

## **Biblical and psychoanalytic allegory in Jane White's *Quarry***

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### **Abstract**

This article attempts to prove that Jane White's novel *Quarry* is centred around two interrelated allegories: biblical and psychoanalytic. The characters lend themselves to allegorical interpretation either as equivalents of biblical figures or as representations of psychoanalytic concepts. It is argued that the overlapping of the biblical and psychoanalytic allegories produces a radical revision of Freud's view on religion. Freud believed that all religious behaviour stems from the Oedipus complex; *Quarry*, this article claims, relates the Oedipus complex not to the origin of faith but to its loss. The article also discusses *Quarry's* ideological ambiguity in its attitude towards religion and suggests what this ambiguity derives from.

### **Key words**

Christ-like figure, Freud, Jane White, Oedipus complex, *Quarry*, religion, the unconscious

## **Biblijna i psychoanalityczna alegoria w powieści *Quarry* Jane White**

### **Abstrakt**

W niniejszym artykule staram się udowodnić, że powieść Jane White pt. *Quarry* skoncentrowana jest wokół dwóch powiązanych alegorii: biblijnej oraz psychoanalitycznej. Bohaterów powieści można zinterpretować alegorycznie, bądź to jako odpowiedniki postaci biblijnych, bądź to jako przedstawienia pojęć psychoanalitycznych. Twierdzę też, że nałożenie na siebie alegorii biblijnej oraz psychoanalitycznej prowadzi do radykalnej rewizji poglądów Freuda na religię. Freud wierzył, że zachowania religijne mają swe źródło w kompleksie Edypa; powieść *Quarry*, jak usiłuję wykazać, wiąże kompleks Edypa nie z pochodzeniem wiary, lecz z jej utratą. W artykule omawiam także ideologiczną dwuznaczność powieści *Quarry* w odniesieniu do religii oraz czynniki decydujące o tej dwuznaczności.

### **Słowa kluczowe**

Freud, Jane White, kompleks Edypa, nieświadomość, postać mesjańska, *Quarry*, religia

### **1. Introduction**

The present article discusses the novel *Quarry* by Jane White, who was a little-known English author living in the years 1934-1985. Jane White is a pen name of Jane Brady (cf. Nedelkoff 2008). Under this pseudonym, in the years 1967-1979, she wrote seven novels and one piece of non-fiction (cf. Griffiths 2011, "Jane White" 2008).<sup>1</sup> *Quarry* is Jane White's 1967 debut novel but she "has written plays, poetry, verse dramas for as long as she can remember. Her first novel (un-

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<sup>1</sup> Other novels by Jane White are: *Proxy* (1968), *Beatrice*, *Falling* (1968), *Retreat in Good Order* (1970), *Left for Dead* (1971), *Comet* (1975) and *Benjamin's Open Day* (1979). She also published an autobiographical book entitled *Norfolk Child* (1973).

published) was completed at the age of nine” (White 1968: dust jacket info). Two facts indicate that Jane White’s works have slipped into a literary limbo: not only is Wikipedia silent about her (as of October 2017) but also she is featured on *The Neglected Books Page*, a website devoted to forgotten books. Besides, there does not seem to be any scholarly interest in her oeuvre.

*Quarry* seems to be a rather complex and puzzling novel, in spite of its ostensibly simple plot about three boys bullying a fourth one and keeping him imprisoned in a cave (a detailed summary will be provided later on). Brooks Peters, former editor in chief of *Quest* magazine, describes *Quarry* as “a real enigma. I can’t figure out what it is really about except perhaps the breakdown of society” (qtd. in “Jane White” 2008). The reviewer Richard Freeman notices that *Quarry* “is an allegory with a variety of more or less cosmic overtones” and he claims that “the cave is philosophically associated with the one in Plato’s *Republic*” (qtd. in “Jane White” 2008). Nevertheless, Freeman concludes that “[u]ltimately, the book is about the complex symbiosis between prosecutor and prey” (qtd. in “Jane White” 2008). Admittedly, the cave in *Quarry* may evoke associations with Plato’s myth of the cave, but it is far from obvious how – and if – this framework was applied by Jane White. The view that the “prosecutor and prey” theme dominates the novel is not entirely convincing either and the “breakdown of society” theme seems to be an even less useful key to *Quarry*.

The aim of this article is to shed some light on this “enigma” by employing structuralism and semiotics as the main methodological tools. The analysis of *Quarry* will also draw upon some psychoanalytic concepts as originally developed by Freud. However, rather than using psychoanalysis as a methodology, the present article will treat it as a source of inspiration behind the novel, alongside the biblical inspirations. While alternative interpretations, such as those mentioned above, cannot be dismissed, it will be argued that the novel is predominantly allegorical. Consequently, the analysis will focus

on an allegorical interpretation of the main characters. An allegory can be defined as “a story [...] with a double meaning: a primary or surface meaning; and a secondary or under-the-surface meaning. It is a story, therefore, that can be read, understood and interpreted at two levels (and in some cases at three or four levels)” (Cuddon 1982: 24). Encyclopædia Britannica adds that an allegory is “a [...] fictional narrative that conveys a meaning not explicitly set forth in the narrative”. It is a “meaning [...] that the reader can understand only through an interpretive process” (“Allegory: Art and literature” 2017). In a similar vein, Janina Abramowska (2003) defines the essence of allegory as “an interplay between two semantic planes: the literal plane functions as a vehicle for hidden meanings, which are basically more significant” (translation mine). Henceforth the primary meaning of an allegory will be called “the literal level” and the secondary meaning will be called “the allegorical level”.

In the light of the above definitions, we can say that two kinds of allegory are present in the novel: biblical and psychoanalytic. Particular characters in the novel can be read as signs that stand for biblical figures or, alternatively, for certain psychoanalytic concepts. The biblical allegory involves a Christ-like figure (the bullied boy), serpent-like figures (the three bullies) and a character that stands for Eve or for conscience (the girl in the pink dress). In addition, the biblical allegory is combined with a psychoanalytic one. In the light of psychoanalysis, the three bullies stand for various aspects of one boy’s mind while the Christ-like bullied boy is the three boys’ idea of a “father”. The article proposes the thesis that the combination of the two allegories – biblical and psychoanalytic – results in a modification, perhaps even reversal, of the Freudian model of religion. Briefly speaking, Freud’s idea was that the Oedipus complex is the ultimate source of all religion; *Quarry*, by contrast, seems to link the resolution of the Oedipal conflict with the loss of faith rather than with its inception.

Apart from the combination of the two allegories, the other thesis of the present analysis is the ideological ambiguity of

*Quarry*. The claim that an allegorical text is ambiguous requires some explanation. Okopień-Sławińska (2002) stresses the fact that “the bond between [the literal and the allegorical meaning] is highly conventional and is based on parallels established by literary, cultural, religious [...] etc. traditions [...] The conventionalised nature of allegory makes it different from a symbol” (23–24, translation mine). In other words, an allegory, as opposed to symbol, is relatively unambiguous. Accordingly, the links between the characters in *Quarry* and their biblical / psychoanalytic equivalents are rather clearly defined. How, then, can we claim that there is ambiguity in *Quarry*? It arises, first, from the very combination of the two different allegories (and from the way they are combined), and second, from the tone of the last scenes and their symbolic (i.e. ambiguous) quality. The ambiguity pertains to the novel’s approach to faith and religion. *Quarry* seems to present the loss of faith as a natural process connected with growing up, at the same time intimating that this process may be unfortunate or pernicious.<sup>2</sup>

## 2. A summary of the novel

Because Jane White’s works are virtually forgotten, it is necessary to provide a summary of *Quarry* before discussing it. The novel is set in England, probably in the 1960s, during a long spell of excessively hot weather. Three grammar-school boys – Todd, Randy and Carter – bully a young boy into coming with them to a cave in a forsaken quarry. Todd is the leader of the trio. Todd and Randy are “about eighteen” (White 1967: 61), Carter is fifteen (White 1967: 101) and their victim is about twelve (White 1967: 62). The bullies intend to keep the boy inside to play a “game”, as they call it, but no explanation of the game is provided. The boy they choose as their prey is very

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<sup>2</sup> Abramowska mentions another situation in which allegory can be viewed as ambiguous. It is when one adopts a “redefinition of allegory, extending the term to cover a whole variety of literary phenomena involving a double or [...] multiple meaning” (Abramowska 2003: 18, translation mine). The redefinition means that one forgoes the distinction between symbol and allegory and subsumes the former under the common heading “allegory”. However, such a “symbol-turned-allegory” is not the kind of ambiguous allegory that is meant here.

enigmatic. He follows the bullies without being forced to and stays in the cave for a long time without being guarded or tied up. He persistently refuses to reveal his name or identity. He seems to have no family; no one looks for him when he stays in the cave. Frequently, he does not behave like a child at all. "The boy was patient, and most unchildlike" (White 1967: 201). The three boys provide food and equipment for the nameless boy. In the end, they organize a kind of trial and sentence him to death; then they take knives and stab him. To their astonishment, the dying boy does not bleed at all. Afterwards, they burn the body along with all the equipment in the cave. Finally, the cave collapses as the rocks have cracked after the heatwave. Meanwhile, Todd's widowed mother, Clare, is courted by a certain Mark Savory. Todd and his friends feel uneasy about him but Clare accepts Mark's marriage proposal. She promises Todd not to mention the topic of the quarry to Mark on condition that Todd comes with her and Mark on a trip to Italy. (She does not know what happens in the quarry but has her suspicions.) The last scene shows Todd with his mother and Mark, waiting for the train. The scene features another lone little boy that Todd talks to before departure.

The nameless boy's death is foreshadowed by the death of a girl. One day when the bullies come to the cave, they see a girl in a pink dress playing alone at the bottom of the quarry. The bullies decide to "go down and settle it" (White 1967: 148) because they are convinced that she has noticed them up in the cave and they fear she may tell somebody about the boy. Randy takes a knife, supposedly "only to frighten her with" (White 1967: 149), and they start to chase her along the valley, trying to keep hidden from her sight. When she climbs the slope at the end of the valley, Randy manages to grab her foot for a moment but then she tugs it free and climbs over the lip of the cliff. However, immediately after she escapes the bullies, she is run over by a motorcycle and dies.

It is also important to note a non-allegorical religious subplot connected with Randy. He is a Catholic, "and he believed with a kind of loveless obstinacy which had its roots mainly in

fear” (White 1967: 25). It is this fear that for a long time prevents him from rejecting “a faith he longed to discard” (White 1967: 25). His faith is obsessively ritualistic, which corresponds with his pedantic nature. Moreover, Randy, true to his meaningful name, is torn between his lust and the lingering remains of his faith. He alternates between unsuccessful attempts to have sex with various girls (Carter’s sister included) and making frequent confessions, also ineffective. Ultimately, he decides to give up his faith – and he does so in a way which is “as ritualistic, as meaningless” (White 1967: 223), as his religious practices were. In one of the last scenes, Randy finally has sex with a girl – possibly a prostitute. (As far as the other two boys are concerned, we do not know anything about their religious convictions.)

### **3. The biblical framework**

The nameless boy can be seen as a Christ-like figure for several reasons. First, there are a few factors which invite an allegorical interpretation of the boy: he has no fixed identity, he does not behave like a child and he is a fantastic figure in that he does not bleed when stabbed (in fact, all these three factors make him to some extent fantastic, and, by the same token, allegorical). Second, it is stressed that the boy’s imprisonment in the cave takes place on a Friday (White 1967: 59), like Christ’s death. Third, the boy’s behaviour echoes Christ’s wilful sacrifice. The boy follows Todd and his friends to the cave of his own free will and stays there for days and weeks without being bound. When the bullies put him on “trial”, he accepts the guilty verdict. Besides, the cave, which becomes the boy’s grave, resembles Christ’s sepulchre, “which [...] had [been] hewn out in the rock” (The King James Bible, Matt. 27, 60).

The location of the cave in a quarry provides quite an intriguing biblical allusion, too. Archaeological findings show that Mount Calvary, where Christ was crucified – now the site of the Holy Sepulchre Church – used to be a quarry. “The 1961 restorations opened archaeological trenches in various points

of the church. From these trenches it is now known with certainty that the area served as a stone quarry from the eighth to the first centuries BC” (“From quarry to garden” 2011). This context serves as an additional link between the nameless boy and Christ.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, this perspective reinforces and enriches the allegorical dimension of the quarry in the novel, where bleak and oppressive imagery plays a vital part: “the landscape blazed in the sun. [...] the trees and bushes seemed to sway in the heat as if they were in some kind of stately ritual dance. They no longer looked green; they seemed to have given up all their colour to the sun and to have become a uniform grey” (White 1967: 56). And some time later: “The low bushes still seemed to lean and quiver in the heat, and the yellow earth showing between their scrawny stems looked drier and more thinly spread over the bare rock face than ever” (White 1967: 99).

The scene of the chase after the girl in *Quarry* contains a biblical reference, too. Todd, chasing the girl, tries to hide from view by crawling in the grass. This resembles the movement of a snake and thus relates Todd to the biblical serpent. Todd crawls in the dust, which alludes to the way God curses the serpent in Genesis 3,14: “upon thy belly shalt thou go and dust shalt thou eat”. In *Quarry*, “the dust [is] caking [Todd’s] skin” (White 1967: 150). The same parallel with the serpent is present when Randy “grabbed at [the girl’s] foot. She kicked back savagely [...] and caught him on the cheek bone with her heel” (White 1967: 155). This is a rather obvious allusion to the passage from Genesis: “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise his heel” (Gen. 3,15).

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<sup>3</sup> One may wonder whether Jane White had actually learned about the archaeological discoveries (and thus whether the allusion was deliberate on her part), given the relatively short time span between the excavations (1961) and the publication of *Quarry* (1967). However, it is possible that she had, because “from the beginning of the works, the archaeologist [Father Virgilio Corbo] published preliminary reports at regular intervals in the scientific journal ‘Liber Annus’ as well as a number of more popular articles in various magazines and journals” (“The archeological excavations” 2011).



This time, then, it is Randy who plays the part of the serpent. Curiously enough, the Freudian interpretation of the three boys as allegorical manifestations of different sides of one boy's personality adds coherence to the biblical allusion because it means that the serpent-like acts: Todd's crawling in the dust and Randy's catching at the girl's foot are performed by the same person. We will come back to the interpretation of this scene towards the end of our discussion.

#### **4. Psychoanalytic perspective**

In his book *Totem and Taboo*, Freud expressed his views on the relationship between culture, religion and the Oedipus complex. The latter, as we know, means sexual desire for one's mother and jealousy about the father. Now, "Freud notes two prohibitions present in all civilizations [...] These are the taboos against incest and patricide. Freud shows that they are linked and he begins by considering the taboo on incest. The exact origin of this taboo is unclear" (Chapman 2007: 30). In order to explain this, Freud proposes the "hypothesis of the primal horde" (Chapman 2007: 30). This prehistoric tribe – "a very large extended family" (Chapman 2007: 30) – is dominated by a single male, who maintains a harem consisting of all the females. Other "males, principally the leader's sons" (Chapman 2007: 30) are denied access to the females. The "father [...] drives away the growing sons" (Freud 1913: 71):

One day the expelled brothers joined forces, slew and ate the father, and thus put an end to the father horde. [...] a sense of guilt was formed which coincided here with the remorse generally felt. The dead now became stronger than the living had been [...] What the fathers' presence had formerly prevented they themselves now prohibited in the psychic situation of "subsequent obedience" [...] They undid their deed by declaring that the killing of the father substitute, the totem, was not allowed, and renounced the fruits of their deed by denying themselves the liberated women. Thus they created the two fundamental taboos of totemism out of the sense of guilt of the son, and for this very reason these had to cor-

respond with the two repressed wishes of the Oedipus complex. (Freud 1913: 72)

According to Freud, the sons “raise[d] up the killed father as a god. [...] these early rites developed into the systems of religion which we have today” (Chapman 2007: 31).

Chapman (2007: 32) “elaborate[s] on the similarities Freud found between totemic psychology and the Oedipus complex” in modern man:

The child [...] has an ambivalent attitude towards his father. The child is attached to his father through love and protection. However, the child also desires his mother’s sole attention and physical affection, and in the child’s imagination the father stands in the way of this bond. [...]

In childhood, unlike Freud’s primitive hordes, the boy does not murder his father but has to meet the conflicting situations of simultaneous love and hatred for the father and of unrealizable love for the mother in another way. [...] Generally speaking, the outcome of the Oedipus complex is for the boy to identify with his father and renounce competition for the mother. This renunciation of the incestuous relationship and elevation of the father is again the same as Freud outlined in the primal horde, although accomplished somewhat differently. (Chapman 2007: 32)

Both models of the Oedipus complex – primeval and modern – led Freud to believe that “all religious behavior, from the foundations of belief to subtle ritual, is grounded in the gratification of infantile desire” (Chapman 2007: 36). That is to say that the religious ritual is supposed to provide a sort of compensation for the unfulfilled incestuous and patricidal wishes.

Keeping this at the back of our minds, we can return to the analysis of Jane White’s *Quarry*. One can plausibly interpret Todd, Carter and Randy as allegories of different sides of one boy’s psyche. The device is akin to that of a doppelganger, only it involves three characters instead of two.

In literature, a doppelganger is usually shaped as a twin, shadow or a mirror image of a protagonist. [...] [I]t may be figured as one person existing in two different places at the same time. [...]

It may be used to show the “other self” of a character that he or she has not discovered yet. This “other self” could be the darker side of the character that troubles or the brighter side that motivates. Hence, it helps writers to portray complex characters. (“Doppelganger” 2016)

Such an interpretation of *Quarry* is encouraged by the fact that the three boys are presented with an extreme amount of parallelism. The first scenes featuring Todd, Randy and Carter separately are arranged in such a way that first we learn what Todd does on the evening after meeting the nameless boy, then what Carter does at the same time at a different location, and what Randy does at the same time. There are more such “simultaneous” sequences. The last three scenes of the novel, featuring the boys separately, though not simultaneously, also contain parallelisms (to be discussed later on).

Another argument in favour of the “three-in-one” interpretation is to be found in those passages which suggest a complementary relationship, even symbiosis between the three bullies. For example, at one point the narrator describes the trio in the following way:

the combination was formidable – [Carter’s] physical energy, [Todd’s] intellectual brilliance, [Randy’s] low cunning were its components [...] Randy felt that the impetus of it all sprang from him. If he were to withdraw his support, to check the flow of his very life blood into it, it would collapse into its component parts and into meaninglessness. (White 1967: 26)

On another occasion, when Todd and Randy talk about Carter, Todd says, “he fits. You and I on our own do not balance well. We need Carter for ballast. He prevents us from becoming top heavy” (White 1967: 95). Also, Carter “dimly perceived that he fulfilled some purpose as an interpreter, a link between them [Todd and Randy], and his own world” (White 1967: 101).

Again, when the boys destroy a breakwater, “they worked together in total co-operation” (White 1967: 137).

The general outline of the psychoanalytic allegory is then as follows. Todd, as the leader of the gang, represents consciousness, whereas Randy and Carter represent the unconscious.<sup>4</sup> The nameless boy stands for the idea of a father, while Randy and Carter represent opposite aspects of the Oedipus complex: Randy stands for “hatred for the father” (Chapman 2007: 32) and Carter stands for the love of him. (I will reserve the term “the allegorical boy” to denote the “three-in-one” boy, as opposed to the nameless boy.) The killing of the nameless boy represents the patricidal wish. Furthermore, the cave stands for the mind because it is in the cave that the allegorical conflict and its resolution take place. The cave is “something which no one else [...] knew existed” (White 1967: 101). This fact makes it similar to someone’s innermost thoughts and feelings.

The claim that the nameless boy represents the allegorical boy’s idea of a father is the first fact that requires explanation. To begin with, it must be noted that none of the three boys has a father. Not only Todd’s mother, Clare, is widowed, but also Randy’s parents are dead and the latter boy lives with his aunt and uncle. Carter’s father is supposedly dead, too, though Randy insinuates that he has left the family (White 1967: 64). Furthermore, Mark Savory, who is to become Todd’s stepfather, parallels the nameless boy. Mark, like the boy, uses “a precisely airy gesture” (White 1967: 72). “Savory waved his long white hand at Todd in an airy gesture of dismissal. Sickeningly, it exactly reproduced the airy gesture when the boy was in what Todd privately called his ‘rajah’ mood” (White 1967: 79). Therefore both Mark and the nameless boy can be thought of as substitutes for the missing father. The interpretation of the nameless boy as a father figure corresponds well with the fact that Todd, facing him, sometimes “felt he was

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<sup>4</sup> I use the term *the unconscious* rather than *the subconscious* to denote “memories, feelings, and other mental content outside conscious awareness” (Miller 2016).

talking to someone considerably older, not younger than himself” (White 1967: 201).<sup>5</sup>

The blueprint of the Oedipus complex – with its incestuous impulse and ambivalent feelings for the father – can be traced in the novel both on the literal and on the allegorical level. The allegorical level both parallels and combines with the literal level. The relationship between Todd, his mother and future stepfather is modelled on the Oedipus complex because it is marked, on the one hand, by sexual tension between Todd and Clare and, on the other hand, by competition between Todd and Mark. The sexual tension between Todd and his mother is revealed especially in two parallel scenes: in one of them, Todd accidentally sees his mother’s naked breasts and in the other, Clare, also accidentally, sees Todd naked. Besides, Todd calls his mother by her first name and admits before Mark that “she is too close to me – she makes demands –” (White 1967: 175). Mark Savory, in turn, is the paternal figure who may be perceived by Todd as a powerful rival competing for Clare’s affections. Mark is “disconcertingly intelligent” (White 1967: 74), beats Todd at golf and is perceived by Todd with a mixture of respect and fear. Todd plays a sort of psychological game with Mark. The former thinks that in this game his mother is on his side and against Mark. But at the end it turns out that she has outwitted him and sided with Mark (White 1967: 195–196). Thus the incestuous impulse is resolved. What is more, in the light of the above-mentioned “three-in-one” interpretation, Randy’s desire for Carter’s sister can be interpreted as an incestuous drive, too. This, combined with the sexual tension

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<sup>5</sup> Chapman notes that “it is possible that a child would be fatherless, have a weak father, etc. In this case, the psychical father would be whoever is responsible for protection, punishment, and the aggregate of other experiences Freud connects with the father. This psychical father could be a widowed mother, an uncle, or even an amalgamation of various people in the child’s fantasy” (Chapman 2007: 31). In *Quarry*, several characters function as equivalents of the father: Carter’s mother, Randy’s carers, the nameless boy and Todd’s future stepfather, Mark Savory. (Todd’s widowed mother, however, does not fit into that class of characters.) The nameless boy performs the “father” function on the allegorical level, while the other characters do so on the literal level.

between Todd and his mother, yields a psychoanalytically coherent picture of the allegorical boy experiencing an incestuous desire for both his mother and sister.

Another way in which the Oedipus complex manifests itself in the novel is through the relationship between the three bullies and the nameless boy. The relationship highlights the ambivalence about the “father”. The nameless boy, like the Freudian father, is treated by the three boys with both respect and hatred. On the one hand, they provide for the mysterious boy and sometimes are scared of him (or at least disconcerted by him); on the other hand, they imprison him and kill him. At the same time, the bullies can be ascribed specific roles. As has been said, Randy represents hatred for the “father”, while Carter represents affection. Thus they represent two conflicting sides of the allegorical boy’s unconscious. Randy’s and Carter’s attitudes are revealed through the game either boy plays with the nameless boy. (There is a series of scenes in which each of the bullies comes separately to the cave and plays a different game with the boy.) Carter plays pirates; Randy engages in a vicious scuffle with the nameless boy, which the latter later calls playing “gangsters” (White 1967: 200). Carter has an extremely good time playing with the nameless boy, while Randy’s game is violent and involves hurting each other.<sup>6</sup> The allegorical meaning of Randy and Carter is additionally revealed through the two boys’ relationship with their carers: Randy is rebellious towards his aunt and uncle, while Carter is on good terms with his mother. But at this stage, it seems, the contrary impulses coming from the unconscious are yet unrepressed: they assert themselves, as if encroaching on the conscious. As a result, Todd, Randy and Carter (the conscious and the unconscious) commit the allegorical patricide together.

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<sup>6</sup> Let us note, by the way, that the game reflects Randy’s “dark” personality. It does so not only because of the violence involved, but also because part of this scene takes place in complete darkness (cf. White 1967: 165-167). This corresponds with other scenes, in which Randy is almost always shown in the dark or in the shadow.

The last three scenes suggest that the allegorical “three-in-one” boy overcomes both the incestuous and the patricidal impulse and the Oedipus complex is resolved. We shall assume that overcoming the complex is roughly synonymous with its repression. In those scenes, Carter goes to sleep, Randy has sex with an unnamed girl in a field outside the town and Todd leaves for Italy with Clare and Mark. The last scenes with Carter and Randy take place at night, followed by the last scene with Todd, which takes place in daylight. We may assume that night signifies the unconscious and day – the conscious. The last scenes, then, suggest that both the hatred for the “father”, represented by Randy, and the affection, represented by Carter, are repressed into the unconscious. If we assume that the forbidden incestuous impulse is represented by Randy’s sexual urge, then it is repressed, too. Such an interpretation of the two night scenes is subtly but cogently corroborated by an inconspicuous detail: both Carter and Randy perceive the night as “unusually dark” (White 1967: 245) or “much darker than usual” (White 1967: 247).

The conscious-versus-unconscious interpretation receives further evidence if we examine the motif of rain. In all the three last scenes there is rain but only Todd is *aware* of it; Randy and Carter are both *unaware*. Carter is going to sleep and “the first heavy drops splashed down unnoticed” (White 1967: 245); Randy, who is having sex, “saw, without realising that he saw, the huge slow drops of rain [...] He did not feel them for a long time, although they struck his bare back” (White 1967: 248). (What the rain itself means will be discussed in a while.) Last but not least, Todd leaves the two boys behind as he is going to depart from England. The leaving behind can be another symbol of repression and of overcoming the Oedipal conflict. Additionally, the conscious-versus-unconscious significance of the last three scenes is foreshadowed by an earlier scene in which Todd drives a car at night, “staring unblinkingly” (White 1967: 138), with Randy and Carter *asleep* in their seats.

## 5. Modification of the Freudian idea

What casts doubt on the interpretation of *Quarry* as a simple illustration of Freud's views is the interplay between the psychoanalytic and the biblical allegory as well as the interplay between the allegorical and literal levels. On the whole, *Quarry* seems to introduce considerable modifications to Freud's view on the relationship between religious faith and the Oedipus complex. The Oedipal conflict seems to be presented by Jane White not as the foundation of faith but as the factor which causes its decline. In the novel, the resolution of the love-hate for the "father" coincides with what looks like a rejection of faith. To prove this point, we need to re-examine the relationship between the bullies and the nameless boy in the light of biblical allegory as well as analyse a few crucial scenes: the scene of killing the boy; the scene in which Randy definitively parts with religion; the final scene; and the scene of destroying a breakwater.

To see how the biblical and psychoanalytic allegories overlap, let us begin with a reinterpretation of the bullies' relationship with the nameless boy and an analysis of the first two of the above-mentioned scenes. The three boys may be interpreted not only as allegories of the conscious and the unconscious but also as representative of three types of faith. Todd's and Carter's attitude to religion on the literal level is not mentioned. However, since the nameless boy, apart from representing the Freudian "father", is also a Christ figure, the three boys' relationship with him may stand for their relationship to God. Thus, arguably, Carter's and Todd's types of faith are shown allegorically, especially through the games they play with the nameless boy, while Randy's type is presented both on the literal and on the allegorical level. Carter's "faith", then, is child-like and enthusiastic because he has fun playing with the nameless boy. Todd's "faith" is intellectual and truth-seeking because the game he plays with the nameless boy is a dialogue which resembles an interview, an interrogation, or



playing riddles.<sup>7</sup> As for Randy, he is troubled, not to say tormented by his faith on the literal level, and this fact is paralleled by the violent game he plays with the Christ-like boy.<sup>8</sup> Given this reinterpretation, it seems only natural to see the murder of the boy as an allegorical rejection of faith. This view receives further evidence if we juxtapose the literal religious subplot with the religious allegory in terms of narrative time. Randy's rejection of faith and religion takes place shortly before killing the boy. This suggests an analogy between the two events. The killing of the boy, which in psychoanalytic terms means the desire to kill the father, in biblical terms simultaneously signifies a rejection of God. The two ideas are thus combined in a single event.

In the last scene with Todd, the biblical and psychoanalytic allegories also overlap and produce an effect similar to the one described above. The scene provides an argument for the precise link between *overcoming* the Oedipal complex and abandoning faith. In terms of the psychoanalytic allegory, the scene seems to present a reconciliation between Todd and his stepfather because the former has agreed to go on the trip with Mark. In that scene, Todd meets another lonely young nameless boy, who parallels the one killed in the cave. The solemn parting with the nameless boy on the platform may be seen as a change of attitude to the (mental) "father". Looking out of the train window, "as they slid out of the station [Todd] saw the

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<sup>7</sup> It is also characteristic that the nature of Todd's game is indefinite. When Todd comes alone to the cave, the boy tells him plainly that he played pirates with Carter and gangsters with Randy. But when Todd asks the boy, "And what game have I come to play?", the boy answers simply "I don't know" (White 1967: 201), as if refusing to classify it.

<sup>8</sup> It is worth noting that Randy's faith epitomizes the Freudian model of religion. Randy's obsessive religious practices correspond to Freud's concept of religion as a societal equivalent of individual "obsessional neurosis" (Freud qtd. in Chapman 2007: 28). Randy is, in fact, more or less neurotic. According to Freud, the ritual, both in neurosis and in religion, "defends against the expression of repressed instincts" (Chapman 2007: 28) and at the same time "displays the symbolic essence of the repressed instinct. Thus, the instinct achieves partial gratification" (Chapman 2007: 28). Randy, so long as he observes his rituals, is unsuccessful at seducing girls; it is only when he stops his religious practices that he engages in and completes sexual intercourse.

boy standing with his arm raised to him as if in salute, and he threw his own arm up and out in a gesture of recognition and farewell. They looked at each other, unsmiling and grave, as they drew rapidly apart" (White 1967: 252). Todd kills the first boy but parts peacefully with the other one. So far, the last scene would more or less go in line with Freud's views.

However, the same scene contains a strong potential for a different interpretation in terms of the biblical allegory. Todd and the boy on the platform talk about airplanes. Todd, who has already travelled by plane, says that a plane is "not half as interesting as a train", to which the boy replies, "all the same, I'd like to try it". Then Todd asks him if he "would [...] like to go to Italy" (White 1967: 249). The boy's response is, "not really [...] I suppose it's jolly interesting and all that, but what I'd like most would be the bit in the plane" (White 1967: 249-250). The airplane seems to be a symbol of faith: it is automatically associated with the sky, which, in turn, is allegorically associated with heaven. Imagining a plane trip is therefore like imagining heaven. The conversation about planes highlights a crucial difference between Todd and the boy on the platform: the former considers airplanes (heaven, religious speculation) boring while the latter is still fascinated by them. The farewell to the boy, then, can be read as a farewell to faith – or a farewell to childhood *and* faith. For the nameless boys (both of them), apart from being allegories of the Freudian "father" and of Christ,<sup>9</sup> may also be read as an allegory of childhood. At any rate, the last scene combines the resolution of the Oedipal complex (Todd's reconciliation with Mark Savory) with the end of faith (Todd's disagreement with the boy on the platform). Thus the solemn parting with the little boy could be both a reconciliation with the "father" and a farewell to faith.

The scene in which the three boys destroy a segment of a breakwater, like the scene of the farewell, seems to signify the disillusionment of the allegorical boy's religious experience. In this way, it indirectly substantiates the claim that *Quarry*

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<sup>9</sup> If the boy on the platform is Christ-like, it is only because he parallels the killed boy.

reinterprets Freud's views on the Oedipus complex and religion.

Behind [the breakwater], through the gap where it had stood, stretched the revealed length of peaceful beach, identical with the one upon which they stood. It is indistinguishable, thought Todd, looking bleakly at it. They had broken through to it by means of this superb act of destruction, and it was simply the same; no better, and no worse. Somehow this distressed him greatly. His

disappointment was irrational and acute. For the moment [...] he felt he would never recover from it. (White 1967: 138)

The disproportionate and irrational importance which Todd ascribes to this essentially simple act of vandalism invites an allegorical reading. The scene suggests that the allegorical boy's story stands for an unsuccessful search for the metaphysical truth. The damaging of the breakwater provides a parallel for the bullies' relationship with the nameless boy, especially the fruitless conversations they have with him and, of course, his murder. The hole in the breakwater, like the nameless boy's evasive answers, provides no illumination for the allegorical boy; it leaves him where he was. The parallel is all the closer because in both cases the allegorical boy wants to achieve something unspecified – knowledge, perhaps – through violence: demolishing the breakwater or confining (and killing) the nameless boy.<sup>10</sup>

## **6. Ambiguity of *Quarry***

As was mentioned at the beginning, the novel is ambiguous rather than one-dimensional. It is no wonder because

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<sup>10</sup> We have already hinted at the unspecified character of Todd's "individual" game. But the very idea of kidnapping a boy – its reason and purpose – is characterized by vagueness, too. After the first encounter with the nameless boy, when the victim has been left in the cave, Todd "lay quiet, waiting for [...] sleep, and thought of Carter, and Randy, and of the boy – and of his own reasons, which were deep, and tortuous, and inexplicable" (White 1967: 19).

it is most natural for literature if the ideological message of a work is inherent in its semantic structure, its stylistic shape and thematic composition. This kind of message is usually ambiguous and may be interpreted in various ways; hence any cohesive and disambiguating interpretation may lead to a considerable reduction of a work's ideological content, or even to its utter trivialization. (Sławiński 2002: 207, translation mine)

Besides, Uspienski points out that the ideological point of view "is the least accessible to formal analysis: if one tries to describe it, then using intuition is, to some extent, inevitable" (1997: 18, translation mine). The ambiguity of *Quarry* pertains to the problem of losing faith. If the murder of the nameless boy is interpreted as a rejection of faith, then it is unclear whether the phenomenon is presented as desirable or not. On the literal level, the atrocity of the boy's (as well as the girl's) death quite clearly exposes the three bullies as murderers. However, it does not quite resolve the ambiguity of the allegorical level, on which the deaths simply represent certain psychological – or spiritual – processes. The novel's ambivalence about the loss of faith results from a combination of biblical and Freudian allegory as well as from the novel's use of symbolism. The former source of ambiguity will be exemplified by the scene of chasing the girl; the latter source will be illustrated by analysing the meaning of rain in the final scenes, which is symbolic rather than allegorical.

The scene with the girl in the pink dress bears a considerable allegorical significance but it does not reveal a clear ideological point of view of the novel. It may be interpreted either in a biblical vein or in a more Freudian spirit. In biblical terms, the girl seems to stand for conscience: the boys chase her because they do not want her to denounce them. By analogy, the bullies want to suppress their conscience, which would otherwise remind them of the wickedness of what they do with the boy. The serpent-like boys, then, stand for yielding to temptation and for aversion to moral rules. However, this biblical framework does not exclude the perspective of Freud's psychoanalysis because the latter also includes the idea of original

sin, to which the scene alludes. Of course, Freud understood the idea in a radically different way. Original sin for Freud is the killing of the father, leader of the primal horde (cf. Freud 1913: 77). Viewed in this light, the chase represents no more than the suppression of sympathy, which is a preliminary to killing the “father” (the nameless boy). Whichever point of view we assume, though, it should be noted that the matter is further complicated by the fact that the nameless boy himself encourages the bullies to chase the girl: “I really do think you ought to go down – now, while she’s still there” (White 1967: 148).

The arrangement of the motifs of drought and rain does not make the ideological interpretation of *Quarry* easier, either. The majority of the plot is set in a period of dry weather; rain comes only after the nameless boy’s death, but then it persists. As has been said, the rain features in all the three last scenes, which show the three boys separately. The image of rain carries a considerable semantic potential. “Depending upon its level of intensity, rain may either serve as life-giving or life-destroying. It is revitalizing, fertilizing, and heavenly, and often marks acts of purification” (Protas 2001). Without going into details, the rain in the final scenes could symbolize several different ideas: a reward for the allegorical boy’s maturing; the sadness of his disillusionment; or the coming of God’s grace, of which the allegorical boy is heedless after losing faith (Carter and Randy are unaware of the rain; Todd seems to be indifferent to it).

## **7. Conclusion**

The interpretation outlined here does not pretend to be exhaustive. One of the main points that I have tried to prove is that Jane White’s novel *Quarry* links the Oedipal conflict with the end of religious faith rather than with its origin. Arguably, the claim has been validated. But what conclusions should be drawn from that fact is a question which the present article leaves open. It is an open question, too, whether the allegorical

boy's loss of faith is anyone's fault, or a natural and inevitable process. One could also try to explain why the characters try to gain knowledge (?) through destruction. Yet another question for further research is how the ideas expressed in the novel are related to Jane White's real-life views and experiences, especially her approach to religion. Subsequent analyses may supplement or correct the interpretation proposed here. But whatever alternative interpretations arise, they must take into account the biblical and psychoanalytic frameworks outlined above: the presence, if not the full meaning, of these paradigms in Jane White's novel has been sufficiently substantiated.

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