desmond O'Grady years later in Milan, Trombini said of Boyd that he was a 'good teacher', thus echoing the opinion of Boyd's ex-chorister friends John Alldis and Julian Smith that he was a 'wonderful teacher' and 'civilizing influence' (Niall, *Martin Boyd: A Life*, p134).

<sup>35</sup>Similarities of note are a comparable age disparity between the parties, the 'poisonous' thoughts of Boyd when Luc causes him to suffer (*Diary* 5/8/61), and the fact that both older men lose out to young women.

sexual connotations of the already-existing scar on Dominic's cheek — described as 'add[ing] to his good looks by drawing attention to the sensuousness of his mouth' (*DYM* 113), given Dominic's already noted apparent capacity for libidinal fluctuation and metamorphosis, and finally, bearing in mind his sporadic saint-like Christian fervour, it would seem more relevant to apply interpretive formulae whose bias is towards the psycho-sexual and the religio-erotic. To cite an example, Dominic's wish to be wounded — and here we should take into account his extant wound/mouth juxtaposition and his subordinate status in the masculine duo — may be translated as the desire for a metaphoric capitulation to the feminine (and therefore to powerlessness and vulnerability) as defined by woman's genital wound, at once the 'slash' or 'gash' of slang terminology and the genital flower Huysmans refers to as a 'hideous flesh-wound' (a more contemporary gloss, and one very possibly not dreamt of by Boyd, might posit here a submerged yearning for Kristevan 'jouissance [or sexual pleasure] beyond the phallus').<sup>36</sup> However, the hermeneutics become complicated once the conjectured religious element is factored in, meaning Dominic's yen for Christian martyrdom as inferred by the narrator.

Guy may not be strictly correct here: a more persuasive reading might be that Dominic wishes not so much to give himself up in ritual sacrifice (and so emulate the bull's fate as depicted by the Colonel) as to be pierced in the manner of St Sebastian, a third century martyr shot through by arrows for his beliefs but whose wounds were not mortal. The image of Sebastian, soulful, beautiful and semi-nude, is a familiar one, a favourite of the painters and sculptors of the Italian Renaissance.<sup>37</sup> The ultimate in homoerotic iconicism, he is perceived by Paglia as a Christian Adonis pierced by the phallic arrows or desiring 'glances of the aggressive western eye' (*Personae* 112). According to her lights Sebastian belongs to a form of cultic exhibitionism in which sex and sadomasochism are joined (*Personae* 33), a notion which not only brings us full circle to Dominic and his eroto-masochistic fantasy of received violence or penetration, but which, conceivably, enables a perception of him as desiring the gratification of a St Sebastian 'who has swallowed his tormentors' shafts' (*Personae* 165). Dominic's eagerness for victimisation at the hands of his *erastes* certainly suggests an author well versed in concepts such as that defined by Paglia as 'the torment of eroticism' (*Personae* 33). Other interpretations of the duelling itself might stress, not so much the erotic implications, but what Chesler sees as the normal cruelty of fathers towards sons,<sup>38</sup> or alternatively, 'the primal, brutal way in which most men act out brotherhood'.<sup>39</sup> Regardless of how one views this episode, and despite its perfunctory nature, its cumulative power of allusion and

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<sup>36</sup>Lyn Hatherly Wilson, *Sappho's Sweetbitter Songs*, p45.

<sup>37</sup>Sebastian with his 'vague hints of eroticism' also provided for the medieval mind aesthetic contemplation of bodily existence, according to Dutton, *The Perfectible Body*, p60.

<sup>38</sup>Phyllis Chesler, *About Men*, p155.

<sup>39</sup>Chesler, *About Men*, p118. She also quotes from Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion*: "'When you go to women", says Nietzsche, "take your whip with you". Sensible despots have never confined that precaution to women: they have taken their whips with them when they have dealt with men, and been slavishly idealized by the men over whom they have flourished the whip much more than by women' (p119).

enigma is exemplary of how, with the utmost economy, Boyd is able to build complexity and suggestibility through an unobtrusive layering of ideas.<sup>40</sup>

It is curious that in his creation of the homosexual single bachelor Paul Brayford in the critically-acclaimed *Lucinda Brayford* (1946), a novel preceding by some years the publication of the first book of the Langton series, Boyd makes no attempt at dramatization, parody, subterfuge or camouflage. For example, Paul is not prone to affectation like the rather 'precious' Russell Lockwood; nor to the self-interested depredations of the worldly but enervated Aubrey Tunstall; nor does he feel any extravagant need to defend his masculinity — in the interests of avoiding imputations of effeminacy — in the manner of the caricatured Colonel Rodgers. He may be, like Rodgers, an object of curiosity and speculation — there is, for example, 'some peculiar gossip about his morals' (*Brayford* 444) — and each may automatically choose a much younger man as the focus of his affections, but broadly speaking, within the milieu of a shared English aristocratic tradition, both are the beneficiaries of a class-conferred tolerance for sexual deviance or eccentricity:

[As an Australian middle-class newcomer] Lucinda did not realise that the very peculiarity of Paul's behaviour put it beyond the bounds of conventional disapproval, nor that his ability to dramatise himself enabled him to carry off situations which would fill the more realistic with dismay, nor that there are some people to whom eccentricity is allowed, and who have earned this privilege through a childhood of loneliness and humiliation. (*Brayford* 308)<sup>41</sup>

Correspondences between the two end at this point, however, and so to a great extent does comparison with Sedgwick's 'single gentleman' model. Paul Brayford is neither marginalised nor seriously parodied; any 'feminization' that attaches to him is due to his dedication to culture, the arts, and pleasurable living; and his association with St Saturnin in the south of France — whither he absconds with his sister-in-law's footman Harry — with 'its climate, its wine, its human freedom, its cookery, its links with the golden age and its significant name' (*Brayford* 307), hints at

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<sup>40</sup>It has to be acknowledged that in this instance the construction of Dominic as multi-faceted, chimerical as much in his personality as he is in his sexuality, is an invaluable adjunct to heuristic endeavour. Swathed though he is in romantic glamour, Dominic is enmeshed as well in an intricacy of association. Saint (he is said to resemble the saintly youth Alyosha - *A Difficult Young Man* p155), sinner, heroic cavalier, pacifist, artist and madman, his noble Spanish ancestry aligns him irrevocably with the founder of the Dominican Friars, born in twelfth-century Spain of noble parentage (see Hall's *Dictionary of Subjects and Symbols in Art*). The link with his nominal forebear makes sense of Dominic's occasional portrayal as a latterday St Francis, protective of life in all its forms, since, according to the *Dictionary*, in the *Golden Legend* SS Dominic and Francis together represent Christ's fighters on earth for the virtues of Obedience, Poverty and Chastity. In a dream of the pope Innocent III, according to the *Golden Legend*, Dominic and Francis of Assisi are both individually attributed with holding up with his hands the toppling Lateran church. Also of possible (self-purging?) pertinence may be a further narrative scene from the *Golden Legend*: Dominic's vision of Christ with three arrows or spears he is about to unloose against the world 'to destroy the sins of Pride, Avarice and Lust'. Of incidental interest too is that St Dominic's name is linked with that of Simon de Montfort, leader of papal forces against the heretic Albigensians of Southern France: Simon Montfort, of course, is a principal character in Boyd's *The Montforts*. (From James Hall, *Dictionary of Subjects and Symbols in Art*, London: John Murray, 1985).

<sup>41</sup>The interpolation of the last clause adds an unexpected and unguessed-at dimension to Paul's life history, suggesting that the remark may have more relevance to the author's experience than to Paul Brayford's.

bacchinalian revelry and participation in the pleasures of the flesh beyond the chaste perimeters of platonism. Paul is the most thoroughly emancipated and normative of Boyd's homosexual figures, being neither closeted (in the sense of being 'in the closet' or harbouring a homosexual secret) nor blatantly self-advertising. Lucinda perceives him as anxious 'to achieve living human relationships' (*Brayford* 328), and perhaps his sister-in-law Marian is acknowledging his underlying humanity (meaning that she does not see him as any sort of freak) when she treats his having 'filched away and debauched' her servants as more of an inconvenience than a scandal. Paul's 'moment in the sun' at St Saturnin where the barriers of class and sexual differentiation are made obsolete might well be the novel's most potent insistence on the homosocial/homosexual as part of the natural order:

Lucinda felt...that the kind of life still existed where all things were in proportion and where true human relationships were allowed their natural expression...[a sensation] not diminished by the fact that she had spent the morning bathing in the company of one of the Crittenden footmen, whose manner was neither familiar nor subservient, but only showed that friendly respect which every man and woman had the right to demand. (*Brayford* 304)

Paul Brayford is the moral conscience of *Lucinda Brayford*, a renegade intellect and forward thinker who, while he may savour the values of the past, is sanguine that out of his country's social, political and cultural malaise will spring new and revolutionary modes of thought. His courageous intellectual verve runs parallel with, and may be metaphoric of, his sexual identity and awareness of the need for revised public attitudes toward sexual non-conformity. The strong portrayal of Paul's nay-saying, his capacity for visionary dissent, suggests the impetus — always allowing that the author makes his personality felt through at least two other of the novel's characters — for Boyd's moment of uncharacteristic extravagance, his Flaubertian declaration of '*Lucinda Brayford*, c'est moi'.<sup>42</sup>

It is ironic that, in making the claim that intellectual luxury is the only class privilege he has left (*Brayford* 441), while at the same time enjoying immunity from outright censure for his unorthodox domestic arrangements, Paul gives the impression that he is unaware of his position of unspoken protection: it is something he appears to take entirely for granted.<sup>43</sup> The novel is not reticent, however, about singling him out as a man apart. An observation by Lucinda, for instance:

She had a strong sense of his separateness, almost as if he belonged to another race. From time to time Paul revealed himself as a living expression of antiquity, as if in him dry bones really had been made alive...His profile had a bleak look of ancient suffering...(Brayford 440-41)

while placing him firmly in the Greek tradition, also functions as a compassionate reminder that in Paul we see a human being with a cross to bear. Again, we find Paul himself, in a rare piece of introspection, hinting at depths of Freudian repression too painful to articulate:

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<sup>42</sup>In his *Meanjin* article 'Dubious Cartography', p10.

<sup>43</sup>Paul in fact sees his traits as definitively aristocratic: 'Finding himself different from his associates, he came to believe that all his own characteristics were the marks of aristocracy, even his strong powers of invective, his taste for dishes cooked with wine and garlic, and his love of boys' (*Lucinda Brayford*, p497).

Every man, however fair and candid he may think himself, has a closed corner in his mind where he will not allow the light. If a ray penetrates this dark place his agony is extreme and he cries out in fury and attacks the man who has directed the light. Because of these dark corners all the fine conceptions we build up must ultimately fall. (*Brayford* 443)

One might argue that the allusion here to wilful psychic impenetrability is only provisionally related to the homosexual condition and its compulsive evasions, and that may indeed be true. Nevertheless, examined in context, that is, coming as the conclusion to a discourse on class distinctions, Paul's insight or 'confession' is curiously irrelevant, a non-sequitur which translates as an irrational and spontaneous interpolation tending to reflect the authorial viewpoint quite as much as it does that of his character. It is only subsequently that we are given the opportunity to piece the remark together with Paul's personal situation. As he explains to Lucinda, compared to an inherited cultural imperative requiring him to belong to 'some group, some religious or political system' which only manages to induce in him a sense of being 'nailed to the wall' (*Brayford* 443-44), his villa in Provence offers him freedom, autonomy, a much greater 'sense of life'. Provence is undoubtedly Paul's Arcadia, the nearest realisable equivalent to 'the golden annals of Greece' and their 'archetype of...generous and loyal affections' (*Brayford* 387). Here it is that he can recover his inner life, his sense of spiritual, emotional and sensual well-being; here too he may be said to indulge, if only temporarily, the bachelor's 'flight from commitment'<sup>44</sup> to the social ties demanded by families. Whatever the secrets of the dark recesses of his mind, Paul is ruthlessly candid in his attitude to marriage: in a no doubt deliberate echo of Oscar Wilde, he tells Harry's son Pierre

'Le mariage n'est qu'un désastre pour un jeune homme...C'est la chose la plus choquante, la plus épouvantable qui peut lui venir. Après le mariage il n'est guère un homme libre et fier, mais un esclave. Tu vois que nous sommes heureux sans les femmes'. (*Brayford* 448-49)

Paul's indictment supports Lucinda's intuitive musings as she watches him and Pierre 'splashing and fooling in the sea' at St Saturnin: 'It seemed to her that it was her fate to sit apart, watching men who were less interested in her than in themselves and their own preoccupations' (*Brayford* 446).

The consistency with which Boyd incorporates into his fiction the 'odd man out' as a sexually problematical and frequently feminized aesthete-bachelor, coupled with copious autobiographical evidence of his own aesthetic leanings and same-sex preference (both in friendship and 'romantic' attachments), provides the basis for the logical next step in this analysis: the investigation of the incidence of like-minded, male-to-male attraction as it appears in his novels. To this end, and in anticipation of discovering some sort of developmental pattern, a tracing in sequence would seem to be in order. Starting therefore with *The Love Gods* (1925) — dismissed by Boyd in 1939 as 'a mixture of ninetyish epigrams...eroticism [and] muddled religious earnestness' (*Flame* 200) — we find a part satirical, part serious novel devoted to its author's youthful and most pressing concerns: to issues of religion, love, human fulfilment, and the male psyche. The main protagonists are Edward Browne, a Boyd impersonator insofar as he is given to an 'aesthetic and

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<sup>44</sup>The phrase is that of Barbara Ehrenreich, cited by Bettina Arndt in a review of Kathleen Gerson's *No Man's Land* (*Weekend Australian*, 14-15 May, 1994).

receptive mind' and a somewhat 'schoolgirlish' sentimental emotionalism, and his younger, undergraduate cousin Christopher Beaton. Both are susceptible to religious fervour, Edward with increasing scepticism and Christopher, who confesses to being 'in love with' Christ (*Gods* 176), with a seemingly fanatical commitment. When it comes to 'the grosser temptations of the flesh' (*Gods* 98), both display the usual heterosexual impulses, this despite Christopher's conviction that he has 'sinned' by kissing another cousin, Morag Beaton. At the same time the novel refuses to subscribe to any clear-cut or exclusivist masculine aesthetic: by normative standards, in fact, the masculinity of both young men appears curiously compromised. Edward is shown as longing, for instance, to be 'as virile and natural' (*Gods* 107) as his brother Montacute, who is freckled, athletic and genial; he is struck, however, on re-encountering his cousin after some years, by Christopher's seductive good looks. Christopher is the archetypal ephebe, lovely and desirable: a 'youth of middle height, with...soft yellow hair, nondescript eyes, a wide laughing mouth, and skin like a girl's', his angelic aspect enhanced by 'a shaft of gold, a nimbus round his yellow head' (*Gods* 19-20). Edward is to categorise Christopher's appeal as 'slightly effeminate' and ask whether he is 'a little unwholesome' (*Gods* 107): even so, he finds that 'among church people his religious enthusiasm waned, whereas when he was alone with Christopher it was at its highest'. In a novel which begins with the jilting of Edward by his socialite fiancée Priscilla and ends with his proposal to Morag — towards whom he has hitherto felt only a 'brotherly' regard — the one constant in terms of relationships is that of Edward and Christopher. Their establishment of a close camaraderie occurs during a summer idyll spent camping, swimming, sunbathing and theologising on the Sussex coast, the neo-Paganist implications of which are underlined by Edward's quoting from a Rupert Brooke poem. When later at an East End Mission retreat Edward feels excluded and irritated by Christopher's excessive piety:

Edward caught sight of Christopher's face, lifted with an expression of soft, smug holiness. All natural beauty and graciousness seemed to have left him. He appeared sour and ugly. Edward had sometimes seen the same expression in disagreeable elderly spinsters...(*Gods* 300)

he provokes a showdown and reconciliation not unworthy of a romantic affair. By Edward's reckoning Christopher has broken the sacrament of male bonding, the code of honourable companionship amongst men. His barbed insults to the effect that he would 'disgrace a decent girls' school' and that he is behaving like 'a bloody plaster Saint' (*Gods* 302-3), produce an unprecedented reaction:

'Will you forgive me? Will you forgive me?' Christopher half shouted and flung out his arms...Edward held out his hand. Christopher took it, and with the confiding movement of a child, put his head on his shoulder. Edward surprised, seeing him so close, his smooth skin and soft yellow hair, unexpectedly kissed him. (*Gods* 303)

At the end of the novel Edward might tell Morag that Priscilla and Christopher were 'just lustful little cupids' (*Gods* 319), that she is 'the real thing', but he is dissembling, since in both relationships his has been the more ardent suit. As part of another lovers' discourse this small dishonesty would seem unremarkable. Here, however, it adds piquancy to the novel's final twist, one into which may be read resonances of Sedgwick's triangulation theory: the fact that Edward's union with Morag — who has also been smitten by Christopher — will also seal and make permanent his bond with Christopher.

The attraction of cousins is explored at greater length and complexity in *The Montforts* (1928, revised 1963), the first of Boyd's poorly disguised family chronicles. Only the first edition of this novel features a homosocial attachment of any intensity, and that is a schoolboy crush of Raoul Blair's for a fellow student called Cassian Crane, a boy whose physical beauty calls forth 'a devotion hopeless and unrequited, but which was, for the rest of his school days, the ruling passion of Raoul's life'.\* The episode is suppressed in the revised edition, although interestingly, the original sexual ambiguity of Richard Montfort is made marginally more equivocal and vacillating from a heterosexual viewpoint. What *is* of interest from the perspective of this study is the novel's emasculation of its two most prominent heterosexual lovers, Richard in one generation and Raoul in the next. Both are shown to be afflicted by a disempowering sexual inertia, the kind of male heterosexual impotence and/or lack of desire Henry James gestured at, for example, in his character Ralph Touchett — even, possibly, in Gilbert Osmond — in *The Portrait of A Lady*: attributes which, while they seem relevant to the sexual anxieties of both authors, are made more explicit in Boyd's *The Montforts*.

Of Boyd's two constrained suitors, Richard is the more sexually disabled, a young man so enslaved to protocol and self-image that he has all the affectations of the prig and the snob and only a qualified and limited engagement with the physical world. His priorities are 'to do the decent thing, to have no eccentricities, to be a gentleman; [and] his love for Aïda' (*Montforts* 153), in that order. The attachment to Aïda de Moya, his 'twin' and cousin, is vaguely compromised, however, by its seeming motivation in nostalgia and ego-gratification:

They looked at each other across the ruin. Between them played the ghosts of themselves, a boy and a girl of fourteen...Self-love was added to and inflamed their love for each other. Each had a sudden passionate longing for his own childhood, a childhood absorbed, hopeful, pitiful. And then the passionate longing was transferred to the other who had shared that childhood. (*Montforts* 162).

In both versions of the novel Richard is given the opportunity to consummate his love: 'Richard, for once, had transcended his code of gentility' (*Montforts* 118). Thereafter, separated from Aïda, his letters are perceived as cold and elegant works of art lacking emotion and warmth: 'She thought that they merely expressed Richard's delight in his own facility which, to a certain extent, they did' (*Montforts* 138). The disappointed Aïda has to marry a rather colourless English academic before Richard is brought to the realisation that 'through sheer inactivity he had lost her' (*Montforts* 143). His attitude is probably best summed up in the author's phrase 'negative fidelity', to which may be attributed either insufficient passion, a failure of will and imagination, a misguided belief that perfection comes through restraint, or simply a problematic heterosexual drive. Another possibility is that his emotions are so deeply repressed as to render him dysfunctional. Only in Aïda's presence does he regain some semblance of the lover: '[she] gave him the sense of being completely a man, alive, eager, and purposeful. When she was absent he became an automaton...waiting for something which would never eventuate' (*Montforts* 153). Yet his resolve to act honourably, to refer their wish to be together to the jurisdiction of her husband Matthew Druce, succeeds only in emphasising his weakness and defeatism. After this abysmal scene Aïda accuses Richard of 'equivocal, indecisive,

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\**The Montforts* (Martin Mills), London: Constable, 1928, p243.

apologetic love-making' (*Montforts* 161). The news of her death from childbirth complications finds him reacting coolly but possessively: 'His grief was dry and bleak, yet underneath it was a faint consoling feeling that now Aïda was all his'. It also activates and satisfies what is probably his strongest desire, to make of life a perfect work of art: '...he was glad that she had called the child Madeleine.<sup>45</sup> His literary sense and the Montfort in him was pleased at that. It seemed rather a triumphant piece of jesting on the guillotine' (*Montforts* 169).

Raoul Blair's rite of passage to fully realised heterosexual manhood in Book III of *The Montforts* reads like a corrective, although a slowly-developing one, to his uncle Richard's characterisation as 'ineffectual', 'empty' and ultimately sexually atrophied. Raoul is, again, Boyd's stock-in-trade aesthete, variously described as 'delicate-minded', a 'prig' and an 'ineffectual dilettante'. His tastes run to both 'the decadent poseurs' and their 'ribald censors'; he thrills to Swinburne, collects Beardsleys, composes poems in a 'Brookeish' vein and apes Shaw's 'inversion of customary beliefs' by writing plays against marriage and wearing clothes. His evolution from the young idealist and democratic socialist who is castigated by his uncle Arthur — himself inclined to embroideries and 'faint effeminacies' in his youth — for his 'absurdities', 'aesthetic socks', and 'taste for ridiculous, bad-meat pictures' (*Montforts* 190) to a more robust notion of manhood is instigated by the hardening effect of war: as he tells Arthur, 'I have been brought into contact with slaughter and seduction, which, after all, are the two supreme expressions of virility' (*Montforts* 206). Raoul's fundamentally conflicted nature is complicated, in fact, by his wrestling with issues of power and manliness. Even his sexual orientation is open to doubt after revelations of a 'deep love' for his schoolfellow Crane and his nostalgia for the comradeship of war, friends whose memory he honours as 'the only fine true men he had known' (*Montforts* 214). At length, however, influenced by Broom's advocacy of 'perfected animalism' and told by Madeleine — herself an example of physical perfection and a 'primitive without morals' (*Montforts* 239) — that he needs his repressions liberated, he allows himself to sink into her 'not very chaste embrace' (*Montforts* 248). The remarkable thing here is that Raoul's deflowering seems less an outcome of his own volition than a result of the combined agency of dubious forces. A male/female role reversal, perhaps, where he is seen to be acted upon rather than acting.

The inhibitions articulated here that Raoul is called upon to break down in order to experience heterosexual love are superficially concordant with Boyd's own chivalric code towards women, a code which by a process of idolisation and distancing ends by alienating, with the notable exception of prostitutes, the other half of the human race. As Raoul expresses it:

All the dry chivalry of his upbringing in a sisterless family, his reverence for women of his own class as something sacred or virginal, was raised, an invisible barrier, between himself and the enticing form of Madeleine. He remembered the Maluka's

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<sup>45</sup>Madeleine was the name of Richard's great-grandmother, a legendary family figure said to have seduced Simon de Montfort, a Protestant clergyman, married him when she was six months pregnant, and to have eventually eloped with a cavalry officer. Boyd attributes some of her descendants' foibles to her errant and high-spirited ways; but he also celebrates them when he has Arthur Montfort reflect at the end of *The Montforts*: 'Was it one's business too scrupulously to consider the disabilities which might afflict one's children? A great deal of good had resulted, a great many fine people...from the fact that Madeleine du Rémy des Baux had been careless of her virtue...' (p255).

trying to strengthen that reverence, saying, in one of those discreet addresses on purity which preceded confirmation, that women were practically free from the desires which trouble men...this inhibition had beset him all his life, dislocating any natural approach to any girl with whom he might have the least intellectual sympathy. It had driven him occasionally to the arms of prostitutes...Prostitutes he knew must be gifted with an animal nature. With them he did not feel that he was infringing the code of chivalry. (*Montforts* 248)

Having countered the threat of a sexually cauterized existence or 'sterilizing blight' as he himself sees it, having 'lost for ever his regard for all "nice" women of his class' and decided that 'a state of virginity was a state of incompleteness [and] negation' (*Montforts* 248-49), Raoul is seen to liberalise his rather muddled, misogynist and sexist views on the souls of women:

He was obliged to reconstruct his whole conception of women, of 'upper middle-class' women. This warm intimate Madeleine beside him had shattered the ideals of his youth. Had women anything of the sort of soul with which he had credited them? Had they...any subtle essence which had existence apart from their bodies, anything which justified that absurd picture called 'Reunion'...which showed a close embrace between two winged semi-nude figures in mid-air....

coming eventually to decide that 'every material object had some degree of soul until one came to where it was most significant, most lambent, in the face and form of one's lover' (*Montforts* 249). One is moved to wonder whether the appallingly patronising, patriarchal prejudice against women's sexual desire as voiced by the Maluka and absorbed by Raoul, an attitude which was also a factor of Martin Boyd's conditioning in the mores of Victorian/Edwardian class and gender, could have found an extension in the denial of women's souls in Boyd's own thinking.

In *Dearest Idol* (1929), Boyd's next novel, Maisie Heath is granted a soul but Tony Dawson gives it short shrift along with a more general tendency to reduce her to ridicule. She is the means, or the 'instrument' we are told, of Tony Dawson's physical self-expression: 'He did not pay much attention to her soul. Toward the end of the week Tony...felt that he had dispelled the mystery of woman...He cherished her as he would have cherished any other valuable possession, a pedigree dog, or a motor-car' (*Idol* 134-5).<sup>46</sup> But then Tony's need for the 'creature comfort' of Maisie is secondary, and incidental to, the novel's predominant focus on narcissism, egoism and homosexual possibility. Tony is a monster of vanity and self-love; he also has an infantile fixation on adulation and power. Adulation, a form of power in itself, he gets from his aunt Matilda,<sup>47</sup> from Maisie and

<sup>46</sup>This is not an isolated instance of Tony's misogyny. Elsewhere he reflects on marriage thus: 'No man could live only in the society of women...Had he sold himself into slavery?'; and again, in an echo of Rupert Brooke, he classifies war as 'a glorious adventure, a superb rigger match, away from all the sick littleness of women's quarrels and attentions' (*Dearest Idol*, pp161 & 206 respectively).

<sup>47</sup>Matilda as worshipping and possessive is an extravagant creation: for her Tony is a 'besetting sin' whom she values 'more than her own soul' (*Dearest Idol* p263). She endows him with remarkable qualities, 'so that he might fill [her heart's] yearning recesses' (p265). When we are told that Tony as her idol has become confused with her deity, that 'The two objects of love became united in one, changeless, eternal, adequate' (p266) there is a possibility that Boyd is alluding to William Blake's painting entitled *The Soul Reunited with God* (or *The End of the Song of Jerusalem*), an extraordinary, and erotic, depiction of man's reunion with God the father. This image, according to Chesler, is 'the male notion of transcendence, of spirituality, of redemption, and reunion. There is no woman anywhere' (*About Men*, p22).

from Boris Malakoff; and he relishes the omnipotent power implicit in the obsequiousness of his wartime junior officers. Maisie having been disqualified from any serious consideration as an object of sustained passion or desire — 'the loyalties and devotions of [the male] friendship were between her and any fulfillment of love' (*Idol* 203) — *Dearest Idol* concentrates instead on the relationship between Tony and Boris, one which, in a perverse sense, still manages to underwrite the notion of the attraction of opposites:<sup>48</sup> Tony is a blue-eyed, rosy-cheeked English 'angel' (albeit 'sulky' and 'fastidious'), whereas 'in the cheeks of this young Russian bloomed the warm roses of some wilder, less limited country, in his clear dark eyes burned the deep passion of a more primitive people' (*Idol* 52). Their awakening to friendship is given the romantic treatment normally accorded the heterosexual tryst; in this scene where the two swim together, the suggestion is, given the Freudian implications, of an erotically charged baptism of love:

He and Boris were alone, absolutely together, in that dark mysterious world, enfolded by the shadows of the river, and the unearthly beauty of the trees beyond. He felt a stab of delight that was almost pain. He could have prolonged that moment for ever.... (*Idol* 70)<sup>49</sup>

and indeed, a little later we are told that 'it had been tacitly admitted between them that they loved each other' (*Idol* 104). Nor is it a relationship devoid of sensuality: according to Tony 'In their youth there had been just sufficient physical attraction between them to give stimulus to their friendship' (*Idol* 270). Later still when Boris makes love to Maisie, who is by then married to Tony, he offers by way of justification the rather convoluted explanation that in loving them both he is attempting a closer tie with Tony: 'The sort of friendship we had', he tells Tony, 'so often ends at about twenty I could not bear for ours to end. I wanted something real and lasting to come out of it' (*Idol* 272).<sup>50</sup>

The novel's conclusion is pure melodrama: Boris seeks the atonement of war in order to be worthy of his friend and is killed for his efforts; Tony, having convinced himself that 'the ruling passion of his life had been defiled and destroyed' by Boris's betrayal, comes to the realisation that Boris has sacrificed his life 'to restore the perfection of their friendship' (*Idol* 280). With that his self-esteem is restored, and in the light of the knowledge that Boris has loved her, he looks at Maisie with a new respect — and so begins 'some glimmering of real love for her' (*Idol* 280). Here we have a classic example of the triangulation paradigm, a case where the love-bond between two men is secured and strengthened through the agency of a third and female party (and where, incidentally, the woman's share in the love-bargain is necessarily second-hand and inferior). Overall, one gets the impression that the overstrained and vaguely farcical elements of *Dearest Idol* are a

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<sup>48</sup>The attraction of 'difference' — whether of class, age, race and so on — within the same-sex code is legion, a phenomenon illustrated by a number of examples within Boyd's writings, by his association with the young Italian Luciano Trombini, and by a contribution from Proust: 'The homosexual is not a man who loves other homosexuals, but a man who, when he sees an African hunter, would like to make friends with him'. (Cited by J. E. Rivers, *Proust and the Art of Love: The Aesthetics of Sexuality in the Life, Time and Art of Marcel Proust*, p191).

<sup>49</sup>Here Boyd could be evoking Baudelaire, who said of Wagner that he expressed 'the great passions of man' that allowed one 'to be penetrated and overcome, a joy almost sensual, like the feeling...of floating on the sea!'. Baudelaire is cited by Sprawson, 'Plains of Icarus' p70.

<sup>50</sup>In confessing to Maisie his love for both of them, Boris has the insensitivity to add: '[Yet] on that night...still I thought only of myself and Tony — so little of you' (*Dearest Idol* p272).

smokescreen, a disguise to distract attention from more serious underlying concerns to do with the besetting impediments to any real or lasting homosexual resolution.

The title of Boyd's following novel, *Scandal of Spring* (1934), refers to the Romeo and Juliet-like elopement of two teenagers, culminating in John Vazetti's trial and imprisonment: but further than that any comparison with the passion, commitment and vitality of Shakespeare's hot-headed young lovers has to be found wanting. As told through Vazetti's eyes, his 'romance' with the fifteen-year-old Madge Harding has much of the impetuosity of youth; but its believability is undercut by a lack-lustre enthusiasm, at times an attitudinal indifference, its authority moreover prone to sabotage by competing affiliations. In one sense Madge is a facilitating component in John's life: she is at first a compensation for the absence of his friend Dick Harding (Madge's cousin) whom he 'misses like hell' (*Scandal* 14); and she, who is 'a delicate Dresden china edition of Dick' (*Scandal* 6), is partly instrumental in his initiation into a more universal aesthetic discovery. Apart from that, her effect on him can be surprisingly ephemeral and transient: parted from her he remembers her face vividly once — 'but after that he could not remember it at all' (*Scandal* 22); and she runs a poor second to his infatuation with church ritual:

He put the green brocade chasuble on a coat-hanger...and covered it with a blue linen dust-cloth. He felt as if he were in love. He was in love of course, with Madge, but now he had all these tender sensations, coming from, or augmented by, a different source...he felt a light, tender, and distant love for her, as if he would like to touch her cheek...but nothing more. He was deeply affected by the ritual in which he had just taken part. (*Scandal* 91-92).

The success of Vicar Thurlow's spiritual seduction leaves John uneasy about Madge, leading him to ponder 'the difficulty of reconciling sacred and profane love' (*Scandal* 93). But it also brings to the surface those elements of the sacred and profane which exist in his own nature: his need for religious transcendence, for instance: 'His white alb with its squares of rich colour had made him feel pure, apart, and uplifted' (*Scandal* 92); and confused with that, the emergence of an inherent narcissism, a consciousness of self-image — despite the disclaimer — given prominence over any awareness we might have of Madge's beauty: 'John could not help being touched by a pleasure which was hardly narcissism, when he saw his shapely head with its clear skin and fine hair set in the folds of white linen' (*Scandal* 69). Taken overall, the relationship could be said to suffer from a countermanding impulse working to destabilize the idea of Madge as unmediated object of desire. From a purely sensory point of view, for instance, while we need to entertain the possibility that a cherry-tree could very well symbolise Madge, it does appear that John's pleasurable pact with nature is the more intense:

He put his face close to the cherry-tree, touching the blossom. His sense of beauty and of happiness was so great that he could hardly bear it...[He] thrust his face in among the blossoms and leaves. He wanted to cry...He drew deep breaths. (*Scandal* 21)

Then there is the film of air-force heroics which stirs a longing for male comradeship so overpowering as to leave him feeling emotionally and psychologically estranged from Madge: on kissing her goodnight he can think only of his 'bitter exclusion' from '*the company of ordinary people and*

of friends' (*Scandal* 172, my italics). And finally we need to recall the curious and enabling circumstance for John's initiation into hetero-sex, the stimulation afforded him by the sight of naked men bathing. The 'elopement' escapade culminates in Madge's denial of John in court and his sensation, despite a prison sentence, of a return to freedom. Having encompassed John's 'pain of disenchantment' and the conversion of him to 'a different substance', the novel ends with the previously alluded-to moonlit scene featuring John and Dick. Regardless of the odd stoush, their relationship is shown to be of the sort that endures. It is a scene that encourages one to see the advent of Madge as an aberration, a substitute perhaps: 'Before Dick had gone away he had loved him. He did not use that word, but the fact was the same. Dick had been the centre of his world' (*Scandal* 114).

Brenda Niall notes that the homosexual element in *Scandal of Spring* 'evidently did not trouble its publishers', and speculates that this attitude may have been influenced by the moral impropriety clearly implicated in the clergyman's 'selfish attempt at psychological entrapment'. She ignores completely the loving friendship between the two young men which provides not only the novel's larger framework but also its core value, and presumably the publishers were also sanguine that its undeniably romanticized treatment was unremarkable.<sup>51</sup> Apparently it took the gift of flowers from one man to another in *The Shepherd of Admetus*, Boyd's novel to follow, to swing the balance. The publishers identified what seems to have been a frankly undisguised attempt at portraying a homosexual relationship as 'not sufficiently tragic...as one dealing with so disastrous a predilection should be' (*A Life* 117). The singling out of 'little gifts of flowers' for condemnation by Richard Church (*A Life* 117) seems ludicrously puritanical, but at the same time it suggests a knowledgeable and lingering suspicion of flowers as symbolic of sinfulness, desire and transgression.<sup>52</sup> Boyd made known his sensitivity on this issue when, in *Day of My Delight*, he defended his young friend Roger who was in the habit of bringing him poems and flowers: '...if he thought that I wanted flowers, he would bring me flowers, careless of misunderstanding. No one was less effeminate' (*Day* 162).

Possibly in reaction to the rejection of *The Shepherd of Admetus*, Boyd in *The Lemon Farm* featured an unambiguous if unrealistic heterosexual romance. She is married, he is a misfit just out of school whose only material assets are an Apollo-like body and an animal hardiness to withstand nature in the raw: together they dream their utopian dream of growing lemons in Cyprus, a fantasy fatally disrupted by her drowning. The positive aspect of this tragedy, as has already been pointed out, is his gaining of an understanding of the power of love: 'She has awakened his soul and taught

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<sup>51</sup>Boyd acknowledges that the 'vernal' quality of *Scandal of Spring* was 'captured from my association with Dick [Hoskins]', the Sussex grocer's boy, 'sixteen and close to nature', whom he used to accompany on his errands. Boyd writes: 'His birthday was within a day of my own, and in spite of the difference in our ages and between our lives hitherto, our essential selves were in harmony' (p144). He then refers to Dallas Kenmare's *The Nature of Genius*, and specifically to a chapter called 'The Unknown Eros' which, he says, 'shows a profound understanding of this kind of poetic inspiration which has nothing to do with "inversion"' (*Day of My Delight* pp144, 145 & 170).

<sup>52</sup>It was common to view flowers thus in the conservative and puritanical society of the Dutch 17th and 18th-century still life painters, who developed 'a complex language of flowers to express moral and metaphysical positions...not immediately obvious to the untrained eye'. So says art critic John McDonald, writing in *Spectrum*, *SMH*, 16/11/96.

him to suffer for love' (*Farm* 208). After *The Lemon Farm* came *The Picnic*, a tale of expatriate Australians Wilfred and Christopher Westlake seeking to reclaim their English roots. Wilfred forms a sentimental friendship with a boy of his own age, Alec Woodforde — his sister Ursula calls them 'two of the two million superfluous pansies' (*Picnic* 232) — and demonstrates his loyalty (and cavalier attitude to women of the lower classes) by conniving at the seduction of a village girl by his friend, an activity he considers

reflected fun without offence to his fastidiousness. He had no scruples, because the deflowering of village maidens was, like the slaughter of game, so involved with the poetry of Shakespeare and the privileges of the aristocracy as to be part of our cultural tradition. (*Picnic* 194)

Later Wilfred will reflect that his 'life friendship' with Alec 'seemed...the most illuminating thing that had ever happened to him' (*Picnic* 304). Yet this attachment is as nothing compared to the bond between Wilfred and his brother Christopher. The construction here is unconventional and complex. On the one hand it is as if, in creating this pair, Boyd was attempting to reify the ideal of brotherly love.<sup>53</sup> And indeed their empathy seems intense and indivisible: Wilfred, for instance,

seemed to understand and feel in himself every passion that...moved Christopher...He felt that he was the only person who really could understand his brother, and his sympathy, his bond of brotherhood, was an agony to him, in which he endured every pang which he imagined must...be Christopher's. He saw the whole pattern of his brother's life as a tragedy which he was bound to share. (*Picnic* 300)

The particular near-tragedy that befalls the two brothers here is Christopher's attack on Wilfred with a shooting-stick. It comes as the culmination to an evening's clash of philosophies and interests, and Ursula is the catalyst. Feeling 'his manhood belittled by the quick clever minds of Ursula and Wilfred', Christopher (described as a 'symbolic figure of damnation'), strikes out in a fit of jealous paranoia. It is an incident surely devised with the archetypal slaying of Abel by Cain in mind: 'Something had been dragged up from the dark centuries of human pain, the deep underlying design, the current of passion and atonement had flashed to the surface' (*Picnic* 263-4).

Despite the almost primeval emotional bond, from another angle entirely the Westlake brothers appear as the disparate halves of a whole, the sundered portions of an Aristophanes globe longing possibly for reunification but for whom any hope of reconciliation seems, temporarily at least, out of the question.<sup>54</sup> Ranged alongside each other they represent undiluted binary

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<sup>53</sup>Boyd could also be drawing on the ideal love personified by David and Jonathan — 'the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul' (I Samuel, 18:1) — of whom Abraham Cowley wrote: 'No weight of *Birth* did on one side prevaile,/ Two *Twins* less even lie in *Natures Scale*./ They mingled Fates, and both in each did share,/ They both were *Servants*, they both *Princes* were'. (Stephen Coote (ed), *The Penguin Book of Homosexual Verse*, p168).

<sup>54</sup>Boyd parodies the notion of the divided globe in *The Tea-Time of Love: The Clarification of Miss Stilby*, his pastiche-cum-satire of the romance novels of Mrs Elinor Glyn. The heroine, whose three names illustrate her 'acute' division into mind, emotion and essential self, is shown as yearning after Anna Day, a completely integrated young woman about whom the narrator says: '...young men...felt that in possessing her they would recover that spherical serenity which Socrates [sic] said was the shape of mankind before the sexes were cut apart' (*Tea-Time* p27).

oppositions: culture/nature, refinement/ savagery, mind/matter, Victorian English/Mediterranean 'other', homosexual/ heterosexual, the graceful ephēbe versus the muscular Hercules, the feminine versus the masculine principle, the aesthete versus raw instinct. It is a deliberate differentiation designed, I would contend, to correlate with an observation on the difference between two sorts of men — an insight notable, incidentally, for its sensuality — made here by Tom Woodforde:

The intellectual is nearly always largely feminine. The woman experiences life by being penetrated by life, physically and spiritually. She likes to be touched in the depth of her soul, and to know herself in this way and feel herself revealed. The male wants to remain whole and intact and keep his godhead encased. By chewing at life and love, and digesting it over and over again, the feminine-natured intellectual hopes to come to the revelation of himself. The purely masculine man hates anything that is going to reveal his inner soul, the seat of his power, what Lawrence calls the dark god...So he occupies himself with practical things, sport and making money, which do not touch that central being at all. He does not care for religion because then he has to open his inner self to God. When he wants release he takes it in a purely physical way with a woman. The trouble is that being bottled up in so much darkness his godhead often dies altogether, while the soul of the half-feminine intellectual is shrivelled with too much light. (*Picnic* 256-257)

Here we have formulated an insightful analysis of male polarity that is very likely crucial to, and enlightening of, Boyd's own deep-seated convictions of disparate masculinities. Its significance lies in its implications for Boyd's own 'feminine' masculinity and his repudiation of the hyper-masculine. More than that, it probably represents — taking into account as it does sexual as well as mental and psychological states — the nearest thing we have to an explicit articulation of a formalised, personalised manhood, one he may have constructed as individualistic and idiosyncratic but one which nevertheless finds an easy conjunction with the conventional homosexual profile. As for the emblematic and divergent personalities of Wilfred and Christopher Westlake — the 'feminine-natured intellectual' who is 'gentlemanly' and 'vivacious' as opposed to the 'purely masculine' male designated here as 'outrageous' and 'surly' — many of their characteristics are destined to reappear at a later stage in the forms of Guy and Dominic Langton.<sup>55</sup>

An indissoluble bond based on a complicity of solidarity and affection erected as a shield against the world of women is the foil to an unsatisfactory and misconceived marriage in the book to follow, *Night of the Party* (1938). The deep comradeship of Gavin Leigh and Freddie Nichols is partly symptomatic of Gavin's artistic longing for the freedom to experience pleasure and unconventionality:

'We have the souls of sailors...We like to be civilized sometimes, but we don't let civilization catch us. We make excursions into it...but we clear out before it can put us into starched collars' (*Night* 114 & 127).

He sees his marriage to Ella in terms of physical comfort and financial convenience, a 'rich consolation prize' for Freddie's failure to give him 'the degree of comradesly love he had required,

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<sup>55</sup>Dominic is of course a more fully explored character: compared to the rather primitive Christopher he is multi-faceted, complex, and more manifestly bi-sexual.

nor had he flung himself into the adventure with as much abandon as Gavin demanded' (*Night* 194). The moralistic Ella, on the other hand, is inclined to suspect that 'Perhaps, seeing their close friendship, they were two of those horribly wicked men, whose existence one knew about, but whose crime was never spoken aloud and only barely referred to in dictionaries' (*Night* 158). Their friend Lucinda is more clear-headed and perceptive about Gavin's needs and temperament, however. She recognises Gavin's 'innocence' and 'difference', his claim to artistic immunity: 'Gavin...is better and worse than we are. He's shameless and low, and yet he can catch the stars...You can't marry Hermes to Mrs Humphrey Ward' (*Night* 182). As this remark would suggest, *Night of the Party* is primarily concerned, not just with marital tension and incompatibility, but with something more profound, a seemingly wilful desire to emphasise the gulf between the sexes. Both Gavin and Ella are guilty of exacerbating the gender divide; each is remote from, and deluded about, the other; neither is capable of truly perceiving the other's needs or character. Each mentally and egocentrically shapes the other to his/her preferred image: for the insensitive and puritanical Ella, Gavin is still a 'boy' whom she is determined should fit her preconceived idea of a decorous English gentleman, while Gavin's folly is to believe that by 'nicely seducing' Ella her 'tiresome little rigidities' will naturally and gratefully disperse. Disillusionment and reality having set in, she becomes for him an exaggeratedly malignant force standing in the way of artistic endeavour:

'You hated my painting because it wasn't respectable...You've given me... inhibitions and you've taken away my vision...every creative spirit must suffer some form of crucifixion, must die in some way to your solid respectable world, in order to leave that spirit free — it may be on a cross, it may be in a brothel...You had no faith in my godhead. You are worse than Judas. You denied me my crucifixion'. (*Night* 266)

*Night of the Party* is a sad comedy of marital dysfunction, a parody of bourgeois respectability. Played out against a background of disruptive and subversive elements promoting bohemian and Baudelarian impulses towards the irregular, the unconventional, the 'raffish' and the 'shocking' (including the freedom to indulge in a male company of outcasts which is made intrinsic to Gavin's self-actualisation), the novel chooses in favour of artistic genius, or the option to be outside the pale: '[Gavin's] work had to come before everything, before respectability and morals' (*Night* 318).

The spiritual and erotic bond between the young men Dick Corkery and Joe in *Nuns in Jeopardy* (1940) has already been extensively dealt with in this study. Suffice to add that this relationship is the most psychologically intimate and fully explored of the personal interactions that follow in the wake of Boyd's ingenious and allegorical stranding of a group of nuns and wayfarers on a deserted island.<sup>56</sup> In her biography of Boyd, Niall defines the homosocial/homosexual bonding of Dick and Joe as a prelude to heterosexual love; it is just as feasible to invert that judgment, however, to allow that the nuptials of Dick and Winifred come as a codicil to the more thoroughly developed same-sex collaboration. In this respect one needs to bear in mind that Dick's love for Joe persists as a living memory that will intrude upon, or alternatively, must be accepted and incorporated into his union with Winifred. One also should recall that the enigmatic Mr Smith

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<sup>56</sup>Neil James has criticised this novel as 'providing a weak conceit to contrast the sacred and the profane'. The truth, however, is more complex, since these concepts are not treated as absolutes: there is a crossover effect, for instance, in the corruption of certain of the nuns and the 'divinizing' of the bodies of Dick, Joe and Harry the islander. James was reviewing Marele Day, *Lambs of God*, Spectrum, SMH, 16/8/97.

(a Shavian character who performs in this parable a kind of supernumerary function as Satan, Redeemer and natural man) perceives Joe as belonging to Dick 'by the law of the spirit', while Dick is Winifred's 'only by the law of the flesh' (*Nuns* 138). The novel may opt for an optimistic and conventional finale privileging heterosexual union, possibly one that rates with Raoul Blair's alliance with Madeleine Druce as among the most successful and least compromised — a cynic might add that this is because they are the least developed — of Boyd's foregrounded male/ female relationships, but the fact is that the dream of connubial bliss has already been severely undermined by Mr Smith's reservations on marriage generally, and specifically, by his long-term predictions for Dick and Winifred. As he explains to Joe:

'You have the prevalent Western idea that the chief end of man is to get married, and that then they both live happily ever after. Let us play this fairy tale with Dick and Winifred. You give up your own claim on him for fear it should interfere with this sacred business of marriage. Assume we are rescued...They are likely to have several children and not much money. Back in the world she may regret leaving the sisterhood...in a Melbourne suburban street or in a Devonshire farmhouse, [she] will be left alone for long periods while Dick is at sea. She will be tormented by jealousy. She will hardly believe that it is possible that he is faithful to her, and that he is not taking some other girl in a foreign country as lightly as he took her on this island' (*Nuns* 138)

Defending his view as realistic rather than cynical, Mr Smith takes a progressively more treacherous and misogynist line, arguing for Dick's gradual disillusionment, loss of autonomy and deprivation of the freemasonry of men: 'Unconsciously obeying her instinct [Winifred] will consume his effort and his freedom, until he will cry out for his youth again. Then he will remember you, but you will have failed him'. More pointedly still, in a tone reminiscent of Gavin Leigh's demoting of women to, at best, decorative objects and, at worst, sexual conveniences and impediments to male liberty, he adds: 'A woman is caught as a tool in the hand of Nature, but in a man the spirit is free, and ultimately it is the spirit that counts' (*Nuns* 139).

The dangerously limited and transparently biased anti-female masculine attitudes expressed in both *Night of the Party* and *Nuns in Jeopardy* seem directed in the main towards women as love-objects and marriage partners. In Boyd's next and major work *Lucinda Brayford* (1946) we see the glimmer of a conversion of this antipathy into an over-reverencing and worship of the desired woman — an equally alienating tactic that simultaneously denies and distances the woman from any claim to her potential as a fully realised sexual being<sup>57</sup> — that will be more substantially redeployed under the guise of a gentlemanly 'chivalry' in the later Langton series. More pertinently for the subject of this discussion, the homosocial and homosexual elements of this novel may be pervasive but they are also paradoxically less egregious and centralised, more seamlessly and unobtrusively blended into a wide-reaching and polyglot canvas. They are accompanied by certain ironies: for

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<sup>57</sup>But understandable in terms of Boyd's context and surrounding circumstances: his conditioning and his quaint class prejudices, for instance. These are factors, coupled with inhibitions, fears, and a natural disinclination, which may have influenced his choice of a prostitute for his only (self-verified) sexual experience with a woman. It might be appropriate to note here that there is a noticeable strain of the Madonna/whore syndrome in some of Boyd's novels: 'nice' girls are idolised and idealised; only prostitutes are tainted with sexuality.

example, Lucinda's 'furtive hothouse meetings' with her lover Pat Lanfranc (*Brayford* 329) contrast sharply with Paul Brayford's open homosexual domestic arrangements. They are also remarkable for having undergone a quite specific sea-change: same-sex male attraction — and this may of course reflect the author's advancing years as well as the tendency of maturity to resurrect cherished memories — is no longer a matter of exuberant youthful infatuation or platonic spiritual conjunction amongst equals. The emphasis instead is on a diacritical difference between the parties: if we consider Paul Brayford's interest in the footman Harry, while it involves an element of mutuality, it is chiefly a difference dictated by age, occupation and class; whereas his nephew Stephen's 'delicate' and transfiguring love for the King's College Chapel choirboy Brian imitates the age disparity and idealisation such as might have obtained in ancient Greece.

The first inklings of a homosexual 'type' in *Lucinda Brayford* appear with Tony Duff, an over-sensitive creature who esteems Lucinda Vane as 'flawless and sacred', who loses her interest through passionless inattention and who is dismissed by Canon Chapman as a 'poodle-fakir'<sup>58</sup> and '*arbiter elegantiarum*' (*Brayford* 45). Courted by Hugo Brayford, she realises 'how grotesque and dim would have been her marriage to Tony...All this preoccupation with stuffs and colours...now seemed to her curious in a man' (*Brayford* 124). At the same time a part of Lucinda recognises that she prefers the milksop, the kind of young man her father Fred would have scorned for his careful appearance, taste, good manners and uselessness with horses (*Brayford* 140). This intuition sets the tone for the compatibility of her future relationship with her brother-in-law Paul, the one person in her new life who will fulfil the role of spiritual and cultural companion as well as that of an 'intimate confidant': a man who will cause her to reflect:

...Paul with his sensitive wavering glances, his exotic tastes, his malicious chatter, his small limbs, was what Fred would have judged the very embodiment of irresponsibility if not of downright shiftiness, even more so than Tony. It was odd, she thought, that she should have two close friends of the 'poodle-fakir' type.  
(*Brayford* 173-4)

Paul may attract a deal of obloquy for his defiance of the conventions, he may be called 'ridiculous', 'extreme', 'outrageous', 'decadent', 'absurd' and 'a perverted old spinster' — one critic defined him as 'the complete upper-class queen'<sup>59</sup> — but these epithets as fictionalised are directed in the main by the prejudiced and the disapproving. And while it may be true that he is an insufferable snob, a man ruthless with his detractors — as in this riposte to a young left-wing intellectual who treats him as a museum piece:

'You may buy a copy of the *New Statesman*...and a pair of suede shoes, and a Picasso print, and a Freudian textbook, and imagine that you are the *dernier cri* of culture, when you are only its last gasp!...(*Brayford* 335)

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<sup>58</sup>'Poodle-fakir', it will be noted, contracts to 'poof'.

<sup>59</sup>Stephen Kirby, writing in *Outrage*, August 1987: 30, and cited in Michael Hurley, *A Guide to Gay and Lesbian Writing in Australia*, St. Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1996. In another edition of *Outrage* (March 1989: 10) David Jameson queries the construction of Boyd's sexuality in his review of Brenda Niall's biography called 'Bren Denial'.

Lucinda finds that he is sympathetic, non-judgmental and imbued with 'more intelligent kindness than any of her other in-laws' (*Brayford* 294). She is in tune with his serious concern 'to know the truth and what was of value' (*Brayford* 171); she too wishes to reject 'all that was false and deathly'. Lucinda's affinity with Paul Brayford is no accident. With her stereotypical qualifications — her 'candid innocence', her good looks, her delicacy and fastidiousness, her aesthetic sensibility and belief in pleasure and truth — she is the embodiment of Martin Boyd's feminine self. She could also be a symbol of his dividedness. If there were any suggestion here of gender overlap or compromise one might be tempted to the colloquialism that she is the literary equivalent of Boyd in drag, and as such a proleptic appropriation of a concept to be exploited at a later date by Patrick White. In the interests of strict accuracy, however, she is simply the *tabula rasa* or empty vessel<sup>60</sup> Boyd fills progressively — as she journeys from naïveté to self-awareness, tolerance and the shedding of illusions — with his own moral, cultural and philosophical sensitivities. One argument in favour of this theory is that Lucinda, unlike most of her fellow female protagonists, seems unshaken by Paul's sexual unorthodoxy; she accepts his humanity well before she knows enough to accept and tolerate his peculiarities. Robert Dessaix has postulated that Lucinda is 'a very modern woman'.<sup>61</sup> He gives the example of her intuitive recognition, in an early scene of adolescent 'ragging' between her brother Bill and his friend Blake, of

an impulse of sensuality...that seemed to her a thing to be accepted naturally, and less consciously she felt it to be an enrichment of life...to contain some dim promise of a deeper relationship between Tony and herself.... (*Brayford* 56)

a scene which, with its blurring of the edges between homo- and hetero-sexuality, certainly reads like a case of special pleading for the enfranchisement of the former. Even without its reinforcement many years later on the other side of the world at St Saturnin, where Lucinda witnesses a similar scene and experiences all things as being 'in proportion' and human relationships as 'allowed their natural expression', the point would be significant for its implied mild rebuke to the exclusion/occlusion of the homosexual principle.

The relevance to this discussion of Boyd's subsequent novel, *Such Pleasure* (1949), with its central theme of the Irishwoman Bridget Malwyn's attempt to reverse her legacy of dispossession and displacement, though of 'obvious biographical meaning' for Boyd,<sup>62</sup> is tangential. Worth noting, however, is the presence of the obligatory gilded youth, the Oxford undergraduate Maurice with his 'perfect aristocratic beauty', a young man who shares with Paul Brayford a reverence for Nijinski, the controversial Russian genius of the dance perceived by many of his contemporaries as the epitome of 'camp' idolatry. Of curiosity value too is the dispelling of Maurice's heterosexual

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<sup>60</sup>The author seems to want to create this impression, twice alluding to Lucinda's 'silvery' laugh which has 'a hint of emptiness in it' (*Lucinda Brayford*, pp73 & 115). And Lucinda herself thinks that 'the best thing about her might be her readiness to accept anything that appeared to be true. Yet...it gave her no tenacity to any fixed opinion (p188).

<sup>61</sup>Dessaix qualifies his claim thus: 'Lucinda Brayford is not remotely fazed by any slippage between gender and sex and sees sexuality — homosexuality, in this case — as merely an aspect of gender'. The comment, however, makes more sense in the context of his having possibly mistaken Tony Duff and Bill as the ones who are 'fooling around together on a hot Australian beach' (*Australian Gay and Lesbian Writing: An Anthology*, p9).

<sup>62</sup>Niall, *Martin Boyd: A Life*, p139.

doubts in finally succumbing to Griselda: an encounter transformed by his imagination into an Italian dream 'taken tangible form'...

the light on the castle in the lake, old fantasies of knights and ladies, the sublime peaks of the mountains, Mlle. Stolz as a nymph dancing, and the tableau of Venus rising from the sea. Their intimations became actual in this moment of passion. For him Griselda was a hundred Aphrodites, Lesbia, Aspasia and the magic women of history....<sup>63</sup>

but whose flight into fantasy is equally remarkable for its swift descent into mere solipsism, that extreme form of subjective idealism which carries with it, in this instance, the elision of the female: 'At last he was seized with tingling rapture. He was no longer aware of Griselda. His mind was blotted out in his sensations'.

The homosocial/homosexual aspects of the Langton tetralogy — the narrator Guy Langton's somewhat ineffectual masculinity, the variations on the effete bachelor in *The Cardboard Crown* and *Outbreak of Love*, and the sexual ambivalence accredited to Dominic Langton in both *A Difficult Young Man* and *When Blackbirds Sing* — need little further elaboration here. What may be of interest, however, given the nature of the anti-marriage propaganda espoused by several of his characters, is a brief glance at the other side of the coin, Boyd's treatment of lawful heterosexual union. As a background phenomenon in his *oeuvre* as a whole, marriage fares no better and no worse than in the general run of novels: in his fictionalised family histories in particular, the incidence of well-adjusted wedlock is offset by a pejorative tally of elopements, extra-marital temptations, infidelities, illegitimacies, incompatibilities and two notable suicides, that of Damaris Tunstall over a cliff after only three weeks of marriage to Arthur Langton and, in similar vein, the fall while 'sleepwalking' from the castle parapet of Ada Montfort, unhappy wife of Florez de Moya. It is when the question of marriage affects Boyd's centre-stage characters, however, that we witness a curious trend. Of all the heterosexual courtships featured, only one appears to end in an entirely satisfactory union,<sup>64</sup> that of Raoul Montfort with Madeleine Druce (though we might do well to recall that the younger Raoul has written a play against marriage); another, that of Dominic Langton and Helena Craig, for all that it starts in a gesture of flamboyant romanticism as he abducts her immediately prior to her wedding to another in *A Difficult Young Man*, will show signs of irreversible psychological estrangement at the conclusion of the sequel, *When Blackbirds Sing*. In three books, *Love Gods*, *Dearest Idol*, and *Nuns in Jeopardy*, each projected or actual union is either vaguely compromised or radically completed (if we think of the triangulation pattern postulated by Sedgwick) only by the ghostly presence of a third party, a previously (and still) loved male. In *The Montforts*, Richard Montfort loses Aida through lack of will and misguided chivalry; *The Lemon Farm's* utopian dream is fatally disrupted by the drowning of Davina Chelgrove; Gavin Leigh abandons a crippling marriage for artistic liberation in *Night of the Party*; an aborted boy/girl romance in *Scandal of Spring* is superseded by the moonlit scene showing John Vazetti and Dick Harding arm-in-arm, with John convinced that in comradeship lies 'the best part of love' (*Scandal* 245); and heterosexual resolution between Christopher Westlake and Ursula Woodforde is deferred

<sup>63</sup>*Such Pleasure*, p319.

<sup>64</sup>By contrast, although it exists as a barely visible trace in the Langton series, the marriage of Guy's parents Laura and Steven appears as compatible and stable.

for two years at the end of *The Picnic* as the reconciled brothers set out together for Cambridge. Neither can it be said that there is contentment in marriage for *Lucinda Brayford's* heroine as she confronts first, her husband's long-standing infidelity with Mrs Fabian Parker, and then his war injuries and their impediment to her fantasy of divorcing Hugo and marrying his virtual facsimile, another conventional army officer. Stephen Brayford will repeat his mother's pattern of misguided innocence in the choice of a love-object: his idealisation of Heather Vane, a scheming, socially and sexually ambitious opportunist, leaves him not only with a wrecked marriage, but bitterly disillusioned into the bargain.

The topic of heterosexual relationships raises the question of Boyd's literary approach to male/female love-making, an approach that is remarkable for its almost unwavering consistency if not its originality. It is a strategy designed to align, in the main, the human regenerative processes with natural phenomena. An exemplary occasion is the devising of Lucinda Brayford's conception as a joyous and analogous celebration in line with the breaking of a drought:

...[Fred] looked so beautiful and so happy that Julie suddenly felt something break inside her. She too melted with the coming of the rain. She forgave him everything and she burst into tears. He leapt into the bed and took her in his arms, at first hugging her in wild delight, then kissing her tenderly. From this reconciliation was born...Lucinda. (*Brayford* 28)

Lucinda's half-brother Bill will also owe his beginnings to his parents' sympathy with, and participation in, nature's primal forces. Julie's perception when Maitland makes love to her at Mt Lavinia is that

she...seemed to become part of the whole natural world, of the cinnamon-scented forest, the smooth rocks and the brilliant sea. Away from the civilized world...between the forest and the sea, it had had a different quality, wilder and more innocent. (*Brayford* 37)

One of the most deeply ritualistic and implicitly ravishing of these episodes, in the sense of connection to some pagan and sacrificial sun rite, must surely be the experience of Lucinda and Hugo in the Christmas Hills:

Here the land seemed terribly ancient, wistful and yet harsh...Lucinda lay back and closed her eyes against the sun, white and blinding in the mid-heaven. Hugo began to make love to her. [Soon] the time and place, the high and piercing sun, the stark earth, seemed to fuse in her body in a wild desire. A kind of ferocity seized them, a joy passed beyond endurance to pain. She felt that she was consumed by the sun itself, by some first principle of life that immolated her body in an act of new creation. (*Brayford* 141)

The description finds its echo in an encounter between Dominic Langton — in his role of 'noble savage' — and Sylvia Tunstall:

...as he breathed softly and deeply beside her, she felt almost as if she were in some indefinable natural lair. He was like a dark sun, bathing her with warmth, his rays flooding her whole body with a new vitality drawn from some primitive source. She

lay close against him, receiving his rays, and she felt that she had received all his mystery. (*WBS* 65)

The Lawrentian resonances in all four passages have a palimpsest quality, faint but unmistakable. Lawrence's passion for 'the vivid wildness of the old places of civilization', for 'resplendent sunshine and the grace of the old Greek world'<sup>65</sup> seems palpably to reside in the subtext. And the last two passages vibrate with stronger invocations: of lines from 'The Woman Who Rode Away', for instance: 'More and more her ordinary personal consciousness had left her, she had gone into that other state of passionate cosmic consciousness, like one who is drugged'; or again, of an excerpt from 'Sun': 'A flame went over his eyes, and a flame flew over her body, melting her bones'.<sup>66</sup> Besides a sincere salute to Lawrence's capacity to convey sexual ecstasy,<sup>67</sup> there could be other factors at work here. Boyd's consciousness, for one, of his debt to a received canon, something he parodies with deft and self-deprecating humour when he has Broom castigate literary people as aware only 'of huge, indigestible, second-hand masses of other people's impressions' (*The Montforts* 236).<sup>68</sup> We also need to consider that behind Boyd's instinct to filter the procreative act through a screen of Lawrentian elementalism, behind his strategy of effectively mimicking Lawrence by subsuming human physicality to the transcendental cosmic experience, may lie what we might call an experiential sexual anxiety or even, after Sedgwick, a form of heterosexual panic. Boyd's scenarios of sexual congress rely on the exaltation of sensuality, lust and primitive impulses — Lucinda and Hugo are, after all, defined as possibly 'the passive instruments of forces outside themselves' (*Brayford* 141) — but they carry a sense of lovers operating in the absence of human tenderness and affection;<sup>69</sup> and an uncharacteristic conceptual extravagance lends weight to the notion of a secondhand or borrowed technique. It is interesting that the exception — Boyd's stylistically recognisable, because unadulterated, handling of the sequel to the affair between Dominic and Sylvia — serves to confront the issue of heterosexual alienation more squarely:

It was a night of pure sensuality, without love, without meaning. Their bodies had acted with practised skill to achieve the extreme pleasure. There was no tenderness between them. (*WBS* 106)<sup>70</sup>

But then Dominic's seduction of Sylvia has always been calculating, self-centred and power-driven: to him she is a symbol of rightful property restored, a mere 'infidelity' by which to facilitate both his *droit de seigneur* and the titillation of his senses. Charisma and class cannot save her from the implication that, as a sexual conquest, she is a whore. Sylvia Tunstall's case both underscores a

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<sup>65</sup>D. H. Lawrence, 'Sun', from *The Woman Who Rode Away*, Harmondsworth, England: Penguin, 1973, p38.

<sup>66</sup>D. H. Lawrence, *The Woman Who Rode Away*, pp74 & 43.

<sup>67</sup>Boyd says (in 'Dubious Cartography', p12) that D. H. Lawrence's doctrine of harmony with the natural world 'has degenerated [in his novels] into mere obsession with sex, the quickest approach to a temporary fusion with nature'. One might argue that, conversely, Boyd uses the trope of nature in order to mask the sexual act.

<sup>68</sup>For the full flavour of Broom's outburst see page 210.

<sup>69</sup>This is perhaps not so true of the affair between Wolfie von Flugel and Mrs Montaubyn despite the fact that his affection is still expressed in terms of symbolism: his piano prelude presents 'a full-length nude of Mrs Montaubyn': lusty and mischievous, it pays homage to 'the breasts of Ceres...the splendid mysteries...of the Rhine...all the fruitfulness of the earth' (*Outbreak of Love* p343).

<sup>70</sup>Dominic will recall their affair thus: 'All their passionate unions...were like something he had once read in a book. Not a single fibre of his body vibrated at the memory' (*When Blackbirds Sing* p140).

system of double standards and reactivates the related Madonna/whore hypothesis: it is rewarding to compare her with the 'nice' girls of Boyd's novels who are wooed and worshipped almost as if they were high priestesses or untouchables of impossible virtue.<sup>71</sup> The absence of any kind of middle ground or relative normalcy *vis-à-vis* the heterosexual courtship or love-making process is consistent with dis-ease, reluctance or even indifference, and succeeds merely in drawing a contrast with an apparently more expedient desire to establish an ethos of love between men. There are no reticences or restraints, no intimations of panic, for example, in the scene in which Paul Brayford takes Harry the footman's hand, examines it, and uses it to evoke a series of farmyard images. It is an overtly amorous, imaginative, and teasing address: an interesting variation on the pretty speech of endearment, it is earthy but not smutty, mildly eroticised but not indiscreet. As the only philandering expression of any substance or length in Boyd's repertoire, it is also significant, with its expression of relaxed and genuine affection, for its assault on the barriers of class: a breaking down that social and sexual visionary Edward Carpenter advocated as 'a liberation of the spirit beyond roles forced by a capitalist society'.<sup>72</sup>

Lastly, it might be of more than passing interest to note that Boyd's slim volume of poetry, *Retrospect* (1920) — published well before many Australians developed the idea of him as a snob — and in what seems like a deliberate swerve from the commemorative tributes paid to an undifferentiated band of England's lost and glorious youth — to, for instance:

...friends forgotten in an alien land,  
Who left us wonder and a radiance... ('Retreat')

or again, which lamented the

...young and very gallant limbs  
That from the festal door  
Strode out with blithesome Bacchic hymns,  
And ne'er were heard of more... ('Estaminets')

contains a specific, part-ironic and part-sentimentalised valorization of the common soldier. Entitled 'Regulars', it runs

It was unfortunate they knew no Shaw,  
Nor cared if Wells' particular God were true,  
But just rode straight, and played the game they knew,  
Played rather well perhaps, but did no more.  
They loved, and laughed, and told the un-Fabianed truth,  
Were clean and most unreasonably loyal.  
This was a fault. And yet they were a foil  
To intellectual speculative youth.

<sup>71</sup>This attitude would seem similar to the problem Guy Langford has with women: 'I had an extraordinary idea, perhaps acquired from reading the lives of virgin saints, that it was grossly insulting to a girl to fall in love with her' (*A Difficult Young Man* p121). Yet even Boyd's professedly less ambiguously robust courtiers such as Dominic and Richard Montfort are shown to have a worship complex towards the girls they would marry.

<sup>72</sup>Edward Carpenter, *Towards Democracy*, cited by Stephen Coote (ed), *The Penguin Book of Homosexual Verse*, London: Penguin, 1986, p45.

O little men who cheat on office stools,  
 Pity the poor uncultivated fools  
 Who ever gave themselves and gave their sons;  
 Who bled on Afghan plains and were content,  
 Who finally with ammunition spent,  
 Left their dead bodies, England's life, at Mons.

The sonnet — the pre-eminent poetic form for idealised homosexual love from Petrarch onwards<sup>73</sup> — predominates in this collection. Many are deeply elegiac in the Rupert Brooke tradition,<sup>74</sup> conveying the sense that in the loss of a collective brotherhood lies the impoverishment of a religion of manly love. Others are elegies of personal loss, rejection, longing and disillusion; melancholy may seek occasional relief in irony and self-mockery, but essentially the focus is on homosexual emotion as it is sanctioned by the term 'Friendship'.<sup>75</sup> These more intimate love sonnets follow an established (homosexual) poetic idiom in being desexualised and even ungendered — the third-person pronoun is typically elided in favour of the more abstracted and ambiguous 'you' — however, in a poem that recalls Tennyson having written, in relation to one man's feeling for another, that it is better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all, it seems that even ideal or 'pure' love harbours undercurrents of eroticism:

O hand in hand we went, and eye to eye  
 Continually. Others passing by  
 Were strange unheeded shadows. Half the day  
 Loving we sped, and then the hot sun kissed you!  
 Was it enough, to have touched, and held, — and missed you  
 That you, so fair, came such a little way?  
 (Excerpt from "The Journey")

The note of poignancy introduced here is magnified in 'The Ending', a poem which links eros and eroticism to death:

I am forgetting. Every shining day  
 Fades more your waning image from my mind.  
 The busy years lead on till I shall find  
 The last trace fled. Then shall be set my way.  
 Ever without you. Nor may time nor place  
 Nor old familiar song, nor smell, nor sight,  
 Bring to the long gray sorrow of that night,  
 The well loved light of your remembered face.

And to its ghostly grave dear Memory borne,  
 Buried 'neath new impressions as your slain  
 Lithe body's buried 'neath earth's bitterness;

<sup>73</sup>According to Stephen Coote, *The Penguin Book of Homosexual Verse*, p40.

<sup>74</sup>Boyd says he 'soaked' himself in the poetry of Rupert Brooke (and Oscar Wilde) at Reading in 1918 (*A Single Flame*, p147).

<sup>75</sup>Stephen Coote maintains that after the politicized crackdown on gay love in the High Middle Ages by the Catholic Church under St Thomas Aquinas, gay emotion was obliged to rechristen itself 'Friendship'. (*The Penguin Book of Homosexual Verse*, p39). This is the Friendship of which Derrida speaks in his book *Politics of Friendship* (1997).

When I beside this tomb shall doubly mourn  
 Body and friendly spirit: after pain  
 Shall peace come in that hour, or loneliness?

Steeped as it is in necrology and a kind of yearning nostalgia, this is a category of homoerotic verse which might reasonably contribute to Denis de Rougemont's view of Western love as unhappy or death-ridden.<sup>76</sup> And while the latter's negative assessment may not automatically have included a homosexual component, it nevertheless prompts the question: beleaguered by proscription, fear and prejudice, how much more vulnerable to despair must be homosexual love and desire?

It seems that a convention of couching homosexual love poems in tones of deep melancholy and pathos, of linking Eros and Thanatos, is due in no small part to Sappho. According to Lyn Wilson, Sappho's lyrics habitually enjoined sleep, death and eros to suggest 'supernatural influences or a state that is beyond the bounds of conscious, mortal existence'.<sup>77</sup> Lightly touching on this in his poem 'Chant Funebre', Boyd consigns a dead youth to an other-world made morbidly desirable, even Dionysian:

Sing if thy lover silent lies,  
 And where the quiet hands are dust,  
 And where the shining hair is rust,  
 Throw flowers o'er the empty eyes.  
 For youth is sweet and swiftly dies,  
 And soon is perished all his lust,  
 And age and ugly Wisdom must  
 Return when red-checked Folly flies.

But where thy careless song is borne,  
 And where is poured the golden wine,  
 And where the coloured petal's torn,  
 'Tis there the lightless eyes will shine;  
 And spurning dreary hearts that mourn,  
 Dead lips will gladly laugh with thine.<sup>78</sup>

Where the Sapphic influence is strongest, however, is in a love poem — penned by Robert Lindsay<sup>79</sup> and presumably to Boyd— that has strangely similar resonances. The poem was written in 1922 inside the back cover (on the blank verso of the imprint leaf) of Lindsay's copy of Boyd's *Retrospect*, a volume whose inscription on the flyleaf reads 'Robert Lindsay from M à BB'. It is

<sup>76</sup>See Paglia, *Sexual Personae*, p121.

<sup>77</sup>Lyn Hatherly Wilson, *Sappho's Sweetbitter Songs*, p188.

<sup>78</sup>Of possible relevance here is Boyd's mouthpiece Guy Langton's observation about Dominic: '...that streak of my nature which resembled his own...gave me a knowledge of what he suffered when the absence of love was for him the presence of death' (*A Difficult Young Man*, p95).

<sup>79</sup>From my observation of the Robert Lindsay letters in the Mitchell Library (ML MSS 742), the handwriting is unmistakably his. The antiquarian bookseller James Dally described the offering in Catalogue 163, *Australian Literature of the Nineteen-Twenties*, as 'a suggestive four-verse manuscript love poem by Robert Lindsay (the deviant second Lindsay son...)'.  
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reproduced here in full for the simple reason that until now it has not been available for public scrutiny:

He lay upon the lily bed  
and all the song of Philomel  
and all the finest flowers smile<sup>80</sup>  
were chant and incense for the dead.

He lay as carved in ivory  
Upon his bed of hyacinth  
a silent statue on its plinth  
Beneath the pall of purple sky.

The daffodils beneath his head  
were paler than his golden hair  
The flowers upon his heart that were  
more richer than the roses red.

Where is his lover white and red  
Where is his lover fleet and far<sup>81</sup>  
Will he not crown the golden hair!  
Will he not sing the holy dead! <sup>83</sup>

For all its amateurism, the poem creates quite a clever impression of hermeneutic layering and enigma. Even at its most superficial there are elements of mystery and contradiction: baffling religious overtones, for example, or flowers that could symbolise any or all of paradisiac enchantment, erotic desire, transgression, purity, and regeneration. There is a longing for death here that is associated with erotic desire.<sup>84</sup> It suggests a trance-like sleep of ecstasy, the lethargy that follows sexual satisfaction. Or that an analogy is being made between those agents of expropriation, Eros and death, in that both rob 'the body of limbs, substance and integrity'.<sup>85</sup> Or again, that the death of love is being proposed, its non-reciprocation indicated by the defection of the lover. Alternatively, as a man reputed to have an acute sense of irony,<sup>86</sup> Lindsay could simply be indulging in a little self-conscious appropriation of form and flavour, either to dress up a coded message of reproach to his lover or, as a jest, to appear to be doing so. What is interesting — and no doubt facilitated by the private context — is that, for all his recourse to clichés of idiom and imagery, Lindsay is quite unguarded in his use of the gendered third-person pronoun. It is the appeal in the fourth stanza to the male lover (the second 'he' of the piece) that finally makes it clear that the author has previously been describing, not the situation of an 'other', but a subjective state of mind.

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<sup>80</sup>This word appears to be 'smile', though the less poetic 'smell' might seem to be indicated phonetically, grammatically and contextually.

<sup>81</sup>Again, although Lindsay seems to have made a practice of dotting his 'i's, there is a possibility the word 'far' should be interpreted as 'fair'.

<sup>83</sup>The copy of *Retrospect* is now in the Fisher Library, University of Sydney.

<sup>84</sup>This concept, and the one to follow, is put forward by Wilson in *Sappho's Sweetbitter Songs*, p188.

<sup>85</sup>Wilson, in *Sappho's Sweetbitter Songs*, p189, is citing A. Carson, *Eros the Bittersweet: An Essay*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986.

<sup>86</sup>Joanna Mendelssohn in her doctoral thesis *Norman Lindsay and his Family: Myths, Manuscripts and other Narratives*, p126.

The assertion that Martin Boyd and Robert Lindsay were lovers has been of recent origin. Their friendship was, it seems, marked by a cautionary discretion on both sides, but as Joanna Mendelssohn has shown, certain if not all members of the Lindsay family not only treated its close mutuality as an open secret but were pleased at its steadfast nature.<sup>87</sup> Mendelssohn appears to have first noted the association in her 1994 doctoral investigation of the letters of the Lindsay family, later to become the basis of her book *Letters & Liars: Norman Lindsay and the Lindsay Family* (1996). Robert (born in 1872 and an elder brother of Norman) is described by Mendelssohn in terms that are interchangeable with the attributes of Martin Boyd: as 'fastidious', 'inhibited' and 'sensitive', an 'elegant but distant' persona who aspired to be a gentleman and (unlike Boyd) a dress designer. His relationship with his family was problematic and complex (Lionel considered him 'corrupted' and 'corrupting'<sup>88</sup>); London, however, to which he journeyed in 1910, was to provide him with the sexual freedom of a compatible homosexual community.<sup>89</sup> He and Martin met there in the early 1920s, and the friendship was to endure beyond Robert's 1930 departure from London until the latter's death in 1951, with extended visits made to each other at Harkaway and Creswick.<sup>90</sup> Mendelssohn reports Robert's nephew Peter Lindsay as saying of the pair '...they were so alike that they could have stepped out of the same chorus line'.<sup>91</sup> To this she adds that her extensive interviews with Peter (who died in August, 1998) found him positive on three counts: that he understood Martin to be gay, that Martin had a very close friendship with Robert, and that there was a physical dimension to the relationship.<sup>92</sup> Nevertheless, the general silence protecting the alliance was such that, as Mendelssohn has noted, the association was not mentioned in Brenda Niall's biography. Boyd himself makes one reference only to Robert Lindsay in his memoirs, declaring him to be someone 'in whom the family artistry was confined to appreciation and discriminating taste' (*Day* 223). Boyd's evident secrecy over the friendship is understandable in a man of natural reticence living in oppressive times, and may, as well, lend credence to the notion of a serious involvement. It is also feasible that in drawing a firm line between his public and his private life he was conscious of not wishing to reflect badly on his own pre-eminent and artistic family. For the potentially truest guide to his sensual and feeling life we are left with no alternative but the literature.

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<sup>87</sup>In Mendelssohn's words, 'It seems clear Robert never discussed his sexuality with his brothers, although his siblings knew and discussed him amongst themselves, and were pleased by his long friendship with Martin Boyd' (*Norman Lindsay and his Family*, p130). Of incidental interest is that Robert Lindsay's partner in a millinery establishment was an American called Hollis, the name Boyd used for Dominic's soldier friend in *When Blackbirds Sing*.

<sup>88</sup>Joanna Mendelssohn, *Letters & Liars: Norman Lindsay and the Lindsay Family*, Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1996, p132.

<sup>89</sup>According to Mendelssohn, *Letters & Liars*, p136.

<sup>90</sup>In a letter (from Creswick, 10/2/51) Mary Lindsay writes to Rose Lindsay: '...when I come back I'll get Bert away to Martin Boyd for a couple of weeks. He came back after his last visit there most cheerful and looking 15 years younger'. Lindsay family papers, ML MSS 742 Vol. 22, Mitchell Library.

<sup>91</sup>Mendelssohn, *Letters & Liars*, p136.

<sup>92</sup>In conversation, 1/2/99. It should be said at this point that while hearsay must leave the existence of any intimate physical union within the realm of conjecture, the Lindsay/Boyd friendship is congruent both with Boyd's predominant fictional thematic of male-male desire and the diary-based acknowledgment of his infatuation with Luciano Trombini.

And in examining the literature, we should perhaps heed the words of the art historian and critic Robert Hughes: "The arts are the field on which we place our own dreams, thoughts and desires alongside those of others, so that solitudes can meet...the social purpose of art [is] the creation of mutuality, the passage from feeling into shared meaning".<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>93</sup>Robert Hughes, in a speech delivered in support of the American equivalent of the Australia Council in New York. Cited by Leo Schofield, *SMH*, 17/8/96.

## CHAPTER SEVEN: *Intertextual decadence and the religio-erotic*

The entry in Martin Boyd's diary for 15th March, 1966 is recorded on a holiday at Frascati, and it reads simply: 'Have read here lives of Tennyson, Forrest Reid, Hans Anderson, John Lehmann, David Garnett, Thoreau, Cardinal Newman, Baron Corvo and Richard Burton'. It is a wide-ranging and eclectic rollcall unified by its consisting in men who, to a greater or lesser degree, were sexually attracted to other men. The coincidence, if it is one, may extend to the fact that the individuals named are exemplary of an era, dating mainly from the mid-nineteenth century, in which many of the most notable, successful — and occasionally most controversial — of Europe's and America's creative artists and original thinkers were often sexually nonconformist, that is, either bisexual or homosocially and/or homosexually oriented.<sup>1</sup> Keeping in mind the place and the date of Boyd's diary entry, however, there is also the possibility that, deprived of and saddened by Luciano Trombini's inevitable absence from his life, he was seeking empathy — even solace and psychological support — from like-minded fellow artists. But whatever the motivation we need to remember that the latter are broadly representative of a noticeable preference displayed by Boyd towards the leading writers and luminaries of his day. Textual evidence has already been offered in this discussion to support this observation. There is also much in the way of intertextual allusion, both transparent and oblique, to substantiate the notion that Boyd's more instilled and insistent literary and artistic enthusiasms and/or influences, at least insofar as he has communicated to his reading public, centre on a select group of writers distinguished almost universally by, not only familiarity with a discourse of sexual difference, but unconventionality, eccentricity and a willingness to challenge the rigidities of Victorian thinking.

By 'influence' here I do not mean to say that Boyd was obligated to those writers he admired in matters of style or technique or the delicate question of 'originality'. He had no need to borrow a voice and might well have dissociated himself from a concept as radical as Harold Bloom's notion of poetic influence insofar as it connoted a 'disease of self-consciousness' and 'anxiety':<sup>2</sup> no doubt he would have agreed with Blake that to be enslaved by any precursor's system is to be inhibited from creativity by an obsessive reasoning and comparing.<sup>3</sup> Awareness of authorial susceptibility to intellectual plagiarism and/or 'enslavement' is amply illustrated in his character Broom's (a name fortuitously and ironically consonant with 'Bloom') diatribe against 'literary people':

"They are not human beings. They are a hash of the books they have read. They have no opinions beyond their taste in authors. There is nothing of themselves in their minds. They are a mass of authorities...Literary people are only aware of huge,

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<sup>1</sup>In *Corydon* (1924) André Gide posited the provocative view that 'historically homosexuality is associated with great artistic and intellectual achievement while heterosexuality is indicative of decadence'. Cited by Jonathan Dollimore, *Sexual Dissidence: Augustine to Wilde, Freud to Foucault*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993, p12. Further references to this work will be given by page number in the text.

<sup>2</sup>Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1973, p29. One of Bloom's claims is that Wordsworth's "Ode to Immortality" is 'shadowed by the anxiety of influence, due to the greatness of the precursor-poem, Milton's "Lycidas"' (p9).

<sup>3</sup>Bloom is citing Blake in *The Anxiety of Influence*, p29.

indigestible, second-hand masses of other people's impressions...One should take from one's books only sufficient to enhance life itself'.... (*Montforts* 236)

an harangue which, while its self-ironising hyperbole has the effect of introducing a certain Bloomsbury-derived<sup>4</sup> flippancy to diminish the impact of what might otherwise be construed as weighty moral outrage, suggests an underlying and serious engagement on the part of the author with the issues it raises. Ideally, Boyd may genuinely have wished to eschew any possibility of an 'anxiety of influence'; he does, after all, maintain that the best writing is individual, an 'expression of personality' emanating from 'the deepest part of our consciousness'<sup>5</sup> (a consciousness he nevertheless intuited, in keeping with Thomas Mann, as largely beyond our control, constituted according to accretions of timeless habits, archetypes and myths from 'the well of the past'<sup>6</sup>). On the other hand, since he acknowledges in the same breath that "There is also the spirit of a period which informs the work of most of its artists and writers",<sup>7</sup> following this up with the recognition that 'words, as well as having a literal meaning, have widespread subtleties of association, a sort of emanation, the bouquet of the wine',<sup>8</sup> he seems to extend a positive invitation to see him as caught up in what Bloom calls 'the genealogy of imagination', and by implication, carrying a debt to his precursors that is both conceptual and philosophical.

The reality is, of course, that it is well nigh impossible to analyse or evaluate Martin Boyd in isolation from his *zeitgeist*. He himself firmly (if disingenuously) places his cultural heritage in the eighteen nineties (the decade in which he was born) with the disclosure that Roland Penrose, a fringe Bloomsburyite of the 1920s, classified him as 'just like the "nineties"' (*Day* 148) — a coded reference made more explicit in *Lucinda Brayford* when it is said of the candidly homosexual Paul Brayford that 'He lives with a ploughboy and paints like Conder. He's too ninetyish for words' (*Brayford* 334). While the latter remark, with all of its contextual amplification, carries a note of playfulness, there is no disguising its connotations of sexual and artistic licence, if not licentiousness (in the sense of indulging in excessive freedoms); nor, in its reference to Charles Conder, of its evocation of the Aesthetic Movement's more effete strains. It lends a decided shading to Boyd's categorical (albeit obliquely accomplished) self-identification with turn-of-the-century transition, a time of flux and re-evaluation where the very definition *fin-de-siècle* was synonymous with decadence. In one sense it allows us a glimpse of his intellectual and emotional engagement with the 'decadent' ethos. Of equal significance, however, is that this particular 'ninetyish' allusion aligns Boyd precisely with what Sedgwick has pinpointed as the period's inauguration of a discourse associated with the cultural construction of sexual identity, and specifically with homosocial/homosexual definition: a discourse whose effect was to demarginalise homosexuality and bring it into a semblance of cultural centrality and coherence.

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<sup>4</sup>The name 'Broom' also, of course, invokes 'Bloomsbury'.

<sup>5</sup>Boyd is quoting D. H. Lawrence, alluding to Lawrence's belief that individual inspiration is 'conceived by the Holy Ghost' ('De Gustibus', p5).

<sup>6</sup>The reference to Mann is to be found in Milan Kundera, *Testaments Betrayed* (trans) Linda Asher, London: Faber and Faber, 1996, p11. Boyd's insistence on the power of the past is well known; one indicator is that he intended to call his Langton series *The Past Within Us* — recalling both Mann and Proust.

<sup>7</sup>'De Gustibus', p5.

<sup>8</sup>'De Gustibus', p6.

This study has noted some of the limitations found in Boyd's work by certain of his contemporary critics. Boyd himself was offended that Kathleen Fitzpatrick had put him down 'in the wrong place, on a gilt chair in a pretty drawing-room', concerned only to commemorate the more genteel aspects of a constricted and suburban Melbourne. Similarly, H. M. Green is castigated for calling *Lucinda Brayford* 'an ordinary conventional novel' even though, as Boyd says, 'its characters flout nearly every convention'. Leonie Kramer on the other hand he applauds for discerning that his characters 'have the unpredictability of real life', and goes on to endorse the promulgation of the kinds of 'absurd and irrational emotions' he claims enliven and refresh the novels of E. M. Forster.<sup>9</sup> (It is interesting that Kramer also draws a comparison with the latter by noting Boyd's emphasis on the discrepancy between the moral law of the individual and the legal code enforced by society).<sup>10</sup> Kramer observes too that Boyd's characters 'do not work to theories (and not often to rules)',<sup>11</sup> an insight refigured and magnified by Dorothy Green's assertion that Boyd 'did not keep his convictions in water-tight compartments'.<sup>12</sup> In his fiction this characteristic is reflected in what she calls the multiple narrator technique, used to convey partial truths and varying viewpoints — and here it must be said that both perceptions<sup>13</sup> are significant for their consonance with Boyd's admission of personal inconsistency: '...one has conflicting impressions. If I were entirely consistent I should be like a machine and dead' (*Day* 159). Having dismissed Galsworthy as a reasonable basis for comparison with Boyd, Green makes an analogy with Tolstoy — appropriate I think — in which she says: "Tolstoy's words — "love for the refined as expressed not only in Homer, Bach and Raphael, but also in the small things of life" — strike an answering note throughout Boyd's work'. Importantly, she adds: "The masterpieces of European civilization are living presences in the allusive texture of his language'. A further claim that 'they are there, not as evidence of a cultural inheritance, but as a constant challenge to the bogus and pretentious'<sup>14</sup> seems misguided: surely these 'living presences' qualify as both. Perhaps she means to convey that Boyd is not in the business of flaunting his cultural advantage. If this is so, she has a point: Boyd's novelistic technique is self-confessedly the art of emphasis and omission,<sup>15</sup> and it is probably the characteristic omission of a sustained and integrated authorial reflectiveness, plus a notable lack of psychological interiority in the exposition of his characters that led early critics to unfairly dismiss him as 'a novelist unfit to consider the persistent philosophical problems of humanity'.<sup>16</sup> But Boyd's comic method, as Kramer has emphasized, should not divert us from his underlying seriousness. His lightness of touch is just that, a form of legerdemain designed to conceal and/or confuse his deeper purpose. The elliptical, the tangential, the subtle, the economical and the suggestive are his trademark, tools with which he builds the kind of hermeneutic complexity we associate with the novel of ideas.

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<sup>9</sup>All of the foregoing responses are to be found in Boyd, 'Dubious Cartography'.

<sup>10</sup>Leonie Kramer, 'The Seriousness of Martin Boyd', *Southerly*, Vol. 28 No. 2, 1968.

<sup>11</sup>Kramer, *The Australian Quarterly*, Vol. 35 No. 2, June, 1963.

<sup>12</sup>Dorothy Green, 'From Yarra Glen to Rome', p257.

<sup>13</sup>Meaning those of Kramer and Green.

<sup>14</sup>This and the previous quotes are all to be found in 'From Yarra Glen to Rome', p257.

<sup>15</sup>See 'Dubious Cartography', p6.

<sup>16</sup>Susan McKernan's assessment of a line of criticism beginning with Kathleen Fitzpatrick leads her to this conclusion ('The Meaning of Pleasure in the Novels of Martin Boyd', MA Thesis, University of Sydney, 1976, p8).

A good example of the way Boyd operates is the provocative 'ninetyish' picture of Paul Brayford alluded to above, a curious combination of both omission and emphasis which nevertheless opens the window to an equally provocative era. If we revert to Green's perception that Boyd portrays 'not only an historical epoch, but the mutations of [his] own spirit'<sup>17</sup> we find that its relevance, judging by the novels covered by this statement, is confined to the early years of the twentieth century marked by the 1914 war and the disruption of European civilisation, and astute so far as it goes. What it ignores, however, is the textual and intertextual evidence which suggests the *fin-de-siècle* as pivotal to Boyd's cultural imagination, a sphere of influence characterised by English society as the 'gay', 'mauve' or 'naughty' 'nineties and which saw (ignoring for the moment the predominantly 'liberalising' debate on deviant sexuality), in the realms of literature and art, something of a seismic anti-conformist revolution. Boyd's imaginative empathy with this period is, I believe, bound up with his subjectivity, a quest for selfhood that is holistic in its intent, centred not only on the spiritual self but on the *embodiment* of self, an embodiment indivisible from his innate psycho-sexual constitution. Havelock Ellis was to claim that 'in the main a man's sexual constitution is 'all-pervading, deep-rooted, permanent, in large measure congenital', and came up with the dictum: 'A man is what his sex is'.<sup>18</sup> Whether in actuality Boyd's innate sexuality was repressed — as seems likely — or expressed (less likely) — is not germane at this juncture. What his writings betray, however, is an individuality inscribed by an ineradicable same-sex, or transgressive, desire. It is this propensity for transgression — a trait which like subversion presupposes the law without necessarily ratifying it (*Dissidence* 85) — that I believe brings him into a close relationship with the spirit of the 'nineties. Venturing yet more boldly, and borrowing from Jonathan Dollimore, I would posit that Boyd's transgressive desire is inseparable from a 'transgressive aesthetic' (*Dissidence* 8) pertinent to his socio-political, as well as to his psycho-sexual being.

Dollimore's application of the notion of a transgressive aesthetic is to Oscar Wilde, and while it may seem absurd to attempt to make any worthwhile comparison between Wilde and Boyd, there do exist some points of intersection. The signs are that Boyd could be irked by Wilde's extremism,<sup>19</sup> a response presumably based on the latter's consciously deployed 'transmutation of all values', his advocacy of an anti-essentialist individualism and with it, the apparent denial of the natural, the sincere and the authentic; in summary, his determination, according to Dollimore, to demystify the normative ideologies regulating subjectivity, desire, and the aesthetic. Yet to the extent that Boyd's individualism resides in a personal morality not entirely consistent with the state-imposed morality (the actions and attitudes of his characters Dominic Langton and Stephen Brayford are but two exemplars of this dearly-held tenet), and recalling that his adherence to the classical morality presupposes notions of individual freedom and 'the highest when seen', he must surely have sympathised not only with Wilde's discernment of the social potential in individualism, one which implies a radical possibility of freedom 'latent and potential in mankind generally',<sup>20</sup> but

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<sup>17</sup>Green refers specifically here to *Lucinda Brayford* and the novels of the Langton series ('From Yarra Glen to Rome' p250).

<sup>18</sup>Havelock Ellis, *Psychology of Sex*, p13. Ellis went on to say he did not rule out the acquisition of sexual identity.

<sup>19</sup>See 'Preoccupations and Intentions', p89.

<sup>20</sup>From Oscar Wilde, 'The Soul of Man under Socialism', *The Artist as Critic: Critical Writings of Oscar Wilde*, (ed) R. Ellmann, London: W. H. Allen, 1970, p 261. Cited by Dollimore, *Sexual Dissidence*, p8.

with his attacks on public opinion, mediocrity, and conventional morality.<sup>21</sup> Wilde's political radicalism, his socialist ideas about reconstructing society 'on such a basis that poverty will be impossible', must also have struck an answering chord given Boyd's attraction to the progressive yet unorthodox socialist ethic of Bernard Shaw. On another level altogether, a large part of the appeal of both Wilde and Shaw was certain to have been the unrivalled panache and individuality of their rhetoric and wit. It is tempting to speculate, given the number of Wildean traces and appropriations scattered throughout his work, that Boyd felt a kinship with Wilde's paradoxical and protean nature, even, possibly, with his facetiousness. Some of Boyd's own contrariness, his inbuilt division via paradox, is surely present in Wilde's description of Dorian Gray: 'He used to wonder at the shallow psychology of those who conceived the Ego in man as a thing simple, permanent, reliable, and of one essence. To him man was a being with myriad lives and myriad sensations, a complex, multiform creature...'<sup>22</sup> — as good an example of the de-centred self as it is possible to find, and in line, perhaps, with Boyd's mask-and-reality conundrum, the sense of multiple selfhood expressed in the 'many travesties of myself'.<sup>23</sup>

Comprehending something of Boyd's contradictory perceptions of Wilde and their registration in terms of correspondences and antipathies requires an understanding of his individualised morality, that particular aspect of his persona which more than anything else suggests a stable and essentialist self. His underlying system of values, as it appears in his writings, is reliable, constant — though at risk at times of over-reiteration and what one might call polemical rhetoric — and reflects his belief in common with Shaw that a book's morality should be the author's own. His conviction that 'At the deepest level, morals and aesthetics are the same thing', accompanied by the rider that 'morals probably emerged from aesthetic revulsions', gives the clue to a personal aesthetic grounded in the belief that what is beautiful or aesthetically satisfying equates with what is good or morally valuable.<sup>24</sup> An aesthetic schema inseparable from his mantra of the desirability of man's harmony with the natural world, in that it embraces both art and nature, the man-made as well as natural objects such as scenery, flowers and human bodies, it is in many respects the antithesis of the prominence given by the late nineteenth century's Aesthetic Movement to the artificial, the decorative and the faddish.<sup>25</sup> And it is axiomatic that it stands in fundamental opposition to Aestheticism's tenet that works of art should be judged by strictly aesthetic criteria

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<sup>21</sup>All of which, according to Dollimore, forbid both transgressive desire and the transgressive aesthetic (*Sexual Dissidence*, p8). Individualism as Wilde conceives it, notes Dollimore, generates a 'disobedience [which]...is man's original virtue. It is through disobedience that progress has been made, through disobedience and through rebellion' (from 'Soul' p258).

<sup>22</sup>Oscar Wilde, *Dorian Gray*, pp158-59.

<sup>23</sup>And certainly in line with Dominic Langton's protean nature. The unpalatable tenor of Tony Dawson's overweening ego, its solipsistic self-centredness, could be seen as a counter-argument to the centred self.

<sup>24</sup>A tenet closely analogous to the teaching of G. E. Moore who, ironically, was a mentor of Wilde's.

<sup>25</sup>A trend to 'featurism' that Boyd's architect nephew and maverick spirit Robin Boyd was later to disparage in *The Australian Ugliness* (1947) and *Australia's Home* (1952). On another level, Martin Boyd tends to bring a subtle irony to the concept of Art's supremacy over Nature. For example, Morag Beaton's statement deriding naturalism: 'It's much better to be unnatural. A Fragonard or a Boucher is the most unnatural thing in the world and the loveliest. And Heaven must be like a Watteau' (*Love Gods* p65); and Alice Langton's observation of Aubrey Tunstall: 'It seemed to me that he made his life a picture rather than a natural growth, or that he had created for himself a setting so perfect that it restricted the fullness of his life' (*The Cardboard Crown* p86).

independent of issues such as moral, political or religious utility. This explains why it is that we find Boyd fulminating against and labelling 'insidious nonsense' Wilde's dictum that 'there is no such thing as an immoral book';<sup>26</sup> furthermore, it explains why he goes on to attack Wilde for appropriating the slogan 'art for art's sake', a 'pernicious catchword', says Boyd, that 'has led to the ugliness, the hoax and obscenity prevalent today [meaning 1968], which if Wilde were alive, might make him exclaim: "Art, for God's sake!"'.<sup>27</sup> The intemperance and bitter humour of the latter remark most likely stems from Boyd's antipathy for modern art. The first accusation, on the other hand, could be motivated by a dubious assumption that a novel's 'immorality' has the power to corrupt and deprave,<sup>28</sup> an attitude reflected in his own avoidance of the cruder aspects of humanity.<sup>29</sup> Moral outrage seems momentarily to have clouded perceptions of Wilde as the architect of inversion, paradox and the inauthentic. At a deeper level, however, it seems that Boyd was unable to come to terms with Wilde's advanced (and post-modernist) notion of the novel as an imaginary terrain where moral judgment is suspended: the necessary condition, according to Milan Kundera, for the development of characters

conceived not as a function of some pre-existent truth, as examples of good or evil, or as representations of objective laws in conflict, but as autonomous beings grounded in their own morality, in their own laws.<sup>30</sup>

Kundera's contention that suspending moral judgment is not the immorality of the novel but its *morality*, is persuasive. You the reader, he says, 'can accuse Panurge of cowardice, accuse Emma Bovary, accuse Rastignac — that's your business; the novelist has nothing to do with it'.<sup>31</sup> Boyd would surely have agreed that his characters too act according to 'their morality...their own laws', good or bad: or even that we are free to misjudge, for instance, that Dominic is cowardly and unpatriotic, Jackie blasphemous and deranged, Aunt Baba more misguided than malevolent, and Rodgers more innocent than manipulative. Boyd's ideological quarrel with Wilde, may, in fact, be more delusory than real.

The more we consider the pervasiveness of Wildean traces, themes and overt imitation in Boyd's work the more the latter's anachronistic denigration of the exaggerated affectations of Aestheticism's leading apostle reads like an irrational scapegoating for the creative malaise of contemporary 1968 society. Some of the themes borrowed from Wilde have already merited discussion; and to the incidental Wildean excesses of *Broom* may be added what Patricia Dobrez has called Paul Brayford's pronouncements on the importance of being useless. Possibly the most blatant reference comes with Cousin Sarah's destruction of the ancestral portrait of the 'wicked' duque de Teba because of what she perceives as its 'Dorian Gray' connection to the volatile

<sup>26</sup>The full quotation, from the Preface to Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, reads: "There is no such thing as a moral or an immoral book. Books are well written, or badly written. That is all".

<sup>27</sup>'Preoccupations and Intentions', p89.

<sup>28</sup>Much as some critics today assume the effects of screen violence on audiences.

<sup>29</sup>In support of this attitude Boyd quotes from his friend Hugh Fausset: "Terrestrial [sic] life is only bearable, and only truly seen as a reflection, however dim, of a heavenly glory towards which we are meant to aspire. Far better surely to entertain people by light comedy, than to shock and debase them by wallowing in the brutal?" ('Preoccupations', p90).

<sup>30</sup>Milan Kundera, *Testaments Betrayed*, pp7-8.

<sup>31</sup>Kundera, *Testaments Betrayed*, p7.

Dominic. (And interesting for the light it may shed on Boyd's own youthful clandestine activities is the information that 'she had read that book with avidity, keeping it in a brown paper cover beneath her underclothes in her chest of drawers') (*DYM* 93). A verifiable parallel with Boyd's own experience is that his early alter ego Raoul Blair enjoys a liberalised upbringing by parents who 'had not been untouched by the aestheticism of the 'nineties', his father Kenneth in particular being 'half amused and half attracted by artistic Bohemianism' (*Montforts* 171). Raoul delights in Art Nouveau as it appears in *The Studio* journal; he reads Shaw, Olive Schreiner and William Morris, and 'thrills' to the phrases of Swinburne. His former headmaster's denunciation of Wilde, Aubrey Beardsley, and Norman Lindsay — those with 'the voice of an angel and the heart of a beast' — excites in him a fervent appreciation of 'this clashing of minds, of art with religion, of new intelligence with tradition' (*Montforts* 185). He may classify himself as only a spectator (a voyeur perhaps?) of unconventional life, but in his very fascination with the purveyors of dissidence, of vitalism and of perversity we may detect a transgressive streak which, though mild, is deeply inherent. We need only to glance at his bookshelves, 'full of the literature of the 'nineties, its precursors and its satirists', to find the source of his greatest exhilaration: '*He did not know which he enjoyed more, the decadent poseurs or their ribald censors*' (*Montforts* 185, my italics). It is a bold statement, one which evokes both Wilde (who tended to see all conditions, even the seemingly natural and sincere, as a pose<sup>32</sup>) and Wilde's artistic collaborator Beardsley, an *agent provocateur* whose genius for mockery and satire, matched only by his fixation on the bizarre and scandalous, is superbly captured by the wit of Arthur Symons: 'What exquisite indecency,/ Select, supreme, severe, an art!/ The art of knowing how to be/ Part lewd, aesthetical in part,/ And *fin-de-siècle* essentially'.<sup>33</sup>

Wilde and Beardsley as well as anyone probably best synthesize a mode of sensibility whose allure for Boyd lay in its coincidence, not only with his more manifest tastes, discriminations and inclinations, but also in its accommodation, indeed its encouragement of, his less conspicuous but ever-present bias toward the transgressive. His attribution to Raoul Blair of an aesthetic poised somewhere between 'a queer combination of Beardsleys and Bibles' (*Montforts* 193) is an illustration of the latter: the phrase has the authentic ring of Wildean paradox; it also evokes Valéry's designation of J. K. Huysman's *A Rebours* as 'the Bible and bedside book' for those readers who wished to see reflected 'their scorn for accepted aesthetic and moral standards, and who wanted to extend the boundaries of emotional and spiritual experience'.<sup>34</sup> It is in the context of the latter — bearing in mind his formative exposure to the kind of 'enlightenment' that was to set him aside from the philistines and the conformists — that the catchcry's immediate relevance to Boyd, both in its congruence with the real-life pleasure afforded him by the regular appearance of Beardsley drawings and articles in *The Studio* magazine,<sup>35</sup> and in its gesturing towards a family environment he experienced as an incongruous meld of piety and permissiveness, merits consideration. Huysman's *A Rebours* (published in France in 1884) was the notorious 'yellow book' given by Lord Henry Wotton to Dorian Gray to hasten the latter's propensity for corruption. Also designated by Arthur Symons as 'the breviary of the Decadence', *A Rebours* was the quintessence of the bizarre, the

<sup>32</sup>Lord Henry Wotton, in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, p11, says: 'Being natural is simply a pose, and the most irritating pose I know'.

<sup>33</sup>Arthur Symons, frontispiece to Stanley Weintraub, *Beardsley*, Middlesex: Penguin, 1972.

<sup>34</sup>According to Weintraub in *Beardsley*, pp42-43.

<sup>35</sup>The first edition of which appeared early in 1892.

artificial, and the exotic, and many of Aestheticism's more decadent strains may be traced to Huysmans. The models for its hero Des Esseintes, an aristocrat of ancient lineage who is disillusioned, anaemic, neurotic, and exquisitely over-refined, were some half-dozen 'dandies and aesthetes living or only lately dead', among them Huysmans himself, Charles Baudelaire, and Robert, Comte de Montesquiou-Fezensac (who was also the prototype for Proust's Charlus).<sup>36</sup> Des Esseintes in his turn inspired Wilde's Dorian Gray; and certain correspondences in characters such as Aubrey Tunstall, Russell Lockwood and Paul Brayford (with his hinted-at spiritual anguish) suggest that Boyd was not impervious to his influence. As Huysmans' translator Robert Baldick comments: 'The total number of Des Esseintes' literary progeny is incalculable: almost every unhappy, solitary hero of a twentieth-century novel could probably trace his descent back to Huysmans' great creation'.<sup>37</sup>

Huysmans' novel may have been the keystone of the Decadence, that movement characterized in France and England by a delight in artifice, the denigration of nature, and a craving for new and complex sensations,<sup>38</sup> but its intention was not frivolous. Its attempt to overturn preconceived ideas, to extend the serious scope of the novel with the introduction of art, science and history<sup>39</sup> in part explains the exotic and sensual density that caused George Moore to exclaim 'That prodigious book, that beautiful mosaic',<sup>40</sup> and Wilde to mark its potency with Dorian Gray's declaration that 'the heavy odour of incense seemed to fling about its pages and to trouble the brain'. If we heed the further observations of Gray we may assume that Martin Boyd would have found it equally compelling:

The life of the senses as described in terms of mystical philosophy. One hardly knew at times whether one was reading the spiritual ecstasies of some medieval saint or the morbid confessions of a modern sinner.<sup>41</sup>

Nor was the book's focus on so-called depravity purely gratuitous. If Des Esseintes enjoys 'unnatural loves and perverse pleasures', he ends in disgust and disillusionment; and escapism as a mode of being is ultimately displaced by a theme of suffering and expiation. In many ways *Rebours* epitomizes Martin Boyd's susceptibilities and oppositions as they relate to the complexities of Aestheticism. In its novelty and daring, for example, its flaunting of tradition, and its accent on the superiority of art and the autonomy of the artist, it mirrors the appealing *avant-gardism* of the Aesthetic Movement. On the other hand, the novel's central morality is a refutation and invalidation of Aestheticism's suspension of morals, its premise that art should be judged by aesthetic criteria alone. There is an irony here, because for the most part it would seem that Huysmans and the movement were on convergent paths: Des Esseintes as modern man tortured by the quest for an elusive ideal, aestheticism at its best a 'revitalizing influence in an age of ugliness,

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<sup>36</sup>Robert Baldick (trans), introducing J. K. Huysmans, *Against Nature*, London: Penguin, 1959, p8. It will be noted that the title has changed in the translation.

<sup>37</sup>Baldick, Introduction, *Against Nature*, p11.

<sup>38</sup>Baldick, *Against Nature*, p13.

<sup>39</sup>Baldick, *Against Nature*, p7.

<sup>40</sup>Moore is cited by Baldick, *Against Nature*, p10.

<sup>41</sup>For both *Dorian Gray* quotes see Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, p145-146.

brutality, dreadful inequality and oppression, complacency, hypocrisy and Philistinism: a genuine search for beauty and the realization that the beautiful has an independent value'.<sup>42</sup>

The possibility that Boyd did not read the 'yellow book' at first hand is remote but of little real importance, since his familiarity with (for example) Wilde and Swinburne, Beardsley, Baudelaire and Verlaine indicates a substantial awareness of its impact. It was Huysmans, after all, who succeeded not only in creating a type whose enervated spirit or *mal du siècle* was representative of an epoch, but who also was responsible for drawing attention to the previously neglected authors of French Symbolism. Weintraub has noted that Beardsley — who plainly held a fascination for Boyd (and whose first name was appropriated for his aesthete/bachelor character Aubrey Tunstall) — made a point of creating for himself a second-hand persona based principally on Huysmans, Whistler and Wilde;<sup>43</sup> and as a tribute to Huysmans he later established a risqué and highly unconventional quarterly he called *The Yellow Book*. Beardsley did not have to work hard at the pose of the disaffected artist/aesthete: he was naturally dandified, mannered and of delicate looks and health. He was also a natural rebel and iconoclast: he lacked reverence for existing institutions and authority,<sup>44</sup> and desired, like Keats, to 'upset the drawing of the blue stocking literary world'.<sup>45</sup> In art his stated aim was the grotesque — 'If I am not grotesque I am nothing' — and despite a uniquely elegant style deriving inspiration from the art of Japan, Whistler and the Pre-Raphaelites, his drawings and posters were frequently withdrawn from publication for their over-emphasis on the erotic and/or lewd.<sup>46</sup> Boyd was no prude, and on the evidence presented here it seems reasonable to accept as axiomatic that he admired, as well as enjoyed, Beardsley's penchant for insolence, wit, audacity and at times the obscenely erotic.<sup>47</sup> One wonders if the latter's morbid, almost macabre imagination, what Weintraub has described as his cultivation, like Des Esseintes, of darkness and seclusion, might also have exercised a perverse appeal for Boyd. Eccentricity, as we recall, was a major component of his home-based cultural conditioning, tolerated along with bohemianism and non-conformism. Beardsley's excessive subversions and decadent individuality, while finding their natural accommodation within the adolescent Boyd's imaginary framework, must nevertheless have exerted a spell sufficient to have pushed the limits of transgression's allure. And it may be useful to speculate that the artist's romantic aura of gloom found its correspondence in Boyd's own darker nature, even assisting him, perhaps, to an intuition of the despair that can accompany hedonism and suggestions of difference. In this context it might also be instructive to place Boyd's interest in Baudelaire, poet of decay and spiritual regeneration, alongside the appeal of Beardsley: each is an aesthete and an outsider; each may be categorised by melancholy, antinomianism and the pursuit of artistic freedom.

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<sup>42</sup>J. A. Cuddon, *A Dictionary of Literary Terms*.

<sup>43</sup>Weintraub, *Beardsley*, p91.

<sup>44</sup>Weintraub, *Beardsley*, p59.

<sup>45</sup>Weintraub, Foreword to *Beardsley*.

<sup>46</sup>Philippe Jullian, author of *Dreamers of Decadence*, describes Beardsley as 'the rarest flower of aestheticism...casually toying with all the religions and all the vices which tempted him' (in the chapter 'Fin de Siècle').

<sup>47</sup>Here we need to understand that Boyd also admired Catullus, the Roman poet whose slangy obscenity is acknowledged by scholars to be a faithful reflection of his age.

Philippe Jullian calls Baudelaire (born in 1821) the first modern European poet. Paul Verlaine's poems owe much to his influence, and the writers who followed gave the name Le Symbolisme to their school of poetry.<sup>48</sup> Eccentric, unconventional, and often hallucinated, he was one of the great love poets of France, his poems admired for their originality and sensual passion: 'rare sensations' he expressed through eroticism and subtle evocative power. He was also a poet of realism, concerned to convey the beauty of the modern city; yet many of his early poems betray a love of horror and decay, and his *Fleurs du Mal* series earned him a reputation as blasphemous and satanic. It is Baudelaire's flouting of the conventions that seems in part to drive Boyd's parody of respectability, *Night of the Party*: when Gavin Leigh indulges in nostalgia, for instance, for 'the abysmal squalid depths of civilization' and longs to experience 'life at the core' (*Night* 196) — 'something...more honest...more beautiful, more brilliantly coloured' (*Night* 227). It may be Verlaine's influence that is more immediately invoked by Lucinda's urging of Gavin to be 'like Verlaine, making scandalous associations in the back streets of Paris...being gay, disreputable... perhaps with dark, contrasting shadows' (*Night* 225), but it is the shadow of Baudelaire that hangs over Gavin's subsequent appeal to Lucinda: 'It wasn't ordinary raffishness you recommended, it was something really rather shocking, like Baudelaire's negress' (*Night* 293). We are reminded again of Baudelaire's octoroon mistress when in the following year's *A Single Flame* (1939) Boyd records the suggestion of his schoolboy companion Roger that they sail the world together with 'a black woman' on board. Boyd is quick to explain this as a picturesque 'Gauguin touch' in 'repudiation of the bourgeois design of life' (*Flame* 220) but it is Jeanne Duval, one of the '*négresses lumineuses*' who expressed for Baudelaire all the mystery and glamour of the tropics,<sup>49</sup> who inevitably makes her presence felt in the subtext. Perhaps Baudelaire is also present in Lucinda's view of Gavin's painting:

The whole picture had a beauty something like that of Botticelli's Venus, the beauty of the human form unveiled against the background of the sea, made in some inexpressible way more sensuous and haunting by the presence of flowers. There were the naked boys, shameless and gay, yet somehow sad in their innocence...It made Lucinda think of all those dreams she had had of a freer world...And the colours — that queer cobalt green of the water, and the zinnia pink of the woman's lips — they made one start like the taste of some unknown, delicious wine...  
(*Night* 298-99)

since the 'sad innocence' of the naked boys — beautiful like Botticelli's Venus for whom the models were long-haired ephebes — carries a resonance of the doomed beauty of Baudelaire's poems: his ideal being '*Sois belle et sois triste*. Be beautiful and sad', a melancholy that would be taken up by the Pre-Raphaelites and later still infiltrate what Jullian calls the fatal madness of the Decadents. The passage has something in common with Baudelaire's nostalgia for the pagan world, 'those ancient times of nakedness, of la jeunesse';<sup>50</sup> and the sea motif — here 'sensuous and haunting' — recalls his rapturous response to water: 'We yearn to dive in to the gulf's depths...and

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<sup>48</sup>These facts, and the impressions of Baudelaire which follow, I owe to Enid Starkie's introduction to *Selected Poems of Charles Baudelaire*, (trans) Geoffrey Wagner, London: Panther, 1971.

<sup>49</sup>Sprawson, 'Plaints of Icarus', p70.

<sup>50</sup>Sprawson, 'Plaints of Icarus', p71.

into the depths of the Unknown, in quest of something new'.<sup>51</sup> Lastly, having evoked Baudelaire, it seems natural that the synaesthesia of the last lines should be compared to the tenor of his sonnet 'Correspondances': 'Les parfums, les couleurs et les sons se répondent'. Enid Starkie tells us that Baudelaire became identified in the 'eighties and 'nineties with everything that was morbid, decadent and immoral. Yet she reminds us of his preoccupation with spiritual values and his belief in the supreme importance of the human soul, his refusal to see it enslaved to machine or state. For Baudelaire, she says, the search for beauty and the search for spiritual belief were the same thing, the means of transcending the material world and penetrating the mysteries of the beyond. Furthermore, his work was based on the duality of man, concerned with the conflict between his idealistic aspirations and his sinful nature. In his very objectives, his ambivalence, his variety and complexity, it becomes immediately apparent why Boyd, if we accept his transgressive aesthetic, must have found in Baudelaire a poet who mirrored not only his own yearnings for spiritual fulfilment, but who could offer ratification of his more deviant and insurrectionist instincts, emotional, intellectual, political and sexual.

Theoretically at least (ignoring for the moment egregious differences in artistic practice and expression), Baudelaire stands in relation to aesthetics and decadence in much the same way as does Boyd to their consolidation into movements in *fin-de-siècle* England. Both are ardent admirers of beauty in art, literature and music; both are attracted, though admittedly with contrasting intensities, to the decadent emphasis on mysticism and eroticism: where Baudelaire, for instance, is an active proponent of the perverse, the sensational and the elaborately exotic, Boyd by comparison, judging by his enthusiasm for authors like Wilde, Beardsley, and the poets Catullus and Swinburne, is merely an appreciative spectator. The aesthetic code of each, however, is such that neither can abandon morality in his search for an aesthetic Grail: a quest, as we know, that for Boyd manifests itself in the search for man as physical and spiritual perfection. That art is not autonomous, self-sufficient, an entity to be judged by aesthetic standards alone, is implied in Boyd's attitude. Yet...and yet, even here one confesses to finding ambivalences and contradictions: for example, in his sympathetic portrayal of Gavin Leigh's bid to throw off societal constraints in order to fulfil his potential as an artist; in his love of Tennyson, who held the post-Romantic idea that the poet is superior to ordinary mortals: 'Vex not thou the poet's mind/ With thy shallow wit:/ Vex not thou the poet's mind;/ For thou canst not fathom it';<sup>52</sup> and in his championing of Dallas Kenmare's *The Nature of Genius*, wherein the notion of the artist as unique, as someone apart from others, is central. To be fair, Kenmare does not argue so much for the moral superiority of the artist, nor, exactly, does she claim his (sic) exemption from morals. By means of strategies which are psychoanalytic and transhistorical, however, she veers extraordinarily close to aestheticism's doctrine on morals by placing the quality of genius or creative talent on a different plane from the average. The genius, she says, and especially the poet, is always and inevitably schizophrenic, a victim of psychosis who can never be 'normal' because the artistic vocation demands the sacrifice of a personal life and almost all human relationships. Pointing to the repudiation of family claims by Jesus,<sup>53</sup> and the wished-for

<sup>51</sup>From Baudelaire's *The Voyage*, cited by Sprawson, 'Plaints of Icarus', p70.

<sup>52</sup>The opening lines to Tennyson's 'The Poet's Mind'.

<sup>53</sup>Kenmare cites Dr. Turck, who in *The Man of Genius* refers to Jesus as saying that those who do God's will, 'the will of my father which is in heaven' are his true brethren. In *The Nature of Genius*, London: Peter Owen, 1960, pp39-40. Further references to this text will be given by page number in the text.

similar rejection expressed by M. Gilson,<sup>54</sup> Kenmare goes on to state that the claims of great art and of true religion are absolute. It is a sentiment to which Boyd appears to give the seal of approval in his portrait of Gavin:

He had to paint. It was the one thing he loved. He worshipped these significant forms, these thrilling colours...He gave himself to painting with the abandonment and pain with which a woman gave herself to the creation of a child...It was idolatry if you like, but the artist who was not an idolater was a bad artist. His work had to come before everything, before respectability and morals. (*Night* 318)

Moreover, in surrendering to his creative compulsions, Gavin manages to suggest art and religion as indistinguishable, a fusion of energies, dedication and passion.

As we have seen, Boyd discovered in Kenmare's book, and especially in a chapter called 'The Unknown Eros', 'a profound understanding of [the] kind of poetic inspiration which has nothing to do with "inversion"' (*Day* 145). The chapter postulates that the conception and experience of love in the creative genius differs 'radically and widely from the so-called "normal"' (*Genius* 76); and Kenmare notes Gilson's description of the amorous experience of the artist...as 'a mixture of eroticism and the quest for beauty' (*Genius* 77). While we cannot credit Boyd with sufficient hubris to imagine himself a creative genius, Kenmare's articulation of love and desire in the artist as essentially sexless, or supra-sexual, clearly struck him as a vindication of his 'otherness', his sense of being non-average and a misfit: here was the key, perhaps, to his psycho-sexual temperament, an hypothesis capable of demystifying the repressed or sublimated libido. What seems certain is that Kenmare was able adequately to articulate Boyd's experience.<sup>55</sup> In the circumstances it seems appropriate to note her allusion to the Baudelairean theory of psychological bi-sexuality — the transcendence of the narrow limits of sex — in the artistic genius. As she elaborates,

In the man of genius the chief human peculiarity lies in his psychological bi-sexuality and feminine qualities analogous on the mental plane to the creative processes in woman, and in his extreme sensitivity and concern with aspects of life quite foreign to the average man. (*Genius* 82)

Sprawson also notes the sensual refinement Baudelaire required of any artist and attributes this to 'a precocious taste for the world of women': that is, an immersion from early childhood in a society from which he has been able to acquire, in Baudelaire's own words

...a delicacy of touch, a refinement of accent, a sort of androgyny, without which the heartiest, the most virile genius remains, as far as perfection of his art is concerned, an incomplete being.<sup>56</sup>

Just as Oscar Wilde's aphorisms which inveigh against marriage find their counterpart in Boyd's vaguely misogynist and wedlock-shy bachelor-aesthetes, so Boyd manages to capture the qualities

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<sup>54</sup>M. Gilson asks: 'What could an author not write...if he could leave all things to follow art, sacrificing to it all human claims, father, mother, wife and children', according to Kenmare, *The Nature of Genius*, p40.

<sup>55</sup>Boyd's Rome diaries show him writing to Kenmare regularly in his last years.

<sup>56</sup>From *Fleurs du Mal*, cited by Sprawson, 'Plaints of Icarus', p71.

of Baudelaire's androgynous artist — his sensitivity, his civility, his inner conciliation of polarities and his (implied) overt anti-masculinist sensibility — in those very same aesthetes.

Patricia Dobrez has noted in her article 'Martin Boyd's Aestheticism' that *The Montforts* represents a modern attempt to make the heroes of aesthetic literature — of Gautier, Pater or Wilde — seem plausible by placing them in a mundane context. The suggestion here is of contrivance, as if Boyd were consciously seeking approval for his protagonists through normalisation and legitimisation; attempting, as it were, a seamless interpolation of aestheticism into the ethos of Australian life. But in actuality the effect is not one of partial or apologetic effacement through integration, acceptance and bohemian liberality — although all of these things pertain — but of a celebrated difference. It is a celebration which takes in the gamut of aestheticism — its high ideals, notions of chivalry, the worship of beauty and its translation into the arts and everyday life — while not skating over its more transgressive elements as exemplified by the dandy and the dilettante, by same-sex friendships and by sexual indeterminacy. For Boyd is as scrupulous in confronting his male aesthetes' oddities and eccentricities, their status as misfits, and their feminized good looks as he is in detailing their fashionable, William Morris and Art Nouveau-influenced taste in furnishings and interior decor. In the latter category, for instance, we find Cousin Arthur's 'holy and exquisite' room at Scudamore with its Chinese embroidery, Murillo Madonna print and throne-like chair (*Montforts* 72); Raoul's liking for *The Studio's* 'illustrations, the repoussé metal-work, the embroidery and applique of the little flowers and...animals' (*Montforts* 171); and the real-life Cousin Ted à Beckett with his patterned tea-cups, his house smelling of lavender and his role as mentor to the young Boyd on such topics as the Beardsley-Swinburne motifs (*Day* 48-49). In the circumstances, Dobrez's politely cautious remark that Boyd points up a 'more effete strain' in Australian society<sup>57</sup> — despite a failure to explore the effeminate nature of 'effete' aestheticism and its connotations of delicacy, languor, and emasculation (as opposed to purely masculinised pursuits and their associations with dynamism, potency and virility); or to ask, for instance, whether sexual difference creates aesthetic difference — is the more pertinent. The reality is that Boyd wrote as his sensibility dictated. Aestheticism was for him as natural as breathing, ingrained in his conscious and unconscious life,<sup>58</sup> a legacy of both nature and nurture. Its presence in his Australian novels, not as a strain but as a dominant pervasiveness, has to be seen, therefore, as to some extent beyond his control. But there is a sense in which the cult of aestheticism is also consciously and deliberately employed as a protest against what Boyd perceived as Australia's philistinism (or bourgeois ethos), its materialism and masculinist values. So it is that in the novels with Australian settings, at least, the hardy frontiersmen of legend get short shrift as he anathematizes with gusto those family members who happen to be *nouveau riche* cattle-breeding squatters/pastoralists and, into the bargain, begetters of under-refined and over-virilized male progeny.

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<sup>57</sup>Patricia Dobrez, 'Martin Boyd's Aestheticism' (p29), *Australasian Victorian Studies Asscn. Conference*, University of Queensland, 1978. Published by the University for the *AVSA* in 1980.

<sup>58</sup>Dobrez's observation (in 'Martin Boyd's Aestheticism', p37) that Boyd unconsciously likened himself to Wilde's voluptuary Dorian Gray or Pater's little hedonist Florian by the luxurious thrusting of his face 'into the thick golden down of a wattle tree' (*A Single Flame*, p36) refers to an action which to my mind is more conscious than unconscious.

If Boyd's relatedness to English aestheticism is marked by contradiction over matters of morality there are additional, and equally paradoxical ramifications. Théophile Gautier's 'art for art's sake' school of thought which privileged art with its own set of aesthetic criteria is, in fact, a moderate view compared to the extremists' belief that in life and action as a whole aesthetic values should take precedence over values of other kinds. Yet the theory of life expounded in the conclusion to Pater's *Renaissance* and practised by Oscar Wilde — and they perhaps more than anyone else make their influence felt in Boyd's *oeuvre* — is closer to the latter.<sup>59</sup> The coincidence does not necessarily implicate Boyd to the same degree of radicalism. Nevertheless, coupled with his reiterated litany of favoured authors — a coterie which, in addition to those already listed, includes people like Ruskin, Swinburne, Tennyson, Montaigne, Shakespeare, Tolstoy, D. H. Lawrence and Rupert Brooke — and which is remarkable for its interconnectedness with notions of aestheticism, decadence, and/or sexual non-conformism, it lends reinforcement and validity to an hypothesis of Boyd as partaking in a transgressive aesthetic.<sup>60</sup> And although priority of interest alone does not warrant a definitive certainty in terms of the transgressive, the continual surfacing of Wildean and Baudelairean and Paterian themes (for example) signals a pattern of traces coherent with a discourse sympathetic, among other things, to Pater's development of a norm of culture focussed on the individual, and positive about the body.<sup>61</sup> Not inconsiderable evidence for a tendency to transgression may be found as well in Boyd's intellectual and emotional involvement in the reincarnation of Hellenism, in his attraction to dissident cliques such as the Bloomsburys and the neo-Pagans, even — or perhaps especially — in his commitment to Anglo-Catholicism.

Boyd's education in the classics — Greek and Latin — ended with a switch to English and history the year before he was to sit the university entrance examination. Ironically, as it turned out, he failed to matriculate in either of the new subjects, having 'gone happily through Xenophon and Aristophanes' as well as absorbing much of Sophocles, Plato, Ovid and (presumably) Homer. It was a classical range impressively far-reaching for a schoolboy, giving us reason to suppose that, like Winckelmann, he early formed a native affinity to the Hellenic spirit.<sup>62</sup> As a reader of Virgil and Catullus he was also brought face to face with the ancient Roman world, where, as C. H. Sisson reminds us, the sexual morals were not those of our own.<sup>63</sup> That Boyd appears to have been unfazed by these two poets may be counted as a measure of his breadth of acceptance, his liberality of spirit and his unsqueamishness: at the same time it would be obtuse to deny an appeal to his Dionysian instincts. To categorise either Virgil or Catullus as propagating images of 'happy pagan days [spent] romping in green meadows' is a 'sentimental notion, half-baked Keats', and simply

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<sup>59</sup>According to *The Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought*, (ed) Alan Bullock, Oliver Stallybrass & Stephen Trombley, London: Harper Collins, 1988, p12.

<sup>60</sup>Boyd claims for himself the spirit of revolt when he tells us of his ancestors the Boyds of Kilmarnock, whose part in the turbulent history of Scotland from 'Bannockburn to Culloden' had left a permanent 'colouration of my mind'. The temperament of the family is indicated, he says, by an entry in the Kilmarnock pedigree: 'Contrary to the traditions of his House, his lordship supported the existing government'. (*Day of My Delight* p8).

<sup>61</sup>The reference to Pater is from Dellamora, *Masculine Desire*, p109.

<sup>62</sup>The observation about Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717-1768) is made by Walter Pater in his essay 'Winckelmann', *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry (The 1893 Text)*, (ed) Donald L. Hill, California: University of California Press, 1980, p152.

<sup>63</sup>C. H. Sisson, (trans) *Catullus*, Great Britain: MacGibbon & Kee, 1966, p93.

wrong, according to Paglia (*Personae* 131). On the contrary she classifies Virgil's *Aeneid*, for example, as closet drama emasculated by epic weakness, eroticism and the 'detachment and connoisseurship so damaging to epic's male pyrotechnics'; and the poet himself is seen as reflecting, at the borderline between republic and empire, the decadence implied in the shift from Apollonian unity and narrowness to an uncontrolled Dionysian pluralism (*Personae* 129-30). As the republic ends, so Catullus — his style 'simple and direct, frequently slangy and at times ostentatiously obscene'<sup>64</sup> — records the 'jazzy promiscuity of Rome's chic set', where woman is depicted as a depraved and primitive femme fatale and the poet as mutating through gender (*Personae* 131-32):<sup>65</sup> indeed Catullus is compared by Paglia to Baudelaire, savouring 'imagery of squalor and filth' (*Personae* 131). Scholars for whom Catullus's indecency overstepped the bounds have tended to excuse it as part of a larger convention exercised by classical poets and orators. Sisson's valediction in his volume of translation, however, puts a more realistic slant on the pagan impulse: 'Catullus my friend across twenty centuries,/ Anxious to complete your lechery before Christ came'.

A capacity to accommodate Dionysian motives of human nature as irrational and abandoned — as 'remnants of animal impulse'<sup>66</sup> — indicates a temperament attuned, like Winckelmann's, to the life of the senses and conscious of a more liberal mode of being. Such a mindset appears to run counter to Boyd's empathy with Arnoldian notions of harmony, rationality and justice — the 'sweetness and light' alluded to in *Much Else in Italy* that one inevitably associates with Hellenism's emphasis on the pre-eminence of intellectual light — but it is important that these dispositions are seen as complementary: Boyd's vision of harmony, as we know, encompassed the integration of body and soul. The dichotomy, if there is one, lies with Arnold and his antithesis between spirit and flesh, what Dellamora has specified as his setting of 'the body and its claims asunder from... "the heart and imagination" and reason'. Questionable, too, is how Boyd might have viewed Arnold's innate and patriarchal authoritarianism, his accent on modern science and, in his search for an adequate (and agnostic) contemporary form of religion, the subsuming of pagan and Christian religions (the religions he called those of 'pleasure' and 'sorrow') to a third term, imaginative reason. And one may safely assume that Arnold's most disaffecting aspect from Boyd's viewpoint may well have been his inherent erotophobia and homophobia: his refusal, as identified by Dellamora, of a full-blooded response to the phenomenal world. Examples given by Dellamora include Arnold's denial, in his critique of the fifteenth idyll of Theocritus, of 'affective and bodily relationships between men as well as between men and women'; and his misreading of St Francis's life-affirming delight in the world as mystical, otherworldly, and ultimately death-oriented (*Desire* 104).

Winckelmann, on the other hand, the writer who did most in the eighteenth century to promote the Greek ideal of artistic beauty (Aldrich 41), seems more comprehensively compatible with Boyd's temperament. An art historian of passionate intellect who, like Boyd, never got closer

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<sup>64</sup>According to R. F. Quinn, *Critical Essays on Roman Literature* (ed) J. P. Sullivan, 1962, p47, and cited by Sisson, *Catullus*, p92.

<sup>65</sup>In his lament for the dying god Attis, according to Paglia.

<sup>66</sup>Kenneth Clark, *The Nude*, p264, in a reference to Pater's description, in his *Study of Dionysus*, of 'that population of satyrs, maenads, sylvans and nereids which represented, in the Greek imagination, the irrational elements of human nature'.

to Greece than Rome, Winckelmann was driven by the same feelings — an 'ardent attraction towards the south... [by] that love of the sun, that weariness of the north'<sup>67</sup> — experienced by Boyd in his first encounter with the 'dazzling impact of Mediterranean life' and its 'Parthenon frieze' of bathing, near-naked youths (*Day* 147). It is a sentiment he reproduces in his last novel, *The Tea-Time of Love*, with the image of Andromeda

desperate to break through into some world of beauty and passion, to smell the jasmine in the moonlight, to hear the nightingale in the oleanders...Like Winckelmann [sic], she was forty and she longed for the south.<sup>68</sup>

Significantly, Andromeda's longing for a 'living Praxiteles bronze' to climb up her balcony to her bed is a transparent allusion to the fact that Winckelmann's taste for beauty lay in Greek sculpture, and specifically the sculpted male form, the apprehension of which required, according to him, a finely-honed sensibility:

As it is confessedly the beauty of man which is to be conceived under one general idea, so I have noticed that those who are observant of beauty only in women, and are moved little or not at all by the beauty of men, seldom have an impartial, vital, inborn instinct for beauty in art. To such persons the beauty of Greek art will ever seem wanting, because its supreme beauty is rather male than female.<sup>69</sup>

Winckelmann's principal achievement was to divine the spirit or temperament of the antique world, to describe ideal art in terms of its combination of sensible embodiment and spiritual motive. Like the Greeks, he recognised the concept of a 'lordship of the soul' that bestowed 'authority and divinity to human eyes and hands and feet': an indication, in Pater's estimation, of 'a happy limit [where] the mind has not yet learned to boast its independence of the flesh'.<sup>70</sup> It was a concept Winckelmann carried into the conduct of his amorous affairs: here it was the beauty of living form, as Pater has observed, that regulated his 'romantic, fervent friendships with young men'.<sup>71</sup> His belief in the connection between the physical and the aesthetic worked to blur the distinctions between art and life, and enabled him to write: '...I found in a beautiful body a soul fashioned for virtue, a soul which is endowed with the perception of the beautiful' (Aldrich 45).

Winckelmann's male supremacist or alternatively, neo-platonist view of the heightened endowment of aesthetic sensibility enjoyed by those alive to the beauty of the male form — at the expense of the female — finds a resonance in Michel de Montaigne's thoughts on friendship between men. Montaigne's name crops up only in passing in Boyd's *Outbreak of Love*, in a passage where Freddie Thorpe tries to convince himself that Clara Bumpus will prove a more satisfactory match than the cultured Anthea Langton as she was 'unlikely to embarrass him by quoting Montaigne, Madame du Deffand or Voltaire at a hunt ball' (*Outbreak* 478). But his ghost is evoked whenever Boyd underwrites Greek fraternization or manly love; and it hovers over Guy's question concerning the Christian religion's complicity in 'the doctrine of brotherly love' in *A Difficult Young*

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<sup>67</sup>Madame de Staël on Winckelmann, cited by Walter Pater in his essay 'Winckelmann', *The Renaissance*, p142.

<sup>68</sup>*The Tea-Time of Love*, p17.

<sup>69</sup>Letter to Friedrich von Berg, reproduced in Pater, *The Renaissance*, p153.

<sup>70</sup>Pater, *The Renaissance*, p164.

<sup>71</sup>Pater, *The Renaissance*, p152.

*Man.* Montaigne, in his essay 'Of Friendship', follows the Ancient schools of philosophy in claiming that 'the true and perfect friendship' is the superior one between men, a 'divine' and 'indivisible' alliance of which the female sex is incapable. Commenting on his exclusion of 'a holy bond that would unite anyone other than two men, two male "companions", in the figure and the oath of...natural fraternity',<sup>72</sup> Jacques Derrida sees Montaigne as the silent dismitter of heterosexual friendship. Even men's love for women, says Montaigne

'tis more precipitant, fickle, moving and inconstant; a fever subject to intermissions and paroxysms, that has seized but on one part of us. Whereas in friendship, 'tis a general and universal fire, but temperate and equal, a constant established heat, all gentle and smooth, without poignancy or roughness.<sup>73</sup>

The version of the male bond expressed here is disarmingly — one could say impossibly — aestheticised and idealised, a reflection perhaps of Montaigne's privileging of antiquity over medievalism.<sup>74</sup> That Montaigne is not speaking of a spiritualized love only is conveyed by the 'constant heat' indicative of passion. Yet, and this may be an anachronistic, post-Freudian quibble, he makes no concession to sexual desire or its potential for disorder, betrayal, turbulence and despair. We have only to think of Edmund Gosse's allusion to 'the wild beast...this volcanic force, ever on the verge of destructive ebullition [to which] one owes the most beautiful episodes of existence';<sup>75</sup> of the fate of Winckelmann at the hands of his unsavoury (probable) lover Arcangeli (Aldrich 44); or of the double life of disguise and secrecy forced upon the homosexual in our own time. Derrida senses the dangers implicit in Montaigne's bonding of souls, the potential for dissymmetry and conflict, when he asks: 'If correspondence is another name for an indivisible community of the soul between lovers, why should it harbour this taste of death, of the impossible, of the aporia?'<sup>76</sup> Several more of Montaigne's essay propositions are highly relevant to issues already raised by this discussion. His diminishment of the model of marriage is one, his reinforcement of the Aristotelian notion of one soul in twin bodies another. Derrida likens Montaigne's covenant of marriage to a 'free market' — shades of Irigaray — that is made 'for other purposes' than the autonomy and the disinterestness that fit friendship, but which is not so free that it can admit of relationships that are themselves free, voluntary and equal.<sup>77</sup>

The notion of equality in itself becomes an issue when twin souls or bodies are considered, prompting the question: is the friend the same or the other? Cicero prefers the same, according to Derrida, because the friend is 'our own ideal image', the duplicate, the reproduction, the copy as well as the original, the face and its mirror; he is a double, another self, the same as self but improved: 'a Narcissus dreaming of immortality'.<sup>78</sup> And indeed Montaigne's philosophy veers provocatively close to the notion of the friendship which proceeds from self-love when he refers to

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<sup>72</sup>Jacques Derrida, *Politics of Friendship* (trans) George Collins, London: Verso, 1997, p180.

<sup>73</sup>From *The Essays of Michel De Montaigne*, (trans) Charles Cotton, (ed) W. Carew Hazlitt, London: George Bell & Sons, 1892, p194.

<sup>74</sup>*Everyman's Encyclopaedia* Vol. 8, p520.

<sup>75</sup>Edmund Gosse, 1890 letter, cited by Dellamora, *Masculine Desire*, p23.

<sup>76</sup>Derrida, *Politics of Friendship*, p179.

<sup>77</sup>Derrida, *Politics of Friendship*, p190.

<sup>78</sup>Derrida, *Politics of Friendship*, p4.

the 'unique and particular friendship' which enables him to 'without perjury communicate to him who is not another, but myself'.<sup>79</sup> Derrida, however, inverts the norm by suggesting that even self-love need not depend on axioms of sameness and compatibility, narcissism and self-exemplarity: 'Unless', he postulates, 'one would find the other in oneself, already: the same dissymmetry and tension of surviving in self, in the "oneself" thus out of joint with its own existence'.<sup>80</sup> The notion of a survival dependent on reconciliation with one's own radically different and maverick self is perhaps one more component in the puzzle of Martin Boyd's complicated, 'divided', and 'double' personality. There are other, less contentious but no less pertinent themes presented by Derrida: for example, the Ciceronian idea (again, obeying notions of sameness) of men preferring their relatives to others, their fellow citizens to foreigners. The first is confirmed by Boyd's persistence on the bond between cousins, whether heterosexual or homosocial, an affinity endorsed by Alice in her Italian diary: 'It is said that we should love most those most closely related to us...If one's love of a friend enhanced the quality of one's life, that was enough justification' (*Crown* 142). With typical contrariety, however, Boyd severely tests the notion of the 'foreign' as unacceptable when, following in the homoerotic tradition of travelling south, and indeed, in seeming to adopt the pedagogic/pederastic tradition of ancient Greece, he takes up with Luciano Trombini in Rome in the last years of his life. As recorded in his diary, Boyd's attitude towards the young man belies that of a platonic friendship or even that of a loving father/son relationship. His emotions towards Luciano are intense, those of a man caught up in an all-consuming, and often anguishing, love affair. The two spend hours together, for the most part playing unspecified 'giochi'; Boyd records sketching Luc sunbathing nude in his flat on 11 March 1961;<sup>81</sup> the entry for 21 August 1958 reads, in part: 'Giochi till tea [with "au naturel" added above the line in different ink]. Spend whole day together'. Is Boyd merely playing the part of the paternal artist/friend or is he intimating a degree of intimacy that could qualify as an affective bodily relationship? Obviously physicality plays a role here, though it is idle to speculate as to its exact nature. As a matter of interest and some irony, however, it should not go unrecorded that the name 'Trombini' contains within it an encrypted explosiveness: a plural diminutive from the verb 'trombare', it literally translates as something in the order of 'littlefucker' or 'gentlescrew'.<sup>82</sup>

Irrespective of its realisation or otherwise in overt sexual expression, Boyd's relationship with Luciano — 'the truest friendship of my life' — was demonstrably not without its quotient of eroticism and passion. Coincidentally, it was Pater's emphasis on passion in his 'Conclusion' to *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1873) — the first classic of English aestheticism (*Personae* 481) — which changed aesthetic theory into a manifesto for action (Aldrich 76). The 'Conclusion's' statement of moral relativism and sensuality was so controversial it was omitted from the following edition, with Pater explaining subsequently that he feared it might mislead some young men (the

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<sup>79</sup>Montaigne, *The Essays*, p202.

<sup>80</sup>Derrida, *Politics of Friendship*, p24.

<sup>81</sup>It is a matter of interest that Boyd's Roman diaries, held at the National Library in Canberra, record the execution of many nude, neo-classical drawings made at this time of his life. Most of these drawings, and some paintings, are of a sensuous nature and are held at the Library.

<sup>82</sup>This philological information comes from Gaetano Prampolini, professor of American and Australian literature at Florence University. His advice is that 'trombare' is 'one of the myriad ways in which we indicate in impolite conversation the basic sexual act'. Letter, 23/12/97.

'misleading' was into sexual hedonism, specifically homosexuality (*Personae* 482)). To those students Pater taught at Oxford who were to become the heralds of *fin-de-siècle* aestheticism and decadence, however, it represented an injunction to remain open to experience and the 'stirring of the senses': 'To burn always with this hard, gemlike flame, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in life'.<sup>83</sup> Passion is a bulwark against transience, Pater intimates:

Great passions may give us this quickened sense of life, ecstasy and sorrow of love, the various forms of enthusiastic activity, disinterested or otherwise, which come naturally to many of us. Only be sure it is passion — that it does yield you this fruit of a quickened, multiplied consciousness. Of such wisdom, the poetic passion, the desire of beauty, the love of art for its own sake, has most. For art comes to you proposing frankly to give nothing but the highest quality to your moments as they pass, and simply for those moments' sake.<sup>84</sup>

Potentially 'dangerously immoral and radical', says Aldrich, the statement was nevertheless revolutionary in that it served to bring together aesthetics and morality in a way which embraced eroticism (Aldrich 76). As a leading intellectual and critic of the Victorian age, Pater was a younger rival to his Oxford colleague John Ruskin, and among his students were Oscar Wilde and Gerard Manley Hopkins. Dellamora tells us that his essays on Winckelmann and Leonardo da Vinci were responsible for fashioning an art historical-critical discourse expressive of male-male desire as a major medium of cultural reflection (*Desire* 18). Despite his promotion of hedonistic aestheticism and his focus on perverse sexual self-awareness, however, Pater's references to male bonding are always subdued and nuanced; and his personal life, according to Dellamora, betrays scant sexual interest or activity (*Desire* 75). His call for passion notwithstanding, Paglia finds in Pater emotional repression and inhibited movement, his accent on fluidity and flux too Dionysian, 'an apparent anomaly in aestheticism' because the aesthete honours 'sharply contoured Apollonian objets d'art as a protest against the chthonian liquid realm of female nature'; and she is critical of *Marius the Epicurean's* lack of energy: 'It is overpoweringly effete', she says — 'beautiful, grave, and austere, but Decadent with enervation' (*Personae* 484). Logically, she says, Pater cannot exalt direct, unmediated experience and also insist on the imprisoned self (*Personae* 482). But then, like Martin Boyd, Pater is not always consistent: as DeLaura comments, his personality was undoubtedly subject to divergent and opposing forces.<sup>85</sup>

There can also be no doubt that Pater exerted a profound influence over Boyd, or that Boyd experienced his ideas as at least sympatico, and at most liberating. Pater's vanguard system of aesthetics was daring in its homoerotic and anti-homophobic bias: importantly, he urged for a refinement of consciousness and perception as against 'masculine achievement in a materialistic imperialistic culture' (*Personae* 482). Closer to home, Pater was a seemingly passive and celibate homosexual; in his advocacy of hedonism he followed ascetic Epicurus rather than the sensual

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<sup>83</sup>Boyd's Paul Brayford demonstrates the difficulty of matching this idealised and rapturous sensual aesthetic with a more realistic (and humorous) declaration of relativism: 'Everything I see and hear impinges on me, every waking minute my mind is rejecting some ugliness, accepting some beauty. The flame at the centre of my being does not burn hard and gem-like, but wavering and smoky from all these draughts (*Lucinda Brayford* p291).

<sup>84</sup>Walter Pater, *The Renaissance*, p190.

<sup>85</sup>David J. DeLaura, *Hebrew and Hellene in Victorian England*, p299.

Cyrenaics (*Personae* 482); besides aesthetics, his interests resided in classicism, myth, medievalism, religion and art, with a special emphasis on the conflicting impulses attributed to Apollo and Dionysus. His writing style may be essentially chastened and decorous but his celebrated verdict on the Mona Lisa, where he speaks of

the animalism of Greece, the lust of Rome, the mysticism of the middle age with its spiritual ambition and imaginative loves, the return of the Pagan world, the sins of the Borgias....<sup>86</sup>

shows him capable of an all-inclusive perceptiveness and rhetorical extravagance even Paglia might envy. In Boyd's works Pater's presence may be shadowy, witness Broom's declaration that cultivated man can 'never have any religion or morals except provisionally' (*Montforts* 241), or, alternatively, Dominic Langton's imagined composition as a surfeit of black soul-stuff that seems related — recalling his characterization as 'strange' and 'other' — to the 'strange dyes, strange colours, and curious odours' associated in Pater's 'Conclusion' with 'the face of one's friend'. Or it may be straightforward, as, for instance, in Boyd's allusion to medieval Christianity as 'described in *Marius*' (*Much Else* 57), or when Raoul Blair writes 'very Pateresque descriptive articles for a Melbourne monthly' (*Montforts* 230), or again, when Lucinda Brayford, reflecting on Paul Brayford, borrows without discrimination: 'She thought that he was like that Duke Carl in Pater's *Imaginary Portraits*, in whom people had "the spectacle, under those superficial braveries, of a really heroic effort of mind at a disadvantage"' (*Brayford* 498). Boyd's captivation by the Duke Carl of Rosenmold is readily understandable. Heir to a German sovereign-state in the early eighteenth century, he is the archetypal aesthete: good looking, with 'full red lips and open blue eyes', he is 'restless', 'romantic', and 'eccentric'; his mind is 'turned...upon embellishment and the softer things of life'.<sup>87</sup> He is also an idealist who aspires to introduce into the 'hyperborean German darkness' the classical ideal, some glimmer of Apollonian intellect to bring refinement to German art, music and poetry; his ultimate goal, however, lies in self-discovery. An interesting sidelight on Duke Carl is that he is a 'little mad': and as if in proof, he stages his own death and burial service. Eccentricity, of course, is endemic to Boyd's novels, inspired no doubt by his family's unconventionality. It may even be possible that the form of mysterious, even divine, madness that overtakes Jackie Montfort, Dominic Langton and Stephen Brayford is, in each case, strangely integral to a spiritual crisis of conscience and self-realisation.

By far the most significant effect of Pater's influence is to be seen, however, in Boyd's *Much Else in Italy* (1958). Much less a travel memoir than a personal journey towards spiritual truth and enlightenment, the book in a curious but perhaps not immediately apparent way parallels Marius's second-century quest for the God of Love in Pater's novel, *Marius the Epicurean*. Both works, despite their disparate genres, incorporate elements of religious autobiography. Both represent the religious pilgrimage as an impulse towards syncretism, here the integration or reconciliation of the pagan and the Christian: and as such, both are quietly subversive. Pater's method is to conflate Christian allegory with a mythic re-enactment of the story of Cupid and

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<sup>86</sup>Walter Pater, 'Leonardo da Vinci', *The Renaissance*, pp98-99.

<sup>87</sup>Walter Pater, *Imaginary Portraits*, London: Macmillan, 1929, p144.

Psyche, one of the few myths he knew to be accepted by the early Christians.<sup>88</sup> Here it is possible, according to Gerald Monsman, to see Marius as a masculinised Mary, the virgin soul in search of the supreme Lover, for whom

the legend of Cupid and Psyche becomes a parable of his own human situation, of his incarceration in the narrow prison of mortality, of his need to find some larger world which would answer to those dreams of a city of immortal Love.<sup>89</sup>

Boyd's pilgrim, on the other hand, is 'a kind of White Boy in search of God', a Southern Irish Protestant with 'an inherited prejudice against Catholicism' (*Much Else* 6). Where Psyche's story forms itself in Marius's mind as 'the ideal of a perfect imaginative love, centered upon a type of beauty entirely flawless and clean — an ideal which never wholly faded from his thoughts',<sup>90</sup> Boyd and his companion seek throughout Rome for a similar ideal, one which must combine 'the animal well-being of the Apollo of Veii' and 'the serenity of mind of the Apollo of Tevere' with something more elevated. They are to find the beauty they desire in the dreamy peacefulness of Michelangelo's deposed Christ. As Boyd depicts this image, it is made to represent a new Trinity, an Apollonian and Christian synthesis: 'The Face of incarnate innocence, of redeeming love, which superimposed on the others completes the Perfect Drawing' (*Much Else* 125). The Irish boy's journey of discovery mimics to a certain extent Marius's figurative progress through the philosophies of the ancient world: Marius's consideration of, for example, Epicureanism with its accent on pleasure and sensual enjoyment, and of Cyrenaicism's hedonism and worship of physical beauty, is echoed in the Irish boy's determination to enjoy life:

He does not ask to tread 'a steep and rugged pathway'...He much prefers to walk in the green pastures. He is not going to pray for affliction in his sparkling youth, but for the abundant life intended for him by the Supreme Noos at the Creation, and promised by his Son, who turned the water into good wine. (*Much Else* 116)

Like Marius, the Irish boy refuses to abandon the material world; for both young men it must somehow be reconciled with the spiritual. Both, ultimately, are granted their respective reconciliations: Marius at the point where, realizing that pagan systems of thought cannot accommodate the facts of evil, pain and death, he encounters Christianity — and Apollonian synthesis — in the form of the chivalric knight Cornelius for whom he will undertake the ultimate human sacrifice in an act of brotherly love; and the Irish boy in the vision of the redemptive Christ, he whose face is not 'disfigured and defeated by death' (*Much Else* 127).

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<sup>88</sup>Gerald Cornelius Monsman, *Pater's Portraits: Mythic Pattern in the Fiction of Walter Pater*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1967, p72. The point is acknowledged by Boyd when he has Russell Lockwood tell Diana von Flugel that 'the old gods' such as Cupid and Psyche existed and had meaning: 'The Church didn't deny that' (*Outbreak of Love*, p402).

<sup>89</sup>Monsman, *Pater's Portraits*, p74.

<sup>90</sup>Walter Pater, *Marius the Epicurean: His Sensations and Ideas*, New York: Random House, (no date), p76. Further references to this work will be given by page number in the text. As Monsman has noted (*Pater's Portraits* p72), the story of Cupid and Psyche is the allegory of the mortal soul freed from the grip of death through the power of its 'love of Love' (*Marius* 61): Christ became Cupid, and the marriage to Psyche recalls the well-known image of Christ as the bridegroom of 'the living soul' (*Marius* 53).

What the Irish boy also perceives in the face of Christ is the second Adam, the 'double perfection' of body and intellect, flesh and spirit, phenomenon and soul. We may recall Boyd's argument that 'a young man's god is his ideal of himself, himself in Perfect Drawing', and that ultimately his god must appear to him as his own face in the mirror of perfection (*Much Else* 40 & 42). The aesthetic notion of the self as perfected by recognising and cultivating perfection is one we find in *Marius the Epicurean* when Marius speaks of himself as 'of the number of those who...must be "made perfect by the love of visible beauty"' — a theory of susceptibility to 'potent material essences' he puts down to Plato's *Phaedrus* (*Marius* 26). (It is no surprise, then, to find Marius, rather like Martin Boyd, avoiding 'everything repugnant to sight').<sup>91</sup> The genial Christ is another, and coincidental, Paterian idea. Where Boyd sees the Son of God as an 'Apollo redeemed' who 'did nothing but good, shedding pleasure and kindness and healing wherever he went' (*Much Else* 145), Pater has a vision of the Good Shepherd as 'serene, blithe and debonair, beyond the gentlest shepherd of Greek mythology; of a king under whom the beatific vision is realized of a reign of peace — peace of heart — among men' (*Marius* 291). Pater and Boyd also converge somewhat in their attitudes to the Catholic Church. Pater claims that to be admitted from narrower sects into the communion of the Catholic Church has 'the expanding power of a great experience'; while Boyd has the Cambridge student Hayman reassure Stephen Brayford in his infatuation for a young choirboy that Catholic theology 'includes, explains and justifies every good thing in life' (*Brayford* 381). One more coincidence seems too extraordinary to overlook: it is a passage in which Pater, in projecting his own reserved temperament on to Marius:

...it had always been his policy, through all his pursuit of 'experience', to take flight in time from any too disturbing passion, from any sort of affection likely to quicken his pulses beyond the point at which the quiet work of life was practicable.... (*Marius* 353)

could also be describing Martin Boyd. There is however, one relevant and outstanding instance of divergence of thought evinced in these particular works of Pater and Boyd, and that is the Irish boy's insistence on chastity as redundant: where Pater insists that chastity (from Marius's point of view at least) 'is the most beautiful thing in the world and the truest conservation of that creative energy by which men and women were first brought into it' (*Marius* 288), the Irish boy is adamant that

he intended to enjoy his body to its fullest extent, not in mere beefy exercise, but in love and all good pleasures...He had been told that he 'should treat sex reverently'. He did not want to treat it reverently. He thought that people who did so would have the most ghastly prigs for children...he thought that sex at its best should have a ravishing beauty; it would be like returning to live with the gods in the morning of the world...It is ignoble and mean to reject [the Creator's] glorious gift by leading a deliberately deprived and emaciated life... (*Much Else* 36-37).

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<sup>91</sup>This is reflected in Paul Brayford's insistence, on assuming the title of Lord Crittenden, that his servants should be chosen solely for their looks, because, as he says, 'I don't like meeting ugly housemaids in the passages'; to which the narrator adds 'but he was, of course, even more fastidious in his choice of footmen' (*Lucinda Brayford* p495).

Here we can reasonably assume that the Irish boy is extolling the virtues of heterosexual sex; we can assume Boyd's sympathies as well, since his expressed view of the body and its pleasures and of sensate experience in general is vehemently anti-puritanical. This theoretically positive endorsement of sexual activity gives rise to the perennial conundrum we run across with Boyd: on the one hand, the public advocacy of the pleasures of the flesh; on the other, the private semblance of restraint and chastity. In practical terms, we are called upon to balance a series of affective male-to-male relationships against Kenmare's categorisation of the creative artist as 'unnaturally' erotic as opposed to naturally sexual (*Genius* 75) — if only because Boyd claimed to have found, in Kenmare, an insightful champion of wayward genius.

While in the larger sphere it is possible to find remarkable symmetries of concern between Pater and Boyd, Boyd's homage to *Marius the Epicurean* is also paid in small details and subtleties. Take for instance Marius's removal to the city of Pisa — the world of the summer Dionysus — which corresponds roughly, as Monsman observes, to Pater's English Poet's trip southward.<sup>92</sup> In Pisa Marius eats of the 'Tree of Knowledge' and is plunged, like the allegorical Psyche, into sensuous nature; and his friend Flavian dies of the plague, partly because his Dionysian love cannot aspire to immortality but predominantly because his mind is 'imprisoned in its own subjectivity'<sup>93</sup> (in his congested egotism Flavian resembles *Dearest Idol's* Tony Dawson). Something of the pagan Dionysian spirit in its more life-affirming and celebratory mode — some manifestation of Boyd's recognition that the 'pagan gods are little more than our own natures' (*Much Else* 86) — expresses itself in *The Cardboard Crown* when the already-married and respectable grandmother Alice Langton steps into Pisa's Campo Santo and experiences 'pleasure', 'hope' and a 'liberation of the spirit' (p74) just prior to meeting and falling in love with Aubrey Tunstall.<sup>94</sup> More significantly perhaps, it is following an excursion to the Campo Santo, its three serene and mysterious buildings representative of 'the flowering of Christian religion in innocence and perfect beauty' (*Much Else* 174), that the Irish boy discovers the object of his search. Relying as they do on intuitive apprehension, his findings reveal unmistakable Dionysian undertones: 'Christ', he says, 'was a phenomenon, not an intellect. He was the jewel in the cradle, the sparkling boy, the noble man...His function was Being, and his wisdom came from his heart and not his head. He showed us how to live again with innocence and pleasure in the natural world' (*Much Else* 175).

As an occupant of the Boyd household's bookshelves and possible formative influence, Pater's senior colleague and rival John Ruskin deserves a mention here for the simple reason that, while his approach to the arts in many ways reflects Boyd's enthusiasms, it was not without its dissident or transgressive elements. The leading critic of the visual arts at mid-century, Ruskin may not have attempted anything to equal Pater's positive evaluation of perversity — Pater as a matter of fact accuses him of a 'disabling morality' — nevertheless he does, according to Dellamora, wrestle with the place of desire in artistic production. His art criticism was advanced insofar as it

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<sup>92</sup>Monsman, *Pater's Portraits*, p67.

<sup>93</sup>Monsman, *Pater's Portraits*, p74.

<sup>94</sup>Boyd records his own reaction to Pisa's Campo Santo in similar terms: 'I had an extraordinary sense of illumination: [The buildings'] beauty seemed to me to reveal something towards which I had always been groping, and gave me a sense of a homecoming of the spirit...I was like stout Cortez on the peak in Darien' (*Day of My Delight*, p118).

converged with the classicizing and humanistic tendencies evident in the work of the Pre-Raphaelites; most notable, however, was his effort to devise a secular artistic norm capable of harmonizing the competing claims of body and spirit (*Desire* 117). It was an ambition arising out of his religious 'unconversion' of 1858 at a moment when he was struck by the contrast between Evangelical asceticism and 'the Gorgeousness of life which the world seems to be constituted to develop' (*Desire* 120). But it also was relevant to a belated acceptance of eroticism as a component of the artistic imagination, an amendment he makes in *Modern Painters V* (and here there are echoes of Boyd's own convictions): '[man's] nature is nobly animal, nobly spiritual — coherently and irrevocably so...All great art confesses and worships both'.<sup>95</sup> Having become receptive to eroticism, having also accepted sexual nonconformity as an aspect of 'nobly animal' male artists, Ruskin sends notes from Turin to his father:

Certainly it seems intended that strong and frank animality, rejecting all tendency to asceticism, monachism, pietism, and so on, should be connected with the strongest intellects...Homer, Shakespeare, Tintoret, Veronese, Titian, Michael Angelo, Sir Joshua, Rubens, Valasquez, Correggio, Turner, are all of them boldly Animal. Francia and Angelico, and all the purists, however beautiful, are poor weak creatures in comparison.<sup>96</sup>

Despite this, just as Ruskin's writings betray masculine gender anxieties in relation to the female body, so Ruskin's considered reflections on the character of male genius are ambivalent and confusing. Where Pater takes signs of psychological and sexual instability as signs of 'troubled greatness', Ruskin, in an elaborate foretaste of Kenmare and her views of the artist as schizophrenic, postulates genius as diseased and 'almost inevitably linked with sexual irregularity and mental aberration' (*Desire* 118). He also implicitly concurs with Baudelaire's theory of the creative artist as bisexual by proposing, apropos Turner, that hermaphrodeity is a symbol of the 'mind' of male genius (*Desire* 125).

If Ruskin demonstrated his *avant-garde* credentials in helping, with Pater, to re-formulate cultural critique by hypothesizing a place for a body-centred and deviant aesthetic, he proved himself less theoretically adventurous in attacking Whistler's painting style in 1877 and landing himself with a libel suit which was to become a cause célèbre of the Aesthetic Movement. At stake was the proposition that beauty was as much a product of the formal qualities — line, form, colour — of painting as of its content or ideas. Boyd signals his awareness of issues such as these in surreptitious ways: by, for example, attributing to Conder rather than Whistler the inspiration behind the Peacock Room at Crittenden painted by Paul Brayford's father; or by subtly acknowledging, in his allusions to 'significant form' — first, with Gavin Leigh's express need to worship 'these significant forms, these thrilling colours' (*Night* 318); and then with Cynthia Langton's use of the phrase after having viewed what she evidently considers her cousin Brian's unoriginal representative paintings — Clive Bell's development of an aesthetics of art founded both in the unassailability of pure line and form and in the ethical principles of G. E. Moore. Bell attempted to elevate art to a realm beyond moral condemnation by equating 'significant form' (and

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<sup>95</sup>Ruskin is cited by Dellamora, *Masculine Desire*, pp119-120.

<sup>96</sup>Cited by Dellamora, *Masculine Desire*, p123.

here other elements of visual art such as representation were excluded from the definition) with the 'good' (and therefore intrinsically moral) mental state of 'aesthetic emotion'. Though in many respects flawed,<sup>97</sup> his hypothesis was seemingly well-motivated and shares some of the reasoning behind the Aesthetic Movement's attitude to art. Boyd's own view is ambivalent, seeming on the one hand to endorse Bell's concept in the Gavin Leigh episode but reacting with disapproval to the intellectually pretentious Cynthia in *Outbreak of Love*. The latter episode consists in Cynthia's urging of Brian to be more adventurous (to deviate into 'significant form' is understood here in the light of her subsequent allusion): 'You didn't invent that method. Why don't you experiment with more interesting ways of using paint?', to which Boyd appends a comment in usurpation of the young Guy Langton's role as narrator: 'It was surprising how soon in that remote place [Warrandyte] she had caught the atmosphere which was to corrode the soul of her generation' (*Outbreak* 446).<sup>98</sup> Cynthia is clearly meant to be seen as symbolic of youth's willingness to embrace fashion and change; at the same time, however, with the news that 'significant form' is a phrase she has picked up from an English review — a 'flimsy' source of knowledge (*Outbreak* 450) — the reader is warned that she may be misguided. One might think that rationally, even for someone with Boyd's strong antipathy for modern art, there would exist abstract paintings — by a Kandinsky or a Klee for example — capable of provoking in him aesthetic emotion and therefore a sensation of pleasure — pleasure being the root of all critical appreciation of art.<sup>99</sup> However, we are left with the general impression that abstraction of any kind, regardless of any would-be claim to moral superiority, is possibly too incoherent, too illegible, too obscure and too disrespectful of tradition to meet Boyd's aesthetic criteria.

Having said that, having divested Boyd of his dissenting voice in favour of convention (or alternatively, having granted him dissent against change), what are we to make of the Expressionist depictions of the crucified Christ painted by his parallel and 'mad' protagonists Jackie Blair and Dominic Langton? Each is touched by religious zealotry and a passionate opposition to war; each is martyred to the pacifist cause, Jackie as a conscientious objector who dies in prison and Dominic as an artistic recluse who ends his days in a psychiatric ward carrying bedpans, or, in the words of his brother Guy, like 'St Simon of Cyrene, helping our Lord to carry the Cross' (*Crown* 3). As painters, both unload their religious angst and unshakable credos of brotherly love into figurative crucifixion images that are luridly graphic but hauntingly powerful: works which, with their bowed heads and, in Dominic's case at least, conspicuous genitals, besides recalling Brett Whiteley's similarly confronting treatment of the same subject,<sup>100</sup> draw attention to Christ's essential humanity. The style is definitively modernist, and the tormented images are anchored in reality and

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<sup>97</sup>According to Jeffrey T. Dean, 'Clive Bell and G. E. Moore: The Good of Art', *British Journal of Aesthetics*, Vol. 36, No. 2, April 1990, p135-145. Dean finds that the argument to establish the causal nexus of aesthetic emotion and significant form falters on Bell's own admission that other experiences like, say, the contemplation of nature, can cause aesthetic emotion. It also fails to take account of Moore's conception of intrinsically good things as complex, organic wholes.

<sup>98</sup>Cynthia's intellectual precociousness had been queried in similar fashion earlier: 'And she began that train of questioning, of re-assessment so beloved of the intelligentsia, which having become an obsession, has led to the disintegration of our whole tradition of art and religion and moral values' (*Outbreak of Love* p421).

<sup>99</sup>According to Robert Hughes, *The Shock of the New: Art and the Century of Change*, London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1980, p7.

<sup>100</sup>Whiteley's paintings may be seen at the Whiteley Studio in Surry Hills, Sydney.

rich in moral parable. Neither Jackie nor Dominic represents the height of the artistic soul in terms of accomplishment, and here perhaps, the implied rawness and offensiveness of their works could be taken as a critique of the modern. Each is, however, a courageous being trying to live creatively and honestly, trying, as Guy says of Dominic, 'to make his outer things accord with those which were within' (*Crown* 4). Bohemians and non-conformists both, these characters personify the long-term result of Romantic subjectivism and its cultivation of the individual ego and sensibility. Or as Boyd would have it, they are obeying the Holy Ghost within, validating, as it were, the individualised morality. Their paintings and drawings may not be to his personal taste (he dislikes the 'Catholic' resort to accentuated suffering in religious pictures), and they do not conform to a notion of art as beautiful. But inasmuch as they convey Expressionist emotion and vulnerability, inasmuch as they are meaningful in terms of religion and the human condition — in contradistinction to Wilde's aesthetic doctrine that painting 'affects us by no suggestion stolen from philosophy; no pathos pilfered from literature; no feeling filched from a poet' — the implication is that it is moral significance which makes the difference. Boyd's seemingly paradoxical ratification of these works of art thus evolves as a rational and considered critique of what must have been for him one of aestheticism's worst aspects: its 'incommunicable artistic message',<sup>101</sup> or the divorce of art from meaning.

Something of the spirit of the philosophy of George Moore, his strong impulse toward 'the courage and confidence to act according to the promptings of "his own wish"', is present in Boyd's credo of individual morality. If we note Tom Regan's assertion in *Bloomsbury's Prophet* that Moore aspired to do nothing less than reform the Science of Morals with a view to reclaiming for the individual the freedom to judge and to choose,<sup>102</sup> and if we add to this Moore's influence on Bloomsbury, it becomes self-evident that Moore is important as a background figure to any study of Martin Boyd. The Bloomsbury Group (1905-1920) as a force for intellectual and artistic *avant-gardism* in post-Victorian England was notorious for its cultivation of a form of spiritual elitism marked by unconventionality, irreverence, and shared passions (in every sense of the word). Its basis in friendship as much as in shared ideals — as Regan remarks, 'Like Augustine's City of God, Bloomsbury was less a place and more a shared way of life' (*Prophet* 9) — is explained by its having its roots in the Cambridge Apostles, a society comprised of members such as Rupert Brooke, Lytton Strachey, Maynard Keynes, and Leonard Woolf whose undergraduate lives had been insulated both from feminine company and from the workaday world by a commitment to secrecy, elitism, and traditions. Theirs was the unworldly ideal of 'clever men bred both in the classics and gentlemanly ideals, to whom much of Victorian life seemed ugly and oppressive' (*Prophet* 33-34).<sup>103</sup> This fundamental unworldliness, together with the substance of Moore's 'religion' as espoused in *Principia Ethica* (1903) and identified by Keynes:

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<sup>101</sup>This concludes the quote from Oscar Wilde given previously, and is cited by Joanna Banham, Sally Macdonald and Julia Porter in their chapter 'The Aesthetic Movement' in *Victorian Interior Design*, London: Cassell, 1991.

<sup>102</sup>Tom Regan, *Bloomsbury's Prophet: G. E. Moore and the Development of His Moral Philosophy*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986, p282. Further references to this work will be given by page number in the text.

<sup>103</sup>Boyd writes of his own Cambridge life as 'passionate', with 'friendships of the heart and mind' (*Day of My Delight* p211).

The appropriate subjects of passionate contemplation and communion were a beloved person, beauty and truth, and one's prime objects in life were love, the creation and enjoyment of aesthetic experience and the pursuit of knowledge. Of these love came a long way first.... (*Prophet* 27)

provides a likely explanation as to why Bloomsbury went on to embrace Moore as its 'prophet and inspiration', and why *Principia*, as Regan observes, was woven into the fabric of the lives of those denizens of Bloomsbury who were neither students with, nor students of, Moore at Cambridge. It hardly needs reinforcement at this stage that perhaps the most heart-felt elements of Boyd's credo are encapsulated by Moore's philosophy: a passion for truth, a belief in the value of friendship, and the enjoyment of beauty. Yet if we were looking to establish a connection, we could do worse than compare Keynes' enthusiasm for Moore's teachings ('...it was exciting, exhilarating, the beginning of a new renaissance...')<sup>104</sup> with Boyd's delighted initial exposure to the Bloomsbury gestalt: it was for him a 'sudden patch of light and colour', a lesson in discerning 'essential value' (*Flame* 206) and in learning dependence on personal sensibility (*Day* 160). Needless to say, Moore had his detractors. Early reviewers said *Principia* was 'of immoral tendency' and 'positively dangerous'; Beatrice Webb saw it as a 'metaphysical justification for doing what you like and what other people disapprove of!';<sup>105</sup> and as Regan points out, Moore's method, rigorously applied, 'yields a decisive vindication of the higher sodomy': for Lytton Strachey, for example, it provided the philosophical justification of his well-known homosexuality (*Prophet* 279-80). 'Friendship' in Bloomsbury terminology was in actuality a loose lexical determinant capable of application to a variety of orthodox and unorthodox sexual arrangements involving same or different-sex couples — or even 'triangles' as one wit would have it.<sup>106</sup>

Boyd's personal 'revision' of his attitude to Bloomsbury does not, so far as it is possible to ascertain, have anything to do with sexual morality. By the time he came to write his second memoir and to express his disillusionment with some members of the Bloomsbury 'constellation' he met at Cassis (this was in 1926, long after Bloomsbury existed as a core group) it is because he finds them too utilitarian, too rational, too dependent on aesthetic, rather than spiritual, values: they seem to him to exist in a 'moral vacuum' (*Day* 149). This criticism applies to a few individuals only and it would be misguided and reductive to infer from this some reflection in his novels after this date of a definitive pattern of disaffection with Bloomsbury principles in general, some trace, let us say, away from open-armed acceptance to disendorsement. It is true that in the first of these, *The Montforts*, Broom's extremist Bloomsbury and/or neo-Pagan views are paraded to outrageous and parodic effect; but his radicalism is perfectly tailored as the catalyst which will enable Raoul finally to shake off the prudishness that has stalemated his personality: "There was a great deal to be said for Broom's point of view. Raoul felt illuminated, absolutely aware of the spiritual meaning of material things" (*Montforts* 248). Broom's exaggerated paganism is balanced, in fact, by the more positive aspects of his character: by his Moorean attribute of 'strenuous clarity'; by a Paterian belief in the value of inconsistency ("The light on the face of truth is always changing"); by his intuitive

<sup>104</sup>Maynard Keynes, 'My Early Beliefs', cited by Regan, *Bloomsbury's Prophet*, p18.

<sup>105</sup>Beatrice Webb is quoted by Regan, *Bloomsbury's Prophet*, p278.

<sup>106</sup>Regan quotes an anonymous wit as saying in Bloomsbury 'all the couples were triangles' (*Bloomsbury's Prophet*, p8).

intelligence ('Reason is no match for convictions which do not rise out of reason'); and by his anti-Puritanism (this time it could be Boyd speaking):

Puritan people are the most blasphemous...They observe the world around them, teeming with life, starred with beauty, they say it is created by God, the most minute detail of a flower, the mechanism of sexual pleasure, and then achieving an astonishing mental gymnastic, they say it is vain and evil, and the only hope of joy is beyond the corruption of the grave. (*Montforts* 241-42)

By layering and complexity Boyd thus complicates Broom's initial emblematic status as a spokesperson for Bloomsbury. Broom is a small-scale indicator of the method Boyd employs in the wider schematic context of his better novels: the continual contestation and play of ideas, for the most part to ironic effect. In the best tradition of Pater's adoption of Heraclitean flux as a guiding philosophy, Boyd for example takes a relativistic, fluctuating and never quite fixed approach to Bloomsbury precepts in *Lucinda Brayford*. Exemplary of this is the way Paul's view of the Bloomsbury crowd at St Saturnin as 'arty', 'intellectual', 'free' and 'enlightened' but nevertheless blighted by the 'ludicrous' snobberies of the 'prosperous bourgeoisie' (*Brayford* 334-35), is balanced against a picture of Paul as a testy and archaic 'museum-piece' who falls back on a no longer relevant tradition — 'the dusty fabric of English drawing rooms' (*Brayford* 336) — for his own brand of snobbism and aristocratic pride. The novel contains other similar but more subtle ironies: for instance, Bloomsbury realism about love and sex is contrasted with the furtive hypocrisy of Lucinda's extra-marital involvement with Pat Lanfranc; and Stephen Brayford, martyred to the idea of Christian brotherhood, is also seen to die in obedience to the kind of pacifist principles propagated by Bloomsbury. The ultimate irony of *Lucinda Brayford*, however, is Paul's stance as the arbiter of taste and discrimination as exhibited in the flash of Wildean impertinence towards a young Bloomsburyite he accuses of being the 'last gasp' of culture (see Chapter 6, p198). The outburst's satirical edge is blunted by savagery, and it momentarily positions Paul as reactionary, a social anachronism unwilling and unable to adjust to the cultural upheaval of his times and seemingly unaware that it is the libertarian doctrine of intellectuals like the Bloomsburys that gives sanction, in sexually unenlightened times, to his homosexuality, a condition underlined by his interpretation of civilization as the 'golden age' of the Greeks.

Yet another irony worth reporting here is that during Lucinda's sojourn with the increasingly stuffy Pat Lanfranc in Florence, subsequent to the influence of the St Saturnin subversives, she reads him the poetry of Swinburne and Wilde. If she hopes by this to enliven the relationship, the attempt is a dismal failure. Her choice of authors is sophisticated but strange, more suited, one would imagine, to Boyd's taste than to Lucinda's. Swinburne's is a name that figures prominently in Boyd's literary catalogue,<sup>107</sup> a list notable for its concentration on writers given to exploring the complex realities of male friendship and affirming the concept of desire between

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<sup>107</sup>It is Cousin Ted à Beckett, the 'nineties' aesthete given to 'racy' language, who reveals to the young Boyd the 'Beardsley-Swinburne motifs'. Paradoxically, he also tears out the 'indelicate pages' of Boyd's novels before lending them to his lady friends (*Day of My Delight* p48-49).

men.<sup>108</sup> Swinburne is no exception: outspoken and inflammatory, he was, according to Dellamora, not only 'imaginatively receptive to male-male desire', but his *Poems and Ballads* of 1866 are still considered shocking by some, abounding as they do in perversities such as necrophilia, lesbianism, vampirism, sadomasochism and anthropophagy (*Desire* 69-70). Ruskin, a friend of Swinburne's, called them 'some of the wickedest and splendidest verses ever written by a human creature'.<sup>109</sup> Swinburne, says Dellamora, characteristically affiliated himself with a long tradition of poetry invoking or impersonating Sappho, a tradition which includes Catullus, Ovid, John Donne and Byron. Sappho's 'reputation for passion' not only permitted men to borrow her name and writing as a sign of masculine desire<sup>110</sup> but to use lesbian sexuality as a field in which to play out male confusion about and discontent with prescribed roles for men and women (*Desire* 75). Through lesbian personae, as Dellamora observes, men may indulge what de Courtivron calls the 'wish to be woman'<sup>111</sup> and so cross over into the forbidden territory of feminine feeling and bodily sensation (*Desire* 75). In this context Boyd's deployment of lesbian longings in *The Tea-Time of Love* is worth noting for its contrast with his more customary and earnest preoccupation with male friendship. Here, in keeping with the author's overall spoofing of the popular romance genre, the keynote is parody: 'When Anna appeared between the barley-sugar columns Andromeda felt a sudden pang, that feeling which in the Bible is described as the bowels yearning'.<sup>112</sup>

Interestingly, Swinburne was another who, like Catullus and Baudelaire, liked to affirm that 'great poets are bisexual; male and female at once':<sup>113</sup> his *Poems and Ballads*, claimed by Dellamora as the most important single work by which 'modern' French literature<sup>114</sup> makes itself felt in Victorian literary culture, bears witness to a Romantic/Victorian 'rhetoric of androgyny' that typically signals the body as a 'locus of mingled sensations, fantasy and reverie' which may be masculine or feminine or both (*Desire* 71).<sup>115</sup> Swinburne's deviant texts may be seen as a logical, if infinitely more bizarre, continuation of the writing practices of writers like Byron and Shelley who, as Dellamora notes, had earlier constituted poetry as an aesthetic-cultural space in which men could valorize desire between men at the same time as they contested the structure of hegemonic masculinity — including the expression of such desires in sexual activities (*Desire* 16-17). Boyd's declared interest, not just in

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<sup>108</sup>In addition to Boyd's direct acquaintance with Wilde, Beardsley, Baudelaire, Verlaine, Pater, Ruskin, Montaigne, Balzac, Rabelais, Proust, Mann, E. M. Forster, Rupert Brooke, Proust, D. H. Lawrence, Shelley, Byron, Keats, Tennyson, Aldington, Richard Grenville, David Garnett, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky and Shakespeare, not forgetting the classical Greeks, the Roman Catullus, and the more contemporary Freud and Adler, is the implied influence of figures such as Gautier, Huysmans, G. E. Moore, Nietzsche, Whitman and Hopkins. Examples of others who do not fit the criteria but who nevertheless qualify as socially subversive are Bertrand Russell, Bernard Shaw and Olive Schreiner.

<sup>109</sup>Ruskin is cited by Dellamora, *Masculine Desire*, p122.

<sup>110</sup>Dellamora is citing from a letter to him by Elizabeth Harvey (11/11/85), in *Masculine Desire*, p75.

<sup>111</sup>Dellamora takes the Isabelle de Courtivron citation from 'Weak Men and Fatal Women', in *Homosexualities and French Literature* (ed) George Stambolian and Elaine Marks, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1979.

<sup>112</sup>*The Tea-Time of Love*, p25.

<sup>113</sup>A. C. Swinburne, *The Complete Works of Swinburne* (14:305), cited by Dellamora, *Masculine Desire*, p69.

<sup>114</sup>Swinburne was also influenced by de Sade. The Sadic background of the poem 'Anactoria' includes de Sade's polemical defense (sic) of male sodomy (Dellamora, *Masculine Desire* p83).

<sup>115</sup>The relevance to Boyd of the body as an androgynous image and even androgyny's potential to stimulate 'fantasy and reverie' needs no restating here; what still remains to be established, however, is the notion of the androgynous ideal as irrevocably implicated in Boyd's religious quest for the Perfect Drawing.

Swinburne but in others like him such as Catullus and Baudelaire, suggests a vicariously experiential breadth that has been largely ignored, one which acts to compromise any notion of him as narrowly 'aesthetic' or puritanical. And if, in his naming and appreciation of Swinburne et al Boyd may be seen to exceed and subvert expectations, it is feasible to claim that at the same time he achieves, quite self-consciously, a codification of himself as sexually equivocal.

Rather less radical and daring but semiotically if not actually homosexual was another favourite poet of Boyd's, Alfred Tennyson. Boyd tells us that at school (having read all of Shakespeare by the age of twelve) he soaked himself in the poetry of Tennyson. Tennyson filled his head 'with visions of English fields and gardens...where it was always afternoon' (*Day 29*). The poem he calls 'You ask me, why' (actually 'To J. S.') catches his imagination for its validation of British tradition and simple virtues: 'The land, where girt with friends or foes/ A man may speak the thing he will'; yet he ends his quote on Tennyson's note of rebellion, the wish to escape southwards:

Yet waft me from the harbour-mouth  
Wild wind; I seek a warmer sky,  
And I will see before I die  
The palms and temples of the South. (*Day 28-29*)

Not surprisingly, Boyd makes several references to Tennyson. He appears (plus Maud) in one of a series of semi-farcical tableaux with Baudelaire (featured with a negress) and Verlaine (caressing the ears of a butcher's boy) arranged by Paul Brayford at Crittenden to exemplify 'civilised entertainment' (*Brayford 498*). He supplies the symbolism to illustrate Boyd's sense of frustration in 1913 and 1914 at his isolation from his cultural heartland, his feeling that the 'ancient glories...and present excitements of Europe' were

always just beyond my reach. I felt like the Lady of Shalott, seeing the crimson and gold only in a mirror, and because I was powerless to turn and see and touch them at first hand, they were reflected as intolerably desirable to me.... (*Flame 60*)

an image of entrapment and accursedness with implicit resonances of Boyd's alienation complex, his sense of being an outsider. Tennyson's 'In Memoriam A. H. H.' also supplies the title for Boyd's second memoir: 'And was the day of my delight/ As pure and perfect as I say?', where the modulation of the second line throws the first into ambiguous and sobering relief. It was an autobiographical decision made with precision and irony, I suspect, one which was no mere gesture of homage to a favourite poet, but rather, considering that 'In Memoriam' must be the longest, if not the greatest, male-to-male epic love poem in the English language, a coded signalling of affinity with the thematics of homosocial desire. Tennyson's treatment of desire between men in 'In Memoriam' is celebratory — Arthur Hallam is even figured androgynously as 'manhood fused with female grace' — though as Dellamora notes, the poem's articulation of the 'affective impetuosity' of its intense male bonding is cautious, stopping short of sexual interaction (*Desire 17*). Having been a member of the Cambridge Apostles, however, Tennyson was familiar with the possibilities of sex

between men: as Alan Sinfield points out, his use of Theocritean material in 'In Memoriam' could not have occurred without awareness of the tradition of erotic male pastoral.<sup>116</sup>

The probable subliminal influence of Walt Whitman and Gerard Manley Hopkins, two of the more overtly homosexual poets whose intonations and imagery seem to hover in Martin Boyd's consciousness, has already been aired in this discussion. The fact that Boyd never names either of them is curious but explicable. In the case of Whitman, it is curious because Boyd's great friend Hugh Lanson Fausset published a sympathetic study of Whitman<sup>117</sup> of which Boyd cannot have been unaware; and explicable because Whitman's name was synonymous with homosexuality from the moment his *Leaves of Grass*, an explicit poetry of sexual desire between men (*Desire* 17), appeared in 1855. Boyd's silence on Hopkins is perhaps harder to explain, since the poet was a student and friend of Pater's, an Anglo-Catholic who converted to Catholicism, and an incarnationist. Whilst Boyd might have felt protected from too easy an identification with poets such as Baudelaire and Swinburne on the grounds of a possibly blatant perversity, the evidence of Boyd's texts and personal history suggests a kinship with Hopkins that goes close to the bone. Hopkins was a Jesuit priest who initially wanted to be an artist, Boyd a theological student and one-time inmate of an English Franciscan friary who abandoned a religious vocation to become a writer. In the Oxford environment of the 1860s which stimulated and valorized homoerotic feeling (*Desire* 46), Hopkins knew that he was sexually attracted to other males, but rather than adopt a homosexual self-definition he went on to displace his 'perversity' into the realm of religion by writing an eroticized poetry that 'provokes deliberately while remaining just within the limits of Catholic belief' (*Desire* 17). If, in particular, we heed Dellamora's observation that when Hopkins let himself go, his verse turned spontaneously to naturalized images of the youthful male body, and add to that the sensuously evocative way in which Hopkins' 'Epithalamion' summons images of 'boys from the town/ Bathing: it is summer's sovereign good', it is possible to discover more pronounced and concrete correspondences. In certain circumstantial aspects Boyd and Hopkins are similar: Boyd for instance speaks of the 'heightened condition' of his 'passionate Cambridge life': 'During those years I was more alive than at any time since my adolescence. I had friendships of the heart and mind', and claims that his best book came from that experience (*Day* 211); and it goes without saying that he shares Hopkins' reserve in celebrating homoeroticism. But the connection between the 'listless stranger' of the 'Epithalamion' who is transformed to 'froliclavish' — or who experiences a renewal of bodily awareness through watching the bathing boys — and the scene in *Scandal of Spring* where John Vazetti is excited into sensations of a 'vivid sense of freedom' and a 'release and enlargement of life' — 'He was aware of his own body far more intensely than he had ever been before' (*Scandal* 203) — by the sight of the nude boys and men sunbathing and swimming at Hampstead Heath, is uncanny. And it is interesting how for both writers this kind of experience tends to connote the spiritual. Elsewhere Hopkins equates water with 'spousal love' to signify and celebrate the poet's tropic espousal to Christ — a poetically sanctioned way of being 'feminine' through a mystic marriage (*Desire* 51-52).<sup>118</sup> For Boyd's *Scandal* character there is not only a pagan sensation of a

<sup>116</sup>Alan Sinfield, *Alfred Tennyson*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986, pp144-45. Cited by Dellamora, *Masculine Desire*, p19.

<sup>117</sup>Titled *Walt Whitman: Poet of Democracy* (1942).

<sup>118</sup>Dellamora makes a comparison here with Hopkins' 'feminine' powerlessness as a Jesuit, bound to obey the vows required of him. *Masculine Desire*, p52.

return to 'the beginning of the world, to a clear golden age', but a Christian sense of brotherhood, 'a living warmth' of men that has its mildly erotic apotheosis in the young printer he befriends, the contemplation of whose face, in retrospect, elicits the kind of 'calm joy' one associates with contemplation of the face of Christ: 'Peace descended from his temples to his heart. It crept from his heart along to the extremities of his limbs. Peace and security seemed to enfold him. He no longer felt alone' (*Scandal* 216). It seems appropriate at this point to invoke the correlation marked by Benjamin Jowett between erotic 'energy' and religious conviction and 'the easy transition from one to the other'.<sup>119</sup>

Implicit in Boyd as well as recognised in Hopkins is a concurrence in Plato's idea that lovers are attracted to the presence of a divine masculine principle in their beloved (*Desire* 48). In Hopkins, as Dellamora observes, this idea is cognate with Hopkins' perception of Christ as an informing presence in strong and beautiful young men; and where Boyd is concerned we think of Christopher Beaton of *Love Gods*, of Dick Corkery, Joe, and Harry the islander of *Nuns in Jeopardy*, of Tony Dawson and Boris Malakoff<sup>120</sup> of *Dearest Idol*, of Stephen Brayford, even of the agonised Christ figures Jackie Blair and Dominic Langton. But perhaps the strongest of the threads connecting Boyd and Hopkins is the way they envisage Christ. Both writer and poet construct Christ as not only a valorization of the spirit but as a sensate and fully embodied selfhood. The stress is on Incarnational theology, Catholicism's belief that 'Whatever injury man and the universe had suffered in the Fall was healed...when the Word assumed flesh'.<sup>121</sup> This doctrinal recognition of the worthiness of the redeemed human body, including its genitality — especially as evident in certain visual representations of Christ in medieval and Renaissance art — seems to have been instrumental in Hopkins' turning to Catholicism (*Desire* 50-51). And apart from the evidence in Boyd indicating his own adherence to Incarnationism, for instance, his statement in *A Single Flame* that 'the Catholic emphasis is on the Incarnation, the God in man and the divine endorsement of human activity' (p190), let alone his advocacy of a 'God who was also Man, Incarnate and Perfect, his bright Hellenic beauty transfigured by love' (*Love Gods* 115), we do well to recall both the candid depiction by Dominic of Christ in his naked humanity and Boyd's dismay at the addition of an ugly breechclout to Michelangelo's *Risen Christ*. On the basis, therefore, that Boyd never loses sight of the material world as both integral and indispensable to his religious faith, and despite the hermeneutic ambiguity implicit in the revelation of perfection he finds embodied in the Christ of Michelangelo's *Pietà* — here, surely, is Blake's 'Love, the human form divine' — one senses that his celebration of journey's end rests primarily in the *quidditas* of Christ's serene but still earthbound humanity: 'Here is the Perfect Drawing, the beauty long desired' (*Much Else* 127). Elements of aestheticism and spirituality no doubt play a part here, but by making the *Pietà* Christ a focus of desire, by *objectifying* him (or his representation) and thus making him sensually perceptible — in

<sup>119</sup>Jowett's views were written 'in his notebook under the heading "Control of Passions" in 1867', and are to be found in Paddy Kitchen, *Gerard Manley Hopkins*, London: Hamilton, 1978. Cited by Dellamora, *Masculine Desire*, p50.

<sup>120</sup>Tony is the beautiful 'idol' whom Matilda confuses with her deity, while Boris makes a conscious self-sacrifice to the ideal of brotherly love: 'He would fight his way across Europe, back to Tony, and then cleansed by his effort, by suffering and the shedding of his blood, would he be worthy to be his friend...' (*Dearest Idol* p209).

<sup>121</sup>John O'Malley, cited in Leo Steinberg, *The Sexuality of Christ in Renaissance Art and in Modern Oblivion*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996, p10.

much the same way the Vatican's pagan god Hermes was apprehended as an object of desire — Boyd has not only positioned himself as a masculine suitor but drawn a parallel between his spiritual life and his erotic experience.<sup>122</sup> The simultaneous elevation and objectification of the Christ figure mark a crossover point from a simple aesthetic transgression facilitating Boyd's discovery of a real self created, like Gide's, from a liberated (and seemingly chaste) desire<sup>123</sup> to the more complex but equally compelling religio-erotic aesthetic identified by Catherine Runcie. In this context Boyd's choice of an image of perfection is coherent with the Christ of Arnold, described by Runcie as 'enthraling', 'the identity of grace and truth', 'a morally beautiful [and] Platonized Christ in whom wisdom and beauty coincide' — the exception being that Arnold does not, as Runcie adds, dwell on Christ's physical appearance.<sup>124</sup> Complicating Boyd's role as Christ's lover in this instance is a further, and equally charged, contingency: the possibility that he is also seeking to assuage, via the instrumentality of an image deeply symbolic of both humanity and Love, a repressed 'father-hunger'.<sup>125</sup> With virtually no evidence to go on other than a black hole of silence, one can only conjecture that the lack of a close father-son relationship, with its concomitant pain of rejection and loss so eloquently captured in Joyce's lines 'O, father forsaken,/ Forgive your son!',<sup>126</sup> must have been sadly troubling for Boyd.

Three further aspects relating to the face of Michelangelo's Christ are worth remarking, not least because in two instances they help to point up the religious and homoerotic predicament inherent in the male relation to God. The first is its quality of androgyny: gentleness, mildness, grace and self-renunciation combine to render an image that is innately feminine. Boyd's attraction to a feminized Christ highlights the gender confusion experienced by men who want to worship Christ like a lover. There is an intertextual referent for this in Hopkins' (possibly paradoxical) creation of a Christ in whom masculine authority, beauty and virginity are emblematic of 'an androgynous masculine ideal' (*Desire* 52): 'He is the truelove and the bridegroom of men's souls'.<sup>127</sup> Hopkins' emphasis on Christ as 'physical and radiant' (*Desire* 50), his mantra that: 'There met in Jesus Christ all things that can make man lovely and loveable. In his body he was most beautiful' amounts to, in Dellamora's terms, an authorized and 'poetic celebration of desire for other men' (*Desire* 47). Related to this is the second and faintly subversive element in Boyd's perception of the 'perfect' Christ, a subtle slide in register into homoerotic suggestiveness that effectively sweeps up the sacred and the profane into the one continuum. This manifests itself in Boyd's clincher to his discovery of the Perfect Drawing: 'and yet it not only resembles, but has something of the same expression as the little boy who was thrown again and again into the sea at Amalfi' (*Much Else* 127). The third feature is also related to Hopkins' view of Christ, a perception of this face as

<sup>122</sup>The objectifying of God (or Christ) in such a manner, in particular in relation to the writings of Anne Bradstreet (c. 1635-1670), is discussed by Walter Hughes, 'Meat Out of the Eater: Panic and Desire in American Puritan Poetry', *Engendering Men: The Question of Male Feminist Criticism*, (ed) Joseph A. Boone & Michael Cadden, New York and London: Routledge, 1990, p105.

<sup>123</sup>The observation of Gide is made by Dollimore, *Sexual Dissidence*, p13.

<sup>124</sup>Catherine A. Runcie, 'Matthew Arnold's Christ and the Unity of Culture and Religion', *Sydney Studies in English*, Vol 14, 1988-89, pp38-51.

<sup>125</sup>An influential notion of Robert Bly's, author of *Iron John: A Book about Men* (1990).

<sup>126</sup>James Joyce, 'Ecce Puer', *Collected Poems*, New York: Penguin, 1976.

<sup>127</sup>'Sermon' (23/11/1879), in *Gerard Manley Hopkins: Poems & Prose* (ed) W. H. Gardner, London: Penguin, 1972, p137.

quintessentially beautiful, the aesthetic factor vital to Boyd's concept of 'Apollo redeemed': 'If it were not so the Incarnation would have no meaning' (*Much Else* 126). And lest, says Boyd, his language should seem unsuitable, he refers his reader to the way Christ was seen by Traherne: '...as sparkling in his beauty, ravishing as the sun, incarnate love in whom we adore all creation'. While the message of the Michelangelo Christ is that pain and suffering are ephemeral, at the same time Boyd remarks his humanity: 'It is the face of the man who turned water into good wine; who with tolerant indulgence forgave the harlot; who told wise ironic parables; who did not think God's high priest worth answering; but blessed the *putti*, and told the thief he would be that night in Paradise' (*Much Else* 127).

Judging by the frequency of allusions traceable to Traherne to be found in Boyd's writings — it is significant, for instance, that Stephen Brayford dies clutching a volume by Traherne — it should not surprise us that between the two men, despite their separation by three centuries, there is a noteworthy coincidence of thought on religious and moral matters. Traherne was a poet of mystical vision who saw beauty and divinity in the phenomenal world: for him man, God and nature were essentially related, the universe an order in which all things were in balanced harmony, as opposed to the dualism which was developing between faith and reason, science and religion.<sup>128</sup> His doctrine was essentially in keeping with that of Rousseau and other philosophers of the eighteenth century,<sup>129</sup> and shares affinities with Shelley, with Wordsworth, with Blake, with Ruskin and Hopkins, and even with Walt Whitman: as Bertram Dobell observes of Traherne's passage 'Natural things are glorious and to know them glorious' — 'is not this the whole burden of Walt Whitman's poetry?'<sup>130</sup> In *Centuries of Meditations* Traherne's stress is on the body as part of God's creation and the bodily senses — with all their 'desires and possible demands' — as instruments to be fully exercised because God can be known by them: 'My Palat is a Touch-stone fit/ To taste how Good Thou Art'.<sup>131</sup> The enjoyment of reality expressed here, an enjoyment which is 'immediately near to the very gates of our senses'<sup>132</sup> is, as K. W. Salter interprets Traherne, the proper end of human life: this, and the notion of a transition to a knowledge of divine reality through both the senses and the apprehension of nature represents a close correlation with Boyd's own views, views he is at pains to reiterate. Personally expressed as a 'great need...to live in contact and in harmony with the natural world' as demonstrated by 'the Greeks, and also...the Gospels, with their references to the sparrows and lilies, and their imagery taken from all living things',<sup>133</sup> Boyd transposes this need into the body of his work. We recall Mr Smith's 'I love life' speech from *Nuns in Jeopardy*; a source of numerous dicta which coincide with Traherne's thought. For example,

<sup>128</sup>K. W. Salter, *Thomas Traherne: Mystic and Poet*, London: Edward Arnold, 1964, pp6-7.

<sup>129</sup>An observation made by Bertram Dobell (ed) in his introduction to *The Poetical Works of Thomas Traherne: From the Original Manuscripts*, London: Dobell, 1906, pxxiii.

<sup>130</sup>Dobell, Introduction, *The Poetical Works of Thomas Traherne*, pxxiii.

<sup>131</sup>In K. W. Salter, *Thomas Traherne: Mystic and Poet*, p54. Boyd reflects these ideas in his claim that 'Our bodies are the phenomena of noumena in the mind of the Creator, conceived by him in their desires and in every detail, beautiful, perfect, and good' (*Much Else in Italy* p47).

<sup>132</sup>Traherne, *Centuries I*, 23, in Salter, p7. Again, Boyd seems to be echoing Traherne when he speaks of the beauty of the Greek body as 'an expression of the spirit, of man reflecting the Perfect Drawing, unfallen, close to the gates of Paradise' (*Much Else in Italy*, p32).

<sup>133</sup>From 'Dubious Cartography', p12. Boyd attributes this doctrine to the poetry of D. H. Lawrence, an author he admired except for what he said was an 'obsession with sex'.

All the universe obeys one law, and your own nature has to function in harmony with the planets. When you have learnt the note you must strike in this infinite choir, then you will be more than happy. (Mr Smith to Dick, p137)

Here his body and soul had made sharp contacts which tested and formed them. As his body had become as nature designed it...so he felt his spirit was growing untrammelled towards its natural pattern, its instinctive vibration, like a piece of dried seaweed which placed in water unfolds into some beautiful frond or star...(the self-reflexive Dick Corkery, p157)

while Agatha, her life previously 'atrophied by religion and good breeding', experiences an inordinate enhancement of life following her involuntary immersion in nature:

The most ordinary things...filled her with delight, while the really beautiful things...small, simple flowers like daffodils and violets, awoke in her a kind of rapture...It was as if she had come to a world in which all things were made new. (p215)

Agatha reflects here Traherne's 'profound sense of the beauty and sublimity which he saw everywhere around him'.<sup>134</sup>

Other characteristics of Traherne's, enumerated by Dobell as a passionate spirit of love and devotion, a capacity for ecstasy, and a 'never failing aspiration towards... Goodness', evince parallels with Boyd's own temperament.<sup>135</sup> There are additional aspects of Traherne's belief system, too, which appear to have resonances for Boyd: his insistence on self-love as the basis for all love — and its satisfaction through the senses and the development of self-knowledge (here we recall Mr Smith's 'know thyself' admonition); importantly, his 'original realization' of a divine reality which is both transcendent and immanent, possibly captured in Gavin Leigh's explanation to his friend Lucinda that

'by "God" I mean some vital thing that made roses the colour of your lips, that stabbed my heart when I saw a lovely face, or a flying gull, or a bowl of carrots on a kitchen table' (*Night* 227);

and his reluctance, like Wordsworth, to dwell upon the darker aspects of life and nature (and coincidentally it is Boyd's wont to concentrate primarily on a nature that is 'lovely and perfect'). There is yet one more facet of Traherne's personality that should be considered as providing a basis for comparison, if not with Boyd himself, with at least two of his characters: the fact that he was possessed by that 'fine madness' without which, as Dobell notes, no poet, painter, or musician ever yet created a work of lasting art.<sup>136</sup> Into this category one is tempted to consign the painters Jackie Blair and Dominic Langton, both suggested as a little mad but perhaps only one of whom, so far as we are given to understand, produces work for posterity.

<sup>134</sup>Dobell, *The Poetical Works of Thomas Traherne*, plxiv.

<sup>135</sup>Of interest, too, is Traherne's transgressive streak, in that his 'Roman Forgeries' indicted the Roman Church for 'falsifications of historical facts for the purpose of supporting its spiritual and temporal pretensions'. Dobell, *The Poetical Works of Thomas Traherne*, pxlvi.

<sup>136</sup>Dobell, *The Poetical Works of Thomas Traherne*, plxv.

Both Jackie and Dominic characteristically depict a Christ that runs counter to Boyd's ideal of Christ as the personification of Beauty.<sup>137</sup> Here is no suggestion of an aestheticized or 'heroized' godhead; instead we are confronted with, at least as Boyd perceives it, all the expressionist horror of modern art, plus, it would seem, a great deal of pathological anxiety. As Guy Langton tells it, Dominic's huge crucifixion painted at Westhill, featuring 'the tortured body, the face hidden by hanging hair, the conspicuous genitals', stems from his brother's inherited *anima naturaliter Catholica* combined with an upbringing in 'dreary low-church Anglicanism', and in terms of personal symbolism is 'the cross formed by his inner desire and his habit of mind' (*Crown* 9). Dominic's Christ may be read as a reflection of his own tormented soul, of the 'searing anguish' he feels for the world of suffering at large, and of his fear of alienation from God as well as from human society: believing that the absence of love is the presence of death (*DYM* 95), his 'desire' for God is no less intense because it is expressed in a form of inverted or disguised eroticism. By contrast, Jackie's war-time cartoon drawings for a socialist newspaper are highly politicized. Informed by Puritan fundamentalism and the kind of radical individualism that wants to change the world, they show Christ as shunned, faceless and seemingly shamed by man's inhumanity. Jackie dies in prison as a conscientious objector, a martyrdom achieved by Dominic only after years of expiation in hermetic asceticism. It is as if Jackie and Dominic have been created by Boyd as the exponents, in life as well as in art, of Gavin Leigh's observation that 'every creative spirit must suffer some form of crucifixion, must die in some way to [the] solid respectable world, in order to leave that spirit free...' (*Night* 266). Not a small part of the suffering undergone by the two as young men is attributable to their deeply conflicted natures and contradictory impulses, perhaps as a result of the condition of 'normal' schizophrenia that Kenmare associates with creative genius. The conflict they experience is similar in some ways to the creative artist's need to reconcile personal needs and the creative process — and in their case, the religious impulse.

Jackie's is the more extreme but more cryptic portrayal. He is more representative than real, the semblance of a dualistic body-mind split whose 'twisted nature' is the outcome of a life-denying puritanism struggling against an impulse towards the sensual and erotic, an impulse stimulated at art school by contact with young people whose behaviour and attitudes are influenced by the drawings of Norman Lindsay: '[He] was tortured by the constant companionship of these idealists of sex, whose deity, if any, was the Pandemian Aphrodite' (*Montforts* 179), an influence which no doubt leads him later to write 'semi-religious poems about naked women' (*Montforts* 184). Dominic (who, incidentally, paints 'brooding nudes'), is Jackie's embryonic persona developed and made complex: the 'inner conflict between his sensuality and his spiritual nature' always contains within it the possibility of integration and conciliation; and, at least until he disappears into the twilight of his life, Dominic is complicated by a form of vitalism — 'all that vigour, that appreciation of life' (*Crown* 10) — that suggests an ironic linkage to Lindsay's emphasis on the goodness of the physical world,<sup>138</sup> his taking of the nude human body as his 'symbol of the freed

<sup>137</sup>Strangely enough, one is given the impression that their images resemble the crucified Christ of Norman Lindsay's *Pollive Verso*, said by John Hetherington to be 'emaciated', 'forsaken' and 'defeated' (*Norman Lindsay: The Embattled Olympian*, p57).

<sup>138</sup>As observed by Vincent Buckley, 'Utopianism and Vitalism in Australian Literature', *Quadrant*, March 1959, p50.

spirit of man'.<sup>139</sup> Dominic's youthful persona has a pagan, hedonistic streak that is more fully developed in Broom, the archetypal sybarite and heathen of *The Montforts* whose philosophy of life, executed with 'zest' and 'gusto', runs a close parallel to Lindsay's Dionysian credo. Boyd would have been in two minds about Lindsay: attracted no doubt by his conviction that 'the Greeks and Romans established all that the word civilization can mean', but repelled by his vehemently anti-Christian stance. There is enough evidence in Boyd's work to suggest a sympathy with Lindsay's justification of his intensely physical art:

Art, where it touches the most vital of all issues, which is sex, the stimulus of Life's rebirth, will be frank, licentious, shameless, seeking every image which may emphasize the gesture of desire, adoring the naked body, surrounding it with emblems of happiness, strength, courage....<sup>140</sup>

but there are also signs that Boyd considered the quality of Lindsay's art as degrading to the pagan ethic.<sup>141</sup> His opinion might well have echoed that of Vincent Buckley, who in theorizing the presence of Nietzsche in Lindsay, projects him as 'the faintly diabolical prophet of joy and physicality, a joy and physicality that are always being talked about but seldom realized in really compelling work'.<sup>142</sup>

The tension between spirituality and sensuality adumbrated in the lives of Jackie and Dominic may be symptomatic of their divided and essentially puritanical natures but for Dominic, at least, there are brief moments when he is spiritually uplifted through contact with the the natural world. The closeness he feels to God in his naked moonlight walk, for instance, leads the narrator to reflect:

It is possible that strong religious feeling is often accompanied by strong sexual feeling, both the soul and the body trying to escape their loneliness, and by the tension between these two things the soul is either uplifted or damned.... (*DYM* 56)

and indeed the thematics of religio-eroticism is persistent enough in Boyd, though admittedly treated with greater artlessness and candour in his earlier writings, to warrant more attention. Perhaps it is Broom of *The Montforts* who provides the most comprehensive articulation of the concept (despite an overlay of godless cynicism):

'Among the Australian women poets...there is a curious endeavour, as I think Arnold Bennett or someone said, to complicate the Deity with erotic impulse. Of course, it is a truism that one kind of religious fervour is fundamentally sexual, and one can understand a religious poet unconsciously using the language of sexual attraction.

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<sup>139</sup>John Hetherington, *Norman Lindsay: The Embattled Olympian*, p57, is quoting what Lindsay said of *Pollice Verso*.

<sup>140</sup>From Lindsay's *Creative Effort*, quoted by Buckley, 'Utopianism and Vitalism', p50.

<sup>141</sup>His feelings are channelled through Mabel Allman's pronouncements on the shortcomings of Australian life: 'And Norman Lindsay, with inverted Puritan fervour, but imagining himself endowed with the Greek spirit, as a protest draws voluptuous bovine females, with or without ballet skirts' (*The Montforts*, p217). Boyd probably needed to be circumspect in his opinion of Lindsay; his cousin Joan Weigall married Daryl Lindsay, and he himself is alleged to be the secret lover of Norman's brother Robert.

<sup>142</sup>Buckley, 'Utopianism and Vitalism', p51.

We have the exquisite hymns, 'Jesu dulcis memoria' and 'Jesu decus angelicum', which might express any man's yearning for his lover'.... (*Montforts* 233)

in a passage notable for its significant transition from the relationship of 'women poets' with their God to that of the male who also aspires to have Jesus as his lover. Broom in fact is highlighting, either by devious means or by inadvertent ones, the dilemma implicit in the masculine longing for intimacy with God, or the placing of men in the anomalous position of not only receiving the attentions of 'an insistent, masculine suitor', but of pursuing a salvation contingent upon 'the outpouring of homoerotic passion'.<sup>143</sup> It is ironic, therefore, given the context of Jackie Blair in particular, to learn that American Puritans' theology and hermeneutics actually encouraged them to figure their relation to God as a sexual one. In his article 'Meat Out of the Eater' Walter Hughes writes that at the heart of the Puritan movement was a *desire* for God, not a filial sense of obligation; Puritans of both sexes frequently wrote of themselves as 'brides of Christ' spiritually committed to a divine 'husband' and eagerly awaiting a consummation of their union with their divine 'beloved'. An address to his God such as that by the minister and poet Michael Wigglesworth: 'will the Lord now again return and embrace me in the arms of his dearest love? will he fall upon my neck and kiss me?' was exemplary of the erotic connotations at the heart of the Puritan religious experience. According to Hughes, to many Puritans this sudden, exhilarating, even violent infusion of the divine into the human inevitably suggested sexual intercourse.<sup>144</sup>

In making a comparison with Boyd's use of the religio-erotic imperative we find several references of a mostly more obscure nature but with a similarly suggestive power. Father Grant of *Love Gods*, for example, a priest who is so radically physicalized in himself — with his seductive Italian good looks, his 'pleasure-loving mouth' and his voice that is 'low, smooth, and musical' — that he could well represent the reincarnation of Renaissance and continental Catholic allure, quite unabashedly eroticizes the Eucharist with his allusion to 'the kiss from the mouth of Christ' (*Gods* 115). In slightly more expansive vein Edward Browne, also of *Love Gods*, makes his peace before the enshrined Body of Christ in Westminster Cathedral: 'All the love of his bursting heart suddenly rose and went out to that Great Lover on the altar, where it was required, and returned and enfolded him...His whole body remained still, and wrapped in celestial warmth' (*Gods* 17), a description which summons up the imagery and erotic mastery of those compelling and 'shocking' engravings of Blake's titled *Elohim Creating Adam* and *The Soul Reunited with God*: the first, according to Chesler, an expression of male uterus envy and the second a homosexual mating representative of 'the unmet yearnings of mortal sons for immortal and omnipotent father-gods'.<sup>145</sup> Again, Christopher Beaton, also of *Love Gods*, and more interesting ultimately to Edward than his flirtation with the Church, is depicted as 'in love' with Christ: 'To love him is my sole desire' (p176), only to be chided by his cousin Morag for indulging in 'a peculiar form of eroticism' in order to shield himself from pain and discomfort (p221). Both young men reflect elements of the adolescent Boyd's romantic/religious schism, but it is Edward who most closely mirrors the author's autobiographical self: the latter's longing, for example, 'for ecstatic spiritual union with something outside myself'; the sensation when making his first communion that he is united to a 'mystical

<sup>143</sup>Walter Hughes, 'Meat Out of the Eater', *Engendering Men*, p103.

<sup>144</sup>Hughes, 'Meat Out of the Eater', *Engendering Men*, pp102-103.

<sup>145</sup>Phyllis Chesler, *About Men*, pp22 & 43.

lover' (*Flame* 36); and his conviction, based on his ardent feelings for his friends Winsland and Borodaile, that his emotional life is linked up with his religious life. Discrete categories of the sacred and the profane are shown as vulnerable to rupture and cross-fertilisation with Boyd's revelations that Winsland's embrace transforms him to 'a consecrated being' and that 'Borodaile and God were somehow associated in my mind' (*Flame* 40).<sup>146</sup>

If there is one concrete image that best captures and conflates Boyd's specific confusion of homoerotic desire and spiritual yearning it is surely the depiction of physical intimacy between Christ and the 'fresh and innocent youth' St John in Jacopo Bassano's *L'Ultima Cena*. One has the impression that when Boyd comes across this painting in Rome it is a transfiguring and sublime moment, one whose impact is at the very least equivalent to that engendered by the Perfect Drawing. After admiring the picture's references to 'ordinary life', he focusses on Christ:

Before him, his cheek supported on his hand, is S. John the beloved disciple, the bored drowsy boy, but content to be resting close to his god, who stands serene, aloof, pensive, while all around the heated disputatious men try with their limited brains to arrive at the exact definition of truth. Not one of them is looking where it is revealed, love sleeping against the breast of wisdom, a few feet from them. Not one of them is using his heart or his eyes...How could [Christ]...have endured all those disputatious apostles, without the presence of that sleepy trusting youth, who also knew only in his heart, who 'still is nature's priest'?  
(*Much Else* 81)

The sensitive, empathetic and enthusiastic response Boyd accords this portrayal is reinforced at a later date by Guy Langton's affirmation of this same image as 'the perfect symbol of love' (*DYM* 163)<sup>147</sup> — though Guy's statement, with its rider about 'immorality', suggests a touch of authorial self-consciousness apparently related to implications of homosocial/homosexual desire. Bassano's figuration or reification of a continuum of desire inclusive of devotion and passion, of the human and the divine, no doubt plays a part in stimulating and informing Boyd's considered conclusion that 'religion penetrating all relations in life means a constant blending of the spheres of holy and profane thought' (*Much Else* 118).

Bassano's painting may contain a paradox in depicting brotherly love as at the same time affectively intimate, suggestively homoerotic — remembering that St John was the disciple Christ is said to have truly loved — and as a reflection of the purity of the Christian ideal, but its essential message of reciprocal love functions to resolve the tormented relation to God so suggestive elsewhere in Boyd of the remnants of an indoctrination in puritanism. By far the most revelatory glimpse of Boyd's puritan influence must be Paul Brayford's bizarre demonisation of the Almighty:

'God is a kind of super gourmet, a horrible connoisseur sniffing the fragrance of souls. We are tortured and twisted to wring from us cries of agony, exquisite notes

<sup>146</sup>At their first encounter in *Love Gods*, Christopher evokes for Edward the presence of God.

<sup>147</sup>See page 169. Examination of this painting shows that Boyd may have been a trifle fanciful in his perception of St John as 'love sleeping against the breast of wisdom', since the boy seems to be leaning forward in front of Christ. The picture does convey, however, a discernible sense of connectedness between the two, with Christ seemingly oblivious of the other disciples and his hand *almost* caressing St John's head.

of submission and sacrifice, so that this divine monster may enjoy their [sic] music.  
We are like Strasbourg geese whose livers are diseased to make a delicacy'.... (*Brayford*  
pp361-62)

a description with its roots in Christian paradox as conceived by the puritans: a situation encapsulated in the title of Michael Wigglesworth's poetic sequence *Meat Out of the Eater* (1670) and referring to God's 'seemingly contradictory ability to nourish and consume us'.<sup>148</sup> It seems safe to say that, just as Martin Boyd was not partial to the aggressive model of masculinity, neither was he inclined to a view of God as a voracious devourer of souls. The allusion to sacrifice, however, raises in Boyd's case the specific question of celibacy, and here we are presented with a characteristic ambivalence: on the one hand the indications that, following John Henry Newman's circle within the Oxford Movement, Boyd, theoretically at least, deemed celibacy a necessary expression of religious idealism and self-sacrifice;<sup>149</sup> and opposing that, a perception, again possibly theoretical, of natural physical instincts as intrinsic to God's overall plan. What is manifestly more clear is that Boyd's allegiance to Anglo-Catholicism as a preferred mode of worship from adolescence until his death-bed conversion (like Oscar Wilde's) to Roman Catholicism was, initially at least, a form of rebellion against the puritanism of his mother and the related Protestant values of his childhood. But it was also a religion which answered to his fundamental needs. As David Hilliard has shown, for others of a radical temperament and/or homosexual inclinations who gravitated to the Anglo-Catholic church, the latter provided a set of institutions and religious practices through which they could express their sense of difference in an oblique and symbolical way ('Unmanly' 184).

Boyd makes a number of favourable references to the Oxford Movement and to Anglo-Catholicism in his writings, but, as always, in the interests of permutation and mutability he is not averse to the odd note of detraction or mockery: in *Love Gods*, for instance, he alludes to Newman as a 'pathetic storm-tossed voyager',<sup>150</sup> and in *Lucinda Brayford's* opening pages Aubrey Chapman is dubbed a 'Puseyite' and a 'filthy man' and thrown into the Cam by his fellow undergraduates to cries of 'No Popery!' We recall Boyd's youthful experiment in an Anglo-Catholic Franciscan community during the 1920s where he admits to his 'corrupt' motives and the existence of homosexual tensions,<sup>151</sup> the inevitable outcome perhaps of what Hilliard notes as the prevalence within the earlier, breakaway Oxford Movement of intense and demonstrative male-to-male friendships ('Unmanly' 185). In Boyd's elucidation of his own reasons for his attraction to Anglo-Catholicism, it is extraordinary how closely his sentiments echo those of the Oxford Movement: its sense of the 'awe and mystery in religion', for example, as well as a feeling for poetry and symbolism as vehicles of religious truth ('Unmanly' 184). Significantly too for Boyd, the liberal theology that dominated the Anglo-Catholic church from the 1880s until the 1930s asserted the central

<sup>148</sup>Hughes, 'Meat Out of the Eater', *Engendering Men*, p113.

<sup>149</sup>David Hilliard makes this observation of Newman's circle in 'UnEnglish and Unmanly: Anglo-Catholicism and Homosexuality', *Victorian Studies*, Vol. 25 No. 2 Winter 1982, p185. Further references to this article will be given by page number in the text.

<sup>150</sup>Hilliard notes that James Rigg in the 1890s made much of the 'characteristically feminine' mind and temperament of Newman, while in Geoffrey Faber's *Oxford Apostles* (1933) is a portrait of Newman as a sublimated homosexual. It is feasible that Boyd took the name of his miscreant monk, Brother Ambrose, from Newman's inseparable companion Ambrose St John.

<sup>151</sup>This situation as described in *Day of My Delight* is alluded to by Hilliard in a footnote.

importance of the Incarnation — the historical Christ as both fully God and fully man — in its dogmatic system ('Unmanly' 206). In order to arrive, however, at a more comprehensively meaningful and satisfying answer to Anglo-Catholicism's allure for Boyd we need go no further than Hilliard's findings, in his article 'UnEnglish and Unmanly' concerning the 'apparent correlation between male homosexuality and Anglo-Catholic religion' ('Unmanly' 205). Hilliard in effect paints a profile of the man likely to be drawn to the religion, one whose reasons he gives as either aesthetic, or elitist, or non-conformist: as a composite of all three attributes, Boyd emerges as the perfect candidate.

For some homosexuals, according to Hilliard, Anglo-Catholicism exerted an aesthetic attraction because their sense of the numinous was aroused by the elaborate ceremonial and sensuous symbolism of Catholic worship ('Unmanly' 206). The description fits the man who could write of the Church's 'romantic mystery' (*Flame*) and 'pleasant sensations' (*Love Gods*); who delineates Edward Browne's reaction to 'the seductive emotions of worship' — 'the suggestion of Italy in the ornaments and rich vestments of the clergy, the smell of incense, the fading echoes of plainsong and the face of the priest'<sup>152</sup> — as 'both soothing and stimulating' (*Love Gods* 112-113); who says of Wilfred Westlake in the Plumbridge church: 'He liked that church, looking rich, antique, and half pagan in the evening light. It made you think that people believed in the supernatural' (*Picnic* 51); and whose own sense of the numinous is highly developed.<sup>153</sup> Hilliard notes that 'camp' (in its meaning of 'elegantly ostentatious' or 'affected display'), a prominent attribute of the homosexual style as it developed in England from the 1890s onwards, found ample room for expression in the worship and decoration of many Anglo-Catholic churches ('Unmanly' 205). With the 1920s advent of Gothic revival in imitation of 'the living architecture of Catholic Europe', ornamentation became increasingly baroque, luxuriant and 'profoundly shocking' to Low Church adherents. Claiming this as part of its attraction, Hilliard in fact postulates a widespread appeal:

'Anglo-Catholic baroque' was a theatrical, slightly unreal style which reflected the restless gaiety of the 1920s and the postwar urge to reject established social conventions. High Mass in an Anglican church with baroque interior decor, sung to music by Mozart or Schubert, belonged to the age of the Charleston, Theosophy, the Russian Ballet, and the first dramatic successes of Noel Coward. The same people often sampled them all. ('Unmanly' 205)

Boyd patently belongs in this company, despite the fact that it is difficult to determine where he draws the line, in terms of church decor, between 'good' and 'bad' taste.<sup>154</sup> More readily conjectured, however, is his association with Hilliard's hypothesis of a covert link between exotic church decoration, liturgical extravagance, and the 'over-ripe' elegance of homosexual 'camp' ('Unmanly' 205).

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<sup>152</sup>Father Grant's face, as we recall, is refined, feminized, sensuous.

<sup>153</sup>Boyd's own version of a noumenon is 'an idea or spirit that expresses itself in matter'; 'an object of intuitive apprehension...Related to the word *Nóos*, "the Active Principle of the Universe"' (*Much Else* p3).

<sup>154</sup>One wonders, for instance, whether Boyd's likely concurrence with Mr Thurlow (whose mission in *Scandal of Spring* is to remove the reredos from the village church) that 'Anglo-Catholics have much better taste' (p25) is meant to include Anglo-Catholic baroque.

An area immune from speculation concerns the elitism and non-conformism inherent in Anglo-Catholicism. Elitism because the Church's leaders, clerical and lay, shared a common upper-class background of public school and ancient university, therefore its intellectual and social ethos was very different from, and consciously superior to (Adler again), that of English Roman Catholicism ('Unmanly' M206); and non-conformist because, in keeping with its part-constitution as a homosexual subculture, it was 'at variance with entrenched beliefs' ('Unmanly' 209) and a way of expressing dissent from both existing authority and heterosexual orthodoxy. Considering the degree of inbuilt tolerance plus the tacit sanctioning of rebellion implied here, it follows that although homosexual acts were judged to be intrinsically sinful, Anglo-Catholicism encouraged 'a slightly more accommodating attitude' towards homosexuality than was commonly found elsewhere in the Christian church. As Hilliard relates, many of its priests were inclined to the view that homosexual feelings were not in themselves sinful; they should be disciplined and controlled, and channelled into the service of others ('Unmanly' 207). Similar ideas were disseminated by a number of literary figures in their efforts to assimilate the artistic temperament to both homosexuality and the Anglo-Catholic religion.<sup>155</sup> The intertextuality with Boyd demonstrated by some of these sexual radicals is remarkable though hardly surprising. Andre Raffalovich in *Uranisme et Unisexualité*, for example, advocated a life of chastity, supported by friendship, as the Christian ideal ('Unmanly' 198); Edward Carpenter saw Uranian men and women ('the intermediate sex') as the reconcilers and interpreters in the evolution of a new society; and in similar mode the lay theologian Archibald Kenneth Ingram wanted a revitalised Anglo-Catholicism as the remedy for the ills of modern society. Hilliard notes that his character

talks with enthusiasm of a 'new type of youth' which is coming into existence in English society — light-hearted, artistic, nature-loving, 'not so exclusively, so aggressively, male', though by no means effeminate. These youths and young men have a 'much keener sense of comradeship' than their forefathers and show little romantic interest in women.  
(‘Unmanly’ 204)

This hypothetical youth of Ingram's seems to me to embody all the essential characteristics Boyd himself advocates as the masculine ideal. Ingram was pushing for a new sexual morality for the 'new age'. In 1922 he described homosexuality as 'a romantic cult rather than a physical vice', and by the 1940s he was arguing that the morality or immorality of any sexual behaviour was determined by the presence or absence of love: where love was mutual there was no sin ('Unmanly' 204). His conclusion that 'Pure love, especially so intense a love as the homogenic attachment, is not profane but divine', is simultaneously a faithful recuperation of Plato and an unmistakable recapitulation of Boyd's own sentiments. The resurgence of Plato brings this discussion full circle, as if to emphasize that all the ambiguities and ambivalences indigenous to Plato's idealisation of the male bond find their equivalent in Boyd's transgressive aesthetic, his constant counter-balancing and subverting of a utopian ideal with its alternative, the suggestively erotic articulation of the phenomenon of male homosocial/homosexual desire. Just as Plato was able to conceptualize an

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<sup>155</sup>As Dellamora notes, 'one might consider the portrayal of Marius and his Christian friend Cornelius as a highly ideological, mythic expression of male-male desire within an Anglo-Catholic ethos'. *Masculine Desire*, p149.

ethical domain associated with intense pleasure — in acknowledgment of 'the desires that are always apt to invade the soul'<sup>156</sup> — so this man of impassioned ideals and pleasures (and no little spiritual anguish) availed himself of a parallel universe in which tangentially to give vent to the rewarding, rebellious and occasionally violent desires society denied him licit expression.

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<sup>156</sup>Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure* p74, is citing from Plato's *Republic* IX.

## CONCLUSION

Having subjected Martin Boyd to a scrutiny at least as intense as that to which he exposes the ephebic and enthralling Hermes Belvedere, I am persuaded that in many arresting and significant ways he epitomises, is emblematic of, or more provocatively perhaps, *enacts* throughout his writing life his era's diachronic shifts in consciousness as they relate to the homosocial/homosexual project. With his characteristic oscillations between codification and the confessional, the covert and overt, the revelatory and the enigmatic, or alternatively, his mingling of these elements, Boyd reflects on the one hand societal (and therefore internalized) prohibitions and silences and, on the other, the increasingly broader, more elastic, more inclusive and open-ended theoretical debate which superseded the narrowly definitional institutional ideology of the 1890s and its pathology-driven classifications. Eve Sedgwick's perception of the constantly evolving discourses pertaining to the spectrum of the homosocial, the homosexual, the deviant and 'other' as today constituting 'not a coherent definitional field but a space of overlapping, contradictory and conflictual definitional forces' is true if we think of say, Freud's (and Foucault's for that matter) arbitrary inversion model of homosexuality — one based on gender transitivity or sex-role reversal — as against the diametrically opposed and equally arbitrary view of Halperin who, in redefining homo-style sexuality as intransitive, makes sexual object-choice independent of masculine or feminine traits — and thus empties out the assumption of an immutable heterosexuality of desire. It is the challenging of assumptions that has, in fact, been characteristic of the majority of the hypotheses adumbrated here in tracing an interpretive framework against which to position Boyd. And it is not only the collective will to subversion that lends these theories a general air of congruence rather than disparity. If we consider, for instance, that Adler and Craft also question the innate heterosexuality of desire; that Westphal's inclusivist emphasis recognises a 'natural order of disorder' and, like Foucault to follow, privileges sexual sensibility over sexual relations; that Sedgwick hypothesizes a larger circuit of desire in acknowledgment of sexual desire as an unpredictable solvent of stable identities; that Bersani and River argue for a normalising, as against a pathological, view of homosexuality; that for Lacan, gender is not a matter of fixed facts about persons; that Hocquenghem disavows the phallus, traditionally the 'despotic signifier' and determinant of sex-power relations, as the mark of human desire; that Deleuze and Guattari see man as not a given self but as a 'cacophony of desiring machines'; and finally, given Freud's postulation of the protean mobility of sexual desire and (like Plato before him) the potential bisexuality of every human creature, it is possible to detect in all of these individuals a unity of consciousness-altering which marks them as pioneers and anticipators of contemporary 'Queer' theory. Just as Martin Boyd was articulating by ellipsis a less formally coherent but nevertheless urgently felt campaign against rigid stereotypes of male gender formulation, so Queer theory is, in the words of Catherine Lumby, 'giving people the freedom to construct their identity any way they'd like to and supporting that'.<sup>1</sup>

As Bruce James explains it, the new improved Queer of the 90s is no longer interchangeable with the narrowly subcultural term 'gay'. For him it is a state of mind, a powerful

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<sup>1</sup>Catherine Lumby, 'Revolution, what revolution?', *Spectrum*, *SMH*, 21/6/97.

and empowering sensibility, not a sexual preference.<sup>2</sup> Queer theorists, says Lumby, are interested in how and why sexuality came to be seen as such an important marker of identity in the first place; and they resist the urge to categorisation, to carving up the world into straight, gay, bisexual or transgendered. It is a theory sufficiently complex and ambiguous, perhaps, against which to test the reality of Boyd. One intuits that Boyd was much like his character Raoul in that, on matters of sex and religion, he 'loathed these probings below the light and graceful surface of life';<sup>3</sup> and that like his other disguise Guy — who here incidentally aligns himself with Queer theory — he considered that 'Too many things were labelled, especially in human relationships' (*Crown* 142).

Notwithstanding, Boyd, as possibly a one-man vanguard for his times, does confront and indeed interrogate, however tangentially, what he perceives as an imbalance or bias in the male (mainly Australian) heterosexual norm as he experiences it: a critique of masculinity which, while it might not equate with the more modern crisis in masculinity triggered by feminist and postmodernist deconstructions of male hegemonic cultural practice, makes serious inroads into literary perceptions which have habitually 'conventionalised' the Australian male according to an anti-intellectual, anti-aesthetic and physically invigorated larrikin/drover/squatter/digger tradition. In his more bullish and uncouth manifestations the representative heterosexual (usually a male relative) is typically ridiculed or excoriated by means which are comic, subtle, scornful or satiric, an attitudinal bias resembling that of Thomas Mann, a male of primarily homosexual desire who at twenty wrote an essay called 'How I hate "healthy men"'.<sup>4</sup>

A natural corollary to this, the high incidence in Boyd's stories of heterosexual relationships disabled by emptiness, tragedy, or tinged with scandal, might in the circumstances be reflective of a related issue, an oft-thematised denigration of marriage that needs to be judged, perhaps, in a context of personal prejudice over any more generalised or principled antipathy. As we recall, the one time Boyd contemplates (like Aubrey Tunstall) opting for marriage is when he imagines — and he is utterly frank in his admission — that it might entail a substantial income.

It follows that the renunciation/denunciation of the power and potency nexus crucial to conventional constructions of male gender identity must involve not only opposition but a form of alternative thinking. While it seems clear that Boyd's overt and inherent distaste for masculine stereotypical norms (however humorously rendered) is closely allied to a less clearly enunciated but possibly more pressing imperative, the flight from obligatory heterosexuality, the more subliminal project of constructing himself as different while retaining his self-image as essentially masculine is necessarily compromised by anomaly and disjunction. Fundamentally, it is a homosexual definition that is incrementally assembled by Boyd, but again, one which is not reliant on orthodox or specific taxonomies. Nor, despite the self-awareness evidenced in his writings, can he afford any fully explicit appraisal or analysis of his predicament. The struggle for explication is facilitated, therefore, not by introspection but on the margins between disclosure and secrecy, by employing in turns semantic mystification, innuendo and a disarming candour. In the process he reinforces Sedgwick's case for the implausibility of any secure, stable or intelligible expression of feelings between men in a modern heterosexual capitalist patriarchy (*EC* 84). His sexual orientation may indeed be close to

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<sup>2</sup>Bruce James, 'Queer, Really Queer', *Spectrum*, *SMH*, 8/11/97.

<sup>3</sup>In the first edition of *The Montforts* (Martin Mills), London: Constable, 1928, p244.

<sup>4</sup>Anthony Heilbut, *Thomas Mann: Eros and Literature*, cited by Anne Susskind, *Spectrum*, *SMH*, 9/8/97.

that of Proust, one characterised by Sedgwick as 'organised around a radical and irreducible incoherence' (EC 85). However that may be, it is one that is coincidentally predictive of today's more radical destabilisations of sex and gender. Incoherence has been noted as a factor early in Boyd's inscription of his sexual persona. His personal history actually exploits the trope of incoherence, and this invariably in a heterosexual context, as an indicator of heterosexual non-compliance. Sexual opportunity is negated by irresolution, indeterminacy and equivocation — traits explicitly thematised in the sexual anaesthesia of many of his male protagonists — and these are bolstered by claims that his feelings are without direction or focus. Something similar happens when he owns to the felicity of the same-sex comradeship experienced during army training. In this instance his forthright refutation of implications of 'inversion' effectively establishes a definition by negation: that is, while actively acceding to a same-sex preference, he refuses the classification of gender transitivity which would place him, as a feminized man, at the threshold between genders. By contrast, the practitioner in the classical pederastic model of manly love so manifestly privileged by Boyd, allied as he is to notions of noble deeds and self-sacrifice, spiritual and bodily grace, and ideally, to an exalted form of love, is theoretically and univocally valorized as 'virilized' by a choice of object which does not involve crossing the boundaries of gender.

As we have seen, Boyd objects to the trope of inversion because it is, or in synchronic terms it was, associatively coextensive with 'effeminacy'. By the standards of his day effeminacy was the specific epithet used to denote the transgendered male in his adoption of so-called feminine mannerisms and behavioural traits, and Boyd's anathematizing of the word signals an affront not only to his masculinity but to his sense of himself as a gentleman. A possible link to Nietzsche, who directed his most effective intensities of both life and writing toward other men and toward the male body (EC 133), suggests itself here. Sedgwick uncovers a minoritizing strain in Nietzsche which is energetically excoriating of effeminacy to the extent that, rather than make male same-sex desire consonant with that effeminacy, instead 'associates instance after instance of homoerotic desire, though never named as such, with the precious virility of Dionysiac initiates or of ancient warrior classes' (EC 134). Boyd's Dionysian instincts — the will to freedom, moral autonomy and transgression — have been documented here, as has his imaginative sense of the male bond as rooted in an idealised and heroic tradition. And it is precisely because it is but a negligible step from Nietzsche's evocation of ancient ritual to classical philosophy and practices which valued homosexual love above heterosexual, taking into account Freud's extremely plausible view of the latter, that the contradictions start to multiply. Freud acknowledges that the Greeks, universally recognised as 'virilized', were capable of a complete *mental* masculinity. However, the 'virilized' subject's choice of sexual object, the *eromenos* who combines both male and female traits, places the *erastes* in the paradoxical situation of seeking 'a kind of reflection of [his own] bisexual nature'. The *erastes* in effect is attracted to the 'same' and the 'other' simultaneously: to put it another way, he is *psychically* gender-intransitive but *biologically* gender-transitive. Anomalies such as these are endemic to Freud's understanding of sexual desire as polymorphously perverse, of identity as necessarily unstable. They relate to Freud's wider compass, his stress on perversity as integral to culture. More pointedly, they have specific ramifications for Boyd's psychosexual constitution insofar, at least, as it offers itself up for interpretation.

That ambivalences arise inevitably from his challenge to male gender norms and prescriptive homosexual taxonomies is largely because Boyd's friendship patterns locate him in a theoretical no-man's-land. In practice he is a non-conformist, roaming the homosocial/homosexual continuum to adopt components from a variety of formulations but complying exclusively with none. Within the paradigm of 'sameness' implicated in gender-separatist same-sex attraction, for example, he forms friendships according to radically differentiated parameters. There are the ardent youthful and mature friendships based on an equality of age and (presumed) reciprocity which qualify as 'the same'; there are the relationships with Dick Hoskins, Roger Hone, the choristers John Alldis and Julian Smith, and, of course, Luciano Trombini, liaisons with schoolboys which, in terms of the age differential at least, imitate the pedagogic/ pederastic Greek model (although here the qualification of 'sameness' is somewhat compromised);<sup>5</sup> and there is the 'long friendship' with Robert Lindsay<sup>6</sup> — about which Boyd was as secretive as he was about his great-grandfather John Mills, the ex-convict who was responsible for amassing the brewery fortune on which the à Beckett family thrived<sup>7</sup> — a relationship predicated on both sameness *and* difference. Lindsay was older by twenty years, but as Mendelssohn describes him, there were many similarities. Fair, fastidious and with an acute sense of irony, Robert was interested in furniture and interiors and social position; and although he came to question his sexual identity, he never discussed such matters with his family.<sup>8</sup> Whatever the nature of the homosocial or homosexual attachments formed by Boyd in real life, however, it is impossible to ignore the exquisite and androgynous youth whose image dominates his writings. If innate bi-sexuality is a factor of the appreciation of ephebic mixed-sex characteristics, it behoves us to ask whether a bi-sexual nature in terms of a differently gendered object-choice is also a possibility for Boyd. Given, however, that there is barely a jot of evidence to suggest he finds the female body either alluring or arousing, we are left to assume that, like the encounter with the prostitute, any further heterosexual experiments he may have made were probably a mistake.

The paradigm of erotic desire that Boyd approves and, in effect, aligns himself with — that of Kenmare — is not without its own imprecisions and anomalies. It also displays, again ironically, many parallels with Freudian thinking. Most noticeable among them is first, her assertion that the 'genius' (and here we should perhaps substitute the 'creative artist'), and especially the poet,

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<sup>5</sup>Where the emphasis seems to have been on 'sentimental' and affective, rather than sexual, bodily contact. Nevertheless, as Noel Rowe observes, in the uncle/nephew stereotypes Boyd likes to create both fictionally and autobiographically, there is 'an almost palpable sense that they represent for the narrator a potential lapse in taste, morality, manners'. Rowe also suggests that Guy Langton's bequeathing of the family history to his nephew Julian at the start of *The Cardboard Crown* gestures towards the older man/hearer precedent of Greek pederastic tradition. In conversation, April, 1998.

There is yet another phenomenon to consider here, which is that the boys and young men to whom Boyd is attracted, a situation illustrated by Paul Brayford's attachment to Harry the footman, are 'different' to the extent that they evolve into ostensibly 'straight' men who choose to marry.

<sup>6</sup>In the Lindsay family papers 1904-1960, Mitchell Library MSS 742/13, 10/10/45, Lindsay refers to Boyd as 'a fellow I knew in my salad days'.

<sup>7</sup>Barrett Reid, reviewing Niall's biography of Boyd, reflects that 'this master of irony missed, ironically, the inspiration of the best and most Australian of all the family stories'. Arts & Books, *The Age*, 25/2/89.

<sup>8</sup>Mendelssohn, *Norman Lindsay and his Family*, pp126-130.

is always the victim of a psychosis, that the genius never is, never can be, 'normal'...is normality desirable? It looks as if it might well be time to trust to the 'abnormal' genius instead.... (*Genius* 55)

and her recruitment of Jung to corroborate her view: 'Jung has said that every creative person is a duality or a synthesis of contradictory impulses' (*Genius* 38). This leads into the second point, her emphasis on the artist's fragmented nature, on his psychological bi-sexuality and feminine qualities, on what amounts to Ulrich's hypothesized 'hermaphrodeity of the soul'. According to Kenmare the artist is a man apart, in a world where ordinary standards cannot apply; he is supra-sexual and actually rejects sexual fulfilment (*Genius* 85 & 80). The thrust of Kenmare's thesis appears, in fact, to be profoundly anti-sexual:<sup>9</sup> '...the sexual act is...opposed to all genius, to all universal conception and universal creativity...the new man is above all a man of transfigured sex who has restored in himself the androgynous image and likeness of God' (*Genius* 75). Kenmare might say that genius is through and through erotic, but for her 'Eros' denotes a cross between a transcendent sexlessness and a sexuality based on mixed-gender characteristics. Her thesis is not entirely clear-cut, however, leaving room for the kind of ambiguity we encounter in comparing her rebuttal of G. Wilson Knight's argument for the sexual impulse as a strong force in 'abnormal' loves against her own acknowledgment that the creative man 'needs the strange love-experiences that come his way' (*Genius* 111). While she stresses that creativity can, and should, subsist on love that is romanticized, etherealised, spiritualised and disembodied, a theory that shrieks of the Freudian sublimation she disavows, there is also the suggestion (perhaps unintended?) that because he is different in kind, the 'genius' has a dispensation to love as he sees fit. Perhaps Boyd was gratified to have Kenmare's endorsement of his friend Fausset's claim that fulfilment could be achieved 'by living creatively in the world of imagination' (*Genius* 76). No doubt he also welcomed Kenmare's attribution of a transfigured sexuality to the man of creative talent. Not so certain, however, is whether he made the link between Kenmare and Freud's inspired analysis of Leonardo as an idealised and emotional homosexual only: an analysis we recall as prompted by the belief that it is emotional attitude rather than actual behaviour that defines the 'invert'.

Primarily, what Kenmare offered Boyd was a rationale for a duality of personality which, in all probability, was indivisible from a conflicted and, initially at least, confused psychosexual pathology. Presumably, just as Adler provided him with a palliative, the deconstructive re-evaluation of the feminine together with a critique of masculine toughness to reinforce his own prejudices, so Kenmare revealed to him the normality of 'abnormalities', the binding imperative on the artist to be 'different in kind'. Presumably too, he accepted from her the assumption of 'psychological bi-sexuality and feminine qualities' as standard definitional criteria for the exceptionally gifted (and here we recall his own view that 'everyone had some modification from the other sex' (*Much Else* 42)). For, despite the ostensible resistance to the feminine implied by Boyd's imaginary empathy with Plato's template of male bonding, despite his adamant rejection of the effeminate homosexual, commonsense suggests that Boyd was nevertheless anxious, and

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<sup>9</sup>In associating Eros with 'sacred or non-sexual love', Kenmare appears to ignore the possibility of sex as sacred, a factor demonstrable in the art of human societies which existed some 5000 years ago, according to cultural historian Rianne Eisler, author of *The Chalice and the Blade* (1990) and *Sacred Pleasure* (1996). *Compass*, ABC Channel 2, 26/7/98.

pleased, to have his non-conforming 'feminine' side (as defined by binary standards, and as distinct from 'effeminate') validated and valued by theorists whose opinion he trusted.<sup>10</sup> His feminine qualities do not need re-elaboration. Suffice to say that his was a particular sensibility rare to the Australian literary scene of his day. Certain elements may have objected at the time that his aesthetic preoccupations, refinements of perception, elegance of style and drawing-room wit were inimical to the burgeoning but nevertheless culturally emaciated Australian ethos. Today he is more likely to be acclaimed for his cross-cultural appreciations and comparisons and his interested, and interesting, participation in a discipleship stretching from the French Symbolistes through Ruskin, Huysman, Pater, Moore, Wilde and Hopkins: a documentation of social and literary dissidence appropriated by him to fuel his dissemination-by-stealth of a discourse of decadence founded in erotic apprehension, sensory experience, and the exploration and valorization, like Pater, of a body-centred 'perversity': an infiltration, in Boyd's case, into the dimension of the homoerotic.

If there is a sense in his writings that, like Charlie Chaplin, Boyd always plays only himself,<sup>11</sup> it is because his 'self' is not only self-absorbed, but inarguably a chameleon, multiform and various. The perversities (in the sense of contrarities) and contradictions prodigal to his sexual and gendered identity are reflected to an equal, if not magnified, degree in the belief systems out of which Boyd constructs his universe, and function to corroborate his self-definition as 'incorrigible' and inconsistent. Inevitably but inconclusively, one is prompted to reflect on cause and effect, on the correlation between sexual identity and personality: whether *prima facie*, one could be said to determine the other, or whether, accepting the argument of sexuality as constituent of innermost pathology, the two are coterminous and indistinguishable. Conjectural analysis can only deal in outcomes, and the outcomes here suggest, not how or why, but only that any perceived correlation must be based either in a fragmented and volatile self or a slant on the world that is fluid and flexible — or alternatively, on the premise of an accommodation between the two. Manning Clark's perception of Boyd as a 'deeply divided man' torn between sensual and spiritual love, between pleasure and salvation, while probing to the core of the matter, puts the emphasis on confusion. And it is true that Boyd's dichotomies tend to be overwhelming. Or rather, they *appear* as dichotomies because many are presented in terms of binary oppositions: as swerves of thought and impulse, for example, between Apollo and Dionysus, the utopian and dystopian, idealism and political realism, conformism and dissidence, aristocratic order and bohemian infraction. Other, coexisting tensions manifest themselves in a balancing act between the serious and comic, the permitted and prohibited, self-indulgence and self-mastery, pacifism and violence, masculine and feminine, pleasure and sorrow, science and religion.<sup>12</sup> Boyd venerates his ancestral past<sup>13</sup> but his hedonistic impulse demands that he live in the here and now; his pleasure-seeking has Epicurean

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<sup>10</sup>Boyd's prejudice will not allow him to give Freud any credit for the theory of innate bi-sexuality.

<sup>11</sup>Anthony Elliott, reviewing Kenneth S. Lynn's biography of Chaplin, *The Australian Weekend Review*, 21-22 June, 1997.

<sup>12</sup>In his autobiographies he delights in creating enigma and mystery, telling us variously, for example, that he is 'left', 'conservative', 'quasi-agnostic', and thought to be 'more immoral and subversive than my spoken opinions reveal' (this last in *A Single Flame*, p208).

<sup>13</sup>Which includes Thomas Becket (1118-70), Henry II's chancellor and Archbishop of Canterbury who was canonised in 1173.

overtones but is more properly Cyrenaicean in adhering to precepts such as the worship of the beautiful body and the counsel of perfection. His highly developed sense of the visual, the tactile and the sensual, his passionate defence of the material and physical world is informed by an ascetic discipline Umberto Eco has defined as itself in tension between the 'call of earthbound pleasure and a striving after the supernatural'.<sup>14</sup> And coincidentally with Boyd's exuberant appreciation of life there are the intimations of a deepseated anxiety and depression bordering on desolation: he qualifies, perhaps, for inclusion in this statement by Paul Theroux: 'Writers do not become writers out of a healthy literary impulse, but out of a deep loneliness, a deficiency, a kind of dysfunction...and on the positive side, they turn to books for solace...It's conceit. It's signalling for attention. People who are normal don't become writers'.<sup>15</sup>

As harshly negative as Theroux's pronouncement may be, and bearing in mind Boyd's preferred option to 'entertain...by light comedy' rather than by 'wallowing in the brutal', my feeling is that it is nevertheless apt. Its relevance to Boyd's situation may be apprehended in perceptions such as those of Noel Coward who used irony as a protective shield;<sup>16</sup> of Adler who held that the striving for pleasure may be an attempt at victory over pain and a compensation for social disharmony; and of Mordell who believed that the literature of self-deception is nearly always consolatory, that works which vaunt asceticism and death and celibacy 'are usually unconsciously insincere'. I'm not sure, however, that Boyd's preoccupation with death can be imputed as insincere. Death was a palpable reality for Boyd after his involvement in the first world war, and its stark presence in a number of his novels almost invariably connotes the nobility of sacrifice (in contrast, *Lucinda Brayford's* story of Hugo, of a 'princeling' status become ignoble and of an ignominious demise by injury and slow decay, is a cultural parable to codify the death of the world, hell without redemption). Death by martyrdom to an ideal, a moral conviction or an emotional/spiritual need is an extraordinarily pervasive theme, one that is connected most often to the doctrine of brotherly love and/or its elevation to a brotherhood in Christ. In this context we recall Stephen Brayford, Jackie Blair, Boris Malakoff, the 'Joe' figure of *Nuns in Jeopardy* and of course, Dominic Langton in his sado-masochistic desire to take upon himself the suffering of others in recompense for his latent violence. And the martyric death, if we discount the narratorially-generated martyrdom of Davina Chelgrove to the greater glory of Michael Kaye in *The Lemon Farm*, is rarely without a component of the desire personified by the iconic and eroticized St Sebastian in his conflation of love-object and death-wound.

Dollimore tells us that the death/desire nexus endemic to Western culture — where death is perceived as the enemy of desire and yet where death itself may be eroticized and desirable — 'a consummation devoutly to be wished' — owes its conceptual origins to an early Christian prioritizing of celibacy over sexuality (meaning 'heterosexuality') on the grounds that the latter was a 'breeding ground for death'.<sup>17</sup> By contrast, conceivably — and paradoxically — societal oppression

<sup>14</sup>Umberto Eco, *Art and Beauty in the Middle Ages*, (trans) Hugh Bredin, New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1986, p6.

<sup>15</sup>Theroux was talking to Megan Tresidder, 'Travelling with His Grumpiness', *Spectrum*, *SMH*, 10/2/96.

<sup>16</sup>According to Prof. Terry Castle in a paper 'Kindred Spirits' given at Sydney University, 15/8/96.

<sup>17</sup>Dollimore was speaking on the *Arts Today* programme, ABC Radio National, 10/7/98, about his latest book, *Death, Desire and Loss in Western Culture*, London: Allen Lane/Penguin, 1998.

of the homosexual is provoked by a perception of him as sterile and therefore always already inscribed with redundancy and death.<sup>18</sup> This is relevant perhaps to Boyd's repeated grappling with notions of martyrdom and crucifixion: the pacifist and the artist must be prepared to be crucified for their beliefs, he tells us, but there is also a sense in which Stephen and Joe and Boris and possibly Dominic are crucified to, and by, their homoerotic desire. Stephen in particular, because he imagines himself stretched on a Cross of conflicting emotions — the love and hate (desire and repulsion) occasioned by the chorister and the jailer — may be seen as metonymic of a sexuality connected to guilt and angst and uncertainty, even to self-loathing. The obsessive redeployment of the motif of crucifixion, focussing as it does on the love of sacrifice, also brings into play, as Noel Rowe has intuited, the sacrifice of love: giving it up, as he says, in at least two senses. Rowe uses the reference point of the dead soldier at Sydney's Hyde Park war memorial — a horizontal crucifixion in which the soldier's ephemic and naked body is flung backward in an attitude of total surrender, his arms spreadeagled and supported by the enormous sword which runs behind his shoulderblades — to make a subtle comparison with Boyd's crucified young men:<sup>19</sup> the sculpted soldier, he says, is 'an instance of a socially permissible form of homoeroticism...a way of at once saying and silencing physical attraction'. According to Rowe's perspective, by crucifying desire at the same time as he celebrates it in tangible form, the maker and artist finds a way of 'saving his feelings' for the beautiful youth, thus preserving his availability to the 'celibate imagination'.<sup>20</sup> The ambiguities created in this perpetually animated interchange between the youth as object-of-desire and his paradigmatic status as a Christ figure suggest complicity in a transgressive reworking of the Christ-as-lover dilemma encountered by the American puritan poets. Elements of a similar transgression apply to Boyd's displacement on to his 'perfect drawing' of the sensual violence awakened by the Hermes and by the Apollos of Veii and Tevere. That his apprehension of Michelangelo's deposed Christ encompasses the spiritual and the transcendental is axiomatic; but it is not solely and exclusively so. Boyd's response emphasizes the pleasurable: his own pleasure in this 'sparkling...beauty, ravishing as the sun' and the delight in creation epitomized by Christ. His seeming need to spiritualise the body could be said to be compromised by an equal need to register this semi-naked Christ as utterly and humanly desirable. But there is a strong possibility that, like the ancient mystics who unselfconsciously expressed their union with God in erotic terms, Boyd is arguing for the kind of expanded consciousness that would re-unite the sacred and profane; that celebrates, rather than suppresses, sensual pleasure as indispensable to earthly existence.

Two more aspects of the *Pietà* are potentially significant, one relating to psychology and the other to ideology. First, it should be noted that here desire and death reconverge: for all that the Christ of Boyd's epiphany is erotically available he is also dead; and while his state of peaceful stasis might promise eternal life, in realisation that, as Dollimore reminds us, is a kind of death. Boyd's captivation by this image suggests a quietist impulse; it also suggests a more radical proposition of Dollimore's, that it is easy to slip from yearning redemption and eternal life to yearning for death

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<sup>18</sup>Boyd's theme of the possibility or actuality of death for the homosexually-inscribed lover resonates with Derrida's vexed query: '...why should [an *indivisible* community of the soul between lovers] harbour this taste of death, of the impossible, of the aporia?' *Politics of Friendship*, p179.

<sup>19</sup>And possibly, I would add, with the personal burden of a sexuality sacrificed to suppression and repression.

<sup>20</sup>Noel Rowe, in conversation, Department of English, University of Sydney, 30/7/98.

itself. Contextually it is perhaps Derrida who best captures the entanglement of erotic with spiritual desire, and their mutual preservation through a consequent entanglement with death: '...[God] is the absolute desirable or desired, analogically and formally in the position of the beloved, therefore on the side of death, of that which can be inanimate without ceasing to be loved or desired'.<sup>21</sup> The second point to be stressed is that for Boyd this Jesus must have represented the ideal of manhood and masculinity he so earnestly, but obliquely, espouses via a method of relentless resistance to established hegemonic norms. For in this face Michelangelo has mythologised, not the suffering Christ, but the 'radical' and 'anarchist' marked by kindness, compassion, empathy, and the advocacy of non-violence; the man who was reviled by many of his contemporaries because he spoke out against hierarchies, dominance and power.<sup>22</sup>

Boyd's fixation on crucifixion, death, and salvation — underpinned by the belief that the Christian religion 'provides you with a friend you can never lose' (*Scandal* 45) — indicates a troubled, solitary and deeply religious nature. It belies, just as too restricted a concentration on his ambivalences and contradictions belies, his affirmations: his passions, his exuberant celebrations, his moral commitment, his reputation for urbanity and wit, humour, charm and conviviality, and importantly, his dedicated momentum toward integration and a fuller mode of being (and I have no doubt that Boyd's harmonising impulse arises out of his experience of himself as a non-unitary, refractory subject). This will to integrate has been observed in his holistic attitude towards the body and spirit, in the related wish to reconcile pagan permissiveness with a proscribed but redemptive Christianity, in an aestheticism which embraces both culture and nature, and in his attempt to make his art reflect and enhance life and to construct his life, as near perfectly as possible, around art. Boyd said of himself that he was 'perennially displaced',<sup>23</sup> that his lifelong fate was that of never quite belonging to his environment (*Flame* 47). Nevertheless there is a compensatory impetus, evidenced in a moment's imaginative cross-fertilization of Greek and Australian identity in *Lucinda Brayford*, toward a perception of place as more a matter of cultural relationship than geographical location. The countervailing and ineradicable penchant for the unpredictable and inconsistent — the characteristics of flux and deviation which inhabit Boyd's writings in a permanent state of suspension, readiness and availability — is difficult to separate from a perspective of him as a man of disunity and dichotomy; and acting as it does to pervert any determination of what Derrida calls 'Hegelian essence', it militates against conclusions which can be anything other than provisional and tentative. Perhaps one needs to concede that Boyd was a universe of different and conflicting selves obeying post-modernist constructions of identity as relational and mobile. Nevertheless he longed, I suspect, to claim for his 'ec-centric' sexuality<sup>24</sup> and de-centred gender identity a measure of coherence and rationality.

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<sup>21</sup>Jacques Derrida, *Politics of Friendship*, p10.

<sup>22</sup>According to the theologian Joanna Manning, in a documentary on 'sacred sex' shown on *Compass*, ABC Channel 2, 26/7/98.

<sup>23</sup>'Preoccupations and Intentions', p88.

<sup>24</sup>The expression is that of Ed Cohen, 'Are We (Not) What We Are Becoming? "Gay" "Identity", "Gay Studies", and the Disciplining of Knowledge', *Engendering Men*, p174.

It has been said that all respectable novels contain 'hidden in their recesses a paradigm of their concerns'.<sup>25</sup> An unannounced but irrepressible concern of Boyd's is to make palpable the workings of a dimension of homoeroticism and homosocial and homosexual desire. Another concern, this time so deeply buried as to inflect a barely discernible but tantalising trace, is to theorise acceptance of both the exploratory, multitudinous self, and of the self who is different. The first is there in Edward Browne's query concerning the plurality of pleasure: 'Who then could be blamed for the eager gratifying of every curiosity, the seeking of every experience, whether of man, or of woman, or of God?' (*Love Gods* 8); and the second surfaces in Guy Langton's musings over Dominic (and here it is significant that Boyd employs the 'tree of life' imagery so prominent in his works): '...is not extreme logic an absurdity against nature? We do not find exactness anywhere in the natural world. Every tree of the same species is of a different shape' (*DYM* 98).

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<sup>25</sup>Don Anderson, *SMH*, 5/7/97.

APPENDIX

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