CHAPTER V

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An epoch is like an individual, when conscious life is characterized by one-sidedness and by a false attitude, a compensating movement in the unconscious activates those archetypes necessary for bringing about psychic equilibrium (191-192),

stated Jung in his Psychology and Literature (1966). Literature relies heavily on communicable symbols such as archetypes, typical images which recur in literature often enough to be recognizable as an element of literary experience as a whole. Archetypes belonged to art for centuries before the word was popularized by Jung. The archetypal is the conventional element in literature. While the literary artist may consciously draw upon literary conventions and the works of other writers, his use of archetypes may be to some extent unconscious. They are part of his vision, his way of seeing the world and of conveying what he sees through his art. As it is already stated in the beginning of the second chapter, the puzzling case of Patrick White becomes meaningful when considered within the context of Jung’s theories of the great artist and his role in society.

As Cinthia Vanden Driesen has stated in The Artist and Society: Jung and Patrick White, Jung felt that the contact with the Eastern thought would have far-reaching effects in waking Western man to a realization of the psychic depth of his own nature. Through this he could hope to repair the damage wrought in his own spirit through the stultification of the religious and spiritual instincts which
uninhibited growth of rationalism and materialism in the West has brought about. In Jung’s view, disruption in the psychic life of the community follows the same pattern as that within the individual; as soon as one of the channels of psychic energy is blocked, like a stream that is dammed, an upheaval becomes inevitable, but as long as the individual psyche functions undisturbed within a recognized system of belief, no problem is experienced. As soon as the system of belief is found inadequate, as soon as a person outgrows it as it were, neurosis results. In the medieval world, people believed positively in a god who was their loving father, but today, as Jung has stated in The Spiritual Problems of Man, Modern Man in Search of a Soul (1941), “Modern man has lost all the metaphysical certainties of his medieval brother and set up in their place the ideals of material security, general welfare and humaneness” (241-42).

Jung incisively analyzed what he sees as the impasse of humanity. Apart from the rapid march of science technology, the experience of two world wars and the threat of nuclear holocaust have radically shaken complacency. Modern man has begun to realize that every apparent advance adds to the threat of catastrophe, so that perhaps the workshop of reason and materialism has reached its final stage of development. The inherent tendency towards the balancing of psychic energy results therefore in a compensating movement. Jung felt he already observed signs of a forthcoming change in the rapid growth of interest in psychology, showing that, “Modern man has to some extent turn his attention from material things to his own subjective processes” (235). He cites also a new interest in spiritualism, astrology, even witchcraft and all kinds of psychic phenomena. In the context of the present
study, one remark of Jung is of particular significance. "At any rate art has a way of anticipating future changes in man's fundamental outlook" (237).

Thus Jung provides a far more meaningful interpretation of artistic inspiration and activity. Jung held that the driving force behind artistic creation was rooted in the unconscious. For Jung art was one of man's most important intuitive and exploratory activities. It was also the source of primal psychic energy and could also therefore be the source of sustaining creative powers. The creative power could be expressed through symbols. For Jung symbol was the natural language of the unconscious through which some complex and urgent meaning could be conveyed to consciousness. When we relate this symbol to time we understand the universality of art. So an epoch is like an individual.

Erich Newman elaborated on this theory of Jung to provide an illuminating commentary on the relation of art to its epoch and described what this entails for the artist is a description which appears strikingly to fit the case of such a writer as Patrick White. Erich Newman in his, Art and the Creative Unconscious, elaborated this idea in the following lines: "When the unconscious forces break through in the artist, when the archetype striving to be born into the light of the world takes form in him, he is as far from the men around him as he is close to their destiny, for he expresses and gives form to the future of his epoch" (94).

What occurred in the Renaissance was the reappearance of the earth-archetype, and the dislodgement of the heaven-archetype which had in the name of religion, led to the denigration of the beauty of the natural world, and the life of the senses. Today we are again in the throes of the disintegration of the existing canon
and this is reflected in the sense of disorientation in much modern art. However, alongside the disintegration is evidence of the shaping of a new canon. As though to redress the balance of the modern tendency to over-emphasize the material and the physical, there are signs of a new movement towards re-emphasizing the spiritual and religious factors of experience. It could be held then that the emphasis on these aspects of experience in the work of such writers as Patrick White (who, as shall be seen, is no isolated figure from this point of view in the larger context of world literature) is evidence of the workings of a new zeitgeist. According to Jungian theory, it is the common openness to the promptings of the unconscious in a particular period which alone can explain the mysterious force which has been designated the "zeitgeist" of an age. It is the common force that seeks to drive all those who even compensate for the cultural canon at a given time or shaped a new one.

White uses various Australian associations combined with archetypal or literary European ones. In *The Tree of Man* the typical Australian pioneering saga with its characteristic hardships brought about by natural forces like storms, floods and fires, form the background, but at the same time the novel is a recreation of Genesis in Australian setting. On the narrative level the novels deal with the most different characters, times and social backgrounds but they all show that the goal of the quest can be reached within the confines of every kind of mundane reality, that god and grace can be found not only in more spectacular places like deserts or cathedrals, but even in simple table or as in *The Tree of Man*, in a gob of spittle.
From the moment we see Stan Parker, heavy, seemingly un-enterprising, almost inarticulate, indecisive – yet with a queer enterprise and instinct for decision stirring somewhere in him- selecting his bride almost by chance, we can guess what the pattern is to be. No narrow-eyed frontiersman, with a secret lust for heroism, leads his apple-cheeked precocious bride into the fantasy of illimitable distances and inconceivable dangers, not too far from Sydney.

Stan’s pioneering is accounted for by the conflicting presence in him of the nostalgia of permanence and the fiend of motion - the melancholy longing for permanence and the vibrations of a restlessness which is also, at bottom, a desire for permanence. But he pioneers where he does, simply because the patch of land has been left to him by his father.

The first section deals with the first stages of adaptation to the land, and with the years of Amy’s barrenness, when the Parkers remain childless. When she is pregnant with her first child, whom she losses by miscarriage, there is a certain amount of overwriting of overcharged symbolism. But it is towards the end of this period of personal barrenness that the floods come. The effect of the floods is to give the parkers a new orientation towards each other; Life (with a capital has erupted into their static lives).

The second section is one of more advanced adaptation. Amy begins to dream romantic dreams which have a certain parallel in Stan’s emotional life also. The section is dominated symbolically by the bushfire; which brings these romantic fantasies to a point of crisis and purges the Parkers of them.
The third section, the longest, delineates the period of open, nagging dissatisfaction. It is a period dominated by the symbol of drought and during it Amy commits her desperate and gratuitous adultery, which she knows quite well is doomed to sterility; it is inevitably unsatisfying. Stan, too, seeks desperate horizons. The section ends with the storm of dissatisfaction subsiding.

It must be emphasized that these great central symbols are managed with great tact; they are nowhere insisted on, or even explained. They have different uses, as one might expect. They are first of all, actual incidents, which show the three great scourges that the Australian country side dreads; they provide climatic references for the lives of the Parkers. Yet they are symbols of the emotional condition which those lives have reached at a given crucial moment. They can act as symbols of man's life in what White regards as its essential progress or evolution. The flood, bringing man to the first stage of self awareness in relation to other people; the fire, exciting his romantic fantasies and purging him of them; the drought, accompanying his decline of energy to the point where he must attain wisdom or lapse insensately into death. Flood and fire are the deepest powers of life breaking into consciousness.

The symbol of the rose bush, is White's artistry placing in a completely organic relation with the rest of the narrative. This is the rose bush which Amy planted in the first days of her marriage, to be an outward sign to her of her emotional rights; and it is played off throughout the novel against the symbols of a deeper rootedness, symbols of the tree of man. The tree of man in uncontrollable though rooted; the trunk which gives life to it cannot even know itself in any satisfying way; and against its great size; its in advertent reaching towards nihilism; there is only the
rose tree, the small causally noticed, domesticated flower bush which once meant something to Amy, but cannot mean more to either of her children than part of an ethos which they are rejecting. When Amy commits adultery, it is in the context of the rose bush which has died, “the dead balls of brown roses were hanging on the old staggy bush, that brushed her as she went down[…].” (319).

The book is an attempt to trace a morphology of the life of man, to give the feel of everything that is significant in the successive stages of a representative life. It attempts this at the same time as it traces a morphology of Australian society, from the small settlement to the established family, to a larger settlement and outward to the complexities of city life.

It questions the meaning of life and by having its characters spasmodically question, the meaninglessness of most lives. We cannot understand the struggle which Stan says he has had, the struggle for understanding his growth from innocence to experience his reconciliation with the actual. So is the image of the sensitive little grandson with which the book ends;

So that in the end there were the trees. “The boy walking through them with head drooping as he increased in stature, putting out shoots of green thought. So that in the end, there was no end.” (Tree 480).

One dies with the other too and must be reborn. As the man’s powers wither and fade, so too do the manifestations of a purpose in everything. But at the end one notes his place is not suggested to be like the sun’s in the scheme of creation. Now the sunlight, encircling the things of earth, celebrates all else his centrality, measuring
not so much the power of the very old man in the winter of his life as the illimitable spread of his virtue. Here are the final, the ultimate chords of this great symphony:

There was little of design in the garden originally, though one had formed out of the wilderness. It was perfectly obvious that the man was seated at the heart of it, and from this heart the trees radiated, with grave movement of life[...]. All was circumference to the centre, and beyond that the worlds of other circles whether the crescents of purple villas or the bore patches of earth, on which rabbits sat and observed some abstract spectacle for minutes on end, in a paddock not yet built upon. The last circle but one was the cold and golden bowl of winter, enclosing all that was visible and material, and at which the man would blink from time to time, out of his watery eyes, unequal to the effort of realizing he was the centre of it. (474)

The last circle but one does seem to infer, quite explicitly, the existence of the ultimate domain, of the pure and spirit, of the transcendent God. But though this would suggest the guardianship of the all – enclosing Deity over the man through whom His power has been made manifest, the foreground facts are quite human, the state of the old man, blinking into the light, unable to fasten his mind, his last feeble powers of awareness on anything, certainly proclaims that man is mortal and that he is born to crumble back into the dust. The force that works through him must flicker and go out. Only the coming to full strength of another Stan Parker, of other simple good men, will restore the radiance. The God – Power in The Tree of Man is immanent, lying within and behind and working out through the efforts of the man.

So that in the end there was no end.
This is the final sentence of the book. It propounds a continuity, a bright, hopeful sort of continuity in human affairs. The novel establishes as well, the beauty of virtue. To quote the description of the two great trees in the beginning Stan Parker does rise above the involved scrub with the simplicity of true grandeur. At last it is clear that he is purged in spirit, that he has won the victory. Stan, like all others, is pulled at by things of time and the things of eternity, from below and from above. To live in full awareness is to lie upon the rack. The natural and the human and the divine are intrinsic. The rendering of how they all run together is the book’s grandeur – the beauty, the dark – golden beauty of the *The Tree of Man*.

While *The Tree of Man* moves forward with the assurance and the central simplicity of a great symphony, *Voss* has a decidedly more operatic quality. Johann Ulrich Voss grew out of White’s ruminations upon the history of Ludwig Leichhardt who perished in 1948 during his exploration of inland Australia. Voss is a Prometheus who aims to steal form God the fire of this fiery land. Voss is an operatic figure, again in his willful creation of competitive situations. In his intention to traverse the vast, uncharted continent he is quite deliberately pitting himself against God. Voss is determined to confront the worst that God can place across the human parts, to defy the terms of Christian damnation. He explains to Laura Trevelyon that he does not conceive of God as less powerful than himself and it follows, as she is quick to see, that he is determined to destroy himself by the power of his super – will. The vastness of the land matches the vastness of his God-desire.

White’s writing demonstrates the necessity of suffering in human life. His vision encompasses not merely the inimitability of suffering in man’s experience but
the possibility that suffering may be both exemplary and redemptive, for the individual who suffers and for all those involved. He uses the Passion of Christ as the basis archetype of redemptive suffering. In the suffering and death of the third archetypal stage, death may be physical or psychic.

Laura thinks of Voss as her desert. In her reply to his letter, she says, “So, Mr. Voss, we have reached a stage where I am called upon to consider my destroyer as my saviour!” (Voss 185).

Voss reflects that human relationships are vast as deserts: they demand all daring, she seemed to suggest. This reference to saviour is a part of consistently developed pattern throughout the novel which leads Laura’s retrospective understanding of the meaning of Voss’s life and death. Taken in isolation from the early chapters, these references have led to describe Voss as a symbol of Christ.

During one of their halts in the vast desert, when Voss asks Palfreyman, “tell me, as a Christian, was your faith sufficient to survive until paradise was reached?” Palfreyman replies, “I am a poor sort of Christian[...] Besides paradise may well prove to be mirage” (260).

When Le Mesurier falls sick, Voss gets an opportunity to read his poem, in which he says, “O God, my God, I pray that you will take my spirit out of this my body’s remains, and after you have scattered it, grant that it shall be everywhere, and in the rocks and in the empty waterholes, and in true love of all men, and in you, God, at last” (297).

Commenting on the above citation, John and Rose Marie Beston say that the suffering of one man is regarded as beneficial to many as well as bringing union
with God for that man. The pre eminent example of that notion is Christ, whose life forms a pattern for Voss's. When Voss's blood runs out upon the dry earth, we are meant to believe that the earth responds to this watering. The last pages of the book can suggest that Voss's sacrifice, provides a certain guarantee of the future of Australia, as well as of his own salvation.

Most of the critics seem to place an undue emphasis on Laura's doctrine of the three stages of man's spiritual progression in interpreting the excerpt from Le Mssurier's poem. All through the text we notice that Voss's thinking is anti Christian. In Voss one notices not the Christian virtue of humility but the pagan virtue of heroism. He tells one of his men. "I detest humility[...] is man so ignoble that he must lie in the dust, like worms? If this is repentance, sin in less ugly" (151).

As Voss still aspires to be his own God, he is determined to consider love as a weakness or failing and hence, a temptation. Laura begins with this one initial advantage. Voss has fallen in love with her. To that extent he is already weakened and confused, for to him the need for Laura's love and understanding is incompatible with the flawless hard diamond-purity of self-sufficient will which he aspires to. Voss is no longer simply on one side as the embodiment of the demand for self-deification. He has become the battle field in which his pride and will, fight it out with the impulses to love, compassion, humility, identified with Laura.

The story seems to enact a cosmic drama as it were in the Australian landscape in which we see a kind of the eternal triangle of love: here Voss seems to be pursuing the infinite in the Australian landscape though it is only a reflection of the infinite in time. Laura who is pursuing him through his journey though in absence
has been associated with Christ and Beatrice. One would consider her as his epipsyché, whereas Australia is the greater soul. But Laura seems to be concerned with humility and asking amends for others when she says, “I am not in the habit of setting myself limits” (90).

Voss seems to be seeking an identity between himself and God, the infinite and the finite. Laura is Voss’s epipsyché. They respond to each other by reflecting and recognizing each one’s pride. Caroline Bliss has referred to Laura being the mirror of Voss and a mediator between Voss and us. In their platonic love we see the loving of the divided parts for each other. Australia does to Voss, what Voss does to Laura and vice versa. Laura helps Voss to recognize his limits and humanizes him just as Voss humanizes her. Voss understands Australia through Laura who has a better understanding of Australia after having suffered with Voss.

The main focus in this expedition is Voss’s determination to wrestle with the rock, to bleed if necessary, to ascend and he tells Laura that he does not intend to stop short of the throne for the pleasure of groveling on lacerated knee in company with Judd and Palfreyman who have the orthodox faith. The imagery of light penetrating earth and water is very significant in this earth dominated novel. Laura is associated with air whereas Voss is linked with earth and fire. The emphasis on suffering is Christian but here it is a tool only to liberate the imagination as in Romantic poetry.
Suffering is dark, permanent and real and shares the very nature of infinity.

It is Voss who suffers most and attains divinity by accepting his humanity. He also understands Australia better again by love for all including those who hate him. The novel emphasizes that true knowledge comes not through rational understanding but through identification and suffering and the soul’s quest for its true identity which comes through a recognition of identity between the soul and greater soul of which Australia is a symbol. “In the novel Voss’s descent ascent is linked with the paradox of man in god and God in man in Christian terms of God into man” (383 – 384).

If we look at Voss from his perspective, Voss signifies the dynamic male word, that of quest and conquest and Laura signifies the static female world of love and dream. The land is central to the human drama and the main event is journey. The heroine recreates the hero in her consciousness and the hero’s journey takes place both in the Australian desert and in her consciousness. The desert brings out the hero’s heroic qualities, it brings out the heroine’s tenderness. The mind is extended as it were into an objective universe and discovered through it. The desert is Voss himself and his mind partakes of the quality of the desert, just as the desert becomes a correlative to his own isolation. Finally, the hero is made to live as a myth, both in Australia and the mind of the people.

Anyway Laura has won. Voss’s ambition is to be fulfilled in the way he had rejected through love and humility, for, as Laura sees, the Christian way is also a deification of man; God becomes man so that man shall be raised to God. Laura says to the uncomprehending doctor who is attending her in her fever, “When man is truly humbled, when he has learnt that he is not God, then he is nearest to becoming so.
In the end, he may ascent (248). This corresponds to the very ancient Christian theological conception of the ‘divinization’ or ‘theosis’ of man. “It is the women who unmake men to make them saints” (200). Voss combined social satire with a spiritual allegory of the search for salvation.

After the almost Calvinistic austerity of parts of _The Tree of Man_ and of death by torture in the country of the mind as the suffering is necessary for the successful quest-journey of every soul, we see each of the four protagonists of _Riders in the Chariot_ passes through a psychic death before arriving at a state of blessedness which the little dyer of purple hands describes as equanimity.

The incongruous and the inevitable are the opposite poles of irony: “The archetype of the inevitably ironic is Adam, human nature under sentence of death […] The archetype of the incongruously ironic is Christ, the perfectly innocent victim excluded from human society” (Riders 42). Reading man for Adam, the former archetype applies to all White’s characters, for his vision clearly recognizes that death is the destiny of the natural man. It is from within this framework that men must seek reality and permanence. The ‘Crucifixion’ scenes of _Voss_ and _Riders in the Chariot_ are prefect examples of the incongruously ironic.

Evil and suffering are placed in _Riders in the Chariot_ and the profounder characters perceive their spiritual kinship with each other, they have their intimations of the chariot, perhaps the image of redemption, at any rate a positive symbol. The reality of redeeming perceptions and action is thus affirmed through recurrence and reinforcement. Continuity of primordial malevolence is also established in the novel through the same technique of reinforcement, but none of the authentic characters is spiritually incapacitated by malice.
By this stage of his career White count himself a successful novelist. The *Tree of Man* was awarded the gold medal of the Australian literature society. *Voss* won the Miles Franklin Award and W.H. Smith Prize. *Riders in the Chariot* explores the minds of four characters who unwittingly aspire to the illumination of sainthood.

*Riders in the Chariot* exemplifies a difficulty of a different kind. On the whole the symbolism here work effectively. The four archetypal spiritual seekers the saint, the martyr, the artist and the mad woman; the differences in the process of their search: the antagonisms they inspire in the complacent evaders of the spiritual demand: the value to the search of suffering and the sense of guilt all these integrate into a myth conveyed through solidly existent figures. But then there comes what should be a climatic moment- the moment when spiritual enlightenment is achieved. Suddenly one is jolted down to the level of the algebraic symbol- that chariot-, that tatty grand opera stage property.

Then comes the incident of crucifixion. The reader is moved to protest that they would not have done that. The justice of satire seems to have disintegrated into a false malice. Then the reader realizes that that is a Symbol. White does not mean that it actually happened. It is just completing the idea of the Christ parallel. *Riders in the chariot* is surely another adventure into the realm of mysticism. The writer makes use of various symbols drawn from three different strands of European culture: Greek, Hebrew and Roman – Christian, to expose one to new frontiers of consciousness.

The connection between the liberation of the Australian imagination and the Aborigine has been brilliantly examined by Patrick White in *Voss* and *Riders in the Chariot*, to the extent that in the latter novel an Australian Aborigine becomes the
Australian imagination. To understand Alf Dubbo one has to grasp the peculiar situation of Jackie caught between the aboriginal tribe and Voss.

When Jackie, at the instigation of the tribe, severs Voss’s head into the dust, he does so in an attempt to break the terrible magic that bound him remorselessly endlessly, to the white man. The death of the explorer leaves hanging the great question do dreams breed? If Jackie is an answer, dreams do breed and white maggots do not dry up. Jackie carries with him whether it or not, the burden of a new consciousness. He has contracted this from his association with the visionary white man, who had sowed a certain magic and an obstrusive possession into the autochthonous world of the aborigine. The tribe buys an immunity with the sacrifice of Jackie. There is no return for him to the tribe.

Alf, moving beyond Jakie, speaks. White has spiralled his preoccupations of Voss into Riders in the Chariot. Voss himself has become a quarternity. These shards of his visionary search, Laura, Jackie, Judd and Le Mesurier, have broken into the brilliant shapes of Himmelfarb, Dubbo, Miss Hare and Mrs. Godbold. The saint, the eccentric, the artist and the outcast, become the “illuminate” of a stubborn and blind world. The desert and Voss, Voss in the desert, have been transposed through Alf, to the city.

Alf Dubbo now went to the bush, figuratively at least, and as far as other human beings were concerned, never communicative, he retired into the scrub of half-thoughts, amongst the cruel rocks of obsession. Later he learnt to prefer the city, that most savage and impenetrable terrain, for the opportunities it gave him of confusing anyone who might attempt to track him down in his personal hinterland.
Alf has taken over the shifting and troubled mind of Jackie, and he does so as the aborigine who has been touched into uncertainty and deprivation by contact with white civilization, of whom Jackie was the prototype. It is appropriate, therefore, that he should be burdened with the demands of a silent, wordless art. The seer articulate, or as the nature of the book requires, the seer articulating. Dubbo is the artist as painter, who circumnavigates the treacheries of language into the traditional aboriginal medium of paint, who finds a language of silence for a world of silence.

**THE FEMALE 'S STRUGGLE FOR IDENTITY**

Helen Violaris, thirty one, married, business woman and jazz singer said "Australian men are inclined to put their beer first, sport second and women third [...]"(32). The American, Dennis Brogan reports that Australian women 'lament' that, when given the chance between women and horses, "The Australian man, like that most phony of gallants, the modern Irishman, chooses horses"(32). A strong undercurrent of bitterness is noted in the tones in which Australian women discuss their men.

The editor of the Macmillan dictionary of women's Biography, Jennifer Uglow, calls her account of notable women "A book of deviants- independent odd, often difficult women who had defined the expectations of their society as to what a women's role should be "(77 ). This description applies, also, to the deviant but superior females in Patrick White's novels. Women outstanding in intellect or spirit, who the boundaries of their assigned social roles. Although Whites central characters, male and female, typically struggle through several layers of experience, forgiving their way in the process of becoming, there is, within this general pattern of
journeys, a peculiarly female profile of growth, a female psycho-history. These profiles of female development can be found, in descending order of the heroines' success, in Voss, A Fringe of Leaves and The Aunt's Story.

Central characters in these three novels are female and their attempts to mature are presented squarely within the context of their roles as females in male-dominated societies. Their spiritual tensions are, in one dimension, functions of their battles against the restrictions they face as women. White shows us that these women, if they are not to rest content with 'false selves', if they are to move towards their true and full identities, accepting responsibility for their own lives, must participate in a process parallel to the psychological birth of the human infant, as described by the psychiatrist Margaret Mahler. Mahler's work addresses the question: what is the hatching process in the normal infant?

Although Patrick White is not often credited with a positive literary interest in women, the four novels to be discussed describe the hatching of women in hostile environments, showing how those who attempt to hatch proceed, juxtaposing a cost of minor females who never crack their shells at all. The narrowed path of female development that White explores resembles closely the picture painted by feminist commentators. In the four novels considered, White portrays his female characters' attempts at, in Juliet Mitchell's words "successful navigation through and out of the inferiorized and alternative psychology of women under patriarchy"(402).

Women in a closed society, White's novels imply, must grow up twice in order to find true selfhood; once from human infancy and again out of the social infancy their society imposes upon them. Margaret Mahler tells us that the human
infant moves from an initial phase of differentiation from the mother through periods of practicing at separation from her, to independence reproach with her and finally, to a consolidation of identity. Females who would be independent beings in White’s literary world attempt this process on the social level, moving first through a period of differentiation, condemned as rebellion by their social group; then a period of practicing independence, in some way separate from their social milieu; and finally, if successful, to a consolidation of self and re-entry into the social order on their terms. Given the restrictions of their times and places, their chances for success are not strong; their opportunities for suffering are many. From this perspective, the most successful female protagonist the White canon is Laura, the heroine of Voss.

Adopted by an aunt and uncle who find her an enigma, a female intellectual in a society where “expression of thought was the height of unsociability” (Voss 317). She is early a victim of their attempt to rescue her femininity. For example, they assure potential suitors that “intellect in a woman can spice her charm and sweetness” (300). Laura’s effort to redefine herself, to become herself, represents what Maggie Scarf in her discussion of Pressure Points in the Lives of women calls, a life progression in the direction of autonomy.

The first phase of Laura’s growth is her deliberate self-differentiation from her social class. She withdraws from the eligible young bachelors who are threatened by her keen judgement and imagination. Finding them uninteresting, she spends her girlhood “shut with her own thoughts” (5), adept at disguising her feelings, but accomplished in the required social ritual and “expert mistress of trivialities” (8) which she rejects. The women of her social class are, according to White, “devoted
to those pursuit to which ladies do denote themselves, because they must pass the

time” (154). Excluded by their culture from meaningful activity, nineteenth-century
gentlewomen lead meaningless lives. Laura recognizes that she is an exception to the
conventions of Sydney’s female social life, and is determined to “design her own
image rather than accept the one that society rewards” (142).

White makes this clear by providing dramatic counterpoints to Laura. He

contrasts her with typical leisure class women who, confined to prescribed maternal

and social roles often suffer some disabling distortion of personality along the way.

White treats these unhatched women satirically, but the shadow of wasted life is the

backdrop of each scenario. The contrast between what Laura would make of herself

and the alternatives should she fail clarifies her struggle.

Laura’s attitude towards marriage suggests the extent of her rebellion at the
wedding of her beautiful and well loved cousin. Bells, Laura is alert to the fragility of
the ceremony’s promise. Germaine Greer in The Female Eunuch characterizes

marriage as “the chief ceremony of middle class mythology” (213). Laura calls it “the

myth of all happiness” (Voss 329), recognizing that for women it brings a
foreclosure of identity. Foreclosure can happen even to those who seem happily wed.
For example the bride, Belle, whom White later endorses as a good person, “a
practical woman, loving wife, and devoted mother” (423) is also described as one
who “might have been less happy if she had time to consider” (420). He adds that “

very occasionally [...] her glance would waver, as if it had encountered the danger of
distinguishing what has been given from what has been withheld” (427). Belle must

assure herself that she is ‘most fortunate’ (427). White tells us that in her marriage “
she had been forced to curb herself in many [...] ways” (426).
Laura’s convictions about marriage are tested when she falls in love with the egotistical Voss, a portrait of narcissism, who seeks in her an all-giving and forgiving mother/wife, although excited by the drama and vision which he brings into her circumscribed life, Laura is wary and sensibly on the defensive. She demands a relationship on equal terms, accepting Voss’s marriage proposal conditionally and offering to help him find the humility which eludes him. She assures him that they will struggle “but mutually let it be understood” (183).

There is a pitfall on Laura’s path, however, that of pride, a pride intertwined with her will to grow. To separate herself from other women, to insist on an identity far from the social norm, to defy convention and suffer the social consequences is to risk a pride engendered in self defence. That Laura does not stumble or succumb to the temptations of self aggrandizement is largely the fruit of her relationship with Voss. As she warms, counsels and advises him, she instructs herself in humility. She rejects the values of upper class women, but she does not turn in ward. Instead, she acknowledges and ministers to the sufferings of the lower class female.

When the unmarried female servant, Rose Portion, becomes pregnant, Laura’s aunt connects “Rose’s moans with the sounds of cows fallen into dikes and forgotten” (48), just as she would like to forget the now inconvenient maid. But Laura declares that she will nurse Rose and succour the child to come. Her intense identification with her maid’s pregnancy and her subsequent adoption of the orphaned child are commonly interpreted as symbolic expression of her spiritual marriage to Voss, who dies in the bush. However, her behaviour also represents an important stage in her maturation as a complete woman.
Through her experience with Rose, Laura seeks to regain what the intellectually superior woman in a patriarchal society is in danger of losing—her sexuality. Having rejected what was false and demeaning in the profile of femininity forced upon women of her milieu, Laura is at risk of suppressing the feminine within her altogether. Stirred by her feelings for Voss, however, she attempts to recover her hitherto suppressed sexual component through an identification with Rose, a member of the servant class. Servants had in the past suggested to Laura a dark but seductive sexuality that both attracted and repelled her. In chapter three Laura tries to keep her eyes averted from Jack Slipper and says “it is the bodies of these servants, Laura told with hopelessness and disgust’’ (50). Both servants, Rose and Jack, are associated for Laura with the garden, where you could hear “Voices, those of passers-by who had climbed the wall and lay there eating pigs trotters and making love” (52).

When Laura embraces Rose, she expresses her acceptance of her own sexual feelings. “Then the girl (Laura) who in the past had barely suffered her maid to touch her, on account of a physical aversion such contact invariably caused, suddenly reached out and put, her arms round the waist of the swelling woman, and buried her face in the apron, in the sleeping child, to express what emotion it was difficult to tell” (162).

In White’s analysis, successful completion of the process of maturation includes sexual maturation. By this point in the novel Laura has dramatically differentiated herself from her childhood world. When Voss dies, Laura remains single, a confirmed failure in Sydney’s social life, and leaves to teach school. She thus completes the first stage in this dynamic of female growth—resistance and
rebellion- and begins phase two of the hatching process. As Mahler's infant, having successfully differentiated himself from his mother, goes on to crawl away from her, practicing his own powers of locomotion, so Laura departs from Sydney to practice her own values as a teacher in a girls school. She wishes to give, as she explains, to her uncomprehending uncle, "the country something in return" (400-401).

Laura's later role as spokeswoman for the arts is foreshadowed in her capacity to inspire her young female scholars. In middle age, she assumes the leadership of those who would contribute to the cultural and spiritual growth of Australia, counseling a path to social regeneration through the work of the creative imagination. Laura is a successful heroine of a tale of hatching - a process of resistance, separation and return that White is to invoke again in a later novel, A Fringe of Leaves, possibly the most dramatic chronicle of female history on record.

Similar to Laura Bonner of Voss in her position as the different woman in a male dominated, restrictive nineteenth-century society, Ellen Roxburg moves from girlhood drudgery on an isolated marginal farm to marriage to a wealthy and cultured aristocrat, twenty years her senior and her Pygmalion. Ellen survives a childhood alienated from both her alcoholic father and her former lady's maid mother to be catapulted, through marriage, from rough farm labour to domination by her upper class husband and mother in law. "Ellen rightly feels that she has spent her whole life in other people's hands" (Fringe 354). To her husband she is divinity, a pet, a work of art. She is everything except an individual. While her performance as the farmer's daughter who "corrected her speech, learned to obey accepted moral precepts, and social rules, and to counterfeit the Italian hand" (80) fools her identity
she wears is always a false impression, and feels distanced from both her married
and her maiden selves.

At first, Ellen shows small signs of resistance to her fate, she will not, for
example, appreciate Virgil, despite her husband’s efforts. She sometimes feels
towards her husband “an indifference born of obedience” (154) and perceives that “
the whole of her uneventful life had been spent listening to men telling stories and
smiling to encourage them” (156). Here, as in Voss, White is exploring the negatives
to traditional marriage for the female who is striving to be whole. True to female
behaviour in captivity, Ellen resists passively the efforts to transform her into the
Victorian feminine ideal. She breaks minor rules, conscious of a discontent, which
her husband labels, “a fanciful or romantic streak in her nature” (68). The other self
within will not be wholly suppressed.

Guilty about her feelings towards her seductive father, discontented with her
husband who represents, perhaps, an idealized father, seeking her buried self, Ellen
finally embarks on her principal act of rebellion- the first phase of her hatching
process. She seeks also, as Laura did, that suppressed component of her identity, her
sexuality. A brief physical involvement with her unsavory brother-in-law signals the
start of her search for self. His seaminess answers well to Ellen’s guilty attraction to
her own father, with whom she identifies him.

When Ellen leaves her brother-in-law, her adultery and Australia behind her,
she climbs to the deck of her ship dizzy with, “a sense of freedom, of pure joy” (69),
but she is hurried off by the ship’s captain, who wants to protect her. As she is
guided below, she sees in the light an image from childhood, “her father bringing her
back to the house at dusk” (47), an image of limitation and control, the limitation of her female heritage that she, like Laura, must overcome if she is to hatch. Ellen recognizes that she is not at all designed to be the lady whose role, as defined by her mother-in-law, is to listen. Her chance to go beyond that role comes in a violent practicing stage, a phase of separation from the limiting society she has known, a near fatal shedding of her former skin, when her ship is wrecked on the return voyage from Australia to England. The only survivor of any attack by cannibals which ends the lives of the crew and passengers, including her husband. Ellen breaks out of captivity and experiences an intense physical relationship with an escaped murderer, hiding in the bush, who finally leads her back to civilization. Before the constant threat of death, all sexual suppression dissolves and Ellen experiences passion, coming to terms for the first time with her own sexual and emotional needs.

That she finally escapes from the bush is partly a function of her body’s reversion to its natural agility and her early rural conditioning. White touches the hearts of feminists who have argued against suppression of young girls’ athletic abilities when the strength of Ellen’s country girlhood comes to her rescue, enabling her to climb tall trees and sustaining her through exhaustion and hunger. Her physical stamina does not, however, provide her with the courage to hazard an escape along the coastline. She chooses, in fact, to remain with her captors rather than risk the treacherous journey alone. White is specific about her reluctance. He describes her as “immured in not only the blacks strong hold, but in that female passivity wished upon her at birth and reinforced by marriage” (265). Because she is female, White tells us, she can go only so far on her own. The nature of female socialization has set
limits she dare not violate. It is, finally, the male, her convict lover, who leads her back to civilized life.

Like Laura Travelyan, Ellen comes full cycle to return to her society. Her suffering in the bush has been extreme. She emerges from her experience of practicing a self accepting compassionate woman who empathizes with the pain of the chained convicts and the vulnerability of children. Her return to civilization, however is by no means the final stage of maturity that it might have been. Ellen, the novel’s ending suggests, will never again allow herself to be remade to another’s pattern, but neither will she realize the full potential of her identity discovered in the bush. For upon her return, she is once again caught in the web of dependencies and expectations that mark women’s role in a man’s world; she attracts the attention of a kindly and eligible man of means. She fears the connection, fears that he “ might assert rights she would not wish to grant” (403), but she is ready to compromise with life. Admitting that she has been slashed and gashed too often she decides that she needs the rock that is a husband, and her decision suggests retreat. Ellen’s hatching goes only so far.

As in Voss, unhatched minor female characters in A Fringe of Leaves provide a counterpoint to the heroine’s efforts towards independence. These minor unhatched women who have developed their maternal propensities to the fullest are, however, not satirized. Mrs. Oakes, the farm woman who nurses Ellen when she crawls out of the bush, the distracted but goodhearted Mrs. Lovell, who shares with Ellen not only her house but also her belief that women’s security lies in their childbearing function, even Ellen’s snobbish, suffocating mother-in-law escape White’s bitter irony because they give and receive love.
By contrast, the unhatched female who has been distorted and twisted by her dependent, useless, leisure-class role is again the target of White's arrows. Mrs. Merivale, for example, is a portrait of petty jealousy, social snobbery and insensitivity, although even here White suggests a lack of self confidence is the root of her negative behaviour.

He devotes attention, also to Mrs. Merivale's interesting dependent Miss. Scrimshaw, would be or might—have —been Ellen, who had also sustained many a spiritual bruise. She would have been, if life had given her opportunity, an eagle in order "To soar... To reach the heights! To breathe, to be Elevated, and at last free!" (402). Her vision of freedom accords poorly, however, with the reality of her position as a poor but genteel lady, dependent upon the good will and finances of others. Sharp of wit and curious, her refuge is an amused gliding irony, which helps her to accept the narrow boundaries of her life. No chance for hatching here.

Unfolding the life histories of Laura and Ellen Roxburgh and glancing at foreclosures such as Miss. Scrimshaw, White is asking and answering questions about the lives of women. An early novel, The Aunt's Story, explores similar territory— the hatching process of Theodora Goodman. White attributes Theodora's difficulties in hatching in large part, to her at the piano and the needle, in the marriage market. It is early apparent that Theodora's "long stride and loose joints" (Aunt 24) are inappropriate to a female form and that Theodora's pretty sister Fenny is the only child in whom Mrs. Goodman takes pride.

Mrs. Goodman, Theodora's mother, is another one of White's minor unhatched female poisoned by an unhappy marriage. Once a clever girl, she has been
transformed by a marriage where "they sat in their own rooms, and there was more than the house between them, where only the business of living together was shared" (59). She has become a woman whose great tragedy was "that she had never done a murder. Her husband had escaped into the ground" (89), unwanted by this disappointed wife and mother, Theodora identifies closely with her kindly but passive father. She thus both chooses rebellion and has it thrust upon her. She refuses the female role in her milieu and remains an oddity, a young woman, with a moustache who can hit all the targets at a carnival booth. Theodora’s rejection of the prescribed female world of marriage hunting is engendered by her parent’s misalliance, her innate spirit, and her sense that the world rejects her as a woman. "She will never”, as her astute school mistress recognizes, “flatter men’s vanity and their strength, because [...] she will not know how” (44).

It is not that Theodora dissociates herself entirely from feminine interests, it is rather that she has introjected the world’s disapproval of her as a female. Theodora neither knows how nor is able to overcome the negative picture of herself as a female, an image she has introjected from the reactions of others, principally her mother. While White gives us some evidence of Theodora’s interest in Frank Parrot, the boy who eventually marries her sister, he tells us, also, that instead of allowing Frank to shoot at a little hawk, with which we know she identifies, she kills it herself. One explanation is that Theodora explores all of her feelings, including those that are self destructive. But there is more to this incidence. Theodora, already confirmed in self doubt, cannot readily admit to herself the possibility of her attraction to Frank, nor that of his attraction to her. To do so would be to threaten that negative self image as
a female which, by her ten years, is part of Theodora Goodman’s self picture. To shoot the hawk is to affront Frank’s masculinity and to end swiftly the possibility of romance.

In general, Theodora does not integrate her sexuality, coming close at one point only to a vicarious acceptance of her body through a chance meeting with an old family servant, now a prostitute. Like Laura’s servant in Voss Theodora’s Pearl was guilty of illicit sexual behaviour. Although Theodora feels for her the warmth of childhood affection, the encounter is fleeting and does not provide the identification that Laura enjoyed. Theodora in the first stage of hatching—resistance is locked in a dependent hostile relationship with her elderly mother until Mrs. Goodman’s death sets her both free and adrift. At first Theodora clings to her relationship with her young niece, daughter of the conventional and uncomprehending sister Fanny. Theodora attempts to share her love and her outsiders’ wisdom with her niece, Lou, much as Laura bequeathed her love of poetry to a generation of young scholars. Aunthood is the one socially acceptable role left to her, but prompted by her unsympathetic sister and brother-in-law Theodora departs on a journey seeking, White declares, not a destination but ‘a goal’ (133). That her goal is the reconstruction of self soon becomes clear.

Eager, to “touch the hands” (135) of the people who fill the shabby hotel to which she journeys, Theodora extends her role as aunt to a population of genteel eccentrics by acts of empathy and imagination becoming what each of the other guests seeks in her. The feelings which rejection had frozen spill over in this her practicing stage when she seems to be shopping for a self. Theodora is practicing
independence, wildly exploring identities at this second state of psychological rebirth and repairing nearly damage to her ego. White records that "the whole empty expectant house was full of that desperate affection which she had never quite been able to give" (196). Her insight into the suffering around her, much like Laura's sympathy for her servant and Ellen Roxburgh's identification with the convicts in Australia, afford her honour of a kind. But her ties to the hotel's transience are fragile—encounters in a dream. When a violent fire ends this episode in Theodora's life, she leaves to wonder about America as her socially prominent sister, one of White's negative unhatched females, "whose life was full of cupboards she kept locked" (9), prepares a room for her in "old girls" (16)boarding house in Australia, Theodora does not complete the cycle of maturation. Brought to the edge of madness, she knocks at the door of strangers, assumes a new name, and faces her end with spirit, a rose glittering in her hat, her destination and institution for the insane.

Thus White's journey from fact to belief—whether man or woman—involves the return journey from belief to fact. The perception of the pain of the world leads to a sense of the new life, the resurrection, that follows crucifixion and whether or not White himself consciously adverts to it, this is the sense which illuminates the end of most of his works. White's innocent simpletons become explorers in their own right, and by means of very elaborate symbolism they are strongly connected to the landscape. He mixes realism, surrealism, symbolism, fantasy and satire in an exploration of the themes of loneliness, alienation and the problematic nature of contemporary Australian society.
The exploration of the self through the modes of psychology, religion and the like has one thing in common. In attempting to recapitulate significant phases of the evolution of a complex relationship of particular people and land, writers tend to reiterate their veneration for nature. Patrick White is no exception to this tendency. Thus, White's Australia becomes a symbolic region combining in its range both the region of the masses huddled in cities and the region of distances growing, from innocence to experience—from trauma to triumph—in attaining the path to perception.

In an interview with Thelma Herring and G.A. Wilkes, Patrick White declared:

Life in Australia seems to be for many people pretty deadly dull. I have tried to convey a splendour, a transcendence, which is also there, above human realities. From The Tree of Man onward (that started under the title A Life Sentence on Earth) I wanted to suggest my own faith in these superhuman realities. But of course it is very difficult to try to convey a religious faith through symbols and situations which can be accepted by people to-day. (White 399).

Male or female, through the protagonists in his novels White is successful in suggesting his own faith. When questioned about God he said “I believe in God […]. I can’t associate my own faith with Churches […]. I don’t want to be a moralist. I don’t think I have preached sermons in any of my books. I say what I have to say through the juxtaposition of images and situations and the emotional exchanges of human beings” (400). Answering a question on his characters, he said “I suppose all my characters are fragments of my own fragmented character” (400).
Questioned about violence in his novels, White said, “Violence can be explained, but natural violence—acts of God—are difficult to understand and the sufferings of innocent people. God is cruel! We are His bag full of cats” (402).

Considering all this in correct perspective, Ingmar Bjorksten aptly says: Patrick White does not make things easy for his readers. His work is select, like all writing that deals with non-superficial knowledge, experience, and problems. But it is not impenetrable; it is not art for art’s sake, but it is art for people’s sake. He does not shear away from the unpleasant and frightening (402).

The basic theme in Patrick White is mankind’s search for a meaning, and a value in existence. The mystery of the human psyche offers him a challenge which has shown itself to be fruitful. It is in order to make the only existence of his ‘elect’ meaningful that he sends them out on the paths of suffering. In all his novels White recognizes, the existence of yet another world of dimension within the common reality—extraordinary behind the ordinary.

Patricia A Morley writes: “Essential to White’s vision is the affirmation that this other or spiritual world is immanent in our natural one, as well as transcendent to it” (402). She points out that this vision is not unique but traditional. “Although his novels are novels, not mystical essays, the vision from which they spring belongs to the tradition of mysticism, which seeks direct experience or immediate awareness of God, and sees the soul as something wholly distinct from the reasoning mind with its powers” (403).
Patrick White gives human shapes to ideas rather than create individuals who are convincing through and through. Patrick White attains his goal through activating what Jung calls the collective unconscious. The reader recognizes himself in White’s vision. From this the compulsion to reconsider is born. The whole of the system we have built up by experience, expectations and prejudices is exploded. So his characters are no longer psychological object lesson: they serve a different function. Through these characters Patrick White makes us aware of alternative existence, and shows that understanding and reconciliation are possible for the person who struggles sincerely and in humility.