Chapter - III

The Return

The progressive revelation of the inner self started in The Aunt's Story, is continued in The Eye of the Storm, (A Fringe of Leaves) and The Twyborn Affair, (in which the protagonists, not content with their false selves, move toward their true and full identities. They achieve what Mordecai Marcus calls a "decisive initiation", an initiation which centers on self-discovery (223), whereby one has a clearer insight into oneself and one's identity. While in Storm Elizabeth Hunter's moment of "discovery" occurs when she is caught in a storm, in Fringe Ellen Roxburgh is led to the core of self in her journey into the Australian bush. The experiences of both women lead to the growth in awareness and understanding of themselves, and for the first time in White's novels, the traditional mythic journey theme takes the pattern of descent and return, when the protagonists, to use Campbell's phrase, cross "the threshold of mystic realm into the land of common day" to confront society with their newly acquired "ego-shattering, life-redeeming elixir" (Hero 216). However, unlike Elizabeth Hunter whose "moment of transcendence" achieves a significance only on her death-bed, Ellen Roxburgh's self-knowledge helps her to reintegrate herself into society and carry on living. As Brady observes, her moment of greatness is achieved not at the point of death, but by surviving ("Civilization" 126).
In The Twyborn Affair, the search for self is also at the heart of Eddie/Eadith Twyborn's ordeal, but in an attempt to conform to social conventions and sexual barriers, the androgynous protagonist interchanges his personality from man to woman and vice-versa. The transsexual existence, however, does not lead to self-discovery but self-evasion. As it did for Elizabeth and Ellen, recognition and acceptance of the inner self holds out the possibility of renewal, and when Eddie comes to terms with his true self he emerges from the ordeal with a totally different personality. In all three novels the rite de passage as rebirth is prevalent.

The Eye of the Storm

Only when you have no thing in your mind
and no mind in things are you vacant and
spiritual, empty and marvellous.

(qtd. in Watts 151)

In The Eye of the Storm, the departure from the other novels is not only in the theme, but also in the central character, as the beautiful, rich, vain, cruel and self-centred Elizabeth Hunter is a character type who was earlier condemned and denied any possibility of salvation in the world of Patrick White's fiction, her most recognizable precursor being Alfreda Courtney. But
in this novel White affirms that the perception of "pure being" is possible to the "sensual, mendacious and materialistic" protagonist (ES 589) when she admits to her faults and recognizes herself as "a flaw" (ES 424). This recognition is analogous to Voss's and Hurtle's acceptance of their humanity, and Elizabeth, like all White's protagonists, is reduced to the state of humility and simplicity which enables her to transcend to a state of "pure living bliss" (ES 24). However, unlike in earlier novels, the visionary perception does not coincide with the end of the character's life but occurs sixteen years prior to the novel's present. The novel opens with the eighty six year old, half-blind, wealthy woman on her death-bed, attended by nurses and a housekeeper-cook, awaiting the visit of her children and ruminating on her past. As in The Solid Mandala, life is unfolded from its final scenes backwards and there is a gradual revelation of her past life and the lives of those who gather at her bedside.

Elizabeth Hunter's visionary moment occurs when she is caught in a storm on Brumby Island. She, her daughter Dorothy and a Norwegian ecologist, Edward Pehl had been invited by the Warmings to their summer place on the island. But the Warmings are forced to leave to attend to their sick child on the mainland
and Dorothy departs in a jealous rage over her mother's seductive attitude towards Pehl, who escapes when warned about the storm. Elizabeth Hunter alone remains to survive the cyclone which sweeps through the countryside. It is significant that Elizabeth's transcendental experience occurs not in the city but away from it, whereby White reinforces the power of the Australian landscape which "heals" and transforms the individual who dares the metaphysical challenge. Elizabeth's journey to the Warmings' house through the dense trees entwined by vines "so intricately rigged (that) the light barely slithered down" (ES 374) is analogous to the journey of the mythical hero which takes him into the depths of the earth where he encounters the monster to be killed. The monster that Elizabeth encounters is herself - her destructive, insensitive, possessive and demanding self. She admits to her faults, if only to herself, and the confession produces "a rare sense of freedom" (ES 416). As she wanders into the bush - the word "wander" (ES 416) summarising the theme of the erring, bewildered human pilgrimage - she is "disturbed by the mystery of her strength of her elect life" (ES 416). Consequently humbled, for the first time instead of leading, she let herself be led into the cool depths of the rain forest" (ES 416), gradually discovering that "the desire to possess had left her" (ES 417). And as she
walks towards the house she is "less than ever capable of explaining the gifts which were showered on her" (ES 419). Later in the day, as if in preparation of a ritual - Carolyn Bliss remarks that the preparation is clearly meant to evoke the rituals of confession and absolution, communion and baptism (Failure 139) - Elizabeth anoints herself, dresses in white, moulds her hair and waits for the ecologist unaware that he has left the island. When he does not turn up she goes in search of him, and at that time the storm strikes. Battered and bruised by the wind and the rain, she shelters herself on a shelf in a shack, but is thrown off by a blast. Lying on the ground she submits herself "to someone to whom she had never been introduced" (ES 424), realizing that her endurance is being tested. At that moment, like Theodora Goodman, she experiences a total inclusiveness which comprehends everything and everyone:

she positively believed in what she saw and was and what was too real too diverse composed of everyone she had known and loved and not always altogether loved it is better than nothing and given birth to and for God's sake.

(ES 424)
The storm makes her aware of her frailty, and awakened to a new form of consciousness:

she was no longer a body, least of all a woman: the myth of her womanhood had been exploded by the storm. She was instead a being, or more likely a flaw at the centre of this jewel of light: the jewel itself, blinding and tremulous at the same time, existed, flaw and all, only by grace. . . . (ES 424)

Having been stripped of her "inessential self" she is filled with a "dream of glistening peace" (ES 424), and "all else was dissolved by this lustrous moment made visible in the eye of the storm" (ES 425). She wishes herself to also dissolve, "to become part of the shambles . . . no worse than any she had caused in life in her relationships with human beings . . . to be received into the sand along with other deliquescent flesh . . . " (ES 425), but the cry of a dying bird recalls her to life, reminding her that she can't escape suffering. She concludes that not having experienced enough of "living" (ES 425) she has been "saved up" (ES 428) and is miraculously rescued from the devastation, as Himmelfarb was from the Nazi camp. "Weak from the great
joy she had experienced while released from her body and all the contingencies in the eye of the storm" (ES 428), she returns to face "further trial".

Elizabeth Hunter's passage to "self-discovery" may be described in terms of Mordecai Marcus's definition of an "initiation story" wherein the individual undergoes "a significant change in knowledge about the world or himself", and the knowledge thus gained with or without ritual "is at least likely to have permanent effects" (223). Elizabeth's visionary experience which reveals her "true self" alters her to the very core, and forms the symbolic nucleus of the rest of her life. As she lies on her death bed she yearns to return to the moment in the storm but is unable to, as she has not yet surrendered herself. She has not yet left behind her crass materialism and remains a cold and demanding "bitch", which White explains is because "there was that side of her nature too, but she did have, . . . more insights after the storm" (qtd. in Bliss, Failure 139). In fact as she remembers her experience, she is able to accept the unflattering picture of her self-centred past.

Elizabeth recalls that she had failed miserably at love, always demanding from her husband and children all the love
that she herself was incapable of bestowing. To her loving husband she was unfaithful, and had "hurt, deceived, tortured and finally destroyed" him (ES 416). But she had regretted all the pain she had caused him when she heard that he was dying of cancer. And she returned to "Kudjeri", their country property to nurse him in his fatal illness. There, with Alfred, she had experienced a "state of unity in perfect stillness . . . There were moments when their minds were folded into each other without any trace of the cross-hatching of wilfulness or desire to possess" (ES 63). As Aired approached death the two enjoyed a "sere honeymoon of the hopeful spirit" (ES 198). It was a "brief exquisite phase" when she had been able to speak to her husband in "words which conveyed their meanings" (ES 203). Reliving his death she remembers her acts of adultery and awakens to the present "staring inward, in the direction of a horizon which still had to be revealed" (ES 205).

It is at "Kudjeri" that Elizabeth first senses her inward quest. Once when she was looking through Alfred's books, she comes across a book of French engravings where she sees a picture of a skiapod, a monster, half-woman and half-fish, in which she recognizes a "spiritual semblance" (ES 200). Later
in dreams she sees herself as a skiapod "in search of something it would probably never find" (ES 404). This symbolises the hidden, monster-haunted world of dark perplexity, and complete self-knowledge demands a descent into it. Elizabeth's experience in the storm has been a descent into her monster self, and having accepted her imperfection and suffering, she ascends to make her last sublime journey toward integration and wholeness.

As Elizabeth Hunter awaits her two children, Dorothy and Basil, she is aware that it is only the thought of inheriting her wealth which brings them to her death bed. There is no love. When they were children she had not loved them and now it is too late, as she tells Sister de Santis: "When you're prepared to love them they don't want it; when they do, it's you who can't bear the idea" (ES 11). It is Dorothy's idea to move her mother to the Thorogood Village and she enlists the support of her brother and eventually of Arnold Wyburd, the solicitor. When the children inform Elizabeth of their plans she is deeply upset as she realizes that their callousness and hatred is a result of her destructive handiwork but she accepts the news with apparent resignation. She is now ready to re-enter the "eye" having endured "trial by Nature", memories of past failures,
the diminutions of old age. She has even emerged triumphant over the "diseased conscience", her ego, and has now reached "a calm in which the self has been stripped if painfully, of its human imperfections" (ES 29). There is a total annihilation of the self. At this point Elizabeth Hunter experiences an illimitable integration of the past and the present. She is carried back into the eye of the storm and she wills "her body to put her feet on the ground and walk steadily towards the water" (ES 550), towards her final voyage, and there "perform whatever the eye is contemplating for (her)" (ES 550). In her death she dismisses all attempts to fill "the void with mock substance" (ES 551) and attains the "endlessness" of "pure being", becoming co-existent with "the One".

Elizabeth Hunter's death has a different impact on each of the other characters who may all be seen as an extension of Elizabeth. Tacey calls them "personified fragments of a total nature" (Mother - Goddess 274). Flora Manhood, the day nurse, embodies Elizabeth's erotic nature, and the old lady, comes to represent the life she (Flora) had longed for, but hadn't yet dared embrace, beauty that she had imagined but had so far failed to grasp and finally death which hadn't concerned her
(ES 121) but which when she faces, lifts her up into the fullness of love. She, therefore, rejects the idea of a lesbian relationship with her cousin, and decides to marry her boyfriend. The spiritual side of Elizabeth is personified in Sister de Santis and the two inhabit "a world of trust" (ES 11). The nurse's life with Mrs. Hunter fills her with "the beauty she herself had witnessed, and love as she had come to understand it" (ES 607) and she decides to dedicate herself to a remarkably unpleasant cripple. Lotte Lipman, the housekeeper-cook represents the darker side of her employer. It is her dance act which is the prelude to Mrs. Hunter's death. However, as her spiritual existence depends solely on the physical existence of the old woman, on Elizabeth Hunter's death, she commits suicide.

Dorothy embodies Elizabeth's brutal, selfish nature but unlike her mother, Dorothy does not attempt to change. She had married only for the purpose of acquiring the title of "princess" and her marriage quickly collapses. She is forced to return from France when she has no money, to acquire the fortune of her dying mother. But Australia is a country to which she does not belong, and she departs immediately after her mother's death with her money, rejecting her Australian self for her European
persona. Her brother is a mirror image of her "dead" personality and she claims to know Basil "better than the mirror knew him":

She knew him, she thought, as she knew her actual self, as opposed to the one which others saw. She even found herself warming towards their mother for having made a less animal version of identical twins: mutually appreciative siblings. (ES 400)

Like Dorothy, Basil also fails in love and has two unsuccessful marriages behind him. He tries to recover the truth of himself by making a trip to "Kudjeri" whereby he returns through memory to his childhood. But he fails to integrate the past with the present and ends up in incest, brother and sister being desperate for love. They re-awaken from their illusions disappointed and return to their earlier existence after their mother's death. With his inherited fortune, Basil hopes to buy himself "back into life, into art, into the affections of - almost - anybody" (ES 586). Successful as an actor, Basil can only act instead of live life. He has a Macbeth to his credit, but is obsessed with the role of Lear, though in a rare honest moment he admits that the "branches of pure anguish" of Lear are not for him; that the play is
"unplayable for actors anyway" though possible may be for some "gnarled, authentic man, as much a storm-tossed hero as flesh" (ES 350). This is an echo of White's own feelings regarding the play. In an interview he tells Jim Sharman that he read King Lear, repeatedly: "... it is a play that has obsessed me and I have read it a lot. But I think it would be very difficult to find the right actor for Lear... I doubt anyone can do King Lear" (27). And certainly not Basil who can only be "a bloody superficial Lear" (ES 349).

More suited to the part of Lear is Elizabeth Hunter, who has as her fool, Lotte Lippmann. The housekeeper herself asserts that she is "the fool", when told that Elizabeth Hunter is making a fool of her: "She is making no fool. That is what I am" (ES 550). Basil and Dorothy plotting to gain their mother's estate take the role of the ungrateful children, Goneril and Regan. Occupying the eye of the storm, Elizabeth Hunter's experience is similar to Lear's discovery of himself in the storm, and she reproduces the archetype of bare unaccommodated man. The Lear-like stripping process is a central symbol in the works of Patrick White, each character experiencing a peeling away of the false ego-bound self. Right from White's first published story,
"The Twiching Colonel", where the Colonel decides "I shall strip myself, the onion-folds of prejudice, till standing naked though conscious I see myself complete" (606), White endorses the necessity to annihilate "the great monster self" to achieve "that desirable state" (AS 127) of humility and simplicity. This peeling-away and stripping process also imagined by Mary Hare in Riders, "Eventually I shall discover what is at the centre, if enough of me is peeled away," (RC 58), is not just metaphorically but also literally experienced by the protagonist Ellen Roxburgh in the following novel, A Fringe of Leaves. Ultimately, every one, like Lear, has to face his own predicament on the heath amidst his own storm.

Elizabeth Hunter's journey into darkness takes place during her experience in the storm when she descends into her own inner labyrinth. She then realizes as Le Mesurier does, that her "whole life had been a failure, lived at a most humiliating level, always purposeless, frequently degrading" (V 289). The realization transforms her only momentarily as she is still caught in her material existence. The conflict between her spirituality and materialism is the second stage of the journey. The dragon is slain when she is dissolved of the desire to possess, she is then
reborn. Her transformation may be described in D.H. Lawrence's words:

She has lived and suffered, and taken her place in the realities. Now neither riches nor rank nor violence matter to her. She knows what life consists in, and she never fails in her knowledge.

(qtd. in Walsh, White 29)

The knowledge admits her to a state in which grace descends, and she attains the endlessness of "pure being". The persistent theme of the dolorous quest in all White's novels indicate that if we are to be whole, we must descend into the darkest places of the soul; completeness is hard-won.
A Fringe of Leaves

At one stroke I forgot all my knowledge!

There's no use for artificial discipline,

For, move as I will, I manifest the ancient Way.

(qtd. in Watts 165)

A Fringe of Leaves, like Voss, is based on history, and the protagonist Ellen Roxburgh, re-enacts the experience of Eliza Frazer, a nineteenth century English woman who accompanied her husband to Van Diemen's Land to visit his renegade brother, and was shipwrecked off the Queensland coast, taken captive by the Aborigines and finally rescued by a convict. White once again uses the motif of the metaphysical quest, and Ellen's journey to Van Diemen's Land, and the hazardous land journey through the Australian interior first with the Aborigines and later with the convict is a symbolic descent into the psychic underworld, where the heroine encounters the fearful, dark forces within herself. She acknowledges the darkness in her, and her shared responsibility with the world's evil, which allows for the ascent into a world of social relationships.
The novel opens with a "prologue" spoken by "minor characters", Miss Scrimshaw and the Merivales. They have just seen off Austin and Ellen Roxburgh who are returning to England after visiting Mr. Roxburgh's brother Garnet on Van Diemen's Land. Miss Scrimshaw's remark: "Every woman has secret depths with which even she, perhaps, is unacquainted, and which sooner or later must be troubled" (FL 17) predicts Ellen's encounter with her dark self which will lead to the "ultimate in experience". But first she has to endure a painful struggle, which Miss Scrimshaw again anticipates and Mr. Merivale wonders aloud "how Mrs. Roxburgh would react to suffering if faced with it" (FL 21). Ellen's fate thus prophesised, the minor actors are ushered off the stage. The prologue is followed by a transition from present to past, memories and journals revealing the inner and past lives of the Roxburghs, and past back to present.

In the novel, White revives the European image of Australia as a barbarous country, unsuited for the arts of civilized human beings (Manning Clark 17-19) to portray that the European idea of "civilization" is nothing more than a deception of the self, and Ellen Roxburgh's journey is a journey through this self deception into inner reality. Australia and England are also metaphorically
identified with the dichotomous nature of the protagonist. Australia, the "country of thorns, whips, murderers, thieves, shipwrecks and adultresses" (FL 280) is associated with the primitive, crude, sensual Ellen Giuyas, while England is associated with the "civilized" Ellen Roxburgh with her thin veneer of sophistication. Ellen is torn between the two sides of her self and throughout the novel White refers to her as either Giuyas or Roxburgh to signify which self is dominant.

Ellen Giuyas, a farmer's daughter, is introduced to gentility when she marries Mr. Austin Roxburgh, a sickly gentleman who was a lodger on her farm. The old Mrs. Roxburgh initiates Ellen into the mysteries of civilised society which involves the correct handling of teacups and keeping a diary of her daily activities. Ellen's Cornish dialect also fades as she acquires the necessary gift of articulation. The Roxburghs' need to turn Ellen into a lady, a "work of art" (FL 54), advocates the conception of the supremacy of art over nature. But the natural cannot be suppressed for long, and on Van Diemen's Land the Giuyas self breaks through the acquired social façade. Even as they approach the island Ellen "remembered she was the farmer's daughter who had married an honourable gentleman, and corrected her speech, and learned ;
to obey certain accepted moral precepts and social rules, most of them incongruous to her nature . . ." (FL 71). She feels an instant rapport with the Australian countryside. "The scent of the cow's breath, the thudding of her hooves, and the plop of falling dung filled Ellen with an immeasurable home-sickness", and had it not been for the hostility of the people around "she might have been driving Gluyas's cart to market" (FL 74). It is the farmer's daughter who recognizes and is attracted to the "coarse and sensual" in Garnet Roxburgh, which the "spurious lady" (FL 74) rejects. "The hardships and indignities suffered during her girlhood" (FL 75) makes her sympathise with the convicts whom she feels are no more "miscreant" (FL 79) than Garnet or even herself. She also identifies herself with Holly, the scullery-maid, whose "fate might have been her own . . . had a rich man's caprice not saved her from it" (FL 81). And the battle rages on inside her as she tries to suppress the Gluyas self underlying her Roxburgh persona.

It is in the Australian countryside where she is related neither to Roxburgh nor to Gluyas, but to a "being her glass could not reveal" (FL 82), that her untroubled depths surface, as portentously remarked by Miss Scrimshaw. While resting in
a small clearing her repressed sensuality surfaces and she dreams about making love with Garnet. Upon waking she is assuaged with feelings of guilt, as it seems to forebode the "predicament", the "presentiment of an evil" which even as a child she knew "she would have to face" (FL 98). The dream of passion is realized soon after the Christmas day celebrations when she goes riding and falls off her horse in the same clearing, and Garnet comes to her "rescue": "She closed her eyes . . . to bask beneath the lashes in an experience of sensuality she must have awaited all her life" (FL 103). And ironically while Garnet believes he has seduced her, Ellen is aware that he "was less her seducer than the instrument she had chosen for measuring depths she was tempted to explore" (FL 104). The sexual encounter takes her closer to the dark reaches of her own nature, and is a prelude to her mythic descent into the depths of her being.

Ellen's natural self reasserts itself on the return sea voyage and she finds herself regaining the lost "art of common speech" (FL 91) in reverting to her Cornish dialect when talking with the cabin boy, Oswald Dingam. She realizes that her artificial persona is being stripped from her and that she is "returning, and not by slow degrees to nature" (FL 188). The ritualistic stripping of her socially acquired self is reinforced further by
the fact that as soon as she falls into the hands of the Aborigines, the women of the tribe strip the clothes from her body, cut her hair, and adorn her head with feathers. She is at last "her own creation", unlike the woman who "descended the stairs in a topaz collar" (FL 75). She was then someone else's work of art, but is now "entirely liberated" (FL 219). Her complete transformation is reflected in her conversation with her mother-in-law in her mind when she uses her Cornish style of speech. The old lady is shocked, and asks her:

...'You haven't forgotten all you have been taught?'

'The words,' Ellen could only mumble, 'seem to be falling away.'...

'But are you not keeping up the journal? I only suggested it, to help you learn to express yourself.'

'Oh, the journal - it's lost!'... (FL 232)

As Brady points out, Ellen's sojourn with the Aborigines is a return of her repressed self ("Humanism" 64) and it not only lays bare the essential core of her being, but also makes her aware of the basic necessity - food - which she had taken
for granted with her entry into polite society. Now as a slave
crawling on all fours around the camp like an animal, "the search
for food was . . . the only rational behaviour" (FL 227). The
perpetual struggle with hunger drives her to cannibalism. However,
at first the morally conscious Mrs. Roxburgh is revolted at the
sight of the remains of a cannibal feast (FL 243) and she walks
away pitying the "starving and ignorant savages". But herself
starved, she "found herself stooping to pick up" a thigh bone:

There were one or two shreds of half-cooked
flesh and gobbets of burnt fat still adhering
to this monstrous object. Her stiffened body
and almost audibly twanging nerves were
warning her against what she was about to
do, what she was, in fact, already doing. She
had raised the bone, and was tearing at it
with her teeth, spasmodically chewing, swallowing
by great gulps which her throat threatened
to return. But did not. She flung the bone
away only after it was cleaned, and followed
slowly in the wake of her cannibal mentors.
She was less disgusted in retrospect by what
she had done, than awed by the fact that she had been moved to do it. (FL 244)

By the act of cannibalism Ellen crosses over the frontier of her European inheritance to the Aboriginal world. The two worlds are brought together at the level of reality. Though Ellen feels that "in the light of Christian morality she must never think of the incident again" (FL 244), she continually remembers the event, and finds that it makes her tolerably happy.

. . . she could not have explained how tasting flesh from the human thigh-bone in the stillness of a forest morning had nourished not only her animal body but some darker need of the hungry spirit. (FL 245)

She feels "that she had partaken of a sacrament" (FL 244), which makes her recognize that the spiritual manifests itself even in the seemingly bestial. At this point White resolves a crisis which grows directly from the confrontation of two cultures - the value of one culture converted into the symbolic form of the other - the cannibalistic rite becomes a Christian symbol as she later recalls the act as "a kind of communion" (FL 329).
Thereby White not only conveys the parallels between the myths of the two peoples, but also, as Helen Tiffin observes, "explodes the antithesis that cannibalism is symbolic of the irretrievable difference between a moral, Christian, civilized Europe and an unregenerate, savage Other" (Australian Literature" 1156).

The "sacramental cannibalism" which nourishes "some darker need" takes her deeper into her dark nature. As Ellen's descent into her inner depths progresses, she meets the convict Jack Chance, who serves her as a guide, "the dark shadow-figure" of her own evil who leads her out of the wilderness. In return she promises her 'deliverer' "a pardon" (FL 252). But as they get closer to civilization she wonders if society will accept them, and "might have chosen to prolong the journey rather than face those who would quiz them upon their unorthodox arrival" (FL 275). Jack believes that he will be thrown back into prison, and though Ellen insists that she will keep her promise she is tortured by doubts as to whether she could summon enough personal conviction to win Jack a pardon, and regrets having "rashly promised" it in the beginning. Jack senses her reversal of attitude and tells her: "'Your heart isn't in it, Ellen. It's like as if you'd went dead on me!'" (FL 292). Her protests do not convince him and
when they arrive at the settlement he abandons her and returns to the bush. Ellen's last link with civilization had been the fringe of leaves she was wearing and the wedding ring secured to it, but as she crawls out of the forest to the Oakeses' farm she loses both vines and ring. Thus stripped of the last layer of civilization she re-entres it "naked as a newborn child" (FL 297).

Exhausted by her journey and experiences Ellen undergoes an emotional crisis unsure if she is Mab, Jack's mistress and victim, Ellen Gluyas or Mrs. Roxburgh, and each identity jostles the other in her mind. The realization that she has betrayed the man who rescued her fills her with guilt, and she accepts and confesses her evil: "I am the one who has committed the crime. . . . I must give myself up as his (Jack's) murdpress" (FL 309-10). Acknowledging her criminal self she recognizes her fellowship with "all those who have been rejected" (FL 320) and on seeing a chain of convicts is "united in one terrible spasm with his rabble of men" (FL 334). She realizes that the "heart of darkness" is common to all of them. Like Theodora Goodman in The Aunt's Story, who, aware of her own darkness, is unable to condemn Jack Frost the murderer, Ellen could hardly condemn Pilcher, the seaman who saved his own life at the Roxburghs'.
expense, for he is "an individual whose past was not more dubious than her own" (FL 350). The criminal world, and the world of polite society are finally united in her, but this integration also isolates her and "it saddened her to think she might never become acceptable to either of the two incompatible worlds even as they might never accept to merge" (FL 335). In the chapel with the scribbled legend "GOD IS LOVE" Ellen is granted a "vision", "a peace of mind" which "she did not attempt to interpret... but let the silence enclose her like a beatitude" (FL 352-3). The inscription reminds her that "love" is her "last chance. There is nothing else on earth to keep you here" (FL epigraph) and she extends her love to members of both worlds. With the new appreciation of civilization she is ready to be reintegrated into society and may even marry Mr. Jevons, an Englishman of "substantial means" (FL 355). Ellen no longer thinks in hyperbolic terms as Miss Scrimshaw does: "'To soar!' Miss Scrimshaw wheezed. 'To reach the heights! To breathe! Perch on the crags and look down on everything that lies beneath one! Elevated, and at last free!' " (FL 363). Ellen's sufferings have taught her to see through grandeur and pretensions and she remains "ineluctably earthbound". She was "slashed and gashed too often... the crags" are not for her. She "is more like moss or lichen that takes to some tree or rock" (FL 363).
Ellen's life thus follows the three fold pattern described by Campbell: "separation - initiation - return . . . the nuclear unit of the monomyth" (Hero 30). Ellen is first separated from her Cornish background, initiated into society and finally returns to her earlier existence, when she is captured by the Aborigines. She is again separated from family, friends, and all that is familiar, and initiated into Aboriginal society. For the Aborigines, "initiation is the door which admits to the inner shrine and to a knowledge of the mysteries, . . . It is a transition rite through which the initiate passes from one condition to another" (Elkin 153,156). Ellen's "initiation" similarly admits her to the inner mystery of herself, and she moves further back in time, a transition to, as Tacey describes it, "a state of moral being that predates her life as an English gentlewoman" ("New Ethic" 192). It is a movement from a false-self to the real-self, from the outer to the inner world. Confronted with the evil in her self, she accepts it and is thus reborn with a better understanding of herself and the world. As Tacey explains it:
Ellen Roxburgh suffers a psychological crisis but she turns crisis to transformation by accepting the inner reality, personified here as her childhood self Ellen Gluyas. She manages to integrate this into her personality, and by integration she releases it from its suppressed state, so that it no longer appears as a daemonic Mr. Hyde that must force its way destructively into consciousness. In this transformed state her inner and outer worlds, her soul and consciousness, engage not so much in a Jekyll and Hyde deadlock as in creative and life-giving dialogue.

("It's happening inside" 36)

Return, says Campbell, is the vital thread in the mythic pattern as it has to effect a reconciliation between the worlds passed through. And on Ellen's return to society she achieves this reconciliation by integrating the two worlds in herself. Her self-completion is achieved through mastery and assimilation of conflicting opposites. Through the life of Ellen, Patrick White not only unites life's coexisting opposites but also sets the tone for cultural and racial harmony.
Ellen's underworld journey which follows the three main stages of romance described by Frye (Anatomy 187-90), the first stage of the perilous journey, when the heroine travels through the "dark labyrinthisue underworld", the conflict with the "darkness" within which takes her to the second stage of crucial struggle, and finally the last stage of rebirth, is analogous to the underworld journey made by Virgil's hero. As in Virgil, there is the confrontation with the terrors and horrors of the wilderness and as the journey proceeds, spatial symbols are abandoned and the "dark world" appears as one of spiritual torment. Ellen experiences the anguish that befalls Virgil's hero who "plunging into the depths of his own being, meets the shock of secret fears that the self-maintenance of his own courage held down while confronting the outer world" (Bodkin 127). Manly Johnson sees this pattern of descent and return and the allegory of life as a journey through a world of conscious nature as variations on ideas and imagery from Virgil ("Genethlicon" 227). Ellen's journey from Z to A, Johnson says, corresponds to the Virgilian landscapes, farm, rustic countryside and wilderness, and Ellen's affinity with the countryside and wilderness where the dark reaches of her own nature begin to reveal themselves also answers to Virgil's description of the two landscapes as places where man encounters his anxieties
and uncontrolled passion. The fourth landscape of paradise exists in the protagonist's mind, as enveloped in the Tintagel fantasy, Ellen dreams "about a prince who will come to her in a romanticised Cornwall." Johnson also observes that Austin Roxburgh is similarly enclosed in a private myth in his worship of Virgil "attempting to read natural experience in the light of literary experience." Ironically, Austin who sees death as a "literary conceit" (FL 30) meets with a violent death. Both Ellen and Austin are jostled out of their imaginary world to reality, exemplifying two different kinds of myth: "The one presenting mankind as he wishes to be, the other an attempt to grapple with man and nature as they are." Johnson rightly adds that beyond considering similarities in theme, characters, and situations to works of Virgil one must be prepared to undergo a sea change in White's use of the allusion ("Genethlicon" 226-27). This change of allusion may be observed in the inversion of the patriarchal pattern in Virgil, as in the earlier novels The Aunt's Story and The Eye of the Storm when White used the Greek and Shakespeare prototypes to portray the spiritual quest of his heroines.
The Twyborn Affair

An elephant's head on a human body, a broken tusk and a cracked belly - whichever way you look at him he seems the embodiment of imperfection, of incompleteness. How indeed can one fathom the mystery that this very Vakrantunda-Mahakaya, with his crooked face and distorted body, is the Lord and Master of Success and Perfection?

(Girish Karnad, Hayavadana 1)

Eddie Twyborn, the protagonist in The Twyborn Affair, like his fictional counterparts in the other novels of Patrick White, embarks on the same mythic journey - the "painful setting into the unknown" (TA epigraph). The sense of pain in this novel stems from the individual's ambivalent sexual identity, and Eddie the "pseudo-man-cum-crypto-woman" (TA 298) struggles against the conventional preoccupations with gender. The world of the androgynous protagonist is entirely conditioned by the myth of the Australian identity which demands an individual to accept clearly defined sex roles, and, as Helen Tiffin points out, "to be androgynous in a world that demands polar opposites in sex
is to be by definition an outsider" (25). Hence, feeling himself a freak, Eddie flees his parents and the country of his childhood, Australia. He believes that he is setting out in search of his true self and says inwardly, "I would like to think myself morally justified in being true to what I am - if I knew what that is. I must discover" (TA 63).

Eddie's quest takes him through three worlds - the literary terrain of White's earlier novels, the Australia of Happy Valley, the London of The Living and the Dead, and the Southern France of The Aunt's Story - and three different personalities. He exists first as Eudoxia Vatatzes living with his ageing Greek lover in France, then as Eddie Twyborn in Sydney, and finally as Eadith Trist, a fashionable whoremistress in London. However, his transition from one role to another does not lead to self-fulfilment but self denial as his existence is a series of concealments and escapes. As a child, Eddie remembers that while "Father never wanted his child hanging round . . . Eadie wanted one constantly", but Eadie's was a "desire to devour . . . his man's smell!" (TA 123). Caught between a deeply loved but undemonstrative father and a possessive mother who pays more attention to her dogs, the child is both alone and unloved. And, corresponding to "the comedy
of escape, in which the hero runs away to a more congenial society" (Frye, Anatomy 229), Eddie escapes on the eve of his marriage to another continent where he dissolves into Eudoxia. However, the past that he seeks to escape from, pursues him in the form of Joanie Golson, his mother's lesbian friend, who was on his list of "avoidables" ever since the night "that Mummy had corked on a moustache", worn her husband's clothes and gone to the winter garden of the Australia Hotel to dance with Joanie (TA 38). Mrs. Golson's sudden appearance in St. Mayuel is seen as a threat from his past, and Eddie thinks that she has been sent by his mother, the "sinister parent" of the dark world (Frye, Anatomy 238), to "persecute" him. He is terrified that she will destroy his new life "just when I'd begun to order my life, perhaps even make it into something believable, this emissary comes to smash it to pieces" (TA 22). Gradually Eddie faces the truth that what he really fears is Joanie as part of the past he both rejects and craves, and he even contemplates leaving his lover "if only to be drawn back into what I could not endure but long for . . ." (TA 40).

Eddie admits that the timeless world he shares with Angelos Vatatzes who believes himself descended from Byzantine emperors
is unreal and his being is not his real self but one that Angelos has created: "the aesthetic version . . . so different than he (Angelos) could ever understand. For all his languages he could never understand the one I speak" (TA 77). A feeling of dispossession grips him and he notes in his diary: "... nothing of me is mine, not even the body I was given to inhabit, nor the disguises chosen for it. The real E. has not yet been discovered, and perhaps never will be" (TA 79). The physical world in which Eddie moves is, at various times, Paradise and Hell, apocalyptic and demonic, a new order and chaos. He feels that it is time to break away and wonders if he can escape into the past, so that he can begin again. But he realizes that Angelos and he "can never be separated, not by human intervention (no Golsons!) only of my own free will" (TA 122), and as that is impossible, the couple take flight. The flight is also to conceal his male identity from Joanie Golson who takes a "feverish interest in Eudoxia" (TA 320), an identity which is revealed only when Angelos on his death bed says: "I have had from you, dear boy, the only happiness I've ever known" (TA 126).
After Angelos's death Eddie reverts to his masculine personality and joins the war. He is next seen as a decorated war hero on board a ship bound for Sydney. His return to Australia is a re-exploration of his past and "he liked to think . . . that he would emerge at last from the bombardment, not only of a past war, but the past" (TA 133). But the attempt at reconciliation proves disastrous as his parents do not understand him and remain cold and unresponsive. Mother and son are still "victims of their diffidence" (TA 148), while the Judge looked at Eddie as though he were "a moron . . . or worse, some kind of pervert" (TA 159). He regrets his return, and decides to work on the land, as a "way perhaps, (of) getting to know a country I've never belonged to" (TA 161). It is another escape "from himself to a landscape", but it is a landscape which he feels "would respond" (TA 161) unlike his parents.

As a jackeroo on the Lushington property, Eddie develops his masculine image by exposing himself to hard physical labour of the land, and in time comes "to terms with his body. He had begun to live in accordance with appearances" (TA 201). He even has an affair with Marcia "as part of an exercise in self-vindication" (TA 217) and though he is surprised at having
enjoyed their "moment of shared lust" (TA 225) he later finds it a strain "to return the passion expected of him" (TA 225). Ironically "the fineness" in Eddie which Marcia appreciates prevents him from enjoying sex with her, and attracts him to Don Prowse, the masculine station manager. Though Eddie takes care to avoid contact, Don who suppresses a latent homosexuality recognizes the "fuckun queen" (TA 284) in Eddie, and rapes him. Their "breathing in some kind of harmony" (TA 284) afterward, suggests Eddie's complicity and acceptance. His heterosexual image shattered, Eddie escapes to another continent without "the answer to himself" (TA 287).

So much of Eddie's life is spent suppressing emotions and avoiding people in order to fit into the socially determined pattern, that he remains "a kind of mistake trying to correct itself" (TA 143), and is able to relate himself only to "monstrosity or hopelessness" (TA 267). And he can reassemble and make whole the scattered "jig-saw" of his being (TA 146) only when he comes to terms with his incompleteness, when there is self-acceptance: "In his own experience, in whichever sexual role he had been playing, self-searching had never led more than briefly to self-acceptance" (TA 223).
While Eddie's sexual ambivalence alienates him from people it draws him closer to the landscape in which he finds an extraordinary release of his thwarted sensuality. When Joanie Golson visits the Lushingtons, Eddie escapes once again, afraid now that she would recognize him as Eudoxia. He rides off to the hills and lying "on the rough grass ... he could not remember ever having felt happier" (TA 212). The Australian landscape "engaged his feelings in a brief and unlikely love affair" (TA 291) which ended when he left the station. As Helen Tiffin notes, "that 'possibility of a relationship with a landscape, an unprepossessing one at that' which is a major direction of Voss and A Fringe of Leaves, is only momentarily vouchsafed in Eddie, and is not the end of his fitful search" (28). Eddie's flight from Australia is a further descent into his own hell: "As the first time, so the second. He is swallowed up" (TA 302). Caught in the demonic underworld, in his next existence as Madam Eadith Trist in London, Eddie wallows in decadence and corruption, his brothel pandering to every human vice.

In the world of high-class vice Eddie meets Rod Gravenor, a man related to him "if not through blood, in spirit" (TA 313). But he avoids any intimacy with this man he loves for fear
that the discovery of his male self might spoil their relationship. Trapped in the prison of the self he has created Eddie/Eadith admits:

... she had not existed in any of her several lives, ... She was accepted as real, ... Yet whatever form she took or whatever the illusion temporarily possessing her, the reality of love, which is the core of reality itself, had eluded her, and perhaps always would. (TA 336)

The only time that Eddie offers himself physically is when he meets Gravenor's nephew, Philip Thring, "a bloody pansy" (TA 398) who is brought to the Beckwith Street establishment in the hope that he will be initiated into manhood. Philip is embarassed and confesses:

... what I find at Beckwith Street interests me aesthetically - and for its perversity, morally. But it doesn't rouse me physically. Even if my uncle despises me for it - his friends do, and I think he must - I can't take part. (TA 400)

Eddie then initiates the boy into the mysteries of sex.
Rod Gravenor, like Angelos Vatatzes and Greg Lushington, is linked with Judge Twyborn. While Eddie's love for Angelos is largely due to the displaced and rejected love for his father, Greg and Gravenor evoke a father image—a parent who is warmer and more approachable. Through his affair with Marcia, Eddie had hoped to love "his mother whom he should have loved but didn't" (TA 222), but ultimately she, like the men of his life can be of no help to fit his parents into the "warping puzzle" of his life. Eddie's search for wholeness is thus a simultaneous search for his parents, which reflects, as Jean-Paul Durix puts it, "a desire to rebuild the mythically perfect unity of parent and child" (42).

The past is resurrected when Eddie encounters an old "wheezing, groaning, panting, hobbling" (TA 366) Joanie Golson, collapsed on a pavement in London: "As on other painfully personal occasions the past began reaching out to Eadith through that shuddering of water which memory becomes visually . . ." (TA 365). And afterward when "increasing whiffs of Eadie Twyborn began to trouble Eadith Trist" (TA 366) he knows that he must find his mother. Through a meeting with Australians, Eddie learns that she is in London and that the Judge is dead. The news
of his father's death shatters him but intensifies his need to search for his mother. When he does find her he wonders for a moment if he should make his getaway, but finally wills himself to confront and re-enter his past. Their reunion takes place on a bench adjoining the Church where Eadie came to pray. She scribbles a message on the flyleaf of her prayerbook: "Are you my son Eddie?", and Eddie not trusting himself to speech writes: "No, but I am your daughter Eadith" (TA 422). Eadie's words after this written exchange, "I am so glad. I've always wanted a daughter" (TA 423), create a harmony Eddie has never known. For the first time his mother has given her tenderness and support, and Eddie is finally accepted for himself. This total acceptance by a mother of her child is unprecedented in White's earlier writing. Thereafter they meet regularly and Eadie even hopes to return to Australia with her daughter.

His mother's recognition and acceptance of his androgyny results in the most significant translation in Eddie - the union of his male and female identities. He breaks away from his Eadith self and changes to male clothes, forgetting to remove his woman's make-up. In this androgynous identity he goes to meet his/her similarly androgynous mother, but is killed in a
bomb-blast before the final reunion. However, parent and child are united in the mother's imagination as Eadie who had been waiting for her "daughter", believes that, "Eadith Eddie no matter which this fragment of my self that I lost is now returned where it belongs" (TA 432). A moment of peace that Patrick White later describes in Flaws in the Glass, as "the Twyborn moment of grace" (257), descends on Eadie as she envisages the future with her son/daughter: "Sitting in the garden drying our hair together amongst the bulbuls and drizzle of taps we shall experience harmony at last" (TA 432). Eadie's vision invokes the myth of wholeness and oneness that is outside time.

Eadie Twyborn's acceptance of the "daughter" in her son is a radical break with social conventions and sexual barriers. White challenges the premises on which Australian identity is based and destroys "the myth of the uni-dimensional man" (Durix 41). The neat categories of masculine and feminine into which the human personality is constricted, is dissolved, and "the woman in man and man in woman" (TA 360) is recognized. For White, as Brady points out, "the distinction between the sexes is neither absolute nor biologically determined: rather, every human being is by definition androgynous, with a masculine and feminine aspect,
Jung's animus and anima" (Question of Woman" 178). This notion of the androgyne is implicit in all his novels which explore the interplay between the masculine and feminine elements either through the dichotomous nature of the protagonists, like Theodora Goodman, Mary Hare, Elizabeth Hunter, who are masculine and masterful, or through pairs of characters, like Stan and Amy, Voss and Laura, Arthur and Waldo, Hurtle and his women, Ellen and Jack, who are two sides of the self, one which helps to draw out what is latent within the other.

In The Twyborn Affair Eddie alternates between these two sides of the self till the union of the two in the last "version of Eddie Twyborn" (TA 427), which incorporates male and female. This movement in the novels from division to integration of the two sexes reworks the myth of the androgyne as considered in the Judaeo-Christian tradition. This concept holds that the nature of Adam was androgynous, and split by the Fall into the two sexes there is the perpetual quest to be reintegrated into the original undivided whole. With the integration of Eddie and Eadith, White recreates the androgynous Adam or the complete individual who is both male and female:
Adam was a Man and also a Woman and yet none of them but a Virgin full of modesty and purity - that is, the Image of God.

(qtd. in Gita Krishnankutty 403)

The rejection of the biological determination of sexes, and recreation of the myth of the androgyne is part of White's reconstitution of Australian society which allows no room for sexual ambiguity but which is filled with adulterous wives and marriages that are nothing more than a social ritual. However, White does not make decisions for society, at the most he suggests likelihoods, and with the death of Eddie just when his mother has accepted the wholeness of androgyny, the novel remains open-ended.

The problem of conflict between mother and child presented in The Aunt's Story and carried on in The Vivisector, The Eye of the Storm, and The Twyborn Affair has its genesis in White's own life, the novels reflecting the affection, antagonisms, dependence and betrayals that ebbed and flowed between White and his mother for fifty years (Marr 427). And the resolution reached in Twyborn points to the end of this long struggle. However, in Jungian terms, as pointed out by David Tacey in his study of the Reign
of the Mother Goddess in White's novels, the reunion between mother and child would be seen as a return of the child to the matrix of the "Terrible Mother". But such an interpretation misrepresents the mythical pattern of death and rebirth in the novel, for the reunion is not one of deathly surrender (destruction of the hero) to the devouring Mother, but a communion which results in the rebirth of a new self. The theme of rebirth is contained in the title itself, "Twyborn" meaning twice-born, and Eddie is reborn with a new personality when he is reunited with his mother, and she accepts his androgyny. He is buoyed by a new self-confidence and is "no longer going down but going up, climbing out on the other side of the world" (Frye, Anatomy 239).

As in Storm and Fringe, the moment of rebirth occurs when past and present are interwoven into significant unity. Bodkin explains:

> Before any great task that begins a new life and calls upon untried resources of character, the need seems to arise for some introversion of the mind upon itself and upon its past - a plunging into the depths, to gain knowledge and power over self and destiny. (124-5)
The ubiquitous birth imagery, the release from the "Self", and the interpretation of significant change in individual life as a rebirth, point to the resurrection theme that is prevalent in all White's novels.