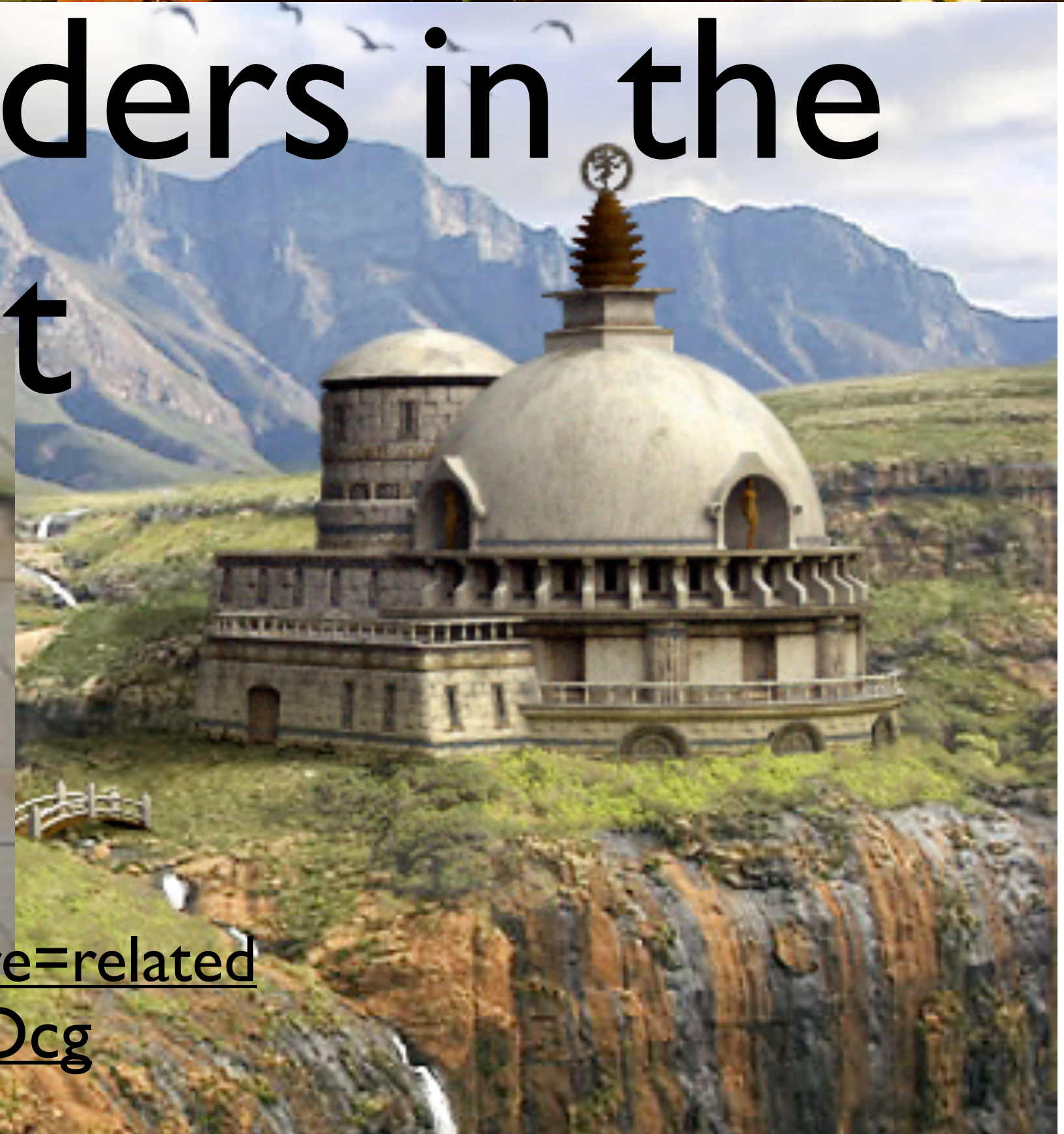




# Patrick White: Riders in the Chariot

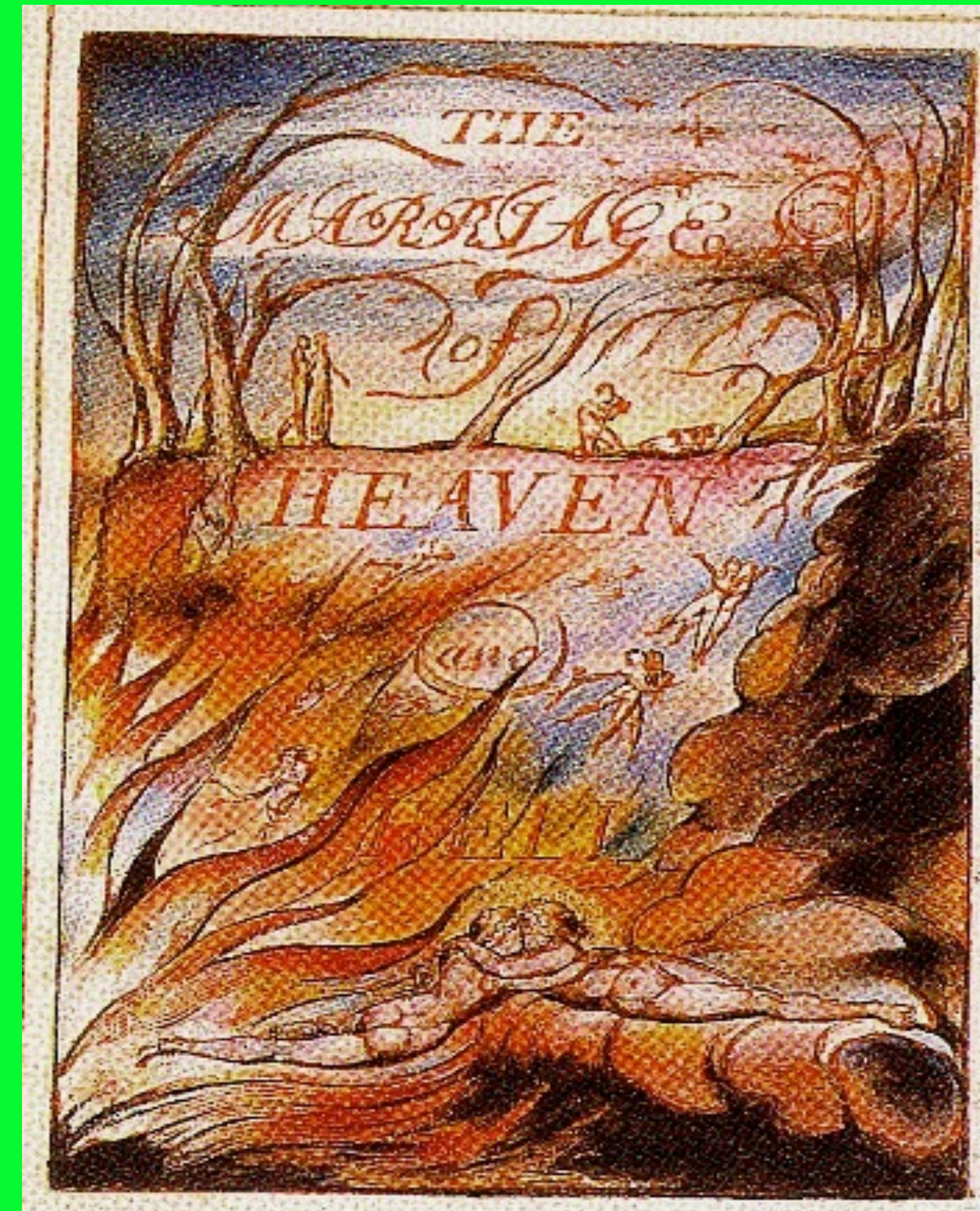


<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E69qNtyVB7o&feature=related>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j02E06UFOcg>

# Epigraph to Patrick White's novel by William Blake:

- Both Blake and White are artists who see themselves as continuing in this prophetic tradition.





# Riders in the Chariot

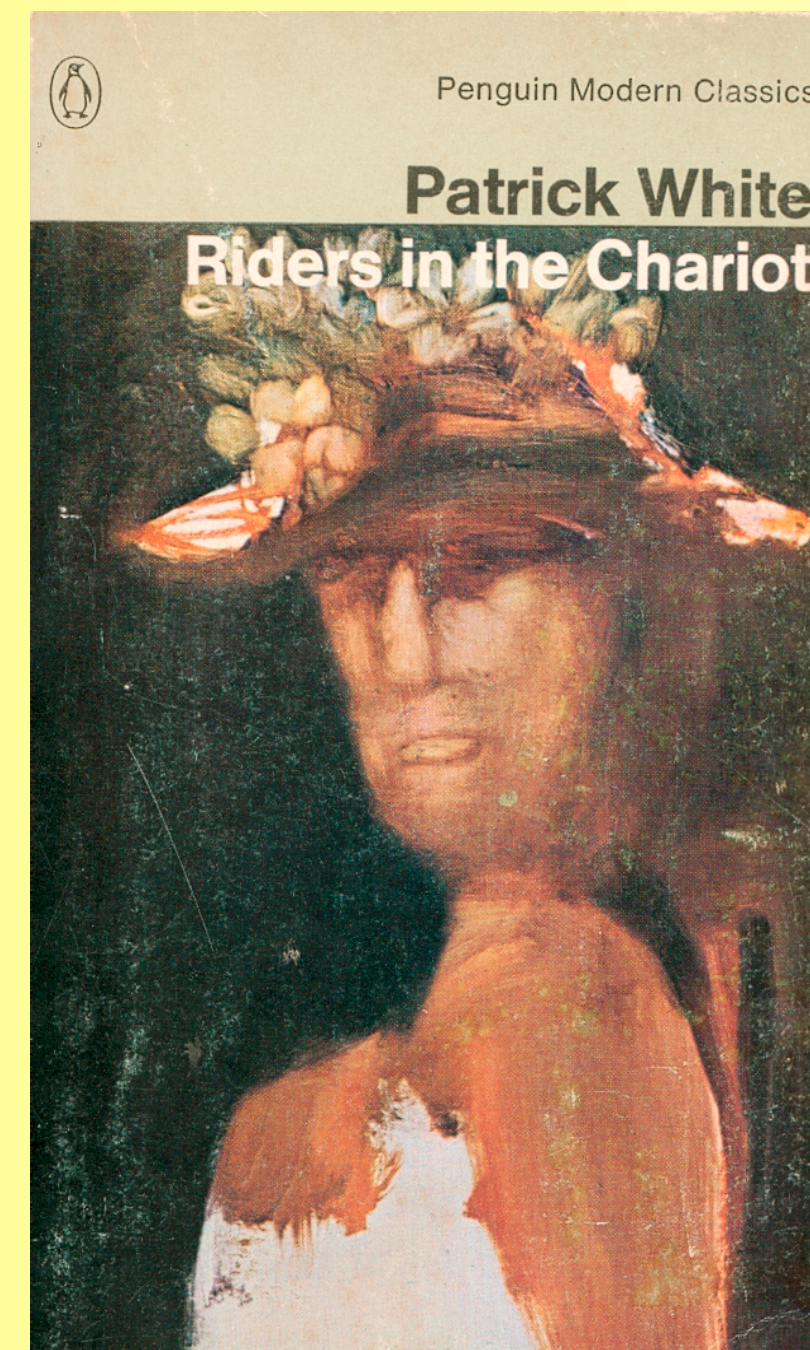
*Isaiah and Ezekiel, both creative, eccentric visionary poets who, in Blake's words*

**“discover'd the infinite in everything”**

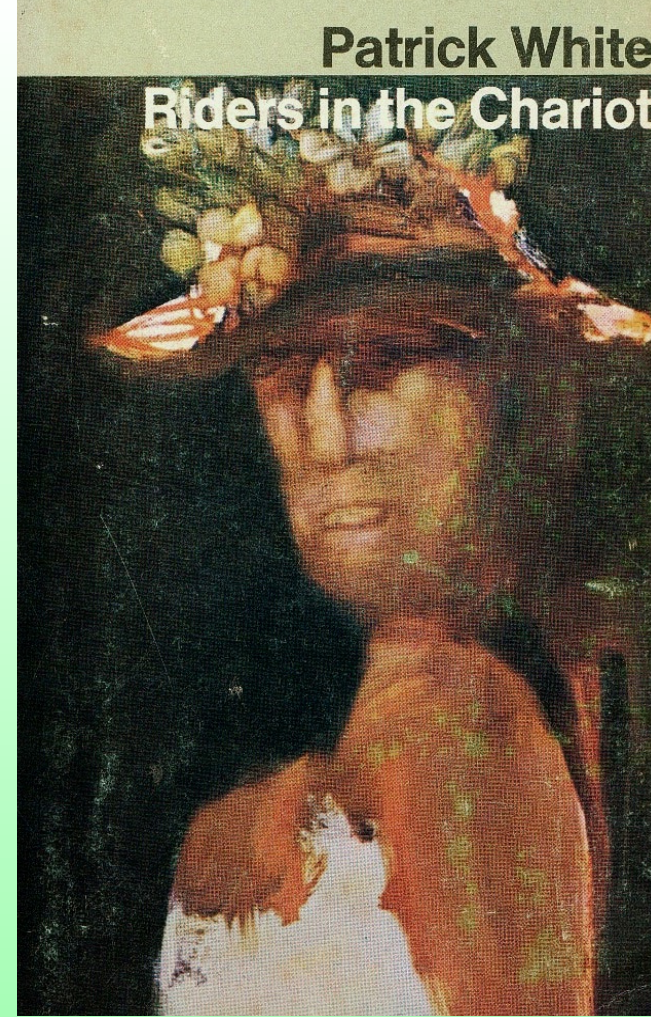
and whose purpose was to

**“raise men into a perception of the infinite”**

*Marriage of Heaven and Hell*



# Title *Riders in the Chariot*



- a direct allusion to Ezekiel's vision (Ezekiel 1 and elsewhere) of the four living creatures, each with four wings and four faces and each a custodian of one of the wheels -rimmed with eyes- of the chariot which bears the throne of Yahweh.
- Function and purpose of Ezekiel's vision....



Peter Robson

# Ezekiel's Vision





## ***Four Riders:***

- \*Miss Hare,***
- \*Mordecai***
- Himmelfarb,***
- \*Mrs Godbold &***
- \*Alf Dubbo***



## **4 Zoas:**

Tharmas:

Body/Sensation

Urizen:

Reason

Luvah: Emotion/  
Sexuality

Urthona/Los:

Imagination

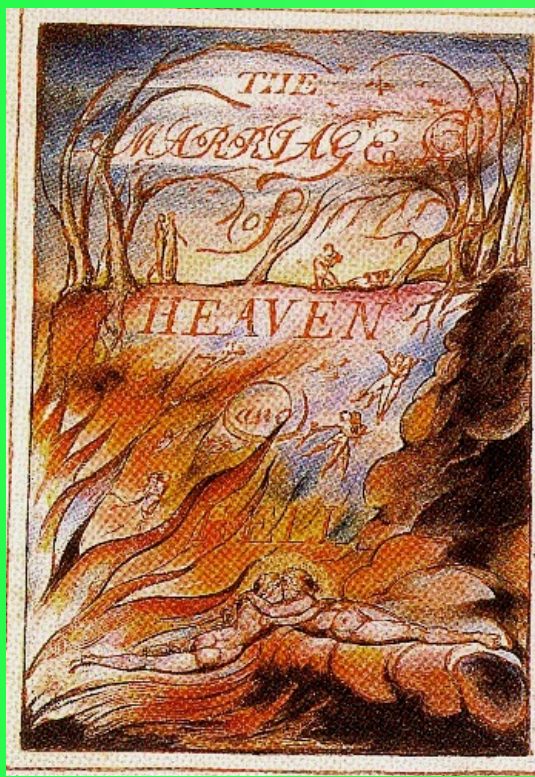
The Nature of Visionary Fancy or Imagination..... (433)..... This world of Imagination is the World of Eternity it is the Divine bosom..... (434)...  
The Fiery Chariot of his Contemplative Thought..... (435)The Cloud that opens, rolling apart before the throne & before the New Heaven & the  
New Earth, Composed of Various Groupes of figures, particularly the four Living Creatures mention'd in Revelations as Surrounding the Throne;  
these I suppose to have the chief agency in removing the old heavens & the old Earth to make way for the New Heaven & the New Earth...

**Blake . “A Vision of the Last Judgement. (432-439)**

See 194: [https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Life\\_of\\_William\\_Blake\\_\(1880\),\\_Volume\\_2/Prose\\_writings/A\\_Vision\\_of\\_the\\_Last\\_Judgment](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Life_of_William_Blake_(1880),_Volume_2/Prose_writings/A_Vision_of_the_Last_Judgment)

White's "Riders",  
like Blake's  
"Living Creatures" have "the  
chief agency" in this  
process of spiritual renewal  
or awakening or metanoia.





# The 4 Riders



- Miss Hare, Mordecai Himmelfarb, Mrs Godbold and Alf Dubbo are identifiably aspects of this prelapsarian, whole human being: the physical, mental, emotional and imaginative aspects. It is through these four that White celebrates the spiritual significance of marginalized individuals who inhabit the Waste-Land of contemporary suburban Australia.
- See “The Prodigal Son” 1958 (distributed)

# Function of these outcasts:

- White has deliberately chosen these social outcasts because they are closest to essential human functions, being less clothed in societal egoistic trappings. In the novel they come to share a special relationship with each other that certainly points in the direction of a more grounded, reflective, compassionate and creative humanity.

Ezekiel, William Blake &  
Patrick White's Aboriginal Artist Alf Dubbo as Prophet  
in Riders in the Chariot

Patrick White is a writer who explores the ways in which the individual creative imagination has the capacity for accessing the divine. Underpinning White's understanding of the function of the imagination is his affinity with the radical theology of William Blake which equates the Saviour with the human imagination. Typically for White, the agents of this imagination are outcasts, like many Old Testament prophets. In *Riders in the Chariot* Alf Dubbo is an outcast Aboriginal artist, whose imagination has been shaped by a blend of missionary Anglicanism, an instinctive affinity for the Australian landscape, a squalid life on the margins of society and a passion for the words of Ezekiel...

# Dubbo's Religious Development

- Chapter 11 ( with Himmelfarb [the Jew] and early experiences of Christianity) Mungindribble: (402-406)
- End of Chapter 9 (to Mrs Godbold): “Are you a Christian?”- “I was educated up to it but gave it away...” (367-371)

White's implication here is that the sanctimonious middle class Christianity, handed down to Dubbo in his childhood, was a barrier to the essential experience of authentic Christianity that he discovers for himself - literally in his bare feet.



Meeting with Himmelfarb:

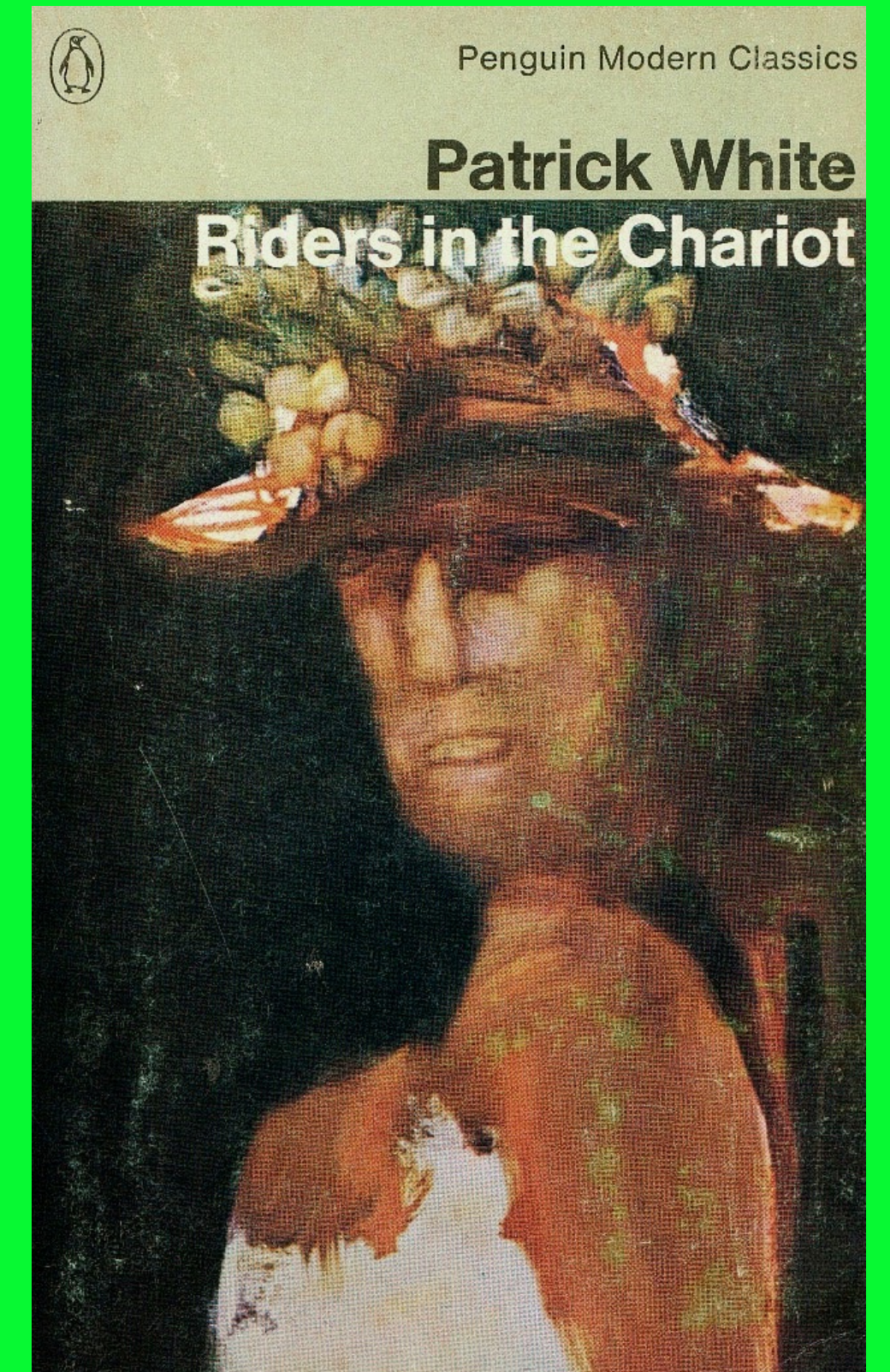
“...every one had four faces, and every one had four wings... I have a read of the Bible, but not for any of his reasons. I read it because you can see it all...”

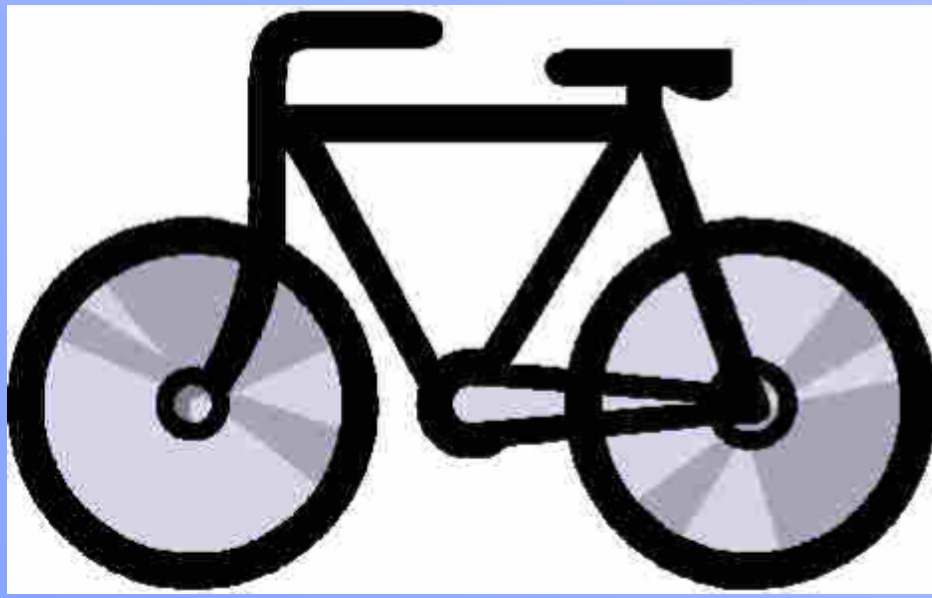
- Dubbo comes to embody the redemptive visionary imagination that he experiences through the words of Ezekiel. He expresses this through his eccentric behaviour, sometimes acting like an Aboriginal version of Lear's fool, and through his life, which is something of a marriage of Heaven and Hell, as he struggles through poverty, syphilis and tuberculosis, towards the transcendent visions that become his major paintings





# Patrick White's Aboriginal Artist Alf Dubbo as Prophet in *Riders in the Chariot*:





## Barranugli

While Dubbo has reached a new depth of artistic and religious experience here at Hannah's, the turn of events, which includes the theft of his paintings leads to a deepening loss of trust in everything associated with white man's world, including Christ. He now escapes to a single room on the outskirts of Barranugli where he begins work at the factory. Distrust pushes him into a deeper relationship with his own hands, his own imagination and with the texts that have inspired him. White is close here to a Blakean theology of art which sees the human imagination as the most secure access to divine revelation- (482-483)

## Crucifixion Scene Chapter 13

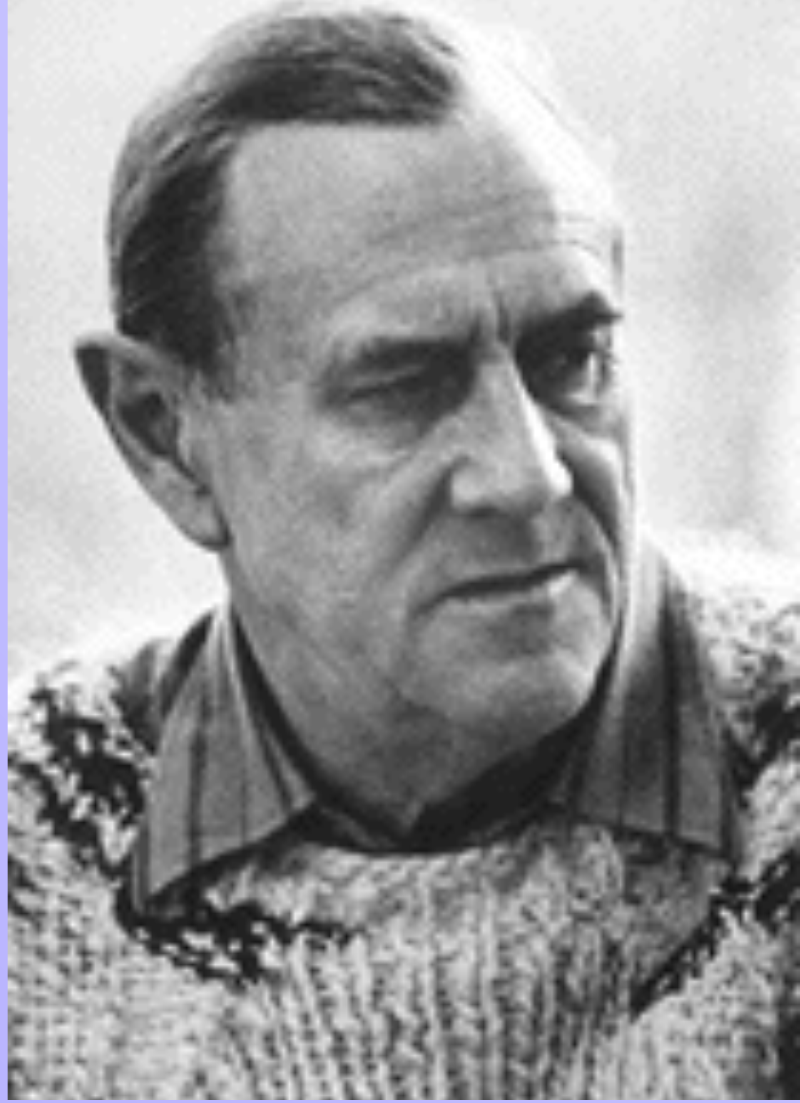


Alf Dubbo as witnessing artist:  
(537-538).

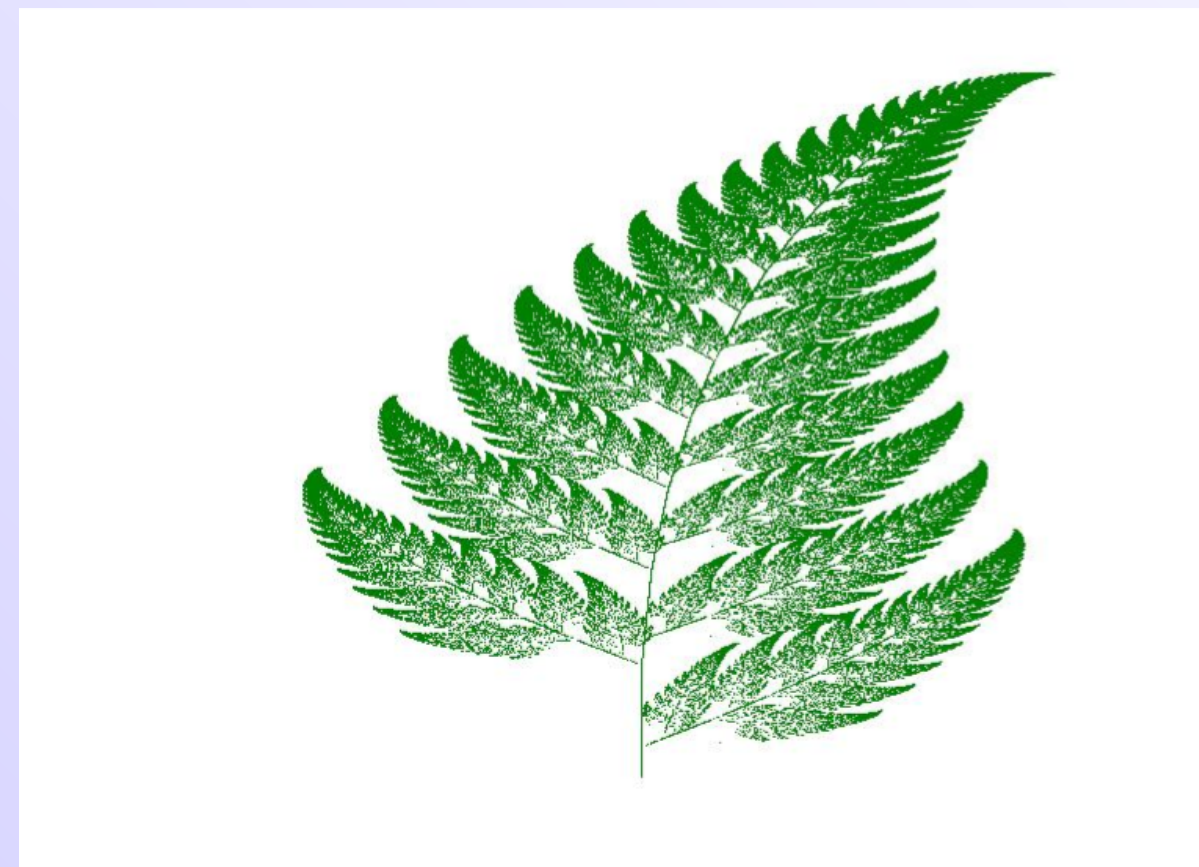
Alf's Realignment with the essential  
meaning of Christianity?? Chapter 14  
(566-569)



Here Dubbo himself begins to assume the role of the ministering preacher beginning to understand and forgive. His function, through his imagination and painting, if not through his oratory, is something of a latter day Ezekiel potentially awakening the conscience of the human race. This event leaves him guilt-ridden through his inability to take any action. However, it is an experience that leads him to a realignment with the full meaning of Christianity: “he would make amends eventually. That would bear witness to his faith, in the man they had crucified, as well as in the risen Lord” Riders - Chapter 14: (567).



# Writer & Artist

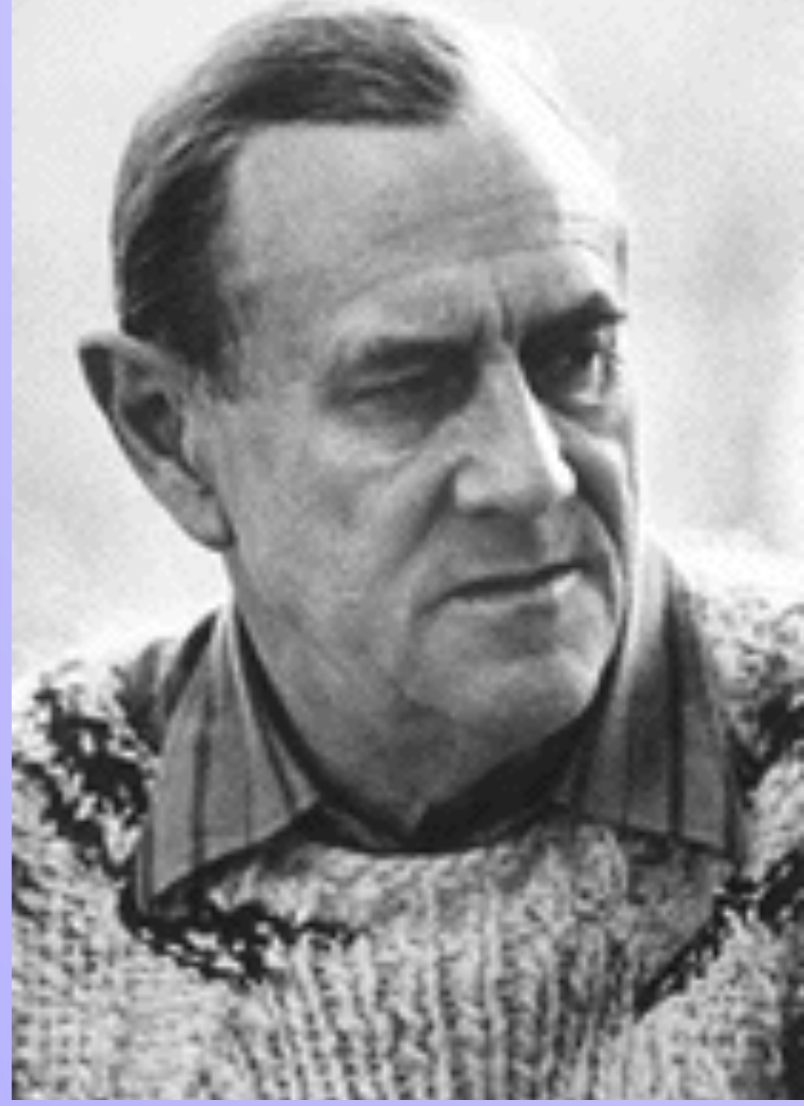


- Patrick White's verbal representation of Alf Dubbo's life and art however, does show an extraordinary insight into the religious painter's imagination and into the way each brush stroke, each discovery of and concealment of an image releases a new level of understanding in the artist. (Chapter 16: 596-599)

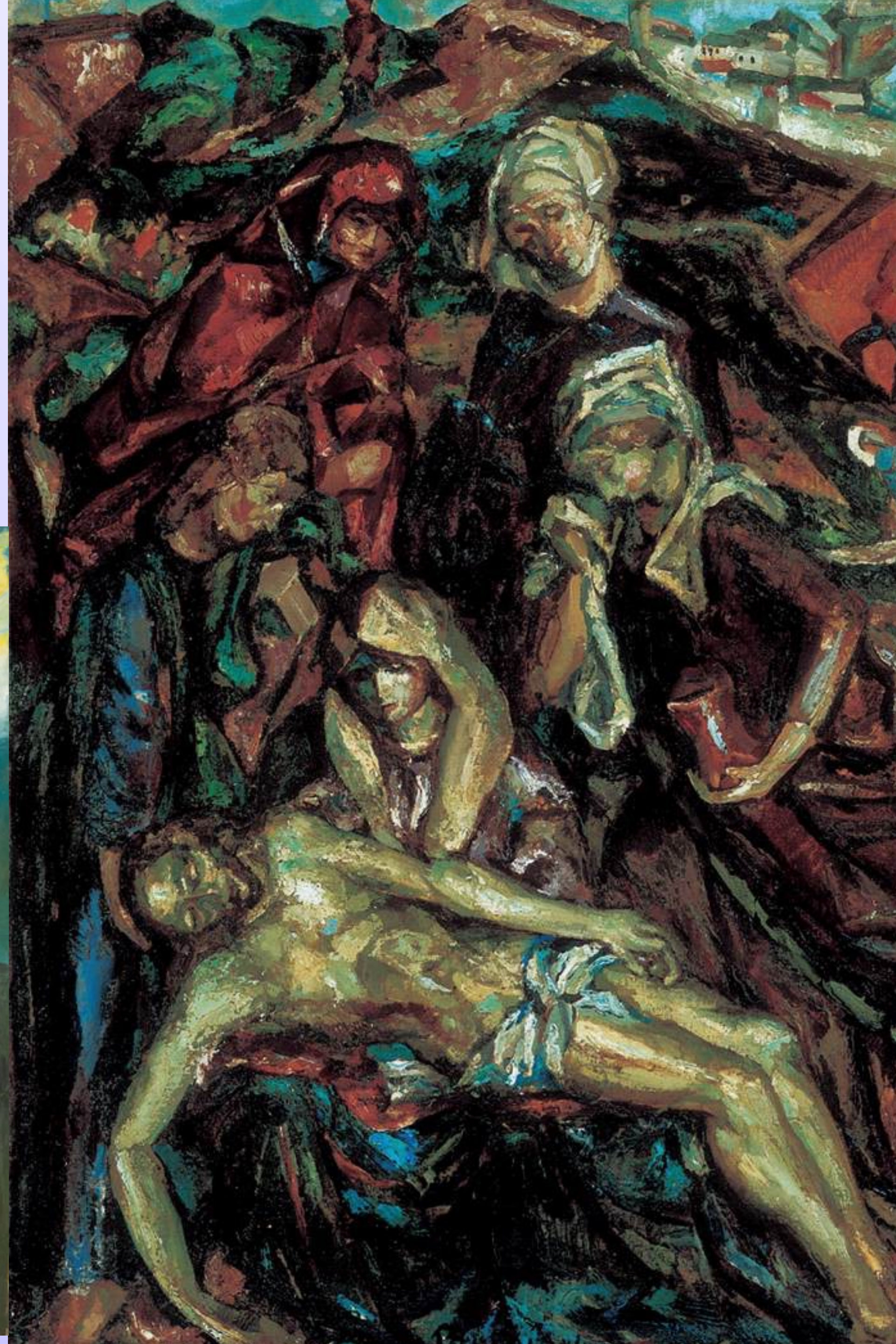
- Films on Patrick White:

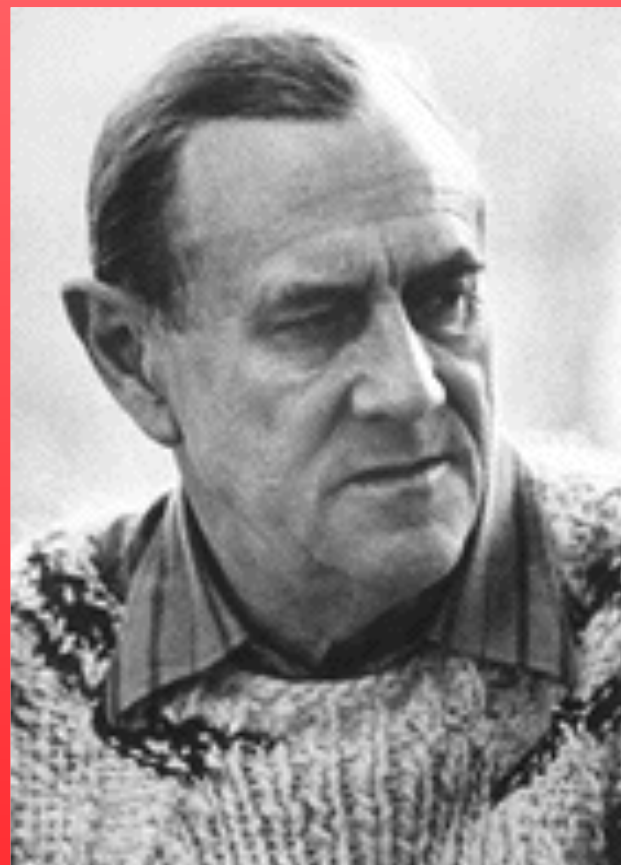
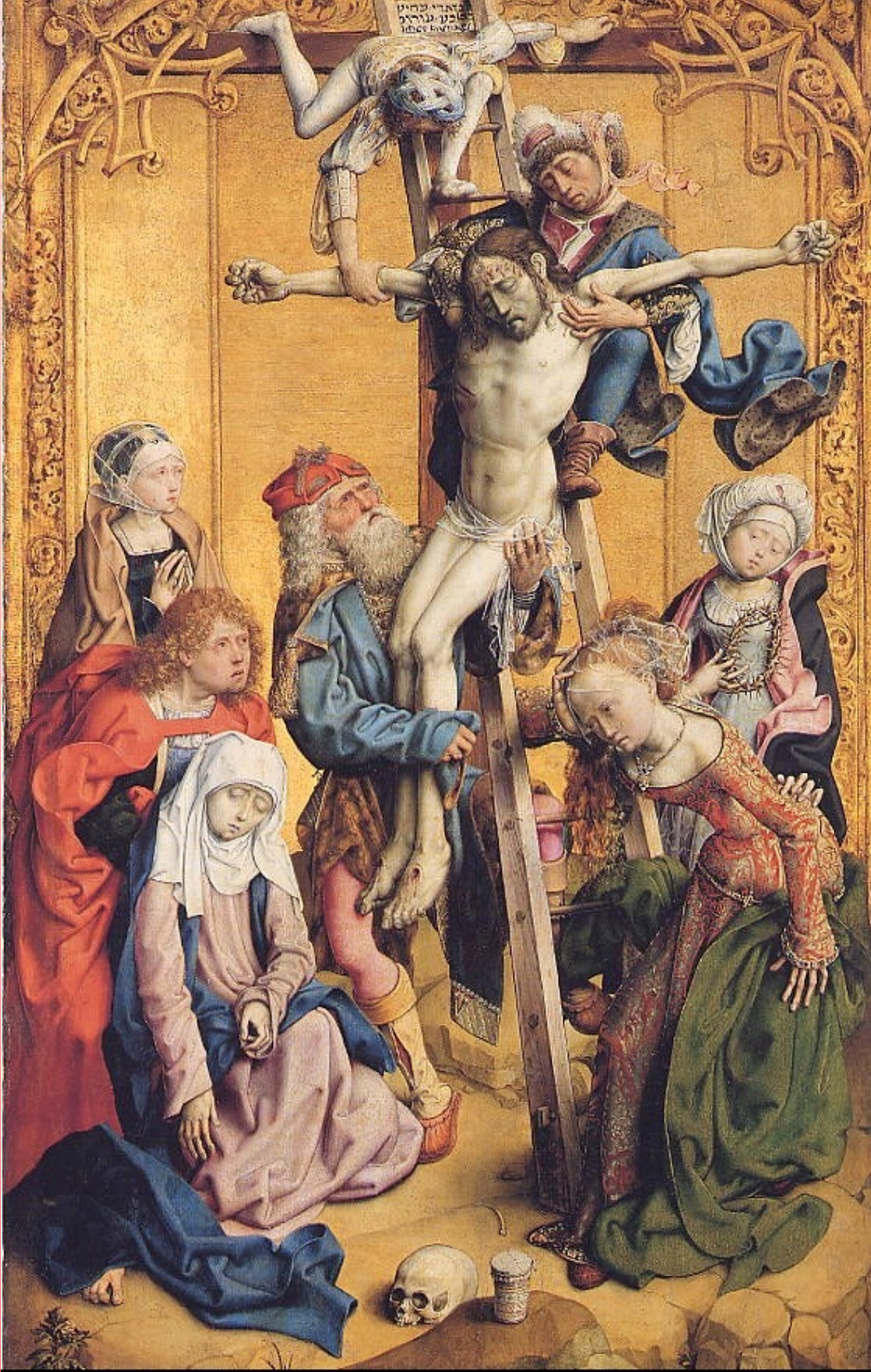
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j02E06UFOcg>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E69qNtyVB7o&feature=related>



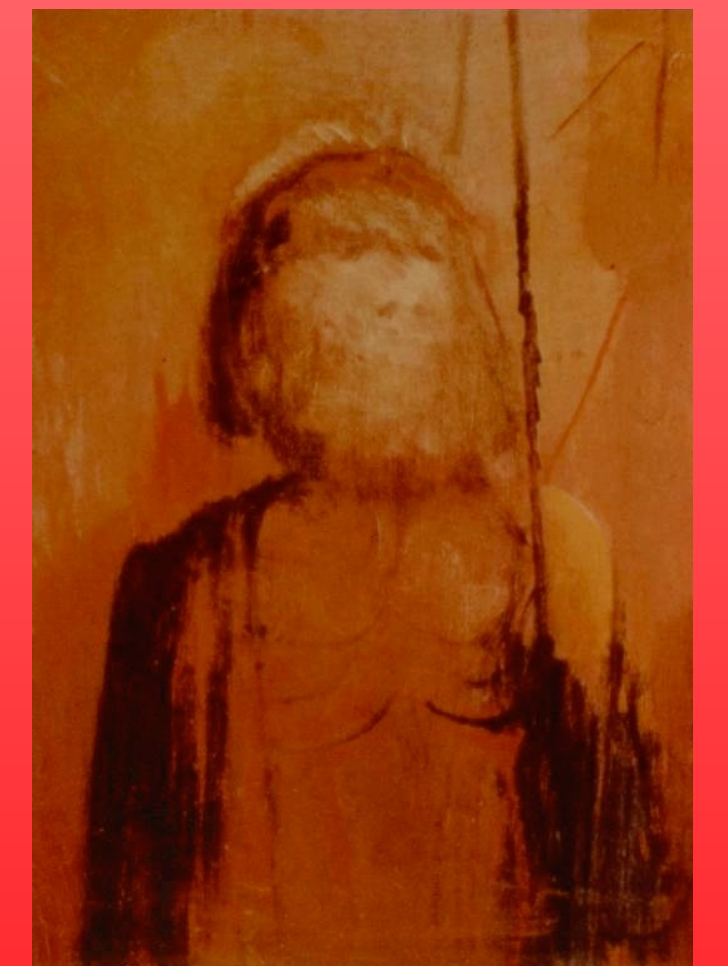


# Writer & Artist- The Deposition





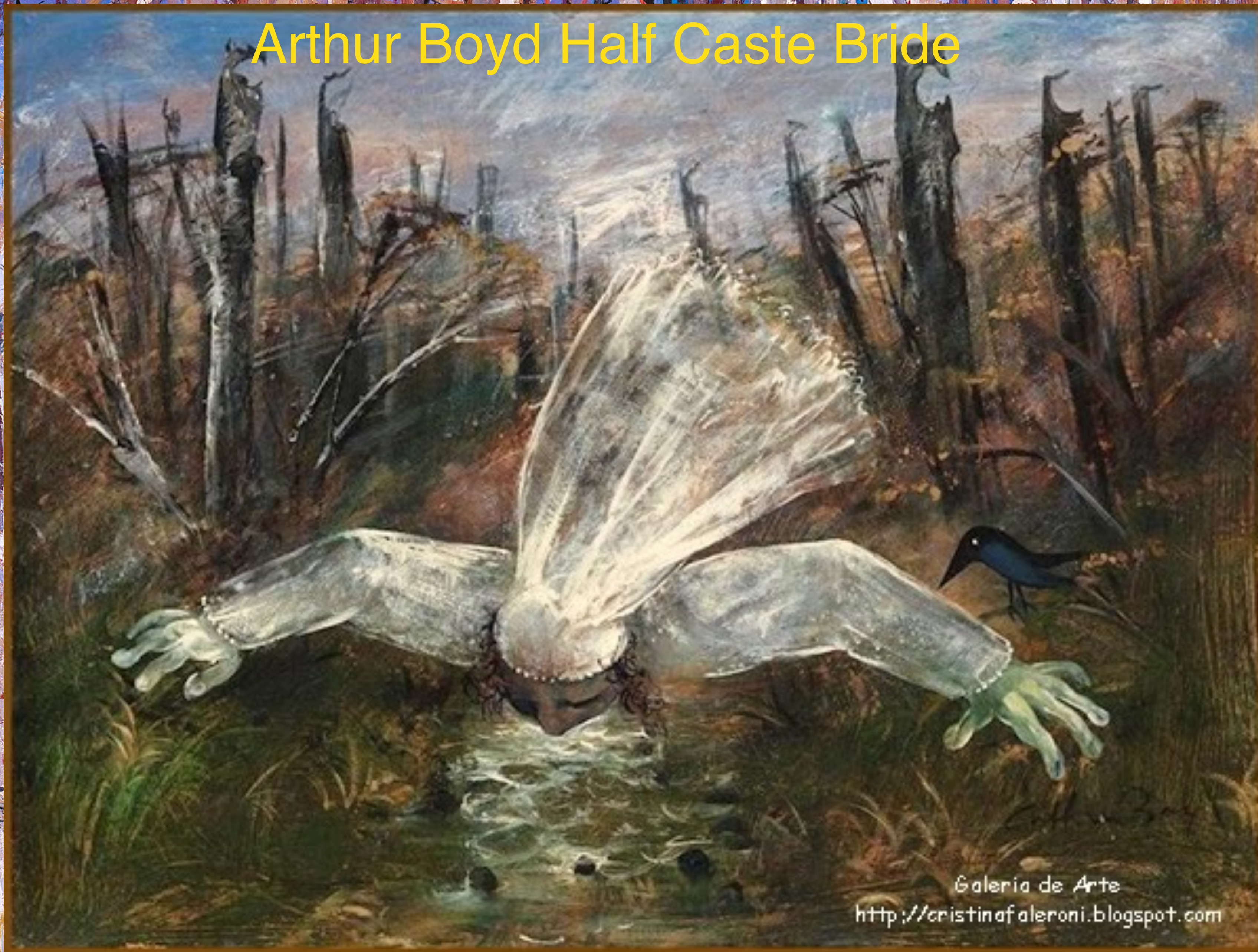
Dubbo's crumbling, tubercular life, is here embraced and sustained by his own creation of this universal act of self-abasement.



Michelangelo  
*The  
Deposition*  
c 1550

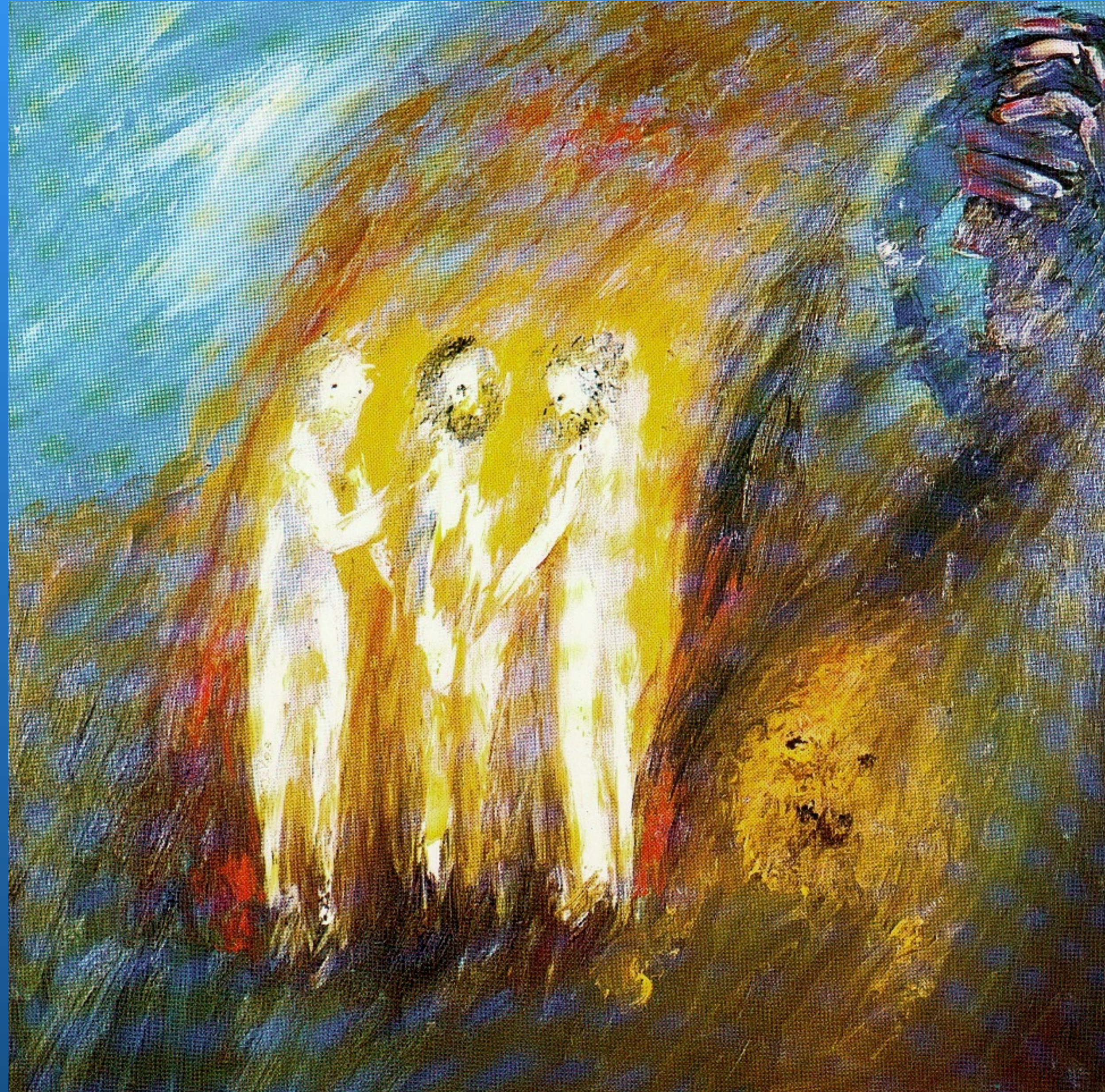


# Arthur Boyd Half Caste Bride



# The Fiery Furnace

Chapter 11-  
460





# The Chariot,

**“Alf’s capacity for wonder”**

- For Dubbo, for Patrick White, this is a moment of spiritual illumination mediated through the artistic imagination. White works hard here to get inside the unfolding experience of the artistic process as everything becomes fresh under the dawning light of a new understanding. It really is like the experience of the dawn of the world, the cosmogonic moment:

“ So the firmament was again created. First the foundations were laid in solid blue... - Chapter 16- 597

(Peng.458).



# The Chariot, (596) “Alf’s capacity for wonder”

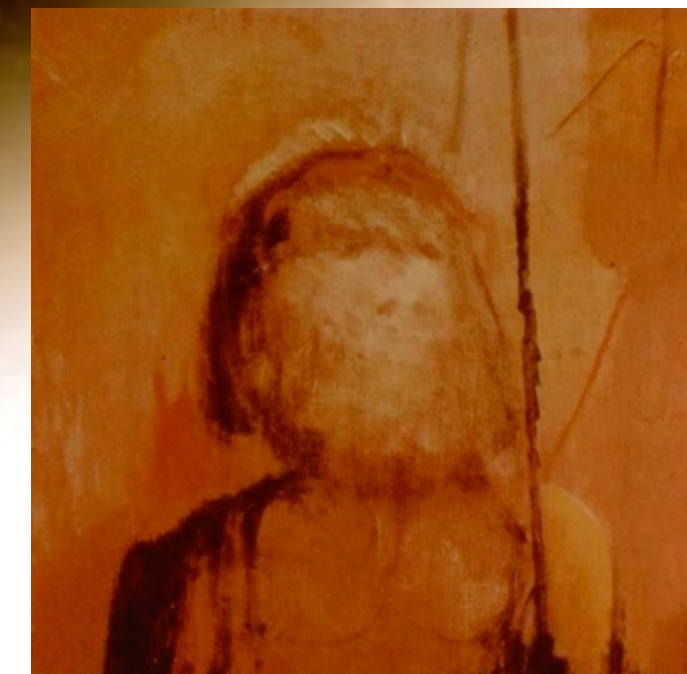
“...And I looked and behold, a whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud, and a fire infolding itself, and a brightness was about it, and out of the midst thereof as the colour of amber, out of the midst of the fire...” (Chapter 16- 596)

Biblical text now becomes for Dubbo an inextricable part of his consciousness, an embodied revelation:

(596)..”The window was blinding him...”



# Writer & Artist- The Chariot Thing....

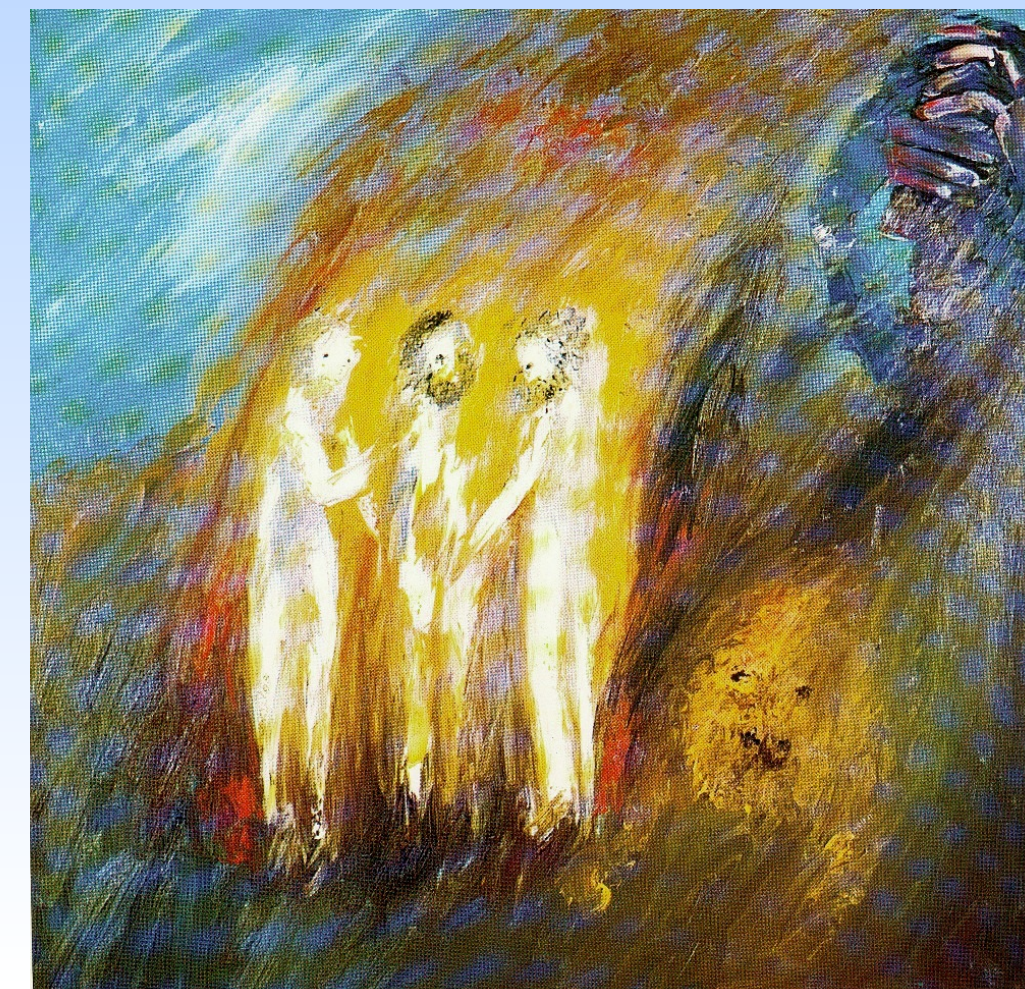




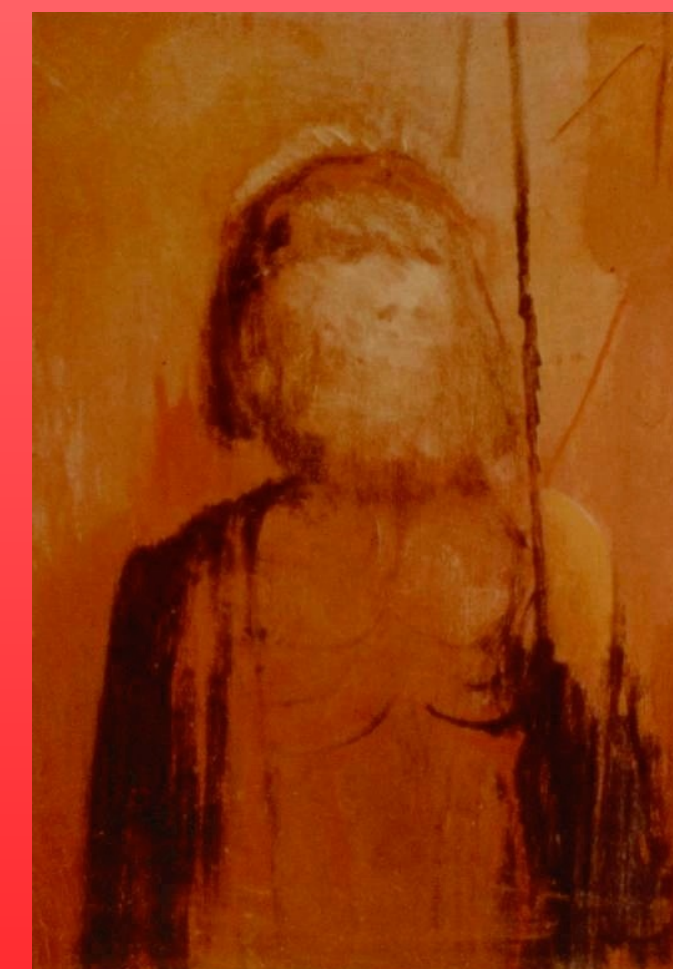
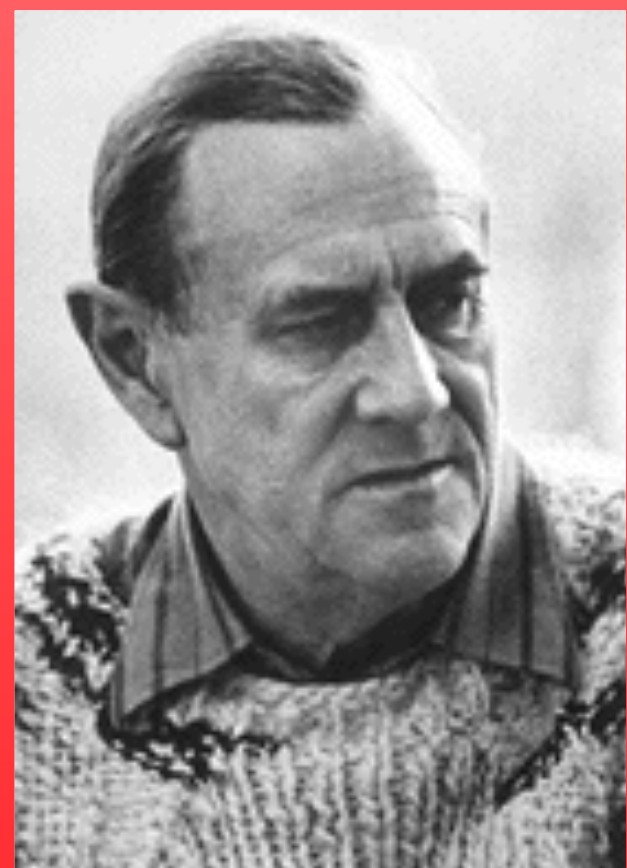
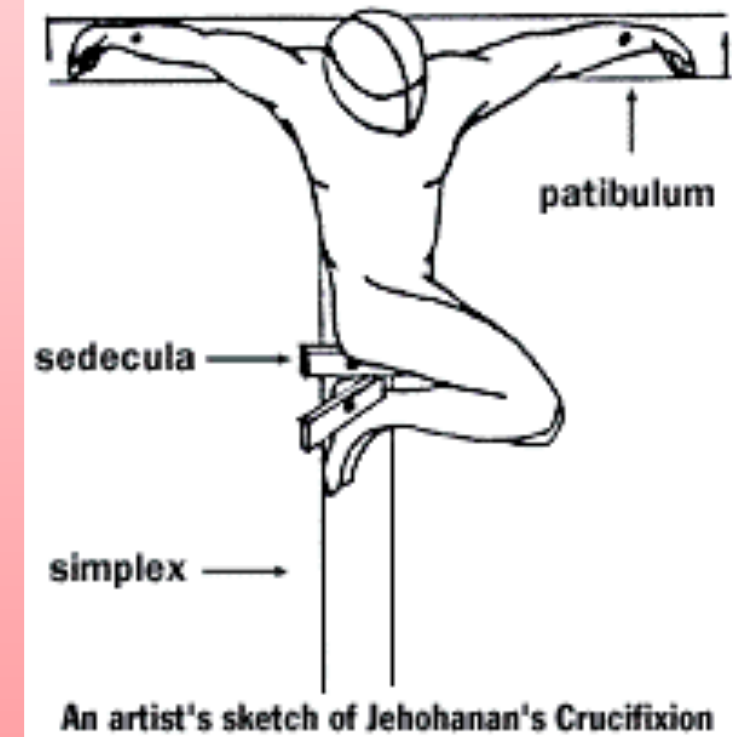
Arthur Boyd  
Caged Artist

# The purpose of Dubbo's paintings

- Dramatically, the process of completing these paintings is the means through which Dubbo experiences the spiritual liberation that Blake predicts is the outcome of true imagination; metaphorically, these paintings perhaps express for White what he aspires to through his own fiction.



- “Once on emerging from behind the barricade of planes, the curtain of textures, he ventured to retouch the wounds of the dead Christ with the love that he had never dared express in life, and at once the blood was gushing from his own mouth, the wounds in the canvas were shining and palpitating with his own conviction.” Riders (Chapter 16- 589-596). “The Deposition”.





## Mircea Eliade



- Poetic creation, like linguistic creation, implies the abolition of time ... and tends towards the recovery of the paradisiac, primordial situation ... the poet discovers the world as though he were present at the cosmogonic moment, contemporaneous with the first day of the Creation... In this his attitude is strangely like that of the "primitive", of the man in traditional society.
- By many ways and starting from different points of view, religious man has always been trying to regenerate or renew himself by periodically re-entering into "the perfection of the beginnings"; that is, by rediscovering the primal source of Life as it was when Life, like the whole of Creation, was still sacred because it was still new from the hands of the Creator

Myths, Dreams and Mysteries: The Encounter Between Contemporary Faiths and Archaic Realities (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), pp. 115, 35-36.

?

For White (as for William Blake) Imagination  
rather than Christian teaching is a more secure  
access to the divine.



# William Blake

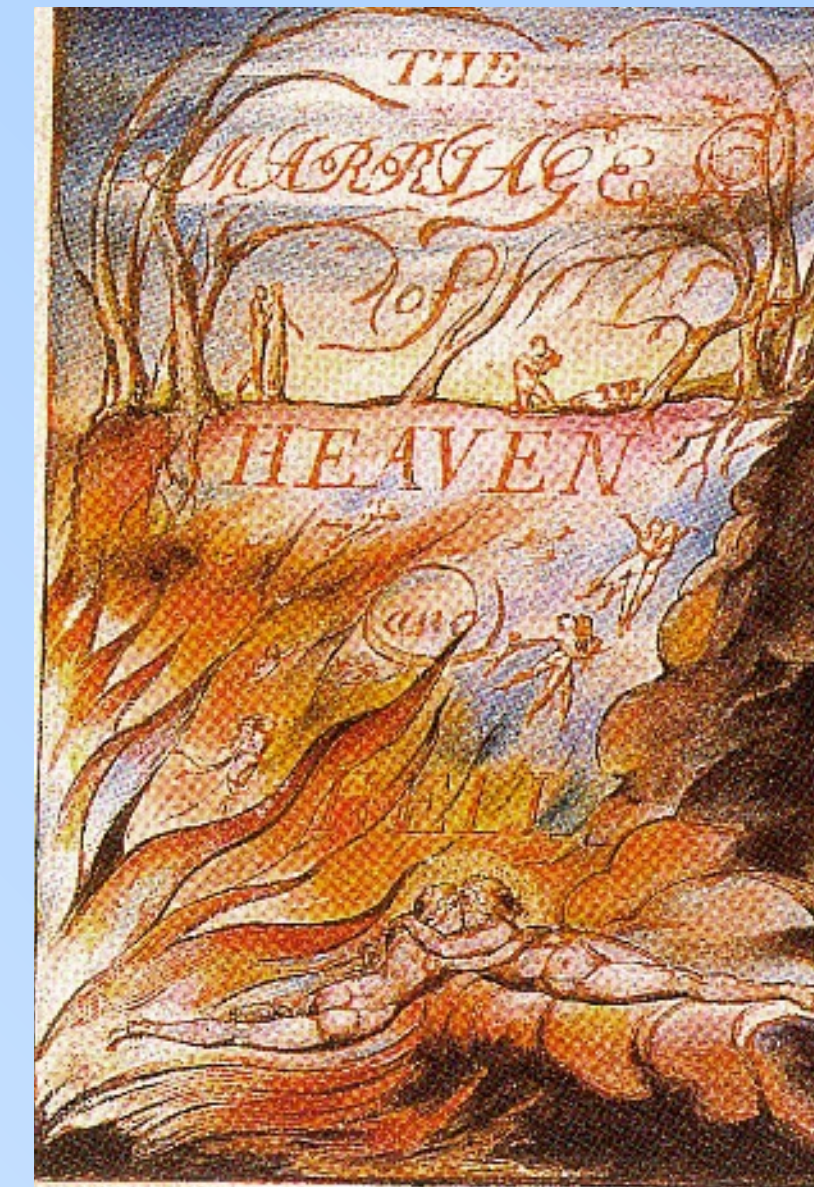
The Vision of Christ that thou does see  
Is my Vision's Greatest Enemy...

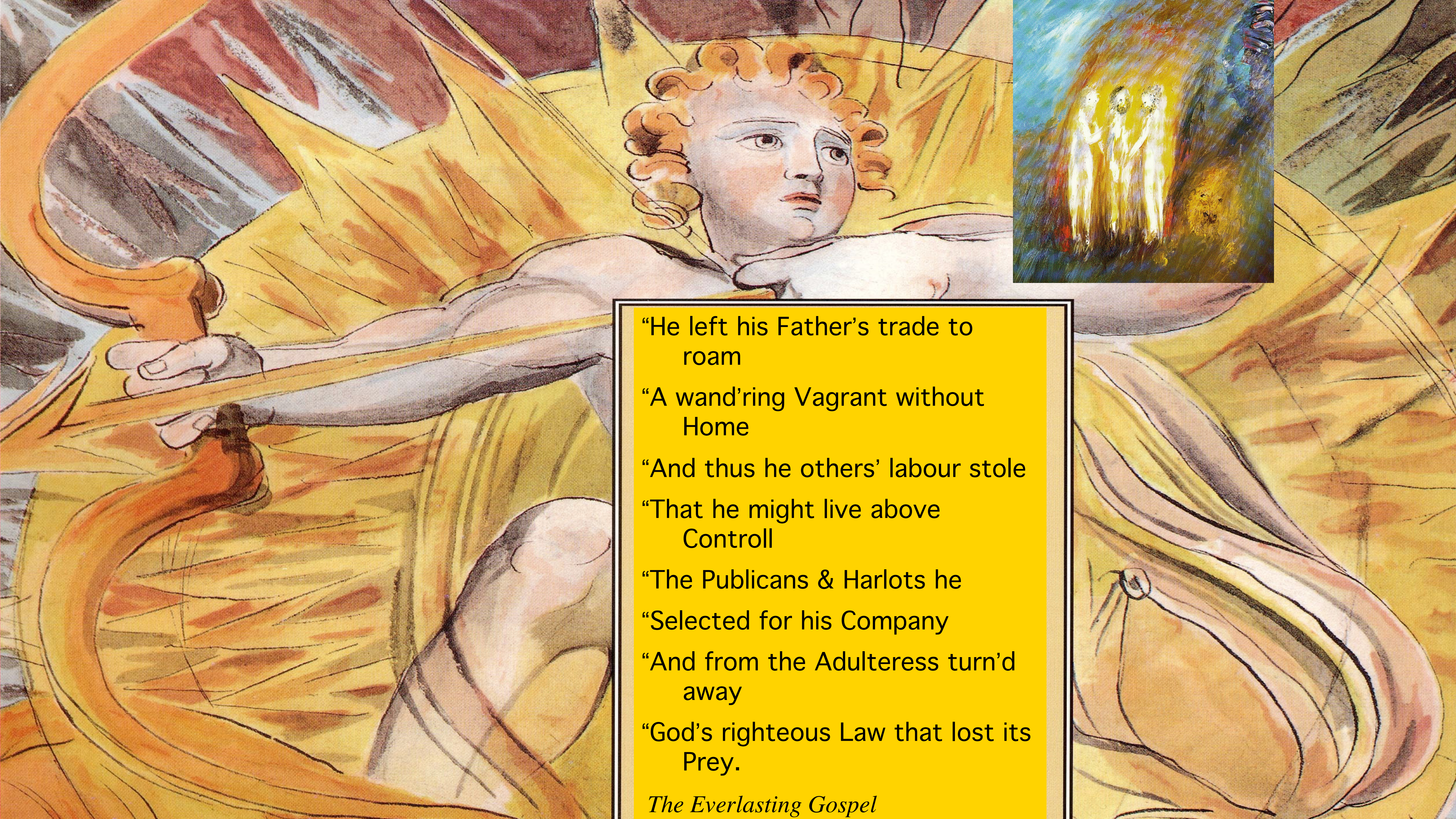
The Moral Christian is the Cause  
Of the Unbeliever & his Laws

Was Jesus Born of a Virgin Pure  
With narrow Soul & looks demure?...

“He scorn'd [his] Earth's Parents scorn'd [his]  
Earth's God...

- The Everlasting Gospel 364-372.





“He left his Father’s trade to  
roam

“A wand’ring Vagrant without  
Home

“And thus he others’ labour stole

“That he might live above  
Controll

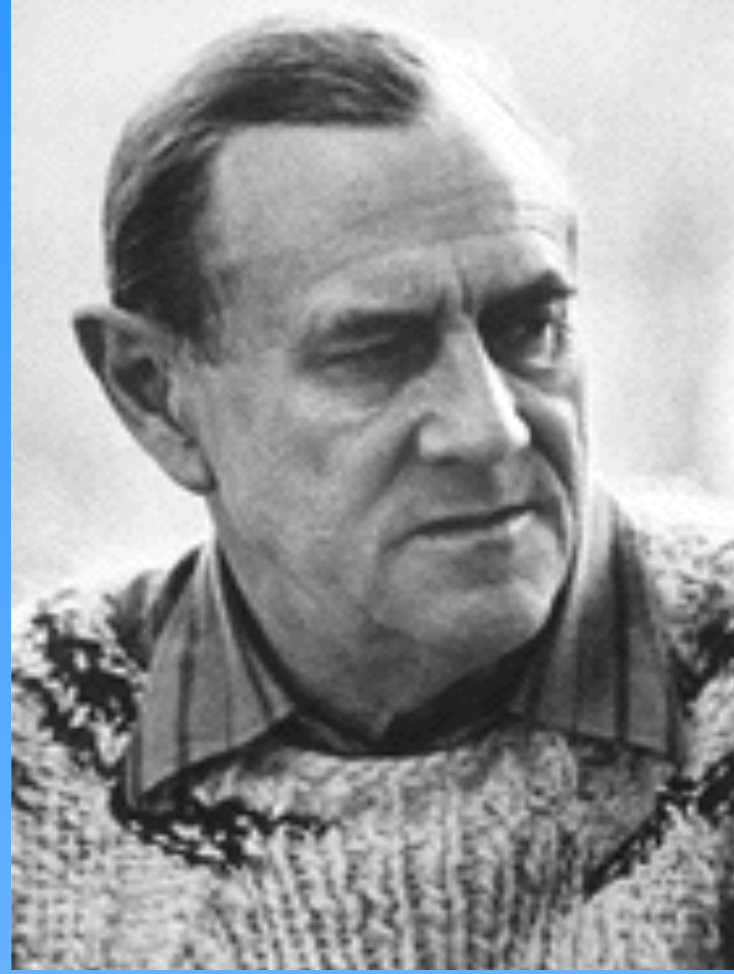
“The Publicans & Harlots he

“Selected for his Company

“And from the Adulteress turn’d  
away

“God’s righteous Law that lost its  
Prey.

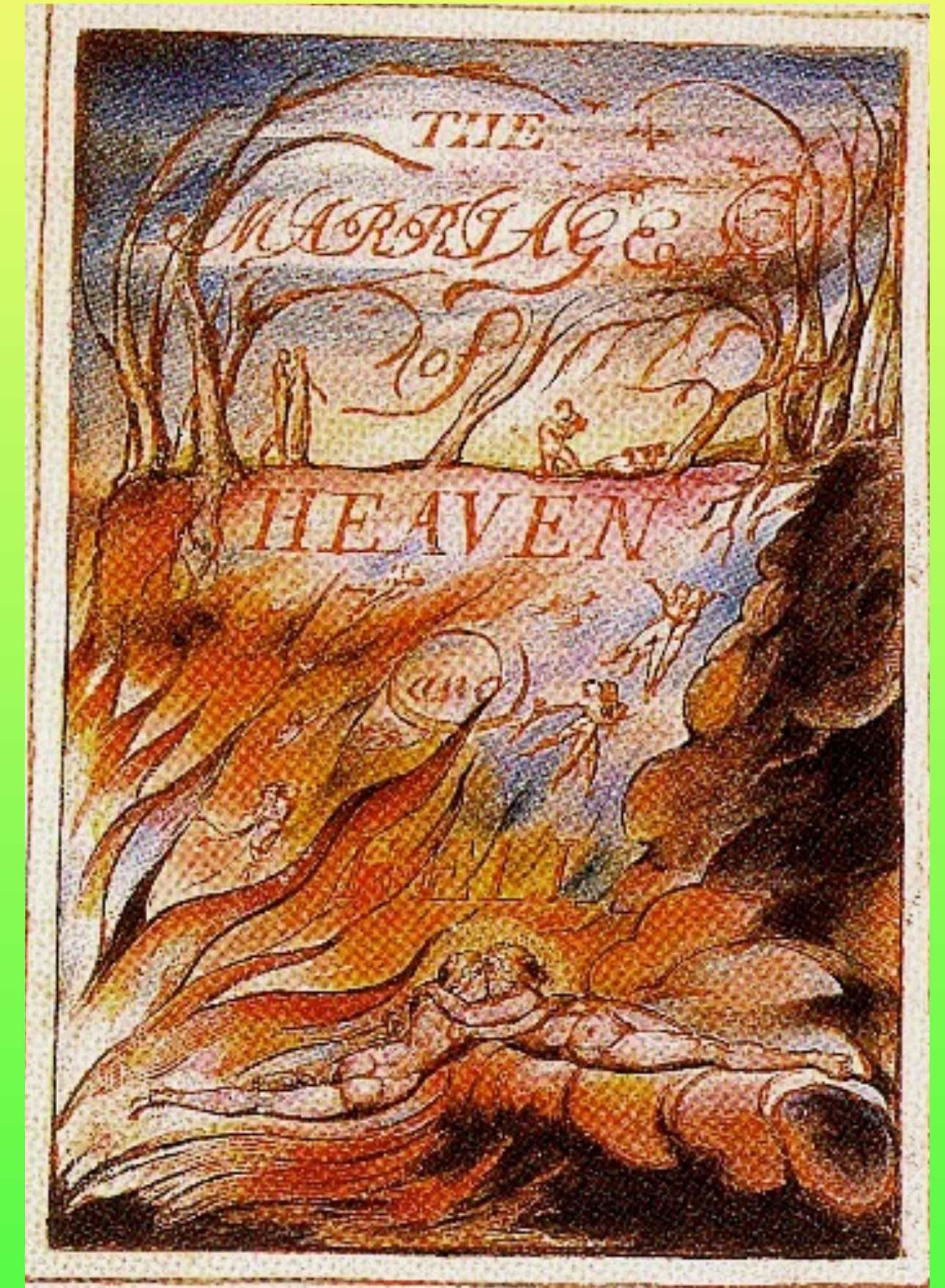
*The Everlasting Gospel*



## Conclusions

Is this not White's message in much of his work namely, that wisdom and understanding in their deepest signification come from a shattering of all the illusions about who and what one is. The Greek word "Metanoia" as used in The New Testament, is pertinent here. This word, "metanoia" usually mistranslated as "repentance", means in fact "the transformation of mind and heart". ...  
"Kenosis", Phillipians 2,7.

- in this representation of the sources of the artists inspiration, Patrick White through Alf Dubbo, like Blake in his “Everlasting Gospel”, aligns himself with the Christ of the whorehouse, of the disease ridden, of the near mad and insane, not with the pious Christ of Mrs Pask or the socially acceptable Christ of Mrs Jolley and Mrs Flack.



# Key Blake Passages for Closure

- Auguries of Innocence 209:

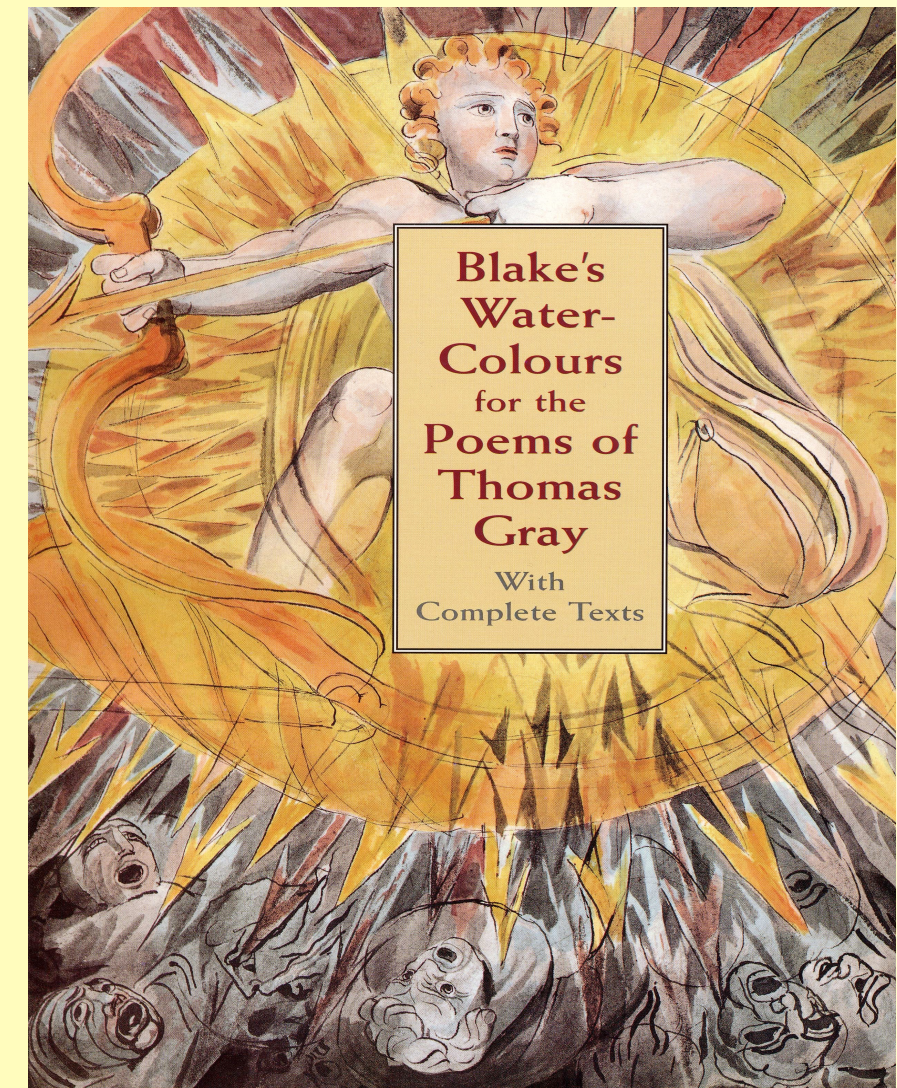


*To see a World in a Grain of Sand  
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower:  
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand  
And Eternity in an hour.*

# Blake's "Human Imagination"

- “The Nature of my Work is Visionary or Imaginative; it is an endeavour to Restore what the Ancients call'd the Golden Age... This world of Imagination is the world of Eternity... All things are comprehended in their Eternal Forms in the divine body of the Saviour... the Human Imagination”

“A Vision of the Last Judgment” (410)





# An Australian Transcendence?



At the same time White is at pains to stress that the vision achieved by his Riders in the Chariot, while transcendental, is also grounded in the earth and is distinctively Australian; again, the imagery here is very reminiscent of paintings by Arthur Boyd.

Alf: inverts normal human values: 597-599.



The allusion here is probably to Dubbo's period on the river bank rubbish dump in Mrs Spice's humpy brothel; an experience with some parallels to Ezekiel's eating barley cakes baked on human dung and lying for 390 days on his left side and 40 days on his right (Ezekiel 4, 4-13). What had Dubbo discovered there on the banks? That syphilis, refuse, brokenness and the whores and queans with whom he later consorted -all the apparent antithesis of the waters of life- were in fact the driving source of his inspiration, were the beginnings of his deepest understanding about who he is and what his essential purpose is.

# Key Blake Passages for Closure

- Jerusalem 313-315:

*Awake! Awake O sleeper of the land of shadows, wake! Expand!  
...Weep at thy soul's disease, and the Divine Vision is darkend...  
Trembling I sit day and night, my friends are astonish'd at me.  
Yet they forvie my wanderings; I rest not from my great task!  
To open the Eternal Worlds, to open the immortal Eyes  
Of man inwards into the Worlds of Thought: into Eternity  
Saviour pour upon me thy Spirit of meekness & love:  
Annihilate the Selfhood in me, be thou all my life!  
Guide thou my hand which trembles exceedingly upon the rock of ages,  
While I write of the building of Golgonooza, & the terrors of Entuthon...*



# Key Blake Passages for Closure

- Jerusalem 346:

*I know of no other Christianity and of no other Gospel than the liberty both of body & mind to exercise the Divine Arts of Imagination  
Imagination the real and World of which this Vegetable Universe is but a faint shadow...*

- The Everlasting Gospel 369:

*Was Jesus Chaste or did he*

*Given any Lessons of Chastity?*

*The morning blushd fiery red;*

*Mary was found in Adulterous bed.*

*Earth groand beneath & Heavens above*

*Trembled at discovery of Love.*

*Jesus was sitting in Moses' Chair;*

*They brought the trembling Woman There.*

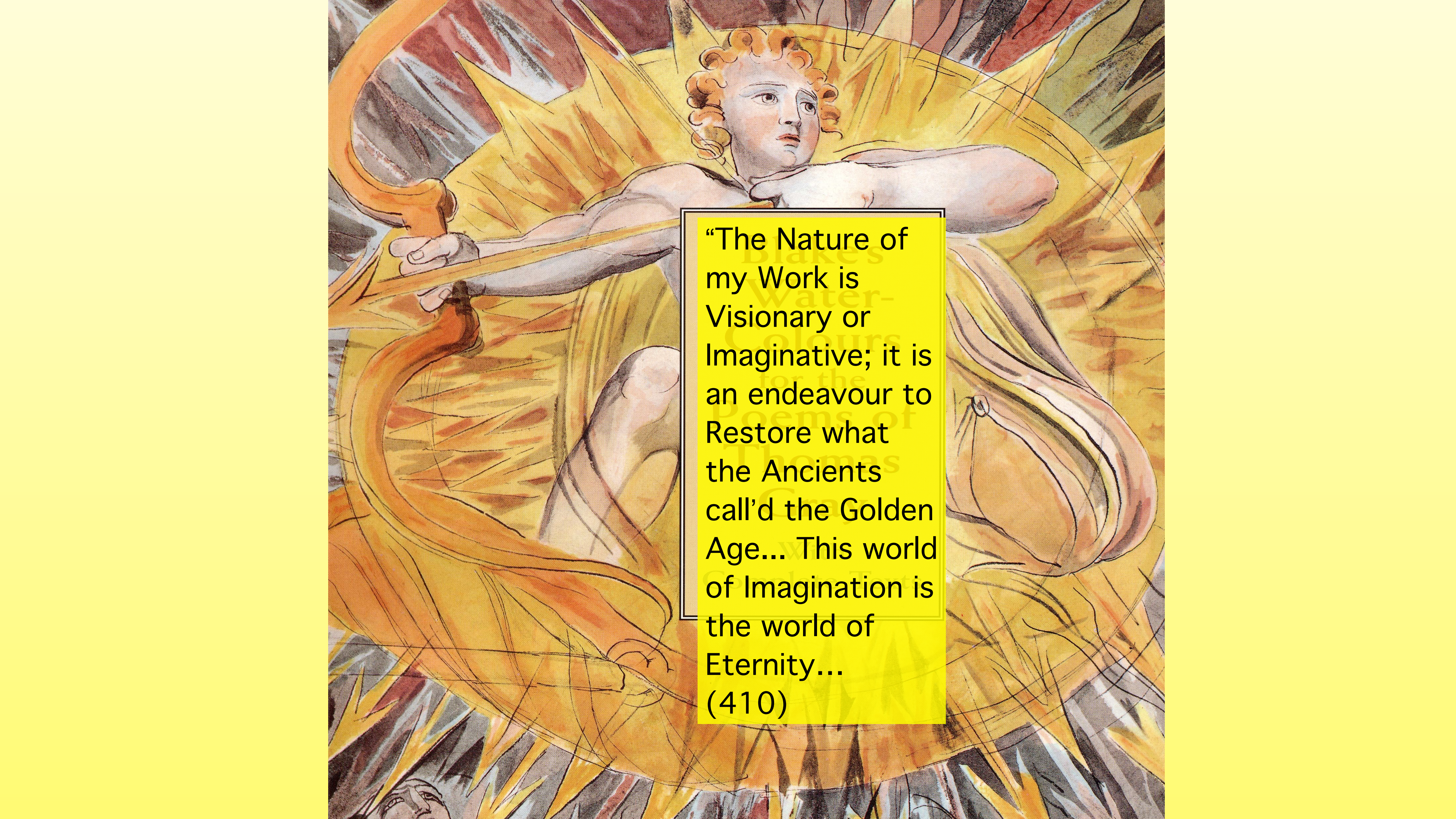
*Moses commands she be stoned to death;*

*What was the sound of Jesus' breath?*

*He laid his hand on Moses' Law...*

*“Good and Evil are no more!” ..... See also Plates 23-27 in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell... (99-102)*

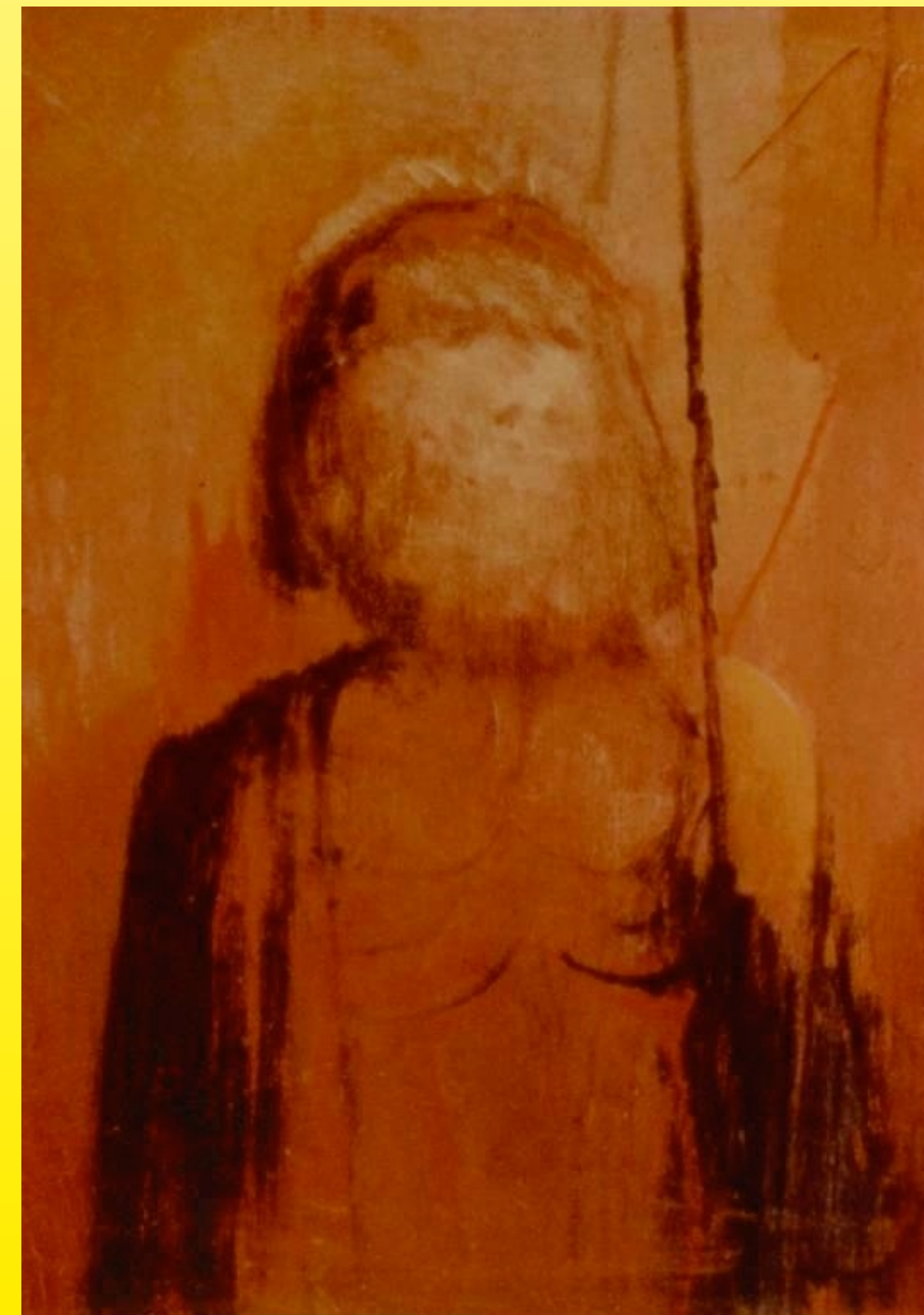




“The Nature of  
my Work is  
Visionary or  
Imaginative; it is  
an endeavour to  
Restore what  
the Ancients  
call'd the Golden  
Age... This world  
of Imagination is  
the world of  
Eternity...  
(410)

# White's "Imagination"

- For Patrick White, the Human Imagination, especially as it materializes in the downtrodden artist Alf Dubbo, is as will become apparent, redemptive and cosmogonic
- END



## ***Four Riders:***



## 4 Zoas:

Tharmas:

Body/Sensation

Urizen:

Reason

Luvah: Emotion/Sexuality

Urthona/Los:

Imagination



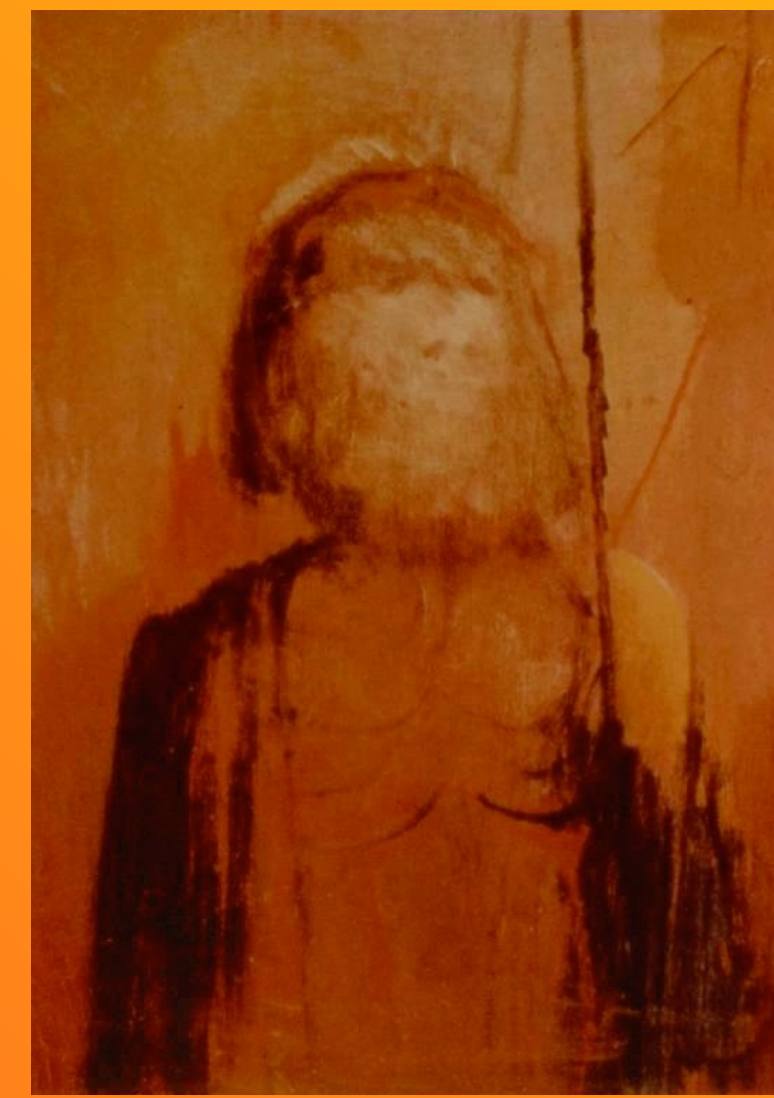
# Blake's Four Zoas

“The Cloud that opens, rolling apart before the throne & before the New Heaven & the New Earth, Composed of Various Groupes of figures, particularly the four Living Creatures mention'd in Revelations as Surrounding the Throne; these I suppose to have the chief agency in removing the old heavens & the old Earth to make way for the New Heaven & the New Earth...”

“Vision of the Last Judgement”

# Alf Dubbo

- The Aboriginal Alf Dubbo has a special place in Patrick White's narrative, because he is an artist, and as such acutely reflects White's own artistic intentions.



# Discussion Questions

- 1. Do you agree with the conclusion that Mary Hare's religious experience is restricted because of her lack of language? Consider the following elements:
- -her declaration on 74 (peng 58) "I have no proper gift. Of words..."
- - her credo 117-123 (91-95 )set in the context of her appreciation of the natural world. Look especially at sentences like "Her hands were helping to trap those words which eluded her", & " ...she was choking with ideas and words" 122 (106).

# Discussion Questions

- How does the Chariot act as a symbol linking the worlds of Mary Hare and Mordecai Himmelfarb in the short Chapter 6 (198-202)? What more do we learn about the significance of the Chariot here? What further light does this vital chapter shed on the similarities and differences between the religious paths of Mary and Mordecai?
- Study every detail of this chapter closely.
- Note the reference again to *zaddik* and note the radiance of the created world as it is seen and described by Mary. Notice also Mary's reaction to "words, words!" Is this attitude an advantage or an obstacle for her in her quest and in her relationship to the *riders*?
- Why is the chapter so short?