

## “We Are All Haunted Houses”: The Rector in Lindsay Clarke’s *The Chymical Wedding*

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*Abstract.* Details regarding Edwin Frere, the Victorian pastor in Lindsay Clarke’s *The Chymical Wedding*, yield new meaning in light of C. G. Jung’s alchemical writings, which are mentioned in the novel’s concluding acknowledgements. Although Frere’s union with Louisa Agnew has been considered a proper *coniunctio*, his relationship with her and his subsequent self-castration require a darker interpretation than some critics—and the narrator—propose. Other significant events under examination include Frere’s disastrous experience in India, his reaction to the sheela-na-gig Gypsy May, two fine moments (helping a young outcast and ice skating with friends), and his life after the novel closes. Relevant statements by Jung about the psychology of the Christian faith, particularly the role of repression, persona, and projection, are applied to Frere’s experiences in order to argue that he does not achieve a fruitful or lasting *coniunctio* with Louisa and that his self-castration is problematic because it participates in the materialism that alchemy seeks to counter.

*Keywords:* C. G. Jung, Lindsay Clarke, *The Chymical Wedding*, alchemy, castration, Christianity, *coniunctio*, India, materialism, *nigredo*, sheela-na-gig.

“‘Miss Agnew,’ he said, ‘I am in great fear for my mind’” (Clarke 374).<sup>1</sup> These are the words of Reverend Edwin Lucas Frere to Miss Louisa Anne Agnew at Decoy Lodge, her rural writing retreat in the fictional English village of Munding.<sup>2</sup> Frere speaks in the late

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<sup>1</sup> Citations to Clarke refer to *The Chymical Wedding* unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>2</sup> Mark F. Lund suggests that Munding comes from the Latin *mundus* and signifies “the passions of this world” (154). “Munding” is not in the *OED*, but “mund” is a variant of “mind” and also refers to protection or guardianship; to a protector or guardian; or to power, strength, or force. Such definitions align with the fact that Frere and the parallel character in the modern time frame, Alex Darken, seek protection in Munding from inner forces. The *Urban Dictionary* cites 2011 usage of the word “munding” as meaning “to laze around and do nothing. To exert no energy; the complete lack of activity.” Clarke probably did not know of this definition, but it helpfully parallels Alex’s original purpose in coming to Munding. A more explicit connection is to Edward’s mention of Laura’s “‘*Rosa Mundi*’” (vagina), which in turn parallels the sheela-na-gig Gypsy May (432). From a Jungian perspective, Munding resonates with the *unus mundus* whose unity of matter, psyche, and spirit mirrors the *coniunctio* or chymical wedding that Clarke’s characters seek to achieve—or what he himself refers to as “the unitary nature of all being” (“The Alchemy” 33). Finally, as

1840s, the earlier of two time periods in Lindsay Clarke's novel *The Chymical Wedding*. In the early 1980s, Laura, the beautiful young psychic assistant to aging poet Edward Nesbit, says to Alex Darken, the novel's only first-person voice, "I am in great fear for my mind" (324), just before they make love on the grass at Decoy Lodge. The repetition of these words suggests not only that Alex and Laura experience the same sexual imperative that brings Frere and Louisa together but also that they are influenced by the Victorian characters' ghosts or at least sense their energy across time. The psychological forces that drive Reverend Frere to the brink of madness in Munding and the aftermath of his union with Louisa are this essay's central concerns.

What we know about Frere's life begins with his trip to India: he failed in his Christian mission, had a devastating sexual experience, got sick, and returned to England where he was reunited with his long-term "companion," Emilia Davenport, who nursed him back to health prior to their eventual marriage (65). As *The Chymical Wedding* opens, the couple reside in Cambridge, but their first appearance is in Munding where they have traveled for a job interview. It is clear that the position of rector is Frere's if he wants it, and he does. There are three significant occurrences while he is in Munding for his interview: he meets 27-year-old Louisa; is horrified that a sexually explicit stone carving—a sheela-na-gig that the villagers call Gypsy May—appears on the outside of the church; and has an anxiety dream that includes a snake.

The Freres move to Munding despite Emilia's preference for "the refinements of Cambridge society" (131, 181), and controversy soon ensues. She fires disgraced housekeeper Amy Larnar because of her affair with the previous rector, Reverend Matthew Stukely. Frere helps Amy find a new job and appears to illustrate the temperance that is emphasized in Herbert's *The Country Parson*. A pleasant moment occurs at Easternness (the Agnew family's estate) when Frere, Louisa, and the local physician, Dr. Tom Horrocks, venture onto the frozen lake on ice skates, but the outing is overshadowed when Emilia miscarries at lakeside before the skaters return to shore. During her convalescence at Easternness, she asks Louisa to support Frere and later tells him to seek out Louisa if he ever needs compassionate support during her absence.

Once Emilia returns to Cambridge alone, Frere's psychological well-being begins to fray, especially after Amy hints at her sexual availability, and he finds himself in fear of his mind at Louisa's door. During their long conversation at Decoy Lodge, she encourages him to embrace Mother Nature as a complement to his Christianity in order to achieve "the sacred marriage of spirit and matter, the chymical wedding" (374)—a position that the narrator explains more fully in the next chapter, "The Keeper of the Keys" (399). On a subsequent night, when she comes to the rectory they make love. A bit later, despite the promise inherent in their shared visionary dialogue, Frere castrates himself. Dr. Horrocks sews him up and records the incident in his journal. A place is found for Frere in a poor parish in London's slums. The speculation in the modern time frame is that Frere and Louisa correspond for the rest of their lives.

The consensus among literary critics is that Frere and Louisa unite opposites such as male and female and achieve a *coniunctio* or chymical wedding (Harper 454; Klonowska 158; Lund 155; Renk 43). Mariadele Boccardi suggests that the spiritual and sexual union

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Deborah J. Brower pointed out in a personal email, the fact that "mund" means mouth in German may suggest that Munding has something important to communicate to Alex.

is undertaken to gain alchemical knowledge (“Postmodernism” 115; “A Romance” 7, 11). Alternatively, the relevant alchemical processes—*nigredo*, *albedo*, *rubedo*; that is, darkness, cleansing, illumination—may be incomplete in the 19th-century time frame, but Laura’s gift of a vase to Alex in the later narrative symbolizes the *rubedo* (Hart 89). There is agreement, however, that Gypsy May represents Frere’s past (Klonowska 162) and that his self-castration enacts “the sacrifice of Attis,” which makes Frere Louisa’s mystic brother (Rowland 166–67).<sup>3</sup>

Liliana Sikorska’s three articles deserve special mention because together they constitute the most in-depth reading of Frere to date. In “Mapping the Green Man’s Territory,” Sikorska writes that “the union of Frere and Louisa ends with a tragic separation and almost ritual self-castration on the part of Frere . . . [who] is unable to continue his accepted role of a husband, as well as the unacceptable role of a lover; thus, he withdraws . . .” (103–04). In “Alchemy as Writing,” Sikorska notes the connection between Frere’s experiences in India and Gypsy May and suggests that the fornication with Louisa leaves him vulnerable and desolate (87, 89).<sup>4</sup> In “The Alchemy of Love,” which contains the longest commentary on Frere, Sikorska argues that although Gypsy May frightens him, Munding gives him a second chance to deal with the psychological forces she represents. The Freres’ loveless marriage impedes his progress, and Emilia’s miscarriage causes it to fall apart because the pregnancy was the only thing holding it together. More positively, in the sex act, Louisa becomes one with Cybele and Gypsy May. As a result, Frere, “for the first and last time, sees the figures of goddesses of love, Aphrodite, Cybele, Isis and Gypsy May, in contrast to his jealous, isolated God” (Sikorska, “The Alchemy” 185).<sup>5</sup> But Gypsy

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<sup>3</sup> Susan Rowland writes, “Interestingly, Frere’s sacrifice of his phallic signifier is the author’s only addition to the alchemy motifs in the novel’s sources” (167). The comment may arise from the narrator’s observation that the castrated Frere is “never again to be the lover of Louisa Agnew” (465). It seems more likely, however, that the castration is of the testicles alone, an interpretation that is more in the spirit of “eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven” (*Harper Study Bible*, Matt. 19.12) as well as the castration of Attis’s testicles only. For the latter, see the reference on page 136 in Catullus’s poem 63. Frere’s self-castration adds a bitter undertone to Louisa’s references to him in her notes as *frater mysticus meus*—brother, not lover or husband.

<sup>4</sup> In mentioning “Sir Humphrey Madcap Agnew,” Sikorska incorrectly identifies Sir Humphrey Agnew as the same person as Madcap Agnew (“Alchemy as Writing” 88). Madcap, Sir Henry’s father and Louisa’s grandfather, was a “[n]otorious boozier and womanizer” who sexually abused the young Henry (142, 144, 206, 371). For Louisa, Madcap represents Mercurius and the animus (“the unruly masculine spirit inside her soul” [292]). Sir Humphrey (1622–1695 [18]) is depicted as “the greatest master of the golden age of English alchemy” (162). His relationship with Janet Dyball, his *soror mystica*, suggests the proper *coniunctio* and inspires Edward and Laura to name swans at Decoy Lodge after them. Louisa’s visionary experience of both ancestors (277–78, 288–89, 302), along with comments by Dr. Horrocks and Emilia about virginity’s limitations, makes her realize that she needs actual sexual experience to complement her academic understanding of male-female *coniunctio*. Similarly, she later displaces her attraction to Frere onto her writing: “she had converted its energy to the enrichment of her book” (359).

<sup>5</sup> The statement borrows Clarke’s language: “Pessinuntica or Artemis, Dictynna or Aphrodite, Cybele, Isis, or humble Gypsy May”; “and so blessedly soft in contrast to the harsh comminations of the jealous, isolated God” (387). There are multiple versions of the Cybele-Attis story, but the ur-source appears to be Ovid’s *Fasti*, book 4, lines 179–372, especially lines 221–44. The basic point is that Cybele (Great Mother) in her jealousy drives Attis (her mortal son and lover) mad. As a result, he castrates himself. From a psychological perspective, Attis’s fate allegorizes the power of unconscious forces to overwhelm the psyche. For a summary of the myth, see N. S. Gill on the works-cited list. Schwartz-Salant offers an excellent alchemical reading of the Cybele-Attis story in chapter 7 of *The Mystery of Human Relationship*. The poems of Catullus, which Frere reads, include two references to Cybele: poems 35 and 63 (pages 92 and 136–39).

May still represents what Frere represses, and he cannot accept both love and passion except in one fleeting moment with Louisa. Sikorska then writes, “In a literal and symbolic act of self-castration, Edwin renounced not only manhood but also humanity. His is the greatest of failures encapsulated in the inability to accept weakness and the gift of love” (186).

As this review suggests, the previous criticism is not particularly Jungian, and the novel itself may seem at first not to be Jungian at all. There are a few references to Sigmund Freud in *The Chymical Wedding* but no mention of Jung, though the various references to “big” dreams imply a Jungian connection. Big dreams and little dreams are terms Jung encountered in Africa, with big dreams being those archetypal, collective, mythological, numinous, prophetic, and transpersonal dreams that arise from the collective unconscious and have significance for a whole people versus little dreams from the personal unconscious that have only individual significance.<sup>6</sup> The Jungian connection is explicitly mentioned, however, in the concluding acknowledgements where Clarke notes that the influence of *Psychology and Alchemy*, *The Psychology of the Transference* (sic), and *Mysterium Coniunctionis* “is evident everywhere throughout this romance” (535).

Jung may or may not be directly behind Clarke’s inspiration for the story of the 19th-century Agnews’ alchemical pursuits. Louisa, her father Sir Henry Agnew, and the fate of their respective alchemical writings are modeled on a true story that Jung includes in *The Practice of Psychotherapy: Essays on the Psychology of the Transference and Other Subjects*. As Jung tells us, Thomas South and his daughter Mrs. Mary Anne Atwood (note the parallel name: Louisa Anne Agnew) both wrote on alchemy—he in verse, she in prose. At his urging, however, her published work was withdrawn and burned lest alchemy’s secret be revealed (*The Practice*, CW 16, par. 505). The parallel situation in *The Chymical Wedding*’s earlier timeframe—Sir Henry tries to write an epic poem; Louisa writes a monograph in prose—also culminates in a book burning.<sup>7</sup> Whereas Atwood’s *A Suggestive Inquiry into the Hermetic Mystery* survived and is still for sale today, all copies of Louisa’s *An Open Invitation to The Chymical Wedding, being An Enquiry into the Great Experiment of Nature and A Modest Prolegomenon to A Fuller Revelation of the Hermetic Mystery* perish in the flames outside Decoy Lodge. Although it is unclear whether Clarke learned of Thomas South and his daughter from Jung or from a more general study of alchemical sources, the appearance of their story in *The Collected Works* points to the question under consideration: what else might Clarke have borrowed from Jung’s alchemical writings, and how does Jung’s application of psychology to alchemy enable a more in-depth reading of Edwin Frere?

The novel’s Jungian underpinnings, along with Frere’s psychological predicament in India, its drivers, and its consequences, have not been sufficiently explored. The purpose of the following analysis is to construct a relevant psychological matrix from Jung’s

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<sup>6</sup> References to Freud appear on pages 148, 166, and 172. Clarke’s references to “big” dreams appear on pages 225–26, 409, and 499. Jung’s references to “big” dreams in *CW* are too numerous to list but can be found in the *General Index*, *CW* 20, on page 221. A related passage appears in *MDR*, page 265.

<sup>7</sup> The incendiary fate of Louisa’s book makes it a silent book (alchemy’s secret remains safe), which partly accounts for the fact that her epitaph in stone is *Mutus Liber*, the title of the 1677 picture book (mute book) that Jung used to illustrate *Psychology and Alchemy* (Clarke 19, 228, 301, 532). If the point of *Mutus Liber* “is that the alchemist is represented as working throughout in conjunction with a woman of the Art” (Waite 400; cf. Clarke 501, 533), then the epitaph sadly underscores Louisa’s spinsterhood.

alchemical writings and to apply it to Reverend Frere who does not achieve a fruitful or lasting *coniunctio*—the union of such opposites as Christianity and alchemy, male and female, spirit and soul, etc. Jung’s writings on alchemy support the conclusion that Christianity’s one-sidedness lies at the core of Frere’s psychological problems, especially as regards his experience in India; that his union with Louisa is not as positive a *coniunctio* as others have suggested but instead sparks a painful new *nigredo* (chaos, darkness, depression, melancholy); and that his life post-castration, while it may illustrate intrapsychic progress of a sort, is not a fully desirable state of being because it proceeds from the materialistic premise that lust can be excised by surgical alteration.

### Spirit versus Soul

There is something particular to Christians and Christianity, Jung asserts in his alchemical works, that causes psychological problems. “Despite all assurances to the contrary,” he writes, “Christ is not a unifying factor but a dividing ‘sword’ which sunders the spiritual man from the physical” (*Mysterium*, CW 14, par. 773). In other words, Jung believes that “every single Christian has a split in his psyche” (par. 257), specifically “the conflict between spirit and body” or “the spirit / soul polarity” (par. 3). Beneath these two fundamental domains—spirit and soul—other dichotomies arise: male/female, father/mother, reason-intellection/emotion-imagination-intuition, conscious/unconscious, divinity/human-archetypal, fragmentation/wholeness, logos/eros, objectivity/subjectivity, and material world/psyche. Jung’s position is that Christianity reinforces polarity and encourages attention to spirit at the expense of the soul. When the soul asserts its imperatives, Christianity becomes a refuge for the religious person. As Marie-Louise von Franz states, “You see what an official creed, or religious attitude, is good for: it is a boat into which one can retire when the sharks attack [. . .] when the influx of the unconscious becomes too strong” (197, fig. 59; my insertion). In contrast, from Jung’s alchemical perspective, the task for such a person is to engage in “the work of redemption in the depths of [one’s] own psyche” by uniting opposites (Jung, *Psychology*, CW 12, par. 452).<sup>8</sup> But what happens if psyche takes a different course, veering away from integration and toward fragmentation?

We can assume that, for children and teenagers, Christianity suitably restrains inappropriate urges from the unconscious. Young adulthood, however, is the provenance of dysfunction. Jung writes:

Indeed, it is usually the case that, in the course of development following puberty, consciousness is confronted with affective tendencies, impulses, and fantasies which for a variety of reasons it is not willing or not able to assimilate. It then reacts with repression in various forms, in the effort to get rid of the troublesome intruders. The general rule is that the more negative the conscious attitude is, and the more it resists, devalues, and is

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<sup>8</sup> For the work of redemption, a synonym for the individuation process, see, for example, *Mysterium*, CW 14, par. 344; *The Practice*, CW 16, par. 533; and *The Red Book* (478–79). Clarke’s use of the phrase is specifically alchemical when Sir Henry Agnew announces, “‘All the evidence proclaims that the work of redemption remains incomplete’” (31). As Kathleen Williams Renk states, “According to Agnew, the work of redemption continues through resurrecting and explaining the Hermetic Mystery and enacting the chemical wedding” (44). As Edward tells Alex, “‘Alchemy is the effort to heal the split in consciousness’” (159).

afraid, the more repulsive, aggressive, and frightening is the face which the dissociated content assumes. (*Alchemical*, CW 13, par. 464)

Jung's statement establishes various helpful principles regarding the dynamics of the spirit/soul dichotomy. Early in adult life ("following puberty"), the movement toward psychic fragmentation features the "repression" of sexual feelings into the unconscious ("dissociated content") in the erroneous effort to "get rid of" them. Jung is describing the origin of the shadow, part of which is "the primitive who is still alive and active in civilized man, and [for whom] our civilized reason means nothing" (*Mysterium*, CW 14, par. 342). One inevitably realizes, in the words of Adrienne Rich, that "all our high-toned questions / breed in a lively animal" ("Two Songs"). For the unintegrated person, enantiodromia ensues in one's religious life and one's physical life: there is "the emergence of the unconscious opposite" (Sharp 50), "the reversal of a psychic situation" (von Franz 14), or what Clarke calls "the rack of contrary impulse" (32). If one strays too far to one extreme, the other pushes back; or, as Jung states, "if a man refuses to accept what he has spurned, it will recoil upon him the moment he wants to go higher" (*Psychology*, CW 12, par. 514). The more unassimilable the feelings and the greater the repression, the stronger the resistance from the unconscious becomes. Then the fundamental conflict is between the shadow and the persona, as Nathan Schwartz-Salant expresses: "Generally, one experiences considerable disturbance when a consciousness emerges that conflicts with one's established personality. The stronger this awareness, the stronger the conflict" (100).

It is better, Jung thinks, for a religious person to be conscious of the split than to be unconscious of it, and he speaks directly about the psychology of the spirit/soul dichotomy:

In the long run it does not pay to cripple life by insisting on the primacy of the spirit, for which reason the pious man cannot prevent himself from sinning again and again and the rationalist must constantly trip up over his own irrationalities. Only the man who hides [represses] the other side in artificial unconsciousness [the shadow] can escape this intolerable conflict. Accordingly, the chronic duel between body and spirit seems a better though by no means ideal solution. The advantage, however, is that both sides remain conscious. (*Mysterium*, CW 14, par. 672)

One can be unaware of the spirit/soul dichotomy, or one can know very well that there is a split. In either case, one is prone to cultivate the persona and to project inner content: persona and projection are the twin challenges.<sup>9</sup> But what if the "pious man" chooses to enter the ministry, a profession that institutionalizes the repression of sexuality? Success in that career depends on the cultivation of a pristine persona. As Jung observes, "Society expects, and indeed must expect, every individual to play the part assigned to him as perfectly as possible, so that a man who is a *parson* must not only carry out his official functions objectively, but must at all times and in all circumstances *play the role of parson in a flawless manner*" (*Two Essays*, CW 7, par. 305; emphases added). The more flawlessly he plays it, the more resistance there is from the unconscious.

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<sup>9</sup> The spirit-soul dichotomy and its consequence (projection) are present in Alex Darken's recollection that Edward Nesbit had "talked about those who had been fired by the spirit but had lost touch with the soul; about unassimilated shadows which foisted evil on to enemies rather than bringing responsibility back home . . ." (204).

Projection is the other process that is in play. In *Psychology and Alchemy* Jung emphasizes that a Christian can identify with externals to the detriment of inner life. He succinctly states, “If the supreme value (Christ) and the supreme negation (sin) are outside, then the soul is void: its highest and lowest are missing” (*Psychology*, CW 12, par. 9). More precisely, one is projecting sinful content, anchoring it in externals rather than addressing what Schwartz-Salant calls “the mad or psychotic parts of an otherwise sane person” (18). Such a Christian will have an undeveloped psyche, for there will be a divide between external beliefs and a psyche that remains as animalistic, archaic, and pagan as ever. Christianity masks the disturbing nexus of archetype and shadow in the unconscious. That kind of veneer is serviceable, but when a traumatic event calls attention to inner content, Christianity’s outer focus needs correction. Jung writes:

So long as consciousness refrains from acting, the opposites will remain dormant in the unconscious. Once they have been activated, the *regius filius*—spirit, Logos, Nous—is swallowed up by Physis; that is to say, the body and the psychic representatives of the organs gain mastery over the conscious mind. In the hero myth this state is known as being swallowed in the belly of the whale or dragon. . . . (*Psychology*, CW 12, par. 440)

Persona suffices until depth speaks, and then compensation ensues in the form of enantiodromia, which is powerful in proportion to the strength of persona and projection. The unconscious pushes back in what von Franz calls “some kind of instinctive urge, either power or sex, or something of the kind. That is, the libido irruption of the unconscious presents itself on a relatively animal or low level at first . . .” (57).

In contrast to Paul Tillich’s emphasis on faith as an act of the centered self in which opposites like conscious and unconscious unite (4–14), a Christian believer can experience psychological fragmentation. The psyche becomes like a chariot whose horses do not pull in a unified and positive direction. Jung notes, for example, “the man who has not yet attained inner unity, hence the state of bondage and disunion, of disintegration, and of being torn in different directions—an agonizing unredeemed state which longs for union, reconciliation, redemption, healing, and wholeness” (*The Practice*, CW 16, par. 405). Similarly, Schwartz-Salant mentions that “a male analysand has an intense and nearly automatic obedience to collective ideals or conventional standards of morality, yet an equally intense passion to act out forbidden energies. In effect, he leads a double life: the model citizen during the day, an obsession with prostitutes and child pornography at night” (150). Such inner contradiction—what we are calling spirit versus soul—characterizes the life of Munding’s rector.

### **Frere in India**

Frere evidently departed for India on “The Evangelical Mission to the Heathen” (28) with his sexual libido in proper check. His stance is only a veneer, but it may have been strong enough for him to assert, as John Milton does, his inability to “praise a fugitive and cloister’d virtue, unexercis’d & unbreath’d, that never sallies out and sees her adversary” (1006). When Frere’s inner resources fail, he suffers “mental turmoil . . . in India” (Clarke 63) and falls ill with brain fever (an inflammatory disease such as encephalitis or

meningitis).<sup>10</sup> The narrator ascribes to him a state that resembles the subjective identification that Jung and others call *participation mystique*, a blurring of subject and object: “Yes, he must have wrought confusion in India, just as India had wrought confusion in his mind” (378). The chaos in the psyche (*nigredo*) and the chaos in the environment (paganism with all its actions and implications) mirror and reinforce each other. Ironically, he goes to India to improve people’s lives, but his experience there nearly ruins his own.

Beyond these basic facts, what do we know about Frere in India? Although his life prior to his departure for India is a matter of pure speculation, the repressed sexual libido must have lain in wait in the shadow until opportunity and action could activate it. His repression—“the act of containment” (422)—gives way. Aristotle’s terminology in *The Nichomachean Ethics* illuminates the pastor’s situation.<sup>11</sup> Temperance (a harmony of reason and desire in which one desires the good) is never really a possibility in Frere’s case. Continenence (in which reason’s rule of desire enables positive action) is his starting position, but having sex with a temple prostitute constitutes incontinence (desire overrules reason and leads to negative behavior). He is unlikely either to become self-indulgent (a state of active desire and inactive reason) or to achieve full temperance. It is also clear that his encounter with the temple prostitute accounts for his feelings of devastation, an encounter on which the novel provides the following intimation:

Then, from somewhere in my [Alex Darken’s] reading, it [his mind] came up with the story of a European in India who, in service of no other deity than his own desire, had cynically taken advantage of a temple-prostitute. The woman was very beautiful and very intelligent. Aware of what the man was doing, she had exhausted him with all her incendiary skills, and then—by the simple act of refusing to give herself again—left him distraught. He’d wandered the world afterwards, endlessly haunted by her memory, a sexual cripple. (345)

In context, the statement refers to what Alex fears his liaison with Laura has done to him. The passage appears not to be about Frere who does not wander the world, but it is not necessarily *not* about him either. The recollection directly follows Alex’s conversation about Frere with the current rector, Reverend Neville Sallis, and the two timeframes interweave so intricately that some connection to Frere is strongly implied. It may be, then, that the European (Frere or some hapless traveler), thinking that sex with the prostitute is merely a physical act, is so overwhelmed by libidinous delight that he instantly falls in love with the forbidden woman and then is devastated when his cathexis is rejected. Such a person becomes “a sexual cripple” because the height of ecstasy will henceforth remain

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<sup>10</sup> Clarke mentions “brain-fever” on page 65. Audrey C. Peterson points out that, in the nineteenth century, “many of the symptoms and the post-mortem evidence were consistent with some forms of meningitis or encephalitis” but that “both physicians and laymen believed that emotional shock or excessive intellectual activity could produce a severe and prolonged fever” (447, 449).

<sup>11</sup> Aristotle states that temperance involves “desir[ing] the right thing in the right way at the right time, which is what principle ordains” (187, III.xii.9); that self-restraint or continence “implies having [but resisting] strong and evil desires” (381, VII.ii.6); that unrestraint or incontinence means acting on evil desires and refusing to follow principle (377 and 379, VII.i.6); and that profligacy or self-indulgence involves desire alone (185, III.xii.5; and 397, VII.iv.4). The narrator mentions “continenency” twice on page 356 right after Amy Larner’s implication “that he need no longer lie alone” (355–56).

forever unattainable—one who has glimpsed the Platonic ideal is unlikely ever to be satisfied by its earthly reflection.

Therefore, the reader of Jung’s phrase “the fleshpots of Egypt” (*Mysterium*, CW 14, par. 607) might transfer the epithet to India: for Frere, the fleshpots of *India* are a hell populated by sexual demons. In that spirit, the Latin quotation inside the church from Virgil’s *Aeneid*, book 6, resonates meaningfully (18). Here is Allen Mandelbaum’s translation:

. . . easy—  
 the way that leads to Avernus: day  
 and night the door of darkest Dis is open.  
 But to recall your steps, to rise again  
 into the upper air: that is the labor;  
 that is the task. (lines 175–80)

Clarke omits the next lines, which suggest the possibility of divine assistance: “A few, whom Jupiter / has loved in kindness or whom blazing worth / has raised to heaven as gods’ sons, returned” (lines 180–82). Instead, as Alex says, “Edward once told me that everyone has to find their own way out of hell” (425). Frere thinks that his path out of the sexual underworld he encountered in India requires repressing sexual desire and cultivating a pastoral persona through good works—in effect, reinstalling the veneer that got dashed in India. He cannot undo his temple fornication, but he can live as continent a life as possible: “that is the labor; / that is the task.”

Besides committing a forbidden sexual act and suffering the consequent emotions, Frere may also be rocked by the implication of the woman whom he has encountered: namely, that the spirit and soul can work together. As Jung observes, whereas Western theology says that God and sin are outside, Eastern religion suggests that God and good are on the inside.

It is the rooted conviction of the West that God and the ego are worlds apart. In India, on the other hand, their identity was taken as self-evident. It was the nature of the Indian mind to become aware of the world-creating significance of the consciousness manifested in man. The West, on the contrary, has always emphasized the littleness, weakness and sinfulness of the ego, despite the fact that it elevated one man to the status of divinity. The alchemists at least suspected man’s hidden godlikeness. . . . (*Mysterium*, CW 14, par. 131)

In his fornication with the temple prostitute, Frere comes face to face with a powerful feminine figure who embodies a challenge to his world view. In her, he confronts a personification of an alternative in which God is now a universal Mother, a notion that has various implications: that sexuality and spirituality are not opposites but can exist in a complementary relationship, that “the kingdom of God is in the midst of you” (Luke 17.21), and that human beings are co-creators with God.<sup>12</sup> Perhaps that realization is partly why Frere’s psyche lapses into brain fever: when body and psyche reflect each other’s ills,

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<sup>12</sup> Rita M. Gross discusses the implications of female deities, including sexuality, in her article on the works-cited list.

psychological circuits overload. The brain fever is another indication that soul/body compensates for spirit/psyche even if that means shaking a man's physical, intellectual, and spiritual foundations.

The consequence of the India episode is that Frere must bear a terrible secret for the rest of his life—that he is less than the moral paragon his professional role requires him to be. Jung describes such inner conflict as follows:

They [“the shadowy personifications of the unconscious”] bring about a momentous alteration of his personality since they immediately constitute a painful personal secret which alienates and isolates him from his surroundings. It is something that we “cannot tell anybody.” We are afraid of being accused of mental abnormality—not without reason, for much the same thing happens to lunatics. (*Psychology*, CW 12, par. 57)

Jung's recollection of a murderess in *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* illustrates the point: insofar as living with secret knowledge of a crime withers one's life, the murderess also murders herself (122–23). A similar point appears in *Mysterium Coniunctionis*: “The thief whom the police do not catch has, nonetheless, robbed himself, and the murderer is his own executioner” (CW 14, par. 202). Therefore, it is not possible for Frere to have a good relationship with himself or anybody else because what happened in India does not stay in India; it travels back to England with him and shadows his every interaction.

In *Psychology and Alchemy* Jung shares a dream that someone had about religion; the voice speaking in the dream might well be Jung's advice to Frere:

Then a voice says: “What you are doing is dangerous. Religion is not a tax to be paid so that you can rid yourself of the woman's image, for this image cannot be got rid of. Woe unto them who use religion as a substitute for another side of the soul's life; they are in error and will be accursed. Religion is no substitute; it is to be added to the other activities of the soul as the ultimate completion. Out of the fulness [sic] of life shall you bring forth your religion; only then shall you be blessed!” (CW 12, par. 293)

Frere is in peril because he does not realize the fundamental truths encapsulated in the dream: that religion is not a sexual safe haven; that woman's image cannot be excised because it is part of the psyche; that spirit and soul (psyche and soma) must work together in a complementary fashion; and, as Jung says in *The Practice of Psychotherapy*, that “[w]holeness is not so much perfection as completeness” (CW 16, par. 452). Clarke echoes Jung's statement in Louisa's idea that “it was not perfection which life required, but completeness” (290) and that Gypsy May, a necessary complement, is ““completion”” (382, 384).

### **Gypsy May**

Frere manages to keep his indiscretion as a single man in India to himself and takes the next step in his career: interviewing for the rector position in Munding. The job is open because Reverend Stukely had a heart attack and died while fornicating with his housekeeper, Amy Larner. Everyone knows about the indiscretion because she cried out for help; it took two men to lift his large corpse off her. Initially unaware of that background, Frere may assume that moving to a rural village and ministering to the salt of the earth will compensate for his own indiscretion in India, but there is no escape, not just

because Munding, as its name implies, is as much a part of the world as India but also because he carries his inner life with him. Although Munding provides a fresh start for the beleaguered pastor, he is subject to Ralph Waldo Emerson's critique of traveling in "Self-Reliance." To assume that being in a new location makes one different means that "[t]raveling is a fool's paradise" because one's "giant" (shadow) comes along (Emerson 164).

We know that Frere's "giant" accompanies him during his interview because of the dream he has. In the first part of the dream, Frere is preaching about how God made humans both male and female, but then he begins to notice that he is losing the congregation. In the dream, Sir Henry pays attention but eyes him ironically and dismissively, then beckons Frere to follow him out of the church. Outside, Frere finds Agnew "crouched on the ['luminously green'] grass like the yogins Frere had seen in India," and then Agnew takes an emerald-colored snake out of his coat. "The question was simply whether or not the priest would allow Agnew's snake to bite him" (34–35). As Edward says to Alex, "Everything in the dream is an aspect of your psyche," and "dreams have a knack of undermining the ego's self-esteem" (151, 148; cf. 527). Dreams illuminate and compensate.

In particular, the dream puts the feminine on the same level as the masculine by stating that God created both. Insofar as a balanced relationship between spirit and soul is implied, it is as though Frere preaches a compensatory sermon to himself. Losing the congregation's attention suggests interview-related anxiety, but the green snake represents sexuality and the soul, both of which Frere has repressed.<sup>13</sup> The snake image also represents paganism in general a few pages later when Reverend Sallis refers to "victory over the pagan serpent and all that" (43). The snake represents forces within psyche and life that Frere thinks must be repressed, even conquered. But the snake is also redolent of the alchemy that Sir Henry has confessed to following in his earlier conversation with Frere. That is, the snake foreshadows both the alchemical view that Louisa later offers as a complement to Christianity—the soul/body that must balance the spirit/intellect—but also the sexual encounter that they will have. These twin temptations—alchemy and sexuality—both present opportunities for him to develop the soul side of his personality. Eventually Frere fails to grasp their potential to aid in the work of redemption, which makes Louisa's musing prophetic: "Louisa wondered how far this man was victim to his own career" (37). To what extent have privileging persona and repressing shadow blighted his life, and how badly will these processes infringe upon his psyche and experience as he moves forward?

The sexual resonance of the snake in Frere's dream bears an unmistakable connection to what most bothers him in his visit to Munding: Gypsy May, the sheela-na-

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<sup>13</sup> The snake's vibrant green color connects to Frere's frame of mind at his Christmas service: "New life, green as the holly leaf, was at work inside him as surely as it stirred inside his wife" (183). The color also links him to the modern narrative in which Alex Darken seeks the Green Man, perhaps "the wild man" within who is "a caged beast" at the Polytechnic (242, 498), and makes love with Laura on "the vivid green of the grass" at Decoy Lodge (331). A helpful gloss on the novel's animal imagery appears in Gloria Anzaldúa's chapter "Entering into the Serpent" in *Borderlands* where the serpent relates to body, earth, the feminine, imagination, intuition, and sexuality—eagle, to the opposing qualities. While inveighing against "the split in human consciousness," Edward Nesbit refers to promoters of modern materialism such as Darwin, Freud, and Marx as "vengeful eagles" (166). In Anzaldúa as in alchemy, the goal is to bridge opposites in order to bring about a new third thing.

gig on the exterior of the church, “a type of (usually) stone architectural figure . . . representing a naked woman gesturing to or otherwise flagrantly displaying exaggerated genitalia” (“Sheela Na Gig”). Frere notices the following characteristics: “the grotesque staring head of Gypsy May where the image squatted, high on the church wall, naked with drooping dugs, and both hands holding open the organ of her sex, as though she were about to drop a child in labour, or as though she might engorge a man” (40). In *Images of Lust: Sexual Carvings on Medieval Churches*, Anthony Weir and James Jerman provide the key background on sheelas. The authors assert “that sheela-na-gigs . . . are arguably iconographic images whose purpose was to give visual support to the Church’s moral teachings” (10).<sup>14</sup> In other words, a sheela’s purpose is to ward off the very lechery it appears to depict, as Louisa well knows. She says, “‘Poor May has become nothing of more account than a bogey to frighten naughty children’” (39). The sheela is “no longer a scene of lechery and debauchery, but a sermon whose theme is that human relationships under the spur of lust can degenerate quickly into base carnality” (Weir and Jerman 23). A sheela’s purpose, therefore, is apotropaic, didactic, minatory, and tutelary; it propounds morality by depicting the ugliness of raw sexuality (10–11, 15, 20). But that is not how Reverend Frere responds to Gypsy May.

Young Sam Yaxley’s view—“‘Tha’s only a lump of owd stone’” (83)—turns out to be as insufficient as stating that a book is nothing but ink on paper.<sup>15</sup> Christian and pagan lenses yield superior readings. First, from Reverend Sallis’s Christian perspective, Maria Aegyptica “‘was a temple whore in Egypt, who worked her passage to the Holy Land, was converted to Christianity and ended her days as a mystic in the Thebaid. . . . She was commonly called Mary the Gypsy’” (44). Therefore, the sheela in Munding is “a crude precursor of the Divine Mother. . . . At all times all wise men had revered the mysterious organ of generation through which alone might life be entered. It was no devourer but the very portal of life” (183). Second, the pagan view is expressed by Louisa and others: Gypsy May, who goes by many names (369, 387), represents the Mother goddess and Nature herself (44, 382; cf. 386–87). Louisa understands that the Mother must be properly loved and feared and that “‘the peace which passeth understanding . . . was hers long before the Church claimed it for its own’” (386).

Frere rejects Louisa’s advice to embrace what Gypsy May represents, believing that Christianity and the Mother goddess are a binary opposition—spirit, not soul, must guide his course. The icon and all that it represents must be rejected because of its pagan origin, and he thinks that it represents “his mortal enemy” (369), the goddess who must be repressed, not integrated. Naturally, the pressure builds: “He was shut in, walled up in stone, and it was not a cave—it was the womb of the hideous idol on his church. She had swooped down over him and engulfed him there” (369). Gypsy May now signifies his repressed sexuality, and the sheela’s presence on his church implies a lesson that he is not ready to hear: namely, that if soul does not complement spirit, the two will compensate for each other in an endless cycle of attraction and repression.

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<sup>14</sup> I have followed Weir and Jerman’s modern spelling. Clarke’s spelling—“*Sheelagh-na-gigs*”—emphasizes what Louisa calls Gypsy May’s “‘Celtic provenance’” (39).

<sup>15</sup> Frere’s ministry to Sam’s father, Will Yaxley, is as big a failure as the mission to India. Frere attempts to convert him on his deathbed; however, the old reprobate bluntly refuses to consider anything other than his own materialistic point of view, which affirms drinking, fornication, and nature (296, 298).

Frere's situation vis-à-vis Gypsy May is so powerfully dysfunctional—"how violent had been the shock when he gazed up at the crude dawn-lit figure of Gypsy May" (61)—because the icon reminds him of his experience in India, as the narrator indicates.

He felt the old dark crowding there—the hot darkness of the Gangetic plain, the place where his reason had been unseated once before. He strove to remind himself that, in contrast to those Hindoo effigies with their flagrant appeal to the sensual beast in man, this image was primitive and crude. It was coarse in a lewd and vulgar joke. But the point was it had no business there at all; yet there it was, as though appointed for his particular confusion. Small wonder his mind had reeled. (63)

The binary thinking that Christianity promotes lies at the heart of Frere's horrible reaction to Gypsy May. In Jung's words, "So clear and definite is the Christ figure that whatever differs from him must appear not only inferior but perverse and vile" (*Alchemical*, CW 13, par. 290). Consequently, Frere lapses into *nigredo* ("old dark," "darkness," "confusion") and fortifies the shadow ("sensual beast"). He sees a clear connection between the Indian prostitute ("Gangetic plain," "Hindoo effigies") and the Munding icon, as well as between his mission to the heathen and his present ministry: "Was he again to abandon his mission, to collapse in ignominious defeat as once in India? . . . Here was the dreadful shadow that had always hung across his ministry" (305).<sup>16</sup> Thus, the icon provides an ever-present reminder of his negative experience in India so that, in Frere's mind, India and Munding merge, just as the prostitute and the icon represent the same psychological force. Like Emerson's hapless traveler, Frere has journeyed a long way from Cambridge only to find that he is still himself. Nevertheless, he resolves to do something about the offending icon: he thinks that "his ghosts should at last be laid" (81) if he christens her. He feels swallowed by the Mother goddess, but his plan would merely reverse that dynamic, enabling spirit to swallow soul. To bring relief from the sensual beast, the rejected sexuality that Gypsy May represents, he plans a swing to the opposite.

### Life in Munding

India has left its mark on Frere's unconscious, but as he begins his ministry in Munding he manifests at least a convincing version of the temperate life specified in his favorite book, George Herbert's *A Priest to the Temple or the Country Parson, his Character and Rule of Holy Life*.<sup>17</sup> Herbert urges the country parson to be "an absolute Master and commander of himself" via prudence, temperance, and "[m]ortification in regard of lusts and affections, and the stupefying and deading of all the clamorous powers of the soul" (227). Clark quotes this passage from Herbert's text (64) and a bit later echoes it: "He [Frere] was thinking that George Herbert was right: a man was not priest to the temple because he had no loud clamourings of the soul, but because he had studied and mastered them" (67). Herbert also cautions against talking with women in private and urges one always to have a witness—principles that Frere violates. Further on, *The Country Parson* cautions against "[o]riginall concupisence," as though lust rather than disobedience were humanity's original sin, and urges reason as a guide (238, 265). As stated in Herbert's translation of Ludwig Cornarus's

<sup>16</sup> The connection is further strengthened by the Roma people's origin in the Punjab region of northern India.

<sup>17</sup> That is Clarke's rendering of Herbert's title on page 64, but F. E. Hutchinson's version appears on the works-cited list. As above, the title is often rendered simply *The Country Parson*.

“A Treatise of Temperance and Sobriety,” by becoming addicted to temperance and reason one can follow the straight and narrow way (292). Frere, however, achieves only superficial compliance with the manual’s principles because “[t]he edifice of his reconstituted life was frail” (32). In a psychological context, if “soul” refers to the unconscious and if mastery refers not to temperance but to repression, Frere knows that like Milton’s Christian wayfarer “he must eventually turn and face. . . [his inner] demons” (67). Nevertheless, with Herbert’s positive advice and Catullus’s antifeminist poetry as his bulwark, he probably considers himself sufficiently protected until events demonstrate that he is not. In the meantime, two fine moments ensue for the Reverend Frere.

First, after learning about Amy Larner’s past from the gossips in the church, Emilia fires her. Frere feels responsible for helping the young outcast and seeks the help of friends. A meeting takes place appropriately at Easternness, a name that represents transformation (Lund 154). The group, consisting of Frere, Sir Henry, Louisa, and Dr. Horrocks, resembles the Christian quaternity that Jung mentions in *Psychology and Alchemy*—the Trinity plus Mary (CW 12, p. 422, fig. 233).<sup>18</sup> They agree on a path forward, and Dr. Horrocks uses his connections to find Amy a new “situation” in a neighboring town (138). Frere, who has acted in the spirit of true Christian charity, appears to be living up to Herbert’s expectations by following his reason, and he seems to make inner progress by helping a young woman who has fallen victim to the sensual beast herself. Frere is on the right track, yet there is a shadow side: Amy’s later attempt at seduction reactivates his old adversary, the conflict between spirit and body. What is the effect?

Frere “was tempted once—just once—to seek some comfort in Amy Larner’s embrace” (364), but it takes more than the likes of Amy Larner to seduce a clergyman. To give in as did Reverend Stukely would have been “an act of monstrous irresponsibility” (355); Frere is “made of sheerer stuff” and has “George Herbert’s little book on the pillow beside him” (355). “Yet in all innocence . . . the plump young woman had unleashed a demon in his mind”—she “had set his mind raging elsewhere like a beast of the field” (355–56). He can still resist because Amy is not “*the great harlot*” of Revelation 19.2, just a wronged and cast-out young woman with “crab-apple cheeks and injured eyes” (131). And besides, “Amy Larner with her dumpy figure and crab-apple cheeks was not the Shulamite of his dreams” (364)—Shulamite being the name for the swarthy female figure identified as bride in the Song of Songs (6.13).

Although Amy is easily resisted (continence holds in the realm of action), Frere’s *inner* life is characterized by incontinence now that the biblical Shulamite becomes one with the Indian temple prostitute. The narrator sums up Frere’s psychological dilemma as follows:

It was not Amy Larner who came into Frere’s chamber that night, nor did the woman even look like her. The figure was darker, more slender, sinuous even. She moved with un-English motions, bejewelled, filmily dressed, Indian. She had stepped from the temple-wall, stone made flesh, one of the crowd of provocative nymphs that lingered there. Tender and indolent, her

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<sup>18</sup> The quaternary relationship surfaces later in Frere’s abhorrence to “revering not God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost, but the obscene, aboriginal goddess that bared her parts to the world above their heads” (383). Louisa believes that “[w]e are part of her, and she of us” (382), which is to say that we are part of the anima and that the anima is within us.

gaze was turned toward him. It spoke of her yearning to become a *maithuna* figure—to be coupled, like those pairs of lovers that stood at the entrance to every temple, serpent-twined, endlessly making love in public view, unabashed and rapt. She was a silent miasmatic dancer whose every gesture uttered only a single word. (356–57)

Sexual desire is Frere's *nigredo* ("darker"). His fantasy woman, who is snake-like in appearance ("sinuous," "serpent-twined"), recalls the snake in his anxiety dream and seems to be a living embodiment of Gypsy May ("stone made flesh"). The "*maithuna* figure" refers to "the union of opposing forces, underlining the nonduality between human and divine" ("Maithuna"). Here, then, is the challenge that Frere faces: soul must complement spirit, as human must complement the divine; otherwise, swings of compensation—"this reeling between appetite and disgust," "ecstasy and dread" (363, 405)—will be endless. The point is that the pressure is mounting: the whore of Babylon, the Indian prostitute, Emilia, Gypsy May, Amy Lerner, and soon Louisa too. The great Mother of us all is increasing her effort to be recognized by amplifying her personifications in Frere's life. Thus, the dream, like the dancer within it, is "miasmatic" (contaminating, corrupting) insofar as it conveys "a single word" that must not be ignored: *desire*.

As we have seen, the stronger the repression that lies underneath the persona, the more the unconscious compensates. The narrator says of Frere, "Yet the more he sought to resist them [*(c)arnal lusts and appetites*'], the harder they pressed" (356). Indeed, being "the Rector of the parish, beyond reproach" intensifies his tumultuous inner life (374). Frere now considers Herbert's pastoral manual "a rebuke to his failure" and realizes that "[h]e was a whited sepulcher" (364): although his reason, for the moment, remains strong enough to ensure continence, he feels hollow on the inside. Jung's statement in *The Practice of Psychotherapy* explains both his resistance to Amy and his growing vulnerability to Louisa: "Experience shows that the carrier of the projection is not just *any* object but is always one that proves adequate to the nature of the content projected—that is to say, it must offer the content a 'hook' to hang on" (CW 16, par. 499). Even in the absence of Emilia, Frere possesses sufficient integrity that he cannot be seduced by a promiscuous younger woman with an inferior mind; however, he is vulnerable to Louisa, his intellectual equal, as they slowly get to know each other. Whereas Amy merely stirs his lust, Louisa seduces him to action.

The second major event that Frere experiences in Munding—one of his finest moments, which brings him closer to Louisa—involves ice skating on the lake at Easternness. Holding hands, the three skaters—Frere, Louisa, and Dr. Horrocks, with Louisa in the middle—prefigure the unity of spirit and soul that she will later advocate. As Frere (a diffident man of faith), Dr. Horrocks (an atheist, rationalist, materialist, and scientist who thinks that humans are merely biological machines), and Louisa (a scholar of alchemy) venture out on the frozen lake, their joint movements signify the importance of uniting the spiritual (Frere) and the rational (Horrocks), with alchemy (Louisa) as a kind of bridge between them. Alex's modern reflection on the Agnew family expresses a point that relates to the meaning of the trinary skaters: "They knew that matter and spirit are indivisible" (174). Unity is the main message of the trio's excursion onto the lake—a message that Frere's performance illustrates especially. "In this moment all contraries seemed reconciled in him—shyness and strength, awkwardness and grace, the spirit bright within the balanced body, his parson's black against the white of the distant drifts" (188). He is for a moment

“Edwin Frere, ice-dancer” (197), and “like a dancer on the ice, he had surrendered narrow consciousness to the rhythms of the flesh” (463). Dr. Horrocks tells him, “I saw you on the ice. You did not falter there. You displayed a rare vitality” (273). It appears that Frere momentarily achieves what W. B. Yeats calls “Unity of Being,” essentially a unity of opposites such as spirit and soul or mind and body.<sup>19</sup> If he were able to live as he skates (openly, joyfully, with full bodily engagement), his life would move closer to the fusion of opposites that Louisa later encourages.

Here too there is a shadow side to Frere’s fine moment, and it centers on Emilia and ice. If water signifies life, ice represents potential-in-stasis, but it also parallels “the ice about her heart” (264). As the trio skates, the pastor’s wife suffers a miscarriage on shore. Water is to ice as pregnancy is to miscarriage. If pregnancy represents the reconciliation of opposites (Jung, *Mysterium*, CW 14, par. 506), and if a child signifies the “[u]nion of opposites as hermaphrodite” (von Franz 176, fig. 53), then miscarriage suggests that the male and female principles have not successfully come together. Jung writes, “Many alchemists compute the duration of the *opus* to be that of a pregnancy, and they liken the entire procedure to such a period of gestation” (*The Practice*, CW 16, par. 461). Insofar as alchemy is an analogy for psychology, a miscarriage symbolizes individuation gone wrong—the movement is from *coniunctio* back to *nigredo*.

Emilia’s convalescence eventually leads to a separation under the pretext that she needs to help her elderly father back in Cambridge. Her discussion with Louisa of Anne Brontë’s novel *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* is ironic, for Emilia is critical of Helen for leaving her dissolute husband but leaves Frere for highly egocentric reasons.<sup>20</sup> She simply wants to leave Munding and return to the big city. Neither Frere nor the reader ever sees her again, though a strained correspondence ensues. Emilia’s departure plunges him into *nigredo* by fanning the spark of lust left in his soul by Amy Larnier. Now “a throng of lechers revelled in his brain” (363). As in India, sexuality personifies as demons (361, 368–69). He seeks solace via a swing to the cynicism of Catullus’s poems (362), but the unconscious compensates with “the treason of his dreams” and “a dissolute concubinage of dreams” (362–63).

Awake, he engages in “the danger of an auto-erotic isolation,” which Jung cautions against (*Alchemical*, CW 13, par. 307). The narrator mentions “a self-regarding sensuality to his loneliness,” “this sensual obsession with the self,” and the fact that “Frere made love to no one but himself” (361, 367, 363). He now illustrates the subjection to lust expressed by William Shakespeare in Sonnet 129, the origin of the phrase “an expense of spirit in a waste of shame” (366). Moreover, like a schoolboy, Frere now focuses on the open eroticism of the Song of Songs; he is no longer able to view the book only as a poem about Christ and the church (361–62). *Nigredo* descends. As “[d]arkness inhabited the mind of Edwin Frere” (360) and “his nights grew darker” (364), he aligns with Alex Darken, a character with “dark” in his very name, who arrives in Munding in a state of *nigredo*

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<sup>19</sup> Unity of Being “is defined in a draft as ‘Complete Harmony between physical [*sic*] body intellect & spiritual desire’” (“Unity”; insertion in the original).

<sup>20</sup> *The Tenant* was published under the pseudonym Acton Bell in 1848, the year of the Freres’ arrival in Munding. Louisa’s familiarity with the novel indicates that she keeps up with culture beyond Munding, and her doubts about male authorship reflect her “kinship” with the author (25). The novel is also mentioned on pages 261 and 269.

because he too has been abandoned by his wife. Jung understands the state of mind that now characterizes Reverend Frere:

When a woman is absent or unattainable the unconscious produces in him a certain femininity which expresses itself in a variety of ways and gives rise to numerous conflicts. The more one-sided his conscious, masculine, spiritual attitude the more inferior, banal, vulgar, and biological will be the compensating femininity of the unconscious. (*Mysterium*, CW 14, par. 221)

The narrative now drives toward the *coniunctio* at the rectory, a union in which Emilia plays a significant role. To Louisa she says, ““You must promise that you will show it [care] to him as you have done to me”” (202). To her husband she says, ““Miss Agnew is not without charity. If you are in difficulties you must approach her”” (313). Emilia’s disagreeable attitude prompts a separation, and urging her husband to lean on the younger woman for comfort and support, along with urging her to be receptive to his appeal, is a deniable way to set Frere and Louisa on a collision course. At first, Louisa naively believes that “Emilia had not understood what she was doing when she consigned him to her care” (378), but she eventually recognizes “the fraught, finally mysterious conspiracy with Emilia” (398). The narrator succinctly sums up the manipulation’s effect on Frere’s psyche: “No more than Amy Larnier was Emilia now the lady of his dreams” (365)—Louisa is.

In a dark mental state of wifeless depression, Frere knocks on the door at Decoy Lodge. During their long conversation, Louisa suggests that his Christianity and her alchemy should join forces to unite spirit and soul—religious vision and natural magic, mind and body, male and female (399). Perhaps binary forces come together momentarily when they make love at the rectory, but Frere misinterprets her suggestion of complementarity as antinomianism (439) and interprets the coupling in biblical terms. Like Adam he recognizes that a sexual opportunity exists (“the gate [to paradise] stood open”), Louisa’s body resembles the contours of Eden, and he experiences lust (there is “venom in his blood” from the “green-headed” snake). He senses “the absolute perfection of this moment” of intercourse; but then “terror struck,” and “she saw him cowering across the room, holding himself” (424). Clarke has used similar imagery before: the wide-open gate parallels Gypsy May’s vagina, and the venomous green snake recalls earlier lust-related serpentine imagery. More significantly, Frere imagines himself to be postlapsarian Adam looking back into a paradise that he will never regain. Perhaps he longs for some earlier state of innocence in the garden, for as Jung states, “Adam and Eve in paradise had no genitals” (*Alchemical*, CW 13, par. 180), which parallels Frere’s self-castration. Or perhaps at this moment he represents what Jung considers the old Adam, ancient man, animal man, the shadow, and the part of us with a “saurian tail” (*Mysterium*, CW 14, par. 602; *Psychology*, CW 12, par. 148); Jung also calls it “the animal sphere of instinct as well as the primitive or archaic psyche” (*The Practice*, CW 16, par. 452). In any case, as Frere’s cowering indicates, *coniunctio* swings immediately back to *nigredo*, with the fact that Louisa does not get pregnant as further indication of the union’s temporary nature. There is to be no new third state that could develop between them; *albedo* and *rubedo* are out of the question, for darkness resumes its hold on Frere’s psyche.

Not all is lost because Frere (“a man of imagination” [130]) later engages in active imagination (“a letter written from myself to myself” [438]) and experiences a visionary dialogue with Louisa (441ff.). However, his *nigredo* state—inner darkness and chaos (375,

444)—now drives him toward self-castration. Dr. Horrocks speculates in his journal that Frere’s experiences in India and with Gypsy May have triggered the conflict of “*the rude aboriginal savage*” versus “*the respectable Anglican parson at his prayers*” (450–51), but that is only the surface truth. First, Frere’s situation illustrates Schwartz-Salant’s characterization of Cybele and Attis: “The myth is a statement of an impossible passion—a love that can neither exist nor not exist. The myth presents a picture of tragic and failed separations and equally tragic states of fusion or bonding” (126). Clearly Frere’s relationships have become impossible. Because he is a married parson, he cannot have a life with Louisa; because he has fornicated with her, he cannot return to Emilia; and because he has neither woman, sexual desire makes his life a living hell. Second, there is a possible echo of Jung in Frere’s position: just as the narrator says, “In the contest between chaos and the word, the word had lost; yet chaos must not win” (447), Jung writes, “Nature *must not* win the game, but she *cannot* lose” (*Alchemical*, CW 13, par. 229). *Nigredo* (“chaos”) has vanquished spirituality (“the word”) in Frere’s capitulation to lust; a more appropriate outcome would be not letting nature win but recognizing that she cannot be ignored or eradicated. As Dr. Horrocks states, “the flesh has its needs, and they must out or fust” (191). Together the two quotations reflect the contrast between binary thinking (spirit *versus* soul) and the proper orientation (spirit *and* soul).

Of course, Frere understands his self-castration in terms of Matthew 19, which he reads before harming himself. The chapter begins with Jesus’s condemnation of divorce-as-adultery and then shifts to the possibility that one can become a eunuch for the kingdom of heaven. Scripture evidently encourages Frere to embrace a jarring non sequitur: if he cannot divorce Emilia or be with Louisa, castration is the only alternative. He imagines what unfolds in terms that recall the Crucifixion. “He had shed his cloth and entered the Garden; he had thought it Paradise, but he knew now that its true name was Gethsemane, and that the roses of Isis flowered there among the violets of Attis” (463). Self-violence, the passage implies, resembles the crucifixion story, as if Frere is sacrificing his testicles for all of mankind. The Christ-like inflation is quite explicit: “‘I have sought’, he murmured quietly, ‘to make a sacrifice on behalf of all men. And now that the sacrifice is made, none other need make it’” (485). Yet in the end his decision is not about Cybele and Attis, Matthew’s gospel, or Gypsy May; in an ultimate absurdity, he sacrifices his testicles in *Louisa’s* name (465), as though the excision of a body part will remedy his entire psychological situation. Schwartz-Salant’s comment on the mad parts of sane persons is apt: “To avoid totally losing a sense of self, the analysand may cut or abuse himself or herself or act in other self-destructive ways” (51). Louisa responds to the news with appropriate compassion: “Then, in a voice of infinite pity, a voice that was her own and not her own, she murmured, ‘Oh my dear, what have you done . . . what have you done to yourself?’” (461; ellipsis in the original).

## Conclusion

The narrator’s positive interpretation of what Frere has done may be unreliable: “Within himself the opposites could at last be reconciled” (464). According to this interpretation, Frere’s attempt to quell the sensual beast is successful; however, it seems unlikely that a materialistic act fully resolves his inner turmoil, and he remains unreconciled to the external world. The narrator is more reliable in expressing Louisa’s various reactions: Frere is “[p]riest to both God and Goddess now,” priest to neither, “something other,” or a

“fallible man” who is nevertheless “utterly beautiful” (465, 485). Frere’s self-mutilation, an attempt to destroy the shadow and to quell the underlying archetypes, makes about as much sense as decapitation as a cure for headaches. It is unlikely that a violation of physical wholeness promotes inner wholeness or that severing ties with one’s beloved is the noble sacrifice that Frere believes it to be. More likely, he will experience a permanent state of *nigredo* that he will disguise as Christian humility and service. In fact, self-castration is not the last psychological trick that Frere plays on himself. As Edward explains to Alex, “A parish was found in the London slums. Apparently it was what he wanted . . . I see him as an unassuming, rather saintly figure among the gin-palaces and stews of the Dickensian fog” (530; ellipsis in the original). What does Frere do? He ministers in a place where taverns and brothels proliferate. He desires to be there. The unstated psychological trick is that he can feel okay about himself and his ministry because others’ behavior is even more degenerate than his own. It takes a saint to seduce a saint and degenerates to soothe a degenerate.

At the end of the novel, Ralph Agnew—Sir Henry’s great grandson—says the following to Alex: “And, in a way, I suppose I believe in ghosts. We carry them inside us. We are all haunted houses” (475). In the literal sense, the comment suggests the possibility that Alex and Laura, in their fornication at Decoy Lodge, have been possessed by Frere and Louisa. Acting on behalf of the ghosts, Alex and Laura, with the help of Edward, enact the conclusion to their Victorian counterparts’ story. But it is also possible that Ralph’s statement should be taken figuratively, as a reference, in Edward’s words, to “how things deeply are” in the unconscious (174), particularly the sensual beast and the archaic person with a saurian tail who live inside us all. In that respect, the modern characters open the doors to psychological progress and move out of the *coniunctio-nigredo* cycle toward individuation (*albedo* and *rubedo*). In the haunted house of the psyche, the conflict is not merely between ghosts and the living but also between spirit and soul, Christianity and alchemy, reason and emotion, and many other binaries. To bring opposites together is to achieve greater wholeness and completeness and to determine where one touches down on a scale ranging from temperance to self-indulgence.

The narrator’s dubiously positive interpretation of Frere’s inner evolution sits in ironic tension with Jesus’s injunction to love others as one loves oneself (Matt. 22.39). It may be true that Frere, in his ministry, demonstrates love of other people; however, if he, a denatured wreck of a man, locates himself in a neighborhood where he can easily project his sensual beast onto the local sex workers and their clients, then his saintliness may partly be a thing of Edward’s imagination. It is hard to believe that self-castrating, moving beyond male and female, and serving as a pastor in a slum are the exact combination Jesus has in mind when recommending a balance between self and others. It may be that Frere continues to serve others because he still cannot love himself.

### Contributor

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