CHAPTER II

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Patrick White's work reveals a preoccupation with mysticism, with the individual's search to grasp some higher, more valid reality that lies beyond or behind everyday social existence. This vision of man and the world is essentially religious, as Patrick White himself states, "religion – that is behind all my novels [...] the relationship between the blundering human being and God"(310), and he chooses to express his mystical vision through the developing reverberations of his character's progress. In this process it is the land of Australia which offers this timeless dimension of experience, (it is) the only medium, the only terminology through which he could make fully meaningful, his own intensely personal view of the world.

The structural basis of the novels is the spiritual quest of the hero or heroine. White's characters embark on journeys which start at the matter of fact level, but the quests are primarily inward into the depth of their own natures. They move into a realm of vision, towards the goal of identification and communion with the divine.

As A.K. Thomson in his essay Patrick White's The Tree of Man states, Patrick White the great novelist has an individual vision of the world, and he can give that vision shape, and therefore meaning, in his chosen medium of the novel. He has an amazing scope. Voss deals with discovering Australia and covers the period 1849 - 1880. The Tree of Man deals with settling the land and covers the period 1880-1939. Riders in the Chariot deals with the life that is lived in Australia during the period 1880-1955; it gives a picture of contemporary Australia and in it Australia is involved with other countries. White's basic theme, man's eternal quest for meaning and value,
is universal and timeless. His expression of this universal theme, however, is through his own particular land and time, twentieth-century Australia, the setting of seven of his eight novels.

The title *The Tree of Man* is taken from Housman's lines:

The tree of Man was never quiet:

Then't was Roman, now 'tis I. (Tree 376)

*The Tree of Man*, winner of the Nobel Prize, transformed the traditional Australian saga of the land. Stan and Amy Parker experience all the elemental rites of such sagas, but with an emphasis on the inward response, not the outward appearance. The novel deals with man against the wilderness, man and woman making a home, man against the four elements of nature (earth, wind, fire and flood), parents and children, personal dishonour and national honour, suicide and murder, growing old and redemption. Amy's quest is to learn about Stan perhaps in time. His is to understand and accept the nature of Being, which he does, slowly and often reluctantly.

The central character's attempt to achieve a sense of oneness with the land are characterized by situations where they are forced to heights of intensely sustained experience, an intensity that is managed because of the sharp brevity of their contact with the land, making the impact condensed in its forcefulness. The land is a formidably important character in *The Tree of Man*. The central figures are neither explorers nor shipwrecked castaways, but farmers and tradesmen directly or indirectly living off the land. As Margaret Atwood puts it in *Survival* (1972),
Usually explorers enter, chaos emerge from it; they do not try to impose order on it. That’s an activity more characteristic of settlers. They do not move through the land, they go to one hitherto uncleared part of it and attempt to change Nature’s order (which may look to man like chaos) into the shape of human civilization. (120)

Keeping the land as a still important and still alien presence, while at the same time letting the characters maintain a more prosaic and a work-a-day relationship with it, the land exerts peculiar pressures of its own as Stan and Amy Parker demonstrate it in The Tree of Man, Patrick White has a more difficult task here in maintaining the tension between an alien land and the settlers. Neither Stan nor Amy is first generation setters. Besides the land is in danger of being vitiated in force as a dramatis personae, because of the seeming mundanity of the relationship.

Patrick White using the land in at least four of his novels as one of the major characters, is also exposed to the danger of being accused of using a figure that has lost its teeth and claws – of reverting to a theme which though important to the earlier Australians, now plays a very marginal role. One also bears in mind that an obsession with the land is often accompanied by an inability on the part of the writer to present convincing human relationships. As J.J. Healy asked: “what is it about a colonial culture that exacerbates the problem of man seeing himself in non-stick like terms?” (3).

White very easily escapes these charges, as is to be expected of a writer of his caliber, and as Vincent Buckley points out in the article on White:
what Patrick White has done apparently is to take one of the conventional subjects of Australian fiction – pioneering man, the bushman here, the emerging primitive community – and treat it in a completely unconventional way. He has, in fact, demythologized one of the national literary myths; and he has tried in the process, to analyse the humanity, not the Australianess of Australian man. (187)

But in the process of demythologizing, The Tree of Man makes one draw the inescapable conclusion that while it might have deflated several pioneer myths which were grandiose in their conception of hardship, bravery and dangers faced, one myth which does not get deflated, but in fact gains in complexity and awesomeness is the land itself. It is, if one can use such a term – remythified. Buckley goes on to add that:

It is a story of man establishing himself to scratch a living from a soil that is no more than ordinarily recalcitrant, and spreading his seed abroad into a society, growing more and more complex, while himself remaining untouched, in his inner being, by that complexity. The Tree of Man: in short, unspectacular and unobtrusive, half of whose life is a spreading and deepening of roots, not an explosion of diffusion of heroic gestures. It survives, in so far as it survives at all, because it has a real relationship with the earth. It does not consciously accept or reject its bonds with the earth. It simply is those bonds. (188)

Amy’s response to the land, if it is to be meaningful as it was pointed out in an earlier chapter of this thesis, demands a body of responses that are a highly
complex structure of feelings, emotions and attitudes. Part of the failure of *Happy Valley* is due to Patrick White's own simplifications in response to the land, a weakness he more than recovers from, in his later novels. Vincent Buckley's statement that "It does not consciously accept or reject its bonds with the earth. It simply is those bonds"(188) therefore is a trifle optimistically naïve.

Both Stan and Amy Parker are measured by their response to the land. For Stan Parker, like Voss, to come to terms with the land till there is a complete fusion between him and the land, it takes an entire life-time. It is this response that White uses as a gauge to record the inner growth of his characters. The entire novel is a highly elaborate pattern of the shifts, changes and revaluations of the relations between the characters and the land.

*The Tree of Man* exposes the fallacies man is prone to in his assumptions about the earth. The danger of succumbing to such fallacies can lead to his spiritual destruction as Amy Parker exemplifies. One, however, must reiterate, that this is not that kind of a colonial novel which emphasizes the land because of a paucity in human experience. This novel works more towards a redefinition of issues that are concerning students of other disciplines as well – man in relation to his environment. The human relationships in this novel are not minimal but fully developed – in fact such a redefinition of man and nature within the literary tradition is only possible when there is a rich national experience to draw upon.

As is idiosyncratic of Patrick White, the first chapter of *The Tree of Man* forms a prelude, wherein all the major themes and symbols of the novel are introduced in a minor key. The entire stress of this chapter is on the encroachment of
man on territory hitherto uninvaded. Stan Parker’s arrival in the bush to build a home and start a farm is clearly an event of historic importance, as is shown by the watchfulness of the bush denizens: “Birds looked from twigs, and the eyes of the animals were drawn to what was happening ... the man struck at the tree, and struck, till several white chips had fallen[...]. The silence was immense. It was the first time anything like this had happened in that part of the bush (Tree 9).

Compounded here are several shades of meaning. Man’s creation of ecological imbalances through destruction of the natural vegetation, sometimes meaningless as in this case for White had stated earlier that “the man took an axe and struck at the side of a hairy tree, more to hear the sound than for any other reason” (9). White also manages to suggest that Stan Parker’s arrival in the bush is the archetype of all pioneer entries as the sentence: “It was the first time anything like this had happened in that part of the bush”(9) indicates.

The feeling of a momentous happening is intensified by the slow almost ponderous pace of the narrative in the initial stages. Minute acts and gestures are recorded with scrupulous attention to detail, as if to impress one of the immensities of the whole scene. Then suddenly there is a rapid sequence of actions: “More quickly then, as if deliberately breaking with a dream” (9) – the man hobbles his horse, builds a shelter and lights a fire.

In keeping with the virginity of the bush till now unassailed, images of youth are replete: “The young horse [...] and the young and hungry dog were there, watching the young man” 10).
The fire Stan Parker kindles gives him a sense of belonging to the bush. Fire is repeatedly used in the novel, to suggest warmth and ownership, though characteristically it expands and takes on many other connotations later on. “He built a fire […] the lighting of his small fire had kindled in him the first warmth of content. Of being somewhere” (9). It establishes his ownership of the area around him: “That particular part of the bush had been made his by the entwining fire. It licked and swallowed the loneliness” (9).

The slow impending annihilation of the bush as man penetrates further and further, is suggested again by the use of natural images. Night is about to descend and “All around, the bush was disappearing. In the light of the later evening […] only the fire held out” (10). But the man-made fire does not guarantee total immunity from the power of the bush because later “Night had settled on the small cocoon of light, threatening to crush it” (13).

Finally, we are made to realize the destruction and ephemerality also inherent in fire which is later borne out by the fire that destroys Glastonbury: “And the cavern of fire was enormous, labyrinthine, that received the man. He branched and flamed, glowed and increased, and was suddenly extinguished in the little puffs of smoke and tired thoughts” (10).

Stan’s fascination with fire is related to his father’s constant use of it as a blacksmith: “He was the blacksmith, and had looked into the fire” (11). The next morning the fire has burnt itself out and Stan Parker is again made aware of his relative helplessness: “[…] in the morning of frost, beside the ashes of a fire, was faced with the prospect of leading some kind of life. Of making that life purposeful.
Of opposing silence and rock and tree. (15) The task seems insurmountable: "It does not seem possible in a world of frost. That world was still imprisoned, just as the intentions were, coldly, sulkily" (15).

Nature is presented in terms that are almost physically inimical: "Grass that is sometimes flesh beneath the teeth would have splintered now, sharp as glass. Rocks that might have contracted physically had grown in hostility during the night" (15).

There is an indefinable ominousness when Stan Parker fells his first tree:

His first tree fell through the white silence with a volley of leaves. This was clean enough. But there was also the meaner warfare of the scrub, deadly in technique and omnipresence, that would come up from behind and leave warning on the flesh in messages of blood. (16)

His act of clearing the bush somehow manages to seem a defilement: There in the scarred bush, that had not yet accepted its changed face, the man soon began to build a house, or shack. "But the house was being built amongst the stumps that in time had ceased to bleed" (15).

There are constant reminders to recall to man his desecration, and in spite of his persistent efforts to gain control, the reminders undermine his dubious victory. "The clearing encroached more and more on the trees, and the stumps of the felled trees had begun to disappear, in ash and smoke, or rotted away like the old teeth. But there remained a log or two, big knotted hulks for which there seemed no solution" (31). This recalls to mind the neglected but seethingly powerful river in T.S. Eliot's *Dry Salvages* (1946). There are a surprising number of parallels between Eliot's river and White's bush. Both of them are placed in the same kind of relationship with man,
where they are explicited and then forgotten. But they can never be wholly forgotten for their rhythms are a part of man. As Eliot puts it:

I do not know much about gods; but I think that the river is a strong brown god – sullen, untamed and intractable. Patient to some degree, at first recognized as a frontier; useful, untrustworthy, as a conveyer of commerce; then only a problem confronting the builder of bridges. The problem once solved, the brown god is almost forgotten by the dwellers in cities – ever, however, implacable keeping his seasons and rages, destroyer, reminder of what men choose to forget. Unhonoured, unpropitiated by worshippers of the machine, but waiting, watching and waiting .(19)

And it is not man who encroaches on the bush alone. Earlier the bush also impinges on the consciousness of young Stan Parker the town-bred boy, till it seems to invade the precincts of his home: “Already the walls of their wooden house were being folded back. The pepper tree invaded his pillow.” (Tree 14) His father’s death increases his longing for the bush: “Then, more than at any time, the nostalgia of permanence and the fiend of motion fought inside the boy, right there at the moment when his life was ending and beginning ” (14).

White in the earlier paragraph however suggests that to succumb to the nostalgia of permanence could lead to stagnation, a narrowing of vision: It was hard certainly in the light of the steady fire not to interpret all fire. Conversely the return to a pastoral kind of existence does not necessarily lead to liberation, unless it is spiritually earned. Stan has forebodings of this:“ [...] Was it for a liberation or
imprisonment? He did not know. Only that this scrubby, anonymous land was about to become his, and that his life was taking shape for the first time.” (14)

The terms ‘liberation’ and ‘imprisonment’ that White uses here in connection with the land are significant, since they refer again to the archetype of mixed feeling, the transported convicts must have had when they first landed in the “scrubby anonymous land.” (14) This further reinforces the assumption that The Tree of Man is not just the story of one man’s endeavour to make a particular pocket of the Australian bush his own, but an allegory of the Australian Everyman, embodying not one layer, but several historical layers of the Australian experiences, through a subtle use of images so loaded with implication, that even a person with a perfunctory acquaintance with Australia’s convict past would not be in danger of missing it. Besides the prison-motif is a metaphor that occurs again and again in the novel, making one aware that Stan Parker too is a prisoner, not a convict in the conventional sense of the term, but a prisoner of his own pre-conceptions and conditioning.

This chapter establishes with enormous concrete force the composite symbols of the bush – the trees, the birds, the silence, the rocks, the grass and the sky – all these are a part of a closely-worked intricate pattern and it is through the responses that Stan and Amy Parker continually give to these features of the bush that we are made to evaluate their spiritual content. We sense the growing alienation between Stan and Amy by the way they react to these natural objects. Again it must be stressed that this complicated pattern of relationships is not a straightforward linear record of progress, where Stan Parker grows steadily in awareness: There are moments of regression when he fails to measure up to the situation, and his self-
realization is achieved only when he pains-takingly and stumblingly reaches that stage of perfect unity with organic nature, that he is a part of it.

Commenting on the peculiar emptiness of the freedom he found in Australia, D.H. Lawrence says in *Kangaroo* (1950): “There is a great relief in the atmosphere, a relief from tension, from pressure. An absence of control or will or form. The sky is open above you, and the air is open around you” (32). But this formless freedom exerts its own toll: “The vacancy of this freedom is almost terrifying [...] The absence of any inner meaning: and at the same time the great sense of vacant spaces” (32-33).

One cannot help noticing, especially in the first two sections of *The Tree of Man* the plenitude of images which suggest brittleness, ephemerality and insubstantiality all contributing to a strange feeling of unreality and disembodiment in the lives of the characters. Amy Parker, particularly is described quite often in the earlier stages of her life as so thin as to be almost breakable; Stan Parker’s first impression when he meets her at a dance is connected to this image: “Stan Parker saw that the parson’s wife had gone, leaving in her place a thin girl [...] Her arms were very thin” (19). Even the dress she is wearing seems to engulf her as it is too loose. This image is extended beyond Amy Parker to include not only the houses but also the lives of the people in Durilgai.

Amy Parker feels a strong antagonism towards the bush because she recognizes almost immediately its power to make her feel her insignificance. Stan Parker is more tolerant in his attitude to the queer preponderance of the bush, but Amy cannot forgive it its ability to repeatedly shatter any of her new-found assumptions or attitudes. Whereas “[…] he (Stan) recognized and accepted the
omnipotence of distance. But this was something she did not, and perhaps never would. She had begun to hate the wind, and the distance, and the road, because her importance tended, to dwindle” (Tree27).

The Parkers’ arrogance of ownership of their hours and land is a precarious one, easily shaken, especially Amy’s. When she is alone in the house: “[...]the forsaken woman was again the thin girl. The important furniture of her marriage were matchsticks in the hollow house. Her thin, child’s life was a pitiful affair in the clearing in the bush” (33).

The bible-peddling stranger’s visit to their home is enough to make them realize that they were strangers to their own place in the frail house. But as is often the case in this novel a sense of ownership is established by the lighting of a lamp: “Now, too, in the lamplight it was confirmed that the house was theirs. Any uneasy moments of doubt that hung about at dusk had been dispersed” (30).

One of the main tensions in the book is generated by the effort to create a world of substance and body and therefore meaning in the bush. This explains Stan’s and Amy’s constant need for reassurance of the reality and permanence of things around them. They find it difficult to dispel a vague sense of unreality, the feeling that they are not quite there: “the thin air of the morning drifted about the house, rubbing at the paper walls and moving them. At what point does solidity dissolve?” (28). Even the later, older Amy cannot escape a feeling of inadequacy: “although a comparatively young and robust woman, of some experience, she began to feel inside her a thinness of insufficiency” (139). Stan Parker too does not escape: “His
substance, which had been solid enough, omnipotent even, at the grindstone an hour or two before, had begun to thin out” (112).

The bush periodically plunges them into a dark nihilistic universe where they have no identity and where their mutual efforts to combat it are puny and unsuccessful. They try to grasp at their shared moments of goodness and beauty, but they are will of the wisp moments which refuse to get captured. For instance Stan and Amy:

In the cool of the released world, amongst the dreaming furniture, at the heart of the staggy rose bush that pressed into the room and wrestled with them without thorns, the man and woman prayed into each other’s mouths that they might hold this goodness forever. But the greatness of the night was too vast. The woman fell back finally, almost crying. And the man withdrew into his own fleshy body. He lay on their bed and touched what was almost a cage of bones, that his soul was beginning already to accept. (115)

But it is not as though these moments of negation are a continuous theme. The sun, (as all objects associated with light in the novel frequently do) returns her to herself: “All shapes, sounds, seemed to fit together in the quiet night. It was no longer vast but familiar [...]” (113). But then neither is familiarity nor a sense of belonging is an often-experienced state, in the novel.

Their uncertainty, their pitiful lack of assurance of not being there by some undefined accident, draws our attention forcefully to the traumas of settlement, one of whose main features is this feeling of unreality and impermanence. In this context
their Irish neighbours - the O'Dowds' home is an important metaphor of the sheer chanciness and patternlessness of settlement. Their house is described as: “[...] standing there, supporting itself, as it were, by some special grace of gravity. Pieces of it hung. Pieces had been pulled off, for comfort, on a wet day, to make a little fire with” (285).

Amy and Mrs. O'Dowd heighten this entire effect of bodilessness by their relief at each other's continued existence, in spite of it: after a long absence “Each was reminded by the other of her own substantiality. She had discovered that she had endured” (286). This insubstantiality is extended from the people to the towns themselves, which are depicted as being unconvincing in their claim to existence. The neighbouring town Bangalay in particular is frequently associated with this unreality: “Life at Bangalay, the market town, did not convince Stan, not even such solid evidence as the red courthouse and the yellow jail [...]. He sat upright, asking to be knocked off rather than acknowledge belief in that town” (34).

It is intriguing that the jail and the courthouse are the major evidences of solidity that Bangalay can offer people, to convince them of its existence. Might be that Patrick White was being deliberately provocative, insinuating that the jail was the historical reason for Australia's existence in the first place. But the people's helplessness is accentuated most strongly when they are thrown in direct contact with the fiercer aspects of the bush. Their terror then is complete. There is a storm: “The woman in the house got up and closed the door, in an attempt to secure for herself an illusion of safety, if only an illusion. Because the black clouds [...] the wind began to bash the small wooden box in which she had been caught” (46).
Stan Parker is actively made aware of the smouldering resentment of the land he had invaded with such unavoidable force: “Surrounded by the resentful inanimacy of rock and passionate striving of the trees, he was not sure [...] he would have liked to look up and see some expression of sympathy on the sky’s face” (47). Stan and Amy cling together in fear against the storm and the effect created in that they are managing to hold on to the land by an intense muscular effort: “Their feet precariously held the earth” (47).

But the floods later, act as a gigantic baptismal fount for the settlement of Durilgai, which significantly means “fruitful”. Till then, it was marked by the aridity and childlessness of the Parkers, the O’Dowds and the Quigleys; Amy had once even called it “a barren stretch of the road ” (66). Vincent Buckley in the same essay quoted earlier states that: “The effect of the floods is to give the Parkers a new orientation towards each other. Life has erupted into their static lives; and the suggestion is that it has done so fruitfully ” (190).

The floods to some measure substantiate, what the settlement has perhaps unconsciously been striving for all along [...] a consecration of the hearth. It is the unobtrusive manner in which the settlement gets its name, that makes it seem so auspicious and yet so natural. But the faint disbelief that attends the first taking of root, cannot be totally obliterated. It still persists:“[...] the people who lived in that district were disinclined to use their name, anyway for a long time, except in postal matters as if something, was expected of them that they could not, or did not care to fulfill ” (Tree 99).
The store and post-office are used as edifices to emphasize the reality of Durilgai, (just as the court-house and jail were offered as evidence of Bangalay's solidity) “a store had been built, and a post-office was added in time, so that Durilgai did exist physically, these two buildings proved it (103). The store is described as a “child’s game in wood and iron” (103). But because of its honest lack of artifice it begins to be absorbed by the landscape. The owner Mr. Denyer was: “[...] the complement of his shop, simply, even awkwardly made. But he would endure [...] fixed at his counter, or in the doorway of his shop. This in turn was fixed in the landscape, of gentle green hills” (104).

The lives of the people acquire a natural, spontaneous rhythm, in keeping with the rhythm of the bush. There is a pervasive fertility and growth: “In all that district the names of things were not so very important. One lived. Almost no one questioned the purpose of living. One was born. One lived [...] New patterns of life, of paddock and yard and orchard, would be traced on the sides of the hills and the little gullies. But not yet. In time. In slow time too [...]” (104).

As the last sentence indicates, the consecration of a hearth cannot be forced. Nor can it ever be complete. For instance the later fire that breaks out in Durilgai does not seem to arouse the same sort of communality that the floods ignite: “Some of them had begun to thrash the flames with branches they had torn off, but like men who did not hold the key to their own mechanical limbs. Their lack of faith, was in conflict with their actions ” (173).

The fire seems to be a reminder for the forgotten power of nature, which the people would rather ignore. For even after the fire: “the people began to creep back
into the world they knew, and from which they had only been forced out by smoke at the opening "(182).

Towards the end of the The Tree of Man one notices a gradual absorption of the old house in to the landscape. The Quigley home, which right from the beginning was made to seem an intrinsic part of the landscape in contrast to the more modern and ambitious dwellings which are there “By assault of nature” is described with an imagery that makes it almost aboriginal: “Quigley’s were still there, in their house along the road. They are the kind that grow from the landscape with the trees, the thin, dusty unnoticeable native ones ” (461).

The Parker home too, now belongs:

That house had never had a name. At first it had not needed one. It had become known as Parkers’ and had stayed that way. There was no one at Durilagi nor in the surrounding districts, who could remember when Parker’s had not stood. Everybody took it for granted and no longer looked at it, may people thought it was ugly. It was old and brown anyway and less planned than purposeful. (359)

Like Denyer’s store and the Quigley home it is inseparable from the garden, from the landscape in which it was. The home of the old settlers seem to belong more to the landscape than the newer constructions which carry a symbol of the city corruption with them.

During the last few years a number of other homes had been built down the road at Durilgai in which Parkers had always lived. There were the original few weather board homes, of which the landscape
had taken possession and which had been squeezed back from the road it seemed, by other developments. The wooden homes stood, each in its smother of trees, like cases in a desert of progress. (394)

The houses are already becoming obsolete in terms of modern valuation, yet they serve as reminders of what consecration involves. The irony lies in the fact that consecration is accompanied by their own impending annihilation: "They were in process of being forgotten, of falling down, and would eventually be swept up with the bones of those who had lingered in them, and who were of no importance anyway, either no helpers or old" (394).

The rhythm which they had managed to establish after so many painful false starts is replaced by the cult of cleanliness "by electrocution, by vacuum cleaner" (394). The new-comers barricade themselves from guilt or unease "simply by closing windows and doors and turning on the radio" (394). Such a break with natural patterns is tantamount to death in life for Patrick White: "[...] those people would retire into the brick tombs which they had build to contain their dead lives, and tune into the morning radio sessions, and[...] would wonder what simple harmonies had eluded them" (461).

Unlike the older settlers the messages contained in the flood and fire will be meaningless to them. As Eliot puts it in Little Gidding (1922):

Water and fire succeed

The town, the pasture and the weed

Water and fire deride

The sacrifice that we denied
Water and fire shall rot
The married foundations we forgot, of sanctuary and choir,
This is the death of water and fire. (37)

The last line in particular fits the scene at Durilgai in the end, where the new house and their mindless inhabitants are impervious to the cleansing, salutary powers of flood and fire, even if they occur, they will hold no lesson of fulfillment or loss.

Reverting to the main theme, it would be a simplification to assure that the life of the protagonists and that of the community can be totally identified with one another. The Parkers still maintain a certain amount of apartness from it “Although their district had become more closely settled the house still appeared to stand alone” (Tree 109). The presence of the rest of the community is compellingly felt only during the flood and the fire.

In keeping with the rich new life that prevails in Durilgai immediately after the floods, Amy conceives. She begins to revel in a feeling or power that is not without insolences:

She walked about on the shady borders of the house now indeed she was centre of the universe. Light converged on the white cocoon she was holding in her arms, the source of birds invested it with mystical importance as they hovered above it, almost, in fussy light; flowers and leaves inclined above the head of the woman with the child or gave blessings with long, benevolent wands when there was a breeze. (114)
But though maternity brings a kind of facile contentment for Amy, it also marks the beginning of the desperate spiritual paths she and Stan will tread, Amy Parker is now described in terms, which however imbues her with a false sense of power. She feels contemptuously superior to the unassuming Doll Quigley, who in spite of her clumsiness, is genuinely filled with loving kindness, which Amy however is not perceptive enough to recognize. White describes Amy's own attachment to her children as facile love. Amy on the other hand thinks of her motherhood as the epitome of love and fulfillment so that the: "Quigleys seemed the antithesis of the fullness of love and summer which Amy now sensed, herself all roundness and warmth as she held the baby in her arms, and the head of the little boy against her skirt. She was at least continuous. She flowed. Her large full breasts had become insolent in fulfillment (117).

But White adds: "Yet Doll Quigley was full of love. She would have suffered willingly if she had been asked" (117). Mrs. O'Dowd undermines Amy's smugness by making slyly meaningful remarks about the undependability of sons and the sickliness of Thelma (remarks which prove prophetic, for Ray goes astray and Thelma is an asthmatic). Amy however quickly recovers herself and refuses to be deterred: "Then Amy Parker curled her lip. Her house was full of the children she had made, and the fat woman her friend, whom she has loved at times, was a ridiculous empty figure" (122).

Thus Amy's motherhood successfully distance her from the O'Dowds and the Quigleys. She even tries to suppress her longing for a romantic interlude with a young handsome lord by trying to count her blessings: "Because there was the house, and
the tress that had grown round it, and the sheds it had accumulated and the paths they had worn with their feet, all suggesting reality and permanence, and at the core of this reality, her husband" (134-135).

But Ray Parker's sudden insight of what their world actually is like, shows up the frailty of her self satisfaction. Her world of substance and body could still threaten to dissolve. Ray climbs a tree and has a bird's eye view of a scene which till then he had only an eye level acquaintance with. The change in altitude brings about a shift in perceptive in the child's mind: "The house in which he lived was more acceptable - seen as a toy. Roads were less distasteful in the abstract than as dust and stones underfoot" (135). This presages the adult Ray who is a constant wanderer on the road and cannot be contained by a house with its suggestion of a fortress.

Ray kills three of Blues (their dogs) pups in an action which could be read as an oblique revolt against the whole concept of breeding and motherhood and the sprucious power it generates. "Ugly old tits" (129), he says of Blue when his mother is fondling the prolific animal in what appears to be a natural understanding with it, of the power of motherhood. Ray's action also hints at his later breaking away from Amy's devouring possessiveness. As an adult Ray tells his mother in their secret meeting at Glastonbury "you haven't lost that habit, Mum [...] That habit of cross questioning a man. You would kill a person dead to see what was inside" (351).

Patrick White's own attitude to the whole concept of fertility and reproduction is ambivalent. While he can depict Amy's pregnancy in images that are joyous, he cannot help hinting at the same time at the falsifications of natural patterns the vicarious power that the concept of multiplication can involve. Besides Amy's poetic
vision starts getting dimmer after the birth of her children. (One hastens to add however that White does not link her gradual decline in sensitivity totally to her motherhood; the seeds of degeneration are present right from the beginning). Even Stan Parker’s inner life is shown as being interfered with seriously by family ties.

There is an obvious discrepancy between Stan the family man and social man, and Stan the inner man. The signs of this split are there right from the beginning and keeps widening till finally, Stan the social creature is almost in abeyance. For instance when he learns about Amy’s very first pregnancy, he is unsure about how he should react: “The man [...] was perhaps, greater, but less adequate, than the husband who had begotten the child” (54).

After Thelma Parker’s christening, as the group comes out of Church, Stan separates himself from the rest of the family in a symbolic gesture of apartness:

So Stan Parker felt the strain of his immediate vicinity. Inwardly he edged a little further away from the christening group. Soon he was wandering quite frankly beyond the confines of the crude church, unashamed by a sudden nakedness that had fallen upon him. Simultaneously with this pleasing nakedness, the flow of words, the flesh of relationships, were becoming secondary to a light of knowledge. (124-125)

Significantly Stan is shown as not only quietly disclaiming the importance of family relationships, but questioning the relevance of the church itself, as he moves away from its “confines”, a word which again suggests a prison, with the church acting as a jailor of ideas and beliefs that are intellectually inadequate. So the escape
Stan has to effect is of a complex kind, involving many strands of experience and a good deal of courage, for it means the repudiation of two ritual pillars of society... the family and the church. The church does come in for quite a close scrutiny in *The Tree of Man*: A number of scenes and experiences are set in it, in what seems an attempt on White's part to revalue and redefine the validity of the church, not only in Australia but in Europeans as well.

In the last church scene in the novel after Stan, Amy and their wealthy daughter Thelma have attended the communion service, Stan's inner essential personality has gained control to such an extent, that he feels removed from the actual objects around him:

> [...] Remaining at distance in the arrangement of objects and sequence of events, he went amongst his acquaintances at the steps, smiling from out of that queer distance and plane, as he talked to them of cattle and of vegetables. Some of them noticed his hollow voice[...]. The two women were telling the old fellow what to do, for he seemed to be rather vague. (417)

The hiatus between the concealed essential Stan and his family is sharply brought out, after his attempted suicide. He joins Amy and Thelma as they sit talking:

> I shall not tell them that I nearly killed myself", said Stan Parker. It was too personal an incident to explain convincingly. It was already part of his submerged half. So he sat cutting his meat, at a great distance, and listening vaguely to his wife tell their daughter the story of other lives. (408)
It also reveals how far removed trivial social intercourse can be from the real moments of life and death. Yet, immediately after his marriage, Stan had felt a closeness to Amy, so that she seemed a part of him: "The two people and their important activities could not have been more exposed. About that importance there was no doubt, for the one had become two. The one was enriched" (29). But before his death Stan Parker comes to the rather ambiguous conclusion that "One, and no other figure, is the answer to all sums" (477).

This could mean a refutation of his earlier conviction that "the one was enriched" (29). It could also mean that Stan had reached that level of perception, where every variegated strand of existence fused into one. But the latter hypothesis gets slightly undercut, when one notices the close similarity between Stan Parker's "One" and the later Voss declaiming "I am one" (Voss 269) carried strong connotations of Onanism an act which is singularly self-enclosed. While one would not go to the extent of attributing Onanism to Stan as well, the suggestions of self-enclosedness, of a self-limiting semblance of perfection cannot be dismissed. Of course the unification analysis cannot be completely ruled out either. The point is Stan Parker's "One" is a highly ambivalent one. The hint that women and matrimony can hinder spiritual progress is strong. (Perhaps this is why White Keeps Doll Quigley, Childless and a spinster) Stan's "One" also recalls Andew Marvell's sentiments in *The Garden* (1681): "Such was that happy garden-state, /While man there walked without a mate" (98).

Besides, Amy Parker is castigated for her refusal to confront reality, by hiding behind the deceptive security of her married state. She uses her husband and children
mainly as complements to her other worldly accomplishments of home and farm. She averts her fear of death by reassuring herself of these possessions: "She had never come close to death, and wondered whether she could deal with it, if death it was that beckoned[...] Instead, she began to think of her two growing children and her solid husband, and to persuade her own strength. By degrees it did become plausible" (Tree 139).

Treating them as she does, as symbols of emotional security and talismans against death, she never genuinely cares for them as individuals. She thinks nostalgically of the lost child in the floods, who had eluded her: "Often, again, it was as if she had no children[...] This boy, if she had tamed him, would have been her son[...]. It was possible" (218).

Paradoxically, Amy's sense of belonging and self-sufficiency is at its strongest when Stan is away at the war: "There were times when she could feel so peaceful that she awoke from her peace with a start of guilt, to urge herself on to some fresh restlessness, in this way to do homage to her absent husband. From the peace of her finally achieved self-sufficiency, of farm and children, he was absent" (204).

As long as Stan maintains the symbol of permanence and substance, his absence does not upset her, on the contrary his presence tended to undermine her complacency with its unspoken criticism. Amy is the arch domesticator. One of the reasons for the lost child escapes her, as Buckly points out was that the boy stood for the flux of life which cannot be tamed or controlled as Amy clearly wishes to do. Domestication to Amy means bringing everything into cosy, comfortable order,
within the boundaries of her own limited perception. This receives a narrowing not only of the natural world, but also of the people who come into her orbit; they have to be distorted to fit her vision. Amy's tragedy is that she cannot widen her vision to accommodate themes and patterns in their entirety; she narrows the themes and patterns to fit her mind. Stan tries to operate in a diametrically opposite manner, and manages some measure of transcendence.

The lost child gets replaced later by the Parker's farm-hand, Con the Greek, another symbol of flux who refuses to get possessed, and for whom Amy feels a mingled sexual and maternal attraction. He rekindles Amy's obsessive fear of chronological time and impermanence. Con's impending marriage to an aging widow makes her painfully aware of her own vanished youth (Amy has a strongly developed feminine ego and sexuality; she covets admiration and everlasting youth till the end of her days). "But she could not evade the floods of time. She was by now rather a fat woman" (232).

Earlier she is reluctant to believe the evidence of her mirror that her face had become blurred with time. In her mind it is still distinct. The strokes of her hairbrush draw attention to her fading hair and as usual she tries to bolster her morale by reviewing her list of possessions:

She went across the roses of the carpet and got into bed, and in darkness tried to think of her children, of her husband [...] of a field of oats, of the great bounties in fact. Until she had swum beyond them and, in spite of dinuous strokes and the bristles of her brush that she
used as a reminder, was sucked under [...]. She lay there thinking about it with persistent horror. (449)

When she learns of Mrs. O’Dowd’s fatal cancer: “She was aghast at her own unreliable relationship to life” (116).

Amy’s fear of death seems to be linked with her fear of time and the old age it will bring in its wake. Yet it is ironic, that the whole concept of The Tree of Man rests on the progress of time. Amy’s fear of time perhaps explains the reason why she is constantly linked with clocks. It implies her slavery to a pattern that is chronological and linear, and though she fears and hates it, she implicitly believes in it, so that her one avenue of release - timelessness is denied to her. Significantly Ray Parker is made to seem as being contrary to clock time and living in a world ungoverned by clocks. As a child he used to even try to arrest chronological clock time:

As the little boy grew, firm and gilded, he would ask to be held up to the clock, to watch its progress. Then he would press his red mouth to the glass and drink the minutes, so that for a moment the ugliness was swallowed down, and the dim face of the clock was outshone by the golden cheeks of the boy. (116)

Strangely, the clock stops before the birth of her second child: “One day, about the time when he had begun to run about with confidence and become a pest, the clock stopped for good, and it was about this time also that Amy Parker had her second child” (116).
But though the childhood of Ray and Thelma Parker is described in terms of arrested chronological time, the suggestion is not one of transcendence through timelessness, but of stagnation, where there is neither progress nor regression: “These were, on the whole, becalmed years, in spite of the visible evidence of growth: Any reference to the future was made, not with conviction, but in accordance with convention” (126).

It is this same slavishness to the false pattern imposed by clocks that makes Amy refuse to let Ray inside her house, with his illegitimate son, when they meet for the last time. Her maternal instincts cannot override her social conscience which tells her Ray is, if not exactly criminal, at least anti-social. So she watches him leave “from a golden window, but the room was dark inside, and filled by a clock” (422).

Stan Parker resists the attempt to be governed completely by clock time, so he can and does experience certain timeless moments. When he enters Glastonbury[...] the Armstrong mansion, to rescue Madeleine, he enters into a strange other world of ineffable experience, which though it is not articulated to his conscious mind, haunts him till the end: “He went from that room, brushing a tapestry that shivered at his shoulder, and rippled, and regained eternity. All things in the house were eternal on that night, if you could forget the fire. Time was becalmed in the passages, their ends” (177). But time begins to flow in the rooms again: “If time had clotted in the stuffy cupboards of the passages, here it flowed again” (177).

The humble Doll Quigley too, is one of White’s elect who can experience timelessness. She visits Stan after his return from the war, and by giving him a renewed vision of simplicity and completeness, she too arrests time, not by
subverting it, as Amy tries to do, but by intersecting it with timelessness: “Her slow, sandy words slid through the waters of time, till he was standing on the edge of the river at Wullunya, and many smooth, miraculous, quite complete events of his youth flowed by. That is what Doll Quigley put into him hands [...]. She put completeness” (213).

Immersing herself in time and not trying to evade it, she rises above time. “Stan Parker continued to think of Doll Quigley, her still limpid presence that ignored the stronger muddier currents of time” (214). Stan Parker and Doll Quigley recognize that the essence of their feeling has links not only with the bush, the trees, the sky and the people, but that these spatial configurations also suggest the permanence of timeless reality. Raymond Preston’s comment on the transition from the rose-garden to the London Tube in Burnt Norton can also be applied to Amy’s life with its tyranny of clocks and all its attendant restrictions and repressions. His comment runs: “This is not merely a sordid London scene, or even a sordid contemporary scene; it is what list ‘in time’ is like compared with the fuller life that the poet has felt ” (131). Similarly, this is what Amy’s life is like - spiritual decrepitude, terror and fear at her lonely condition, because her life is “life in time”, unlike Stan Parker and Doll Quigley who can go beyond “The stronger, muddier currents of time” (Tree 151).

That is why even earlier, when Stan enters the house, after having opened himself to the power of a storm, he is a clearly defined presence against the patternless world inside - patternless because it attempts to devise order by so clumsy and inapt a device as chronological clock time; “He was quite distinct in this fuzzy world of sighs and clocks” (151).
But for Stan to achieve this kind of detachment, where he can recognize the hopelessness of living imprisoned in time, that is living according to one’s conditioning, it takes a protracted and sometimes tortuous process of de-conditioning: where he has to break down self-constructed walls and become like Voss and Ellen Roxburgh, only in a more metaphorical manner - totally defenceless against the spirit of the place. White uses several images to delineate the texture and direction of Stan Parker’s growth. In this condition, fences play an important role in the novel, standing as they do for a deliberate shutting – off.

The pedlar’s talk of the exotic gold coast, ebony natives and ivory, starts a train of scintillating pictures in his mind, “other glittering images that he sensed inside him without yet discovering, stirred, heaved almost to surface” (39). It does not arouse a naïve enthusiasm in Stan Parker, it taps at something more elusive – it is the artist’s search for a vision of beauty that is also permanent:

All this time San Parker was torn between the images of gold and ebony and his own calm life of flesh. He did no wish to take his hat form the peg and say, well, so long, I’m of to see foreign places […]. He had a subtler longing. It was as if the beauty of the world had risen in a sleep, in a crowded wooden room, and he could almost take it in his hands (42).

It lingers in Stan’s memory even after the peddler has disappeared:

“His Gold Coast still glittered in a haze of promise as he grubbed the weeds out of his land. felled trees and tautened fences he had put round what was his. It was by this time almost enclosed ” (42).
Stan Parker has shut himself in by demarcating his territory, unlike Voss who makes all Australia his, by ignoring fences and exploring boundless territories. Fences in *The Tree of Man* also usually denote exclusiveness from the mainsprings of life, a hemming in of the soul. It is like Emily Dickinson’s “soul selecting her own society and then closing “the valves of her attention, like stone” (203).

In fact Stan’s growing self-awareness is closely linked with fences, if not in actuality, at least symbolically. Fences curb the wanderer’s streak in him, and he suddenly wonders in a moment of horror: “Would his life of longing be lived behind the wire fences?” (Tree 42). The faint foreboding that these fences could hamper his soul fills him with fear: “In the mean time he was growing a bit older. His body was hardening into the sculptural shape of muscular bodies [...] in the end there was no obvious sign that his soul too might not harden into the neat, self contained shape it is desirable souls should take ” (42).

Years later, watching young Joe Peabody, work on his land with the serene conviction that it is indisputably his, Stan is ironical because by then he has comprehended the intricacies of ownership, particularly when it concerned the land.

Stan Parker, who remained clothed in his shirt, watched the body of the young man, which had all the obliviousness and confidence of young naked bodies. So Stan Parker himself had moved the trees and boulders back in the dream time. So his mouth, as he watched, had to become a bit ironical. He could remember the time when it was just a matter of fencing in his land, and then it would be his. (362)
Prisons are a logical enough extension of fences, and there is no dearth of this image as already mentioned earlier. Fences and prisons, besides, have a peculiar aptness, since the former is essential for the farmer to prevent encroachment and the latter is entwined closely with the inception of White Australian history.

Barry Argyle in his book on Patrick White draws our attention to the numerous prison images that keep cropping in the book:

Alone in the wilderness, before marriage, Satan Parker decides, perhaps as an indication of his ordinariness, that he will 'make the best of this cell in which he had been locked'. Although he had not learned to think far... (he) had reached the conclusion he was a prisoner in his human mind, as in the mystery of the natural world. (39)

Argyle continues that in The Tree of Man:

Towards the end of the novel, old and sick, he feels himself to be locked in the prison of the bed, and when he is dying, his wife would have dragged him back if she could, to share her further sentence. But he was escaping from her. He has previously tried to escape her in speculation: and in fitting a cardigan on him, she was, he felt, imprisoning him in wool. She has even tried to imprison with love, the child found in the flood. In other words she becomes the jailor. It was once suggested that this kind of imagery was on oblique reference to Australia's convict past, when free women, such as Sarah Purfoy in Marcus Clarke's His Natural Life, arranged with the Government to have their lover or husband assigned to them as a servant. Such women become responsible for the man, and could have him beaten or returned to prison and exchanged for another, if they felt he had misbehaved or ceased to please
them. They assumed the function of the man's jailor, and had more power in their hands than the women of any other nation. "The suggestion, however, now seems extravagant. Although it is now perhaps more reasonable to suppose that a fidelity to the myth of Genesis rather than to Australian history is the cause of such imagery, its result is the same. It weakens the novel[...]" 39).

One must add, however in fairness to Amy, that not all the "prison" images are linked with her, and there are certain scenes where she too seems to be a prisoner. And one cannot accept Argyle's claim that 'It weakness the novel:' When these images are taken in their entirety, that is part of theme which includes not only fences, but houses and churches as well. All they symbolize according to their own contexts, man's inability to respond completely to nature because of the restrictions these very social bodies impose. Besides, Stan's and Amy Parker's growth is directly in proportion to their ability in breaking down these fences, and it is never more powerfully demonstrated than at the end when Amy realizes Stan has escaped his prison through his ability in resisting and battering these walls, while she succumbs and lets them close around her. So after Stan's death she "would have dragged him back if she could, to share her further sentence." (Tree 477)

Stan escapes social circumscribing but Amy is trapped. Her attempts at domesticating in this context takes on a more unhealthy cast. The first child which she loses in a miscarriage is shown as being almost suffocated in her womb: "The gathering darkness and the nest of black-berries pressed her thin soul into greater confinement, and the child inside her protested, perhaps sensing some future frustration, already in the prison of her bones."(62).
The implication is as if her miscarriage is due to this prison atmosphere the unborn child already senses. After Ray is born, she is passionately demonstrative of her love: "Sometimes her moist eyes longed almost to have him safe inside her again" (115). But ironically she is the most condemned prisoner.

Talking to her daughter-in-law the words strongly suggest her imprisonment: "Birds floated in the air with long, slow calls, almost totally arrested, as the two women sat in the prison of each other's company" (380). This finds an objective correlative in Ray's death on the wrong side of the law, though intriguingly enough the young Ray used to identify himself more with the representatives of law, rather than with the breakers of law: "He though that he would become a policeman. He remembered the admirably virile leggings of the young police constable, Murphy, who had shot at a man and killed him[...]. He could have shot the fugitive as cleanly as Murphy, if with less righteousness" (233).

This indicates the pervasiveness of the convict metaphor so that even boyhood aspirations are linked to prisons, in this case through an inversion—not the criminal, but the force that curbs the criminals. But Ray himself dies a near-criminal, shot at and killed by a member of the underworld.

Curiously, the prison image is extended to the natural world too. When Stan first enters the bush during a frost: "That world was still imprisoned, just as the intentions were, coldly, sulkily" (15). The frost-bound world is released only after the advent of the Sun: "the ground thawing took life too, the long ribbons of grass bending and moving as the sun released [...]" (16). A prison therefore is as natural as life and death. Even the natural world cannot escape it. But it is only a part of
nature's cycle. Release which comes along with the sun, is as much a part of the whole theme as imprisonment. This could mean an analogy with the frost-bound condition of man's life when he is imprisoned by his own ignorance. The Sun is a fit instrument of release, as it is a powerful symbol of illumination and enlightenment. But illumination for White is not always represented only by the Sun, it can take the shape of any natural object. So Stan who was a “prisoner in his human mind, as in the mystery of the natural world” can unexpectedly find a solution in the “touch of hands, the lighting of a silence, the sudden shape of a tree or presence of a first star, hinted at eventual released” (49). But it is only initially that Stan’s flashes of recognition are linked with human contact as “the touch of hands” suggests. The human element will be drastically reduced in comparison with the flashes of intuition and understanding he will receive from nature itself. (Could it be that Stain himself is considered as an instrument of release? There are one or two occasions, when Ray equates him with the Sun).

But it is not as if Amy is totally without her “released” moments, when for example she along with Stan intimately feels the presence of the trees within them. This is immediately after the floods, when Amy discovers the lost child has mysteriously disappeared again. This is one of the rare instances where she and Stan meet on a totally unified phase of shared experience. They stand at the window watching the trees:

Do you know this? He would have said; and this? And this? That he saw with his eyes and felt with his bones[...] She had begun to see the shapes of the trees, the white columns, and the humbler shaggy ones
stirring and inclining towards them in the morning light. The sky was moving in an extravagance of recovered blue, so that the man and the woman arrested at their window seemed also to move for a moment, to sway on the stems of their bodies, as their souls stirred and recognized familiar countries. For that moment they were limitless.

(98)

Similarly there are other moments when Amy seems to discard the house and all the trappings of confinement it suggests and lives intensely from the outside, only to come back to domestic safety more entrapped than ever. During her first disastrous pregnancy: “She walked through the trees of the piece of land that belonged to them. There was a blurry moon up, pale and watery, in the gently moving branches of the trees. Altogether there was a feeling of flux, of breeze and branch, of cloud and moon[...]. In the dim watery world in which she walked” (62-63).

She looks on from the outside at the house and realizes for the first time the exact nature of the life she had been living within its walls:

[...]their shack stood, with its unreasonably hopeful window of light. She looked through the window of this man-made but, at her husband lying asleep on a bed. There were the pots standing on the stove. A scum from potatoes falling from the lip of a black pot. She looked at the strong body of the weak man. Her slippers were lying on their sides under a chair. She realized with a kind of flat, open-mouthed, aching detachment, that she was looking at her life. (63)
A dead cow her particular favourite suddenly arouses a horror in her of the
natural universe: "Vicious shadows held her hair- She could not run fast enough
through the agonizing trees, towards the houseful of light that she had in her mind’s
eye. Running, But the farther she left their dead over behind, the closer she came to
all that she had not experienced" (63). She pays for her reluctant and incomplete
response, by the loss of her child, as she stumbles against a pile of rooks and falls
down.

The failure in Amy’s response to this experience can perhaps be better
understood when compared with the powerfully symbolic experience of Mrs. Morel
in D.H. Lawrence’s *Sons and Lovers* in a somewhat similar situation. Mrs. Morel is
expecting Paul and after a violent quarrel with Walter Morel she is thrust into the
night and looked out of the house. The right-world through which she wanders is
classified by the sharp clear outlines of the outside world in contrast to Amy’s
blurred world: "The moon was high and magnificent in the August night. Mrs. Morel,
seared with passion, shivered to find herself out there in a great white light, that fell
cold on her, and gave a shook to her inflamed soul. She stood for a few moments
helplessly staring at the glistening great rhubarb leaves near the door [...]"(34).

In this experience Mrs. Morel the unborn child the moon the hills and the
flowers seem to melt in an intense fusion. Later the baby Paul is born with an artist’s
sensitivity. Amy Parker withdraws from the experience in fear, and loses her child.
There is in Amy, just as there had been in the early Laura, a reluctance to enter into
any kind of complete experience. Even with Stan thought: "She had experienced his
love and strength... out of her she could not wring the love that she was capable of
giving, at last enough, complete as sleep or death” (30).
Unlike Amy’s reaction of terror and fear when out in the elemental darkness, Stan Parker can and does incorporate himself not only to a different environment, but to a different element as well, for here he is moving across the water during the floods as part a rescue team.

[...] as he rowed, accepting the strangeness and inevitability of their position the half submerged world became familiar as his own thoughts. He remembered the face of his mother, before her burial when the skull disclosed what the eyes had always hidden, some fear that the solidity of things around her was not assured. But in the dissolved world of flowing water, under the drifting trees, it was obvious that solidity is not. As they rowed under the liquid trees the sound of leaves, swishing dipping into his wet skin was closer to him.

Stan comes to recognize that the world of body, not only he and Amy, but the entire community was striving to create was not only woefully soluble, but also an actual impediment to the opening of new horizons of one’s mind. It is admittedly on their part an effort to impose order but the fallacy lies in the fact that man thinks his order can begin only with the building of fences, whereas natural law is abhorrent to fences and of the kind of pseudo solidity it stands for.

On their way home from the floods Amy wants to rush back to the security and permanence of her home. She is impatient with the interminable distance: “She was at this moment quite feverish with life [...] the road was interminable that she could have accomplished quickly in her mind” (91). It indicates Amy’s impatience at
and her loosening contact with the rhythms of life and nature, further heightened by her efforts to possess the flux of life through the lost child. But Stan, traveling in the same dray, recognizes that life cannot be rushed and should be allowed to run its natural course. He also realizes the immense disparity in what is considered practical and allowable in the external world, and things as they actually are, according to his perception.

The predominant movement here is a fluid, flowing action, quite different from the longed for permanence and solidity, yet at the same time not the strange emptiness of void that Lawrence sensed in Kangaroo and that White himself constantly draws to our attention. It is a fluidity that springs from nature itself. "Stan sat along the inevitable road, so the dray carried him equably though the flowing darkness. In his exhaustion his own life ebbed and flowed along other roads or he opened doors, and went into houses that he had known, in which the familiar faces were looking for him to behave in an expected way" (91). But his experience on the river has revealed to him the phantasmagoric nature of solidity and permanence, however comforting the assumption that they exist, and he can no longer continue the deception.

But because he too, for all his apparent solidity was as fluid and unpredictable as the stream of life he left them standing with the words half cut out of their mouths[...]. He would have liked to subscribe to their gospel of the stationery, but he could not. He would have liked to open himself and declare. Here am I. Then they would have looked inside and recognized with smiles of approval their own desires, standing in rows like objects at the ironmonger's. Rigid. (91)
The image of the objects in the ironmonger's shop hints at a cast iron unchangeable pattern of destructive rigidity, Stan's non-rigidity belies his earlier fear when he wonders if his life lived behind fences would cause his soul to harden "into the neat, self-contained shape it is desirable souls should take" (42).

Churches also represent fences of a kind in The Tree of Man - metaphysical and intellectual fences through the imposition of ideas that ornate asymmetry because of its inattention to the natural patterns of the lands: for instance, there is the astonishing conversation Amy has with the orphan child of the floods where his words become critiques of the church. As he sits looking at his piece of coloured glass, Amy tells him; "You've still got that old thing[...]." (95)

"That is from the church" he said. Amy's dismissive reference to the glass as an old thing though meant for the glass manages to extend itself to include the church quite unconsciously on Amy's part, implying an institution that is worn out and effects. "There was water inside the church" (95) he tells her. She took the piece of glass and held it to her face, so that the whole room was drenched with crimson and the coals of the fire were a disintegrating gold.

"I will tell you about the church" he said. "There were birds there too, that had come in through the holes in the window. I slept there most of the day, on the seats with one of those things that they pray on a sort of cushion under my head, but it pricked. There were fish swimming in the church. I touched one with my hand. And the books were floating and moving" (95).

Patrick White has beautifully managed to incorporate the church with all its emblematic and symbolic implications into the general flux and fluidity created by
the flood. Stan's dreamlike state when he is flowing across the river and realizes that solidity is not described with almost an identical set of images. The flooding of the church could mean the cleansing inundation of natural forces (water, birds and fish) onto a body that was threatening to become static and superimposed the boy rather ominously. There were no prayers being said not any more in that church. Stan Parker's war time experience includes a visit to a church in war term Europe's, which in its vulnerability to the outside forces strongly resembles the church described by the lost child: “I sat awhile in a church. It was all sky there were the frames of windows, but the glass had fallen.... There was a wind blowing and rain and dogs coming in” (201).

An attempt is made to soften the right pattern the church has set into not only in Australia but in Europe too by exposing it completely to the natural world, against which it had built protective walls. Stan Parker does experience a sense of peace in the Durilgai church before his death, which could suggest that the church too had salvaged itself to some extent through the dropping of fences. But the whole build up of that particular scene is so heavily and unnaturally handled by White, that it remains unconvincing.

Rigidity and the wrong kind of solidity in The Tree of Man is as much associated with house as with fences and churches. But there are those infrequent moments when even the walls of the house seem to dissolve, to mingle with the natural world. The breaking of walls can open up vistas of unimaginined possibilities, where seemingly unrelated objects integrate to form one vast pattern. There are
moments when the bush embraces the Parker home and its occupants in an act of special grace:

On hot evenings the house was compressed and mean: now it opened.

The house was not excluded from the largeness of the cool night. The roof of the house was opening so that the feverish stars were reflected in the pans of milk and many other harmonies were proved of skin and feather of chair and bough of air and needle. (112)

This is one of the most transcendent and positive passages in the book where seemingly antithetical worlds anointed to form many other harmonies, so man and bird, skin and feather, object and source, chair and bough can coalesce so beautifully.

Marvell’s lines in the Garden express a similar orchestration of seemingly diverse phenomena: “The mind, that ocean where each kind does straight its own resemblance find: Yet it creates, transcending these Far other worlds and other seas” (99-100).

Empson’s brilliant analysis of these lines is illuminating:

The sea if clam reflects everything near it; the mind as knower is a conscious mirror. Somewhere in the sea there are sea lions and sea horses... though they are different from land ones; the unconscious is unplumbed and pathless and there is no instinct so strange amongst the beasts that it looks its fantastic echo in the mind. (61)

Similarly the idea in the passage quoted from The Tree of Man is that there is nothing in the would created by man, which cannot acknowledge its echo in Nature. It is this realization of the possibility of fusion of disparate entities that create the
other harmonies. This perhaps explains the recurrence of terms like limitless and boldness in *The Tree of Man* to denote some break through made in to the fences. But Stan's (de) fences can only be removed completely when he recognizes and accepts the mutilation he has committed on the land: "There were certain corners of his property, he could not bring himself to visit almost as if he might have discovered something he did not wish to see. It is all right there, he said and persuaded himself that nothing does alter that is established in the mind" (295).

But Stan has to retract to this, he cannot evade his own concealed guilt and knowledge forever. Poignantly his awareness that he has unwittingly hurt the land surfaces in his consciousness:

Once he had been looking at a crop of remarkably fine sorghum that was almost ready to bring in, when he remembered that the same stretch of land after he had cleared it as a young man, and on it the white chips lying that his axe had carved out of the trees and some trees and young saplings still standing and glistening there, waiting for the axe. So that he forgot his present crop and went away disturbed and thinking. (295)

Stan realizes that his foundations were laid at a cruel cost: "What then was wrong? There was nothing of course that you could explain by methods of logic, only a leaf falling at dusk will disturb the reason without reason" (295). The landscape reproaches him with its denuded face "shabby grass and scraggy trees censured things past" (322). His strong sense of repentance and sorrow is almost exactly echoed in Judith Wright's little poem *Eroded Hills*:
These hills my father's father stripped, and beggars to the winter wind they crouch like shoulders naked and whipped—humble, abandoned, out of mind of their scant creeks I drank once and ate sour cherries from old trees found in their gullies fruiting by chance. Neither fruit nor water gave my mind ease. I dream of hills bandaged in snow, their eyelids clenched to keep out fear. When the last leaf and bird go let my thoughts stand like trees here. (83)

And yet it is the trees that offer succour to a distressed Stan as he rushes off in his car, after discovering Amy's infidelity with a traveling salesman: "Bitter agonizing sweeps of grass with the frost on it, with the sun on it, trees turning up silver in a wind, or just the dead trees, to which he had always been mysteriously attracted, consoled as he rode amongst their silences[...]"(Tree 323). Towards the end as Stan walks through his land he accepts it for what it is, with no thought of material or emotional exploitation: "Twigs are snapping [...] under the sky of two metals, of lead and copper, beneath which the old man is walking with the old dog" (323). It is possible to believe that one is alone in this world. "The stiff, needly leaves of the bushes exclude no sap of kindness. But one does not ask for kindness, hooks and silence are sufficient in themselves" (406).

Stan's acceptance constitutes the final and completed breaking of his fiancés. On the day of his death, without his consciously seeking it, he is placed at the focal point of the land.

The grass [...] has formed a circle in the shrubs and tress which the old woman had not so much planted as stuck in [...] 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 moments of life... All was circumference to the centre, and beyond that the worlds of other circles whether crescent of purple villas or the bare patches of earth [...] 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 [...] the large triumphant scene of which he was becoming mysteriously aware [...].

(474)

Stan Parker has freed himself. His horizons have been opened now till they are limitless, he has widened his perception and consciousness till it can accommodate the universe in its totality. This is borne out by Amy's reaction when she discovers him in the garden: "Stan is dead. My husband. In the boundless garden" (478).

The Tree of Man, with its four fold structure is primarily and consistently concerned with the relationship of Man to God, of God to Man. God is God, it seems to proclaim, because man is man. And equally the reverse. One lives within the being of the other. One dies with the other too and must be reborn. This is a book about a mystery. It is also, more strenuously, a wrestling throughout the life of Stan Parker with the contradictions, the complexities of this relationship. At the opening Stan Parker, arrives to take possession of his block of land in virgin scrub.

The four parts of the novel, the orchestral movements of Stan's spiritual quest, are based on analogies with the four seasons and with the movement of one day from morning to evening. Narrative events are important in this long, epic novel, the
narrative episodes serving as archetypal images of man’s basic experience in all ages. In The Tree of Man, the spiritual quest, the inward journey in search of permanence or reality, is seen in terms of four archetypal stages innocence, experience, hell (death) and heaven, (reconciliation). Innocence is associated with man’s youth, with morning (The clear morning of those early years) spring time and the honeymoon of marriage, its archetypal ordeal is flood. Experience, the first years of adult maturity, is the summer of life; it includes the ordeals of fire and war. Autumn is identified with the dry years of suffering, psychic death and loss of faith - ordeal by drought. Winter is the continuation of death begun in late fall, but includes the quiet joys of ‘winter sunshine’ (435) which passes into early spring. The later, in The Tree of Man is identified with Stan’s recovery of faith and spiritual rebirth.

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 loses 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 and the suggestion is that it has done so fruitfully” (67).

When the rain began in earnest, after the honeymoon of blown showers and blue patches, the lives of men and animals appeared both transitory and insignificant events beneath its terrible continuity, although in the early stages of deluge the rain was still rain, the flesh accepted it as water, and the spirit grumbled only over what must end.

(67)
The result is that Stan “looked into her and was content; while Amy looked away. She had looked into him, into his eyes, and had never looked deeper, she thought” (86).

So she grasps at the abandoned child, wanting to keep him, hoping to preserve through him something of this new realization. But he disappears, leaving behind him the coloured glass which had been his plaything, now broken; ‘he didn’t belong to us’; the flux of life cannot be possessed, domesticated. It is the recognition of this truth that brings fruitfulness, satisfaction, into Amy’s life, while the settlement is unobtrusively getting the name Durilgai, meaning “fruitful”. The subsequent conception of her first born child, Ray, is itself an unobtrusive part of the narrative. The second child, Thelma, comes as an after thought of life and she proves to be a fruitful little child.

The second section is one of more advanced adaptations. 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 sterility; it is inevitably unsatisfying. Stan, too seeks desperate horizons, but out of a more shallow a more spasmodic need. The section ends with the storm of dissatisfaction subsiding.
The fourth section shows how Stan Parker discovers his own divinity, and thereby confirms his being a modern man. Now he is able to perceive that man must find in himself his own divinity, his own and very private grandeur.

Sometimes ago *The National Times* spotlighted what is called. "The puzzling case of Patrick White", the peculiar mixture of fascination and respect, of hostility and dislike which his work evokes amongst his country men; his own peculiar love-hate relationship with his native Australia, the undoubted quality of genius in his word and its marked religious character which appears to go so much against the grain of the contemporary outlook. All this seems less puzzling, becomes in fact highly meaningful, when considered within the context of Jung's theories of the great artist and his role in society, as it is explained by Cynthia Vanden Driesen in the essay *Jung and Patrick White* (1972).

Like Freud, Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961) saw the mind as a center of conflicting forces, beginning in childhood and following a developmental course throughout an individual's life. His theory of the human personality is built on the concept of a self as the true center of the psyche which for Jung comprises the totality of all psychic processes, conscious as well as unconscious. For Jung a flux of undifferentiated energy gets channeled into certain privileged, symbols, detached from the workings of language. This individual sees the self in the course of its life experience struggling on the one hand with archaic images of omnipotent selfhood, on the other hand with the demands made by social norms. He regarded his patients' dreams (mainly suffering from schizophrenia) not only as issuing from their unconscious instinctual wishes, but also as creations derived from a common store of
"primordial images" perceived across cultures the inherited possibilities of human imaginations as it was from time immemorial, to be found in every individual. The fact of his inheritance explains the truly amazing phenomenon that certain motifs from myths and legends repeat themselves the world over in identical forms... images or motifs were called archetypes.

These primordial images, issuing from a 'collective unconscious', collective because it is detached from anything personal and is common to all men, manifest themselves in extravagant fantasies which threaten to dissolve the boundaries between self and world. The puzzling case of Patrick White can be solved by applying this to his novels. White uses myths in the form of metaphor within an apparently realistic structure, and the radical metaphor or statement of hypothetical identity is basic to the technique of the novels which follow it.

Patrick White has not only put a new continent into the world of fiction, he has given a new meaning to human existence. His man is no derelict creature in a godless universe, nor is White concerned with the absurdity of a reality insufficient to persuade one of its real existence. A sublime explorer of the psyche, he has discovered new depth of the spirit. The essential loneliness of man and the inevitability of human suffering move him deeply. White never minimizes suffering; he rather suggests that the law of suffering is the one indispensable condition of human experience. Progress is to be measured by the amount of suffering undergone. The hero of The Tree of Man, generally regarded as White's masterpiece, Stan Parker is in many respects a representative man. White uses myths in the form of metaphor
within an apparently realistic structure, and the radical metaphor or statement of hypothetical identity is basic to the technique of the novels which follow it.

In *The Tree of Man*, the identifying of one object with another is so frequent that it creates a feeling of flux or flow which is associated with Stan's search for true permanence. This is the anagogic perspective, where the archetypal symbols are not the forms man constructs in nature but are themselves the forms of nature, with all nature being seen as the content of an eternal living body.

In the opening paragraph of *The Tree of Man*, the horse takes root and the tree has hair. The second page expands this unity of tree and horse to include horse, dog, man and fire in a unity of eyes and fire light. And at the same time as the phenomenal worlds is being humanized, both man and nature are being filled with or identified with Spirit. Robert McDougall describes White's technique as follows. "Spirit enters matter[...]. Human nature and phenomenal nature are no longer separated; they are one, welded together in a juncture that shows no cracks" (8).

The four fold structure is conventional in literature, and White's use of it illustrates the originality and power which is possible within a conventional and traditional literary framework. The various ordeals, such as the desert in *Voss* are unavoidable trials or tests, as integral to life as the seasons themselves.

Each of the four parts contains various seasons, for each represents the passing of many years. One season, however, most noticeably in each, dominates the mood. When Stan and Amy are in the autumn of their lives and Amy is "drying up" (Part III), she thinks of their youth and early married life, "the flood time of their lives" (Tree 285), full of lost possibilities. This is analogous to the Edenic myth of the
springtime of mankind, which culminates in lost innocence and a lost paradise. Stan and Amy's summer is their early maturity, including the growth of their own "common trunk the goodness of their common life " (97). In this period of their lives, a "firmly founded architecture had risen at Parkers. Even in the flesh" (109). Mandala images place first Stan, then both Stan and Amy, at the center of existence in the near perfection of their early maturity, "All was good, almost, that could come to this pass" ( 109).

The images towards the end of part two set a different tone, one of apocalypse, as Stan and Amy are both tried and judged by fire and war. Part III is their season "of stubble and dead grass when doubts did press up" (302) the "years of drought" (304), in their life generally and in their marriage, when communication seems to have failed. Amy succumbs to the temptation presented by the commercial traveller who arrives on a dry autumn afternoon, as Amy shivers in a changing wind. Leo comments on the dryness and ironically, a drink is his pretext for entering the house. Stan's discovery of her infidelity precipitates his loss of faith in God as well as in man and his period of great suffering. Their peaceful old age is a time of winter sunshine, of lessened activity. After temporary psychic death, the spiritual analogy to winter hibernation in nature's cycle, the last half -dozen chapters of the novel show the gradual evolution of Stan's spiritual rebirth.Stan's quest for permanence is also a quest for true knowledge, the spiritual wisdom which enables man to perceive the truth and which is contrasted in White's novels with abstract rationalism.

The word 'knowledge' frequently recurs in this novel, as does permanence, always in the context of this fusion of intellect and spirit which gives knowledge of
something absolute and imperishable. In the church at the christening of his second child, Stan becomes aware of receiving ‘a light of knowledge’(124), which he is unable to analyse. Ossie Peabody, the Parkers’ discontented and unhappy neighbour, is contrasted both with Stan himself and with the simplicity and goodness Stan senses in the natural world. Stan is aware of ‘little spasmodic waves of knowledge and contentment’, so that his ‘knowledge of goodness’(56), is impervious to Ossie’s meanness. The next page again refers to Stan’s knowledge, while the imagery connects him with the sun.

At the end of part two, when Stan is confronted with the news that war has broken out in Europe, his progress is summed up once again in terms of knowledge, ‘moments of true knowledge’, which tell him of the presence of god and relate that presence to his wife’s face and to a trembling leaf whose “veins and vastness were related to all things, from burning sun to his own burned hand”(190). This is the anagogic perspective which dominates the novel.

In part three, as Stan travels home from his fruitless effort to find and help Ray, who has been involved in a racing scandal, the ‘perpetual mystery’ in scrolls of fallen bark allow Stan to exchange his ignorance for ‘knowledge’ (284). Mr. Gage’s painting of the ant-woman with whom Amy identifies depicts ‘a small kernal of knowledge’ in the woman’s almond eye, a growing eye, part of the tree of man. Elsie’s son shares this same knowledge; he is aware of a knowledge of poetry without knowing any particular poem, and asks Stan, “Don’t you ever know, Granpa, about things, because you just know?”(407).
Stan Parker's initial stance, as he begins his search for understanding, is one of wondering acceptance: "there seemed no question of interpretation. Anyway, not yet. Stan knows that there is "nothing to be done" (7). He is there and stubbornly determined to survive. His stubborn courage is transferred to both at the beginning of his life and at its ending, when he tells the young evangelist, "I would not be here if I was not stubborn" (495). Although Stan, in his simplicity and humility is strikingly different from Voss, he does share one characteristic with the German explorer, and with his own mother -- an aspiration towards something transcendent which he cannot describe. Despite his love for his land and all it contains, his eyes regard it from a distance. This is the discontent which balances his wondering love of his scrubby land, a love which gives shape to his life for the first time. A struggle between two desires is being waged within Stan, as "the nostalgia of performance and the fiend of motion fought inside the boy, right there at the moment when his life was ending and beginning." (8) And so begins his search of permanence. His quest must also supply the meaning of the land that contains him, since the technique is continually identifying Stan with natural objects- tree, cabbage, rose, animals and his own house. Thus the basic image for Stan's quest, as reflected in the novel's title, is not progress along a road or way but growth. A continuous process of discovery keeps both Stan and the grandchild who is close to him in a state of "endless being" (397).

Stan's future, and what is in one sense a description of the narrative sequence of Tree, is contained in the remarks of Stan and Amy's first visitor, the stranger who sells Bibles and magnetical water: "Because the almighty hasn't yet shown 'Is' and You have not been: it over the head, kicked downstairs, spat at in the eyes. See?" (36)
Drunkenness is a favourite device of White's for justifying apocalyptic remarks on the 'realistic' level, and the stranger's madness is the disturbing kind that lights up some facets of the truth only too clearly. The storm which follows this visit is the first blow designed to teach Stan the limits of his strength which still appears to him unlimited.

The images of gold and ebony in the stranger's talk of the African Gold Coast evoke in Stan a vision of, and longing for, all beauty. Amy's Gold Coast is her little silver nutmeg grater. Stan whose nature is less possessive than Amy's, is described as being a lesser victim of the same deception. His Gold Coast is his own land, glittering with promise. But although this land is now almost enclosed, his longing will not be contained within its fences. His eyes have assumed a distance from youth and still attempt to focus on "something wood will not disclose", just as his ears are tuned to "the one theme" (38), which threatens to burst from the sounds around him. In old age, Stan ironically watches young Peabody wrestling with earth and rock while fencing his land. The young man moves in the same fury of confidence as had Stan, "back in the dream time" (374), before the trials of life and the complications of love have tempered his confidence.

The Almighty begins to show his hand soon after this, as Stan's fear that he is perhaps about to be hit over the head reminds us of the stranger's words. Implicit in the imagery of the great wind storm is the contrast between Stan's human father, the blacksmith, and the mythic god of thunder and lightening; and between man's weakness and the power behind the storm. Stan is suddenly insignificant, a thing of gristle; the house provides only an illusion of safety, and the hammer is inferior iron
to the thunderbolts. When the wind has passed, Stan and Amy are described in mythic
terms which suggest rebirth after death; even the dog shares in this state “[…] his new
young nakedness[…] the new young nacked man[…] the shining teeth, the
streaming skin and the clean, beautiful skull[…] their present state of purity[…] The
dog shook what remained of himself, for he was now his own skeleton ”(45). Stan is
exhausted but at peace. From what little progress he has made, he concludes that, he
was a prisoner in his human mind, as in the mystery of the natural world. “Only
sometimes the touch of hands, the lifting of a silence, the sudden shape of a tree or
presence of a first star, hinted at eventual release” (46).

As Stan and Amy struggle to repair the damage wrought by the storm, they
are as ants on a tortuous path. The ant-man identification is one of the novel’s
recurring patterns of imagery which prepare us to understand Stan’s final epiphany.
In the days which follow the storm, Stan and Amy discover their weakness anew, this
time in the face of death. The death of the cow precipitates Amy’s fear of death and
of all that she has not experienced; this in turn leads to her stumbling on the stones,
and to the loss of her unborn child.

The most dramatic suffering of the autumn of Stan’s life is brought on by his
wife and son, although this time of drought and doubts has a wider base in life in
general. After Ray’s involvement in a racing scandal, Stan journeys to the city in
search of his son, full of hope and the innocent conviction that if he could only find
his son, all would be made clear. This episode is patterned on the archetypal search
for the lost and beloved or the prodigal son.
For Stan, the path to hell lies "over a rime of rotting vegetables, and old newspapers and contraceptive aids", and the stranger of whom he asks the way wonders whether Stan "was mad to expose himself thus nakedly at a crossroads"(280). The sweetish smell of rotten fruit which issue from the fruit shop, now closed, above which Ray has lived is identified with Ray himself. In Ray's career we have a demonic parody of the fruitfulness of Durilgai and of the tree of man; the rotten fruit and the bag of runty plums which Stan sees a woman pitch into the gutter form a prophecy of Ray's end. Stan refuses to join, however, in Thelma's facile assessment of Ray as no good. "it is too early," he said, "to say who is good " (283). This unwillingness to judge becomes, in the latter half of the novel, a recurrent motif, suggestive of the parable of the wheat and the tares (Matt. 13:24-30). The imagery surrounding Ray's death is again demonic or repugnant: his second wife is "bloody horrible", cigarettes substitute for food, "friends" are those who "drink you dry", and flies and the smell of rot prevail."(Tree 453-456)

The counterpart of the lost son Ray is the grandson, Elsie's boy, the sound fruit of The Tree of Man. This child is associated with the lost boy of the flood time, a boy of whom we know little save that he refuses to be possessed by force, even by force of love. He has taken the coloured glass from a flooded church and through it sees the world drenched in crimson. The lost boy is identified by Amy with the lost possibilities of their springtime. To this mythic pattern, which suggests the New Adam or man's recovery of lost innocence, belongs the description of Stan's "state of purity" after the rainstorm. Her two actual children are demonic parodies of this
desirable child: one a criminal, the other a neurotic whose pseudo-spirituality is like that of Rosie Rosetree in Riders.

Amy gives the red glass belonging to the lost boy to Elsie’s son, who is kept in “a state of endless being by his interest in things themselves” (397). In the short last chapter after Stan’s death, “the boy looks through the glass at the crimson mystery of the world. The colours of the scene where Amy gives the glass to the boy” (399). The colours, of course, are complementary, hence operative at the level of verisimilitude. White habitually uses colours as apocalyptic images. Crimson, colour of blood belongs to the pain, suffering and death which is part of Stan’s final epiphany; green, to the promise contained in the boy, whose thoughts and life are green shoots put out by the eternal tree of man. So that, in the end, there was no end.

When suspicion of Amy’s infidelity has given way to certainty, Stan drives off in his old car, which seems to find its own way into the city. In Tree the apocalyptic city or desirable community of men is located at Durilgai, with the big city nearby depicted as a parody of true community, a place which is associated with Thelma’s social climbing and Ray’s fall and which is now the locale for Stan’s experience of hell. His own past failures, especially his failure to take up the bearded man in the flood, mingle with Amy’s, in the swill pot where drink affords no relief. It would seem that Stan has reached absolute bottom in the street beneath a “Godless” paper sky: “He spat at the absent God then, mumbling till it ran down his chin. He spat and farted, because he was full to bursting. Then the paper sky was tearing, he saw. He was tearing the last sacredness, before he fell down amongst some empty crates, mercifully reduced to his body for a time”(333).
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Con the Greek, Stan senses that he has not yet reached the depths, and at the same time he is agonizingly aware of an irretrievable state of lost innocence. Stan's psychic experience of death completes his third stage of life and the novel's Part Three. Returning to Amy he sees that a period has ended, that they have entered a fresh phase.

In the time of alienation from God which follows, years of resignation and suspended life, Stan experienced a freedom from god which is a parody of the freedom he is later to recover and which he vainly tries to explain to Lola after Ray's death; "Freedom. But prayer is freedom, or should be. If a man has got faith" (458). During the periods of his own spiritual death, however, when Stan is "more or less resigned to that state of godlessness he had chosen when he vomited God out of his system and choked off any regurgitative craving for forgiveness" (356), he experiences the same hollow parody of freedom which has ensnared Lola. His recovery begins after the accident where he just fails to shoot himself. The state of suspension ends, his emptiness begins to fill: "It is not natural that emptiness shall prevail, it will fill eventually, whether with water, or children, or dust, or spirit. So the old man sat gulping in. His mouth was dry and caked, that had also vomited out of his life that night, he remembered, in the street" (422-423).

Stan nourishes his new spiritual life by taking part in the communion service. The wine mingles with the vomit and bile of his hatred of Amy and his disbelief in God; Stan swallows both together, with humility and gratitude, confident that eventually he shall "receive a glimpse" (432) of the transcendent reality he has always sought.
We have seen how the theme is forwarded through narrative treated archetypally as ritual. The theme is also developed through a network of recurrent images. Although the image takes its meaning from its individual context, a continuity of association within subtly varied contexts is established. With repetition of the basic image, the metaphorical identification is confirmed.

Some of the most important of these apocalyptic images in *The Tree of Man* are ant-identified with man’s frailty, fish-identified with a transcendent divine spirit and the possibility of man’s relation to this, mandala and square. The patterns, of course, become clearer upon second and subsequent readings, a labour which White’s novels richly repay. The fish motif in Tree begins with Mr. Gage, the post mistress’s husband, whose paintings bring Amy Parker a moment of truth. Mr. Gage had been engrossed in a beautiful fish at the time of his first meeting with Mrs. Gage.

Fish symbolism becomes prominent in Part Four, the section containing Stan’s spiritual rebirth, where it is introduced frequently in a variety of contexts. A fish is one of Thelma’s presents to her mother. “The fish was. He glittered. His being could not end in death” (385).

The fish as Jessie Weston demonstrates in *From Ritual to Romance*, (1920) is an ancient symbol of divine life, being identified with or considered sacred to those deities who were supposed to lead men back from death to life. Miss Weston maintains that the Fish is a Life symbol of immemorial antiquity, and that the title of Fisher has, from the earliest ages, been associated with the Deities who were held to be especially with the origin and preservation of life. Both the Buddha and the Hindu God Vishnu appears in fish avatars. For the early Christians the fish was the secret
symbol of Christ, the apostles were commanded to be fishers of men and a sacramental fish meal was celebrated in the catacombs by the primitive Christians' Church. In the Mystery cults of the Mediterranean basin in the Pre-Christian era, the fish was associated with the god-man and served as the holy food of their sacred meal. Some of the Christian mystics saw Christianity as the fulfillment of the earlier Mystery cults and attempted to fuse the mystic meals of the cults with the sacrament of encharist. In short, the fish serves as a universal symbol of deity and of the possibility for man, of a spiritual life begun in this life and continued in the next. In this context, it is found in Buddhism, Hinduism, various mythologies including the Celtic, ancient Mystery religions of the Mediterranean basin, and Christianity. The universality of the symbol is evoked in The Tree of Man. White's use of the Methodist prayer meeting and the Anglican communion service at crucial points in the narrative structure of Part Four points to a Christian context for the fish image — and this, despite the apparent repudiation of the young evangelist at the time of Stan's death.

The maiden name of Ray's wife, Tarbutt, conceals the name of the fish. Elsie Tarbutt is an earlier version of Ruth Godbold, in Riders. She accepts Ray through a desire to undertake something too big for her, and as a more challenging and humiliating course than becoming a missionary. It is Elsie's son who is the child of promise, when Stan has died. On the night of the rainstorm, when Stan has one of his moments of vision, the little boy sees life through the streaming windowpane as it would look to a fish. It is a revelation for the boy, but one which he cannot convey to the others. The boy's visual impression of life under water resembles a dream, and
belongs to the inversions of reality and illusion effected in the novel. In the production of Hamlet, play and players suggest an inversion of the common perspective: real life is the dream, the pretence or play-acting from which death is an awakening to reality. Stan’s thoughts of his submerged half continue the association of fish and spirit.

Madeleine, in youth the brittle heroine of Amy’s novelette, returns in Part Four as Mrs. Fisher, Thelma’s friend. Her new name appears at first to be a parody of the usual context for fish symbolism, as these sterile women are contrasted with Amy’s simplicity.

The satire directed at the artificial sophistication of this woman and her society is similar to that found in the last chapter of Riders. White’s social satire is not of major importance in itself but serves to forward his main theme and to point out weaknesses in Stan and Amy Parker. Amy identifies Madeleine with all the luxury and the erotic experiences which Amy herself has not experienced; her desires are temporarily purged when she sees Madeline stretching on the ground, after the fire. Stan has been strongly tempted by lust in his rescue of Madeleine from the burning house.

Our last glimpses of Mrs. Fisher, reverse the suspicion that her name is simply a comic parody of the fish symbol. As Madeleine and Thelma are leaving Parkers, the narrator suggests that these were people, “who had not realized themselves fully, but would perhaps, if time would stand” (449). Madeleine speaks genuinely to Stan of the lovely smell of winter which seems endless. “She is suddenly possessed by a yearning for bees, which are identified with her terrible nostalgia for lost possibilities.
Here, as earlier in the novel, bees are identified with spiritual peace and with the sun" (213-450). Solutions have eluded Madeline so far. The last mention of her, however, describes Mrs. Fisher as one whose glances, towards the end of her life were directed inward. The suggestion that Madeleine's life constitutes another quite possibly successful quest illustrates the inclusive tendency of the comic structure.

The ant is identified with man's essential humanity, with his physical frailty and his eventual physical deaths. Failure to notice the development of the ant pattern throughout the novel will restrict the impact of Stan's final epiphany, which begins with a leaf and the ants on the path. In his close attention to the natural world, Stan frequently observes ants; and on one such occasion Stan makes these observations “from the dream state of the sleeper, in which he was slowly stirring and from which he would one day look out perhaps and see” (216). When Stan goes to seek Ray in the city people advise Stan with “Antlike fidelity”, as if receiving him “into their own ant-world” (280).

A special pattern of ant imagery surrounds Amy, Mr. Gage, and his paintings. In the small clearing where her married life begins, Amy's child like frailty seems to put her on a level with the ant. In Part Two, she encounters Mr. Gage spread out upon the ground, contemplating an ant. He is surprised that Amy neither questions nor criticizes his stances. “Because it is not usual for a human being to resist an opportunity to destroy. And she could have crushed with her foot such ecstasy as remained in his ant body” (103). Amy remembers this incident when Mr. Gage's paintings are discovered at the time of his suicide, and in her continuous preoccupation with what could have been her relationship with the dead man, She
resembles the savagely simple woman of one of his paintings, reaching for the incandescent sun. In the painting's corner appears the skeleton of an ant filled with a fire as intense as the sun's. The painted woman, the ant and Amy are thus identified, and depicted as aspiring to the transcendent absolute of the painting's sun.

The ant imagery is complemented by an assortment of images which are identified with man's spirit - bird, butterfly, fire and fish. The essential unity of White's vision demonstrated by his use of the ant image alone at the time of Stan's death, and by the fiery ant of Mr. Gage's painting. Western literature has frequently associated the bird's freedom of flight with man's spirit. White uses this traditional association in Voss, Palfreyman's profession of ornithology. In Tree, the man child Bub is both bird and ant, as he explores the ground and the treetops with wondering appreciation. The separation of spirit and animality is more distinct, more noticeable, in Bub than in a normal human being. The butterfly provides a variation on the bird image. In chapter 21, where Stan attends a production of Hamlet and an early morning communion service, the narrator refers to Stan's spiritual activity and his communion with the landscape. Following this, Stan stoops to watch some ants dragging a butterfly wing. On a sudden impulse, he twitches the wing away and tosses it into the sunlight, where it flutters and shimmers, "rightly restored to air" (412). The wing, an image of the spirit, belongs by rights to the sun and air rather than to the ground and the ants. The connotations of the incident are similar to those surrounding the image of Bub as both ant and bird.

With reference to the ultimate vision of The Tree of Man Manfred Mackenzie emphasized the "quite unambiguous conclusion, when the dying Stan Parker is
received into the ‘one’(2). The identification of man and ant throughout the novel prepares us for Stan’s final epiphany, when he expresses his belief in a leaf, in the cracks in the path and the painfully struggling ants, “But struggling. But joyful... As he stood waiting for the flesh to be loosened on him, he prayed for greater clarity, and it became obvious as a hand. It was clear that One, and no other figure, is the answer to all sums” (497). The paradox of suffering and joy is finally resolved into one joy, yet Stan’s direct assertion of belief is not in this mystical one, but in the earth, the ants, the gob of spittle which, as he informs the young evangelist, “is God” (495).

The last five pages of chapter 25, beginning “That afternoon the old man’s chair had been put on the grass at the back” (493), form a closely knit unit, the chapter’s last page contains Stan’s final epiphany, but those last five pages, contains ours. Stan is shown at the centre of a mandala, which has formed out of the wilderness without man’s conscious design: “It was perfectly obvious that the man was seated at the heart of it [...] All was circumference to the center, and beyond that the worlds of other circles [...] The last circle but one was the cold and golden bowl of winter, enclosing all that was visible and material ” (493-494). The golden – bowl image recalls the golden bowl formed by the brass rail of the balcony at the theatre, a bowel which had held all life in the form of the eternal archetypes of human fears and desires in Shakespeare’s Hamlet. But whereas Stan, or man himself, is at the center of this bowl that encloses, “all that was visible and material”, the circumference is not man in his ant-frailty, not man subject to death and physical decomposition, but some “last circle” beyond this-some absolute with which man is intimately identified.
Into this "large and triumphal scheme" comes the young evangelist, with his belief in the direct approach and his "steam roller" faith. His concern is not really for Stan's spiritual welfare but for himself, since his passionate exposure of his past sins is an 'orgasm', an obsession which preoccupies the young man "even to the exclusion of his present mission, the old man" (494). Once again, as so often in White's novels, we are reminded of the difference between what Kierkegaard described as subjective and objective truth, the former involving a valid personal relation to the truth. "Having defined the truth as subjectivity [...]. Since truth lies in the 'how' of the subject's relationship, the fullest truth attainable by human beings will be that relationship in which the subjective elements- the passion with which one holds to an object- reaches its highest intensity (192).

Stan sees the kinship of fair and foul identified with the most sickening incidents of his life or the fetid character of his own condition when he fell had down in a city alleyway and spat at the absent god.

The identity of characters is expressed through a mysticism, but not the unitive mysticism which negates the reality of the temporal. It is the same vision which underlies Willie Pringle's seeing the blowfly on its bed of offal as "but a variation of the rainbow" (Voss 441). In The Tree of Man as in his other novels this identity between man, nature and God is expressed by the radical metaphor, where two things are identified while each retain its own form and by the anagogic perspective which sees the universe as the incarnate world. The emphasis on immanence in Tree is balanced in the novel which follows, by an emphasis on transcendence and divine grace, mediated to Voss through Laura and Mercy.