Chapter I

The Journey

It is in *The Aunt's Story* that Patrick White first embodied definitely and comprehensively his vision of man, the conception of indispensable suffering, and the redemptive vision. All the novels that follow are a set of variations on this vision of life. The three novels dealt with in this chapter, *The Aunt's Story*, *The Tree of Man*, and *Voss*, center on the metaphysical quest which becomes a major mythic pattern in White's work. All the three novels are rich in mythic and symbolic meanings: Theodora Goodman's spiritual Odyssey is connected to the myth of Odysseus, Stan Parker's journey through life reproduces the archetypal journey of the wayfaring Adam who wanders through the wilderness until the end restores him to the beginning, to God, and, *Voss*, aspiring to Godhead re-enacts the theme of Satan's fall and returns to the state of grace only when he realizes that he is all too human. Australia becomes the route of mythic progression, and the three protagonists journey through the Australian landscape to perceive the ultimate Reality. As Beatson had remarked, "White transforms the topography of Australia and inner life into a realm of myth" (1).
The Aunt's Story

So we create the selves we must destroy
before we find the pattern of our joy.

(Judith Wright, "Destruction")

The "dragon-killing theme" (Frye, Anatomy 189) forms the structural principle of The Aunt's Story and as in all White's novels, the dragon to be slain is within the protagonist. The novel is organised in three parts based on the movement of the central character, Theodora Goodman, towards the destruction of the "self". As William Walsh notes, the chief concern is "the release from the self and even indeed the obliteration of the self" ("White," Manifold Voice 91). The novel opens with the death of Mrs. Goodman who had tyrannised and dominated Theodora's life, and the first part is a reconstruction of Theodora's life up to middle age.

Theodora was a "dry, leathery and yellow" spinster (AS 12) with a long-legged stride and a black moustache which her sister's children loved to stroke.
Theo should have been a boy, they said, . . .
But she herself had never considered what could not have been such a different state. Life was divided, rather, into the tender moments and the cruel, which on the whole are not conditioned by sex. (AS 32)

Theodora is the first in a series of Whitean hermaphrodites, a series which culminates with the acceptance of Eddie/Eadith's androgyny in The Twyborn Affair. Theodora is also the first of White's alienated protagonists (Elyot's isolation is like Waldo Brown's in The Solid Mandala, born out of a sterile existence). She does not enjoy the ordinary pleasures of matrimony or friendship, and does not codify to convention. Simple, unnoticed and lonely she "was at most, but at least, an aunt" (AS 12). Her only connection with the living world that was valid in her own eyes was her love for her niece, Lou. Even as a child at Meroe, Theodora, was an exile, deeply alienated from her mother and sister. Her closest companion was her father, but he, sunk in his reading and his dreams, loved her only absentmindedly and "she was oppressed by a weight of sadness that nobody would lift, because nobody would ever know that she was shouldering it. Least of
all father, who was thick and mysterious as a tree, but also hollow . . . " (AS 25-26). Even at school there was no real communication between her and others: "I shall never overcome the distances, felt Theodora" (AS, 51) and the isolation grew. Only the schoolmistress saw the truth and thought:

Theodora, I shall tell you the truth. Probably you will never marry. We are not the kind. You will not say the things they want to hear, flattering their vanity and their strength, because you will not know how, instinctively, and because it would not flatter you. But there is much that you will experience. You will see clearly, beyond the bone. You will grow up probably ugly, and walk through life in sensible shoes. Because you are honest, and because you are barren, you will be both honoured and despised. You will never make a statue, nor write a poem. Although you will be torn by all the agonies of music, you are not creative. You have not the artist's vanity, which is moved finally to express itself in its objects. But there will be moments
of passing affection, through which the opaque world will become transparent, and of such a moment you will be able to say - my dear child. (AS 63)

But the words remained unsaid. She was a rejected child, and on that rejection she built her life.

However, Meroë was part of Theodora and she identified herself closely with it: "To tell the story of Meroë was to listen also to her own blood" (AS 19). On Meroë there was peace of mind (AS, 24) on Meroë she was free (AS 60). She loved the yellow "honest house" (AS 20) and the black volcanic hill surrounding it:

It was both desolate and soothing to sit on the black hill. There are certain landscapes in which you can see the bones of the earth. And this was one. You could touch your own bones, which is to come a little closer to truth. (AS 60)
It was a place she shared with her father, and the two would go riding round or take long walks, and at her father's death, the Meroë world virtually died for Theo:

Mother, I am dead, I am dead, Meroë has crumbled. So she went outside where the grey light was as thin as water and Meroë had in fact, dissolved. Cocks were crowing the legend of day, but only the legend. Meroë was grey water, grey ash. Then Theodora cried. (AS 85)

Other than her father the only two people who perceived her true nature were the Man who was Given his Dinner who told her:

You'll see a lot of funny things, Theodora Goodman. You'll see them because you've eyes to see. And they'll break you. But perhaps you'll survive. No girl that was thrown down by lightning on her twelfth birthday, and then got up again, is going to be swallowed easy by rivers of fire. (AS 45)
and the Greek cellist Moraitis, with whom she felt akin. She likened his description of Greece to Meroë:

\[ \ldots \text{"Greece, you see, is a bare country. It is all bone."} \]
"Like Meroë," said Theodora. \ldots
"I too come from a country of bones."
"That is good." said Moraitis solemnly.
"It is easier to see." (AS 108)

The two were "compatriots in the country of the bones" (AS 108). But to others, she was a strange person. People passing her stopped to look, sensing something strange. \ldots People mopping their heads wondered uneasily into what they sank into Theodora Goodman's eyes. People casually looking were sucked in by some disturbance that was dark and strange. (AS 96)

Neither of her two suitors, Frank Parrot, or Huntly Clarkson could understand or get through to her, and she cuts off her relationship with them as they hinder her journey towards self-dissolution.
Theodora had a close and intimate relationship with her father, and was hated by her mother who treated her contemptuously. To Mrs. Goodman, Theodora was odd and difficult, and she was quick to cut her down:

Oh, and this is my daughter Theodora, Mrs. Goodman had said. Of course, you will know my younger girl, Fanny Parrot. At her mother-in-law's. Fanny is a great favourite. With everyone. (AS 99)

Pretty, "pink" Fanny was her child and it was only Fanny who was musical (AS 28), Fanny who was artistic (AS 31). "But Theodora," said her father, "has great understanding" (AS 31) while "Fanny always asks questions that have answers" (AS 40). However Theodora had no illusions about her mother. She saw her as a destroyer, "born with an axe in her hand" (AS 121). She was powerful and devious and when she drove her daughter beyond endurance, Theodora almost decided to kill her. But she regained her self-command and "she threw back the thin knife, . . . It had been close, felt Theodora, I have put out my hand and almost touched death" (AS 123). Even at such a moment her honesty made her feel guilty: "I am guilty of a murder that
has not been done, she said, it is the same thing, blood is only an accompaniment" (AS 123), and remained the devoted daughter to the end. It was not Fanny who had:

lived with Mrs. Goodman in her latter years.
From her own house she wrote and spoke of Dear Mother, making her an idea, just as people will talk of Democracy or Religion, at a moral distance. But Theodora was the spinster. She had lived with her mother, and helped her into her clothes. She came when the voice called. (AS 11)

With the death of her mother, Theodora was at last released from the tedious conformity of her life, but she realized that the death offered her only a physical freedom, it was merely the end of the reign of a tyrant mother. The real evil, she recognized, lay within: "I have a core of evil in me that is altogether hateful" (AS 121), "the great monster self" (AS 128) which had to be destroyed and she embarks on a journey to "that solitary land of individual experience, in which no fellow footfall is ever heard" (AS Epigraph). From the beginning, as Dutton remarks, "one realizes that Theodora is marked for
destruction because of her honesty and her understanding, her inability to put up with the ordinary, her refusal just to exist" (15).

The destruction of her relationship with Frank and Huntly are acts of self-murder. In similar shooting incidents she killed whatever she identified with. On an expedition with Frank she pleaded with him not to shoot a little hawk which was one she knew "the red eye of the hawk had spoken of worlds that were brief and fierce" (AS 33). He ignored her and shot, but missed. In a turmoil of emotions she aimed "it was like aiming at her own red eye" and fired. The hawk fell dead. "She felt exhausted, but there was no longer any pain. She was negative as air."

Afterwards she thought "I was wrong . . . but I shall continue to destroy myself, right down to the last of my several lives" (AS 71). In another incident with Huntly at the fair, Theodora shot at clay ducks and each time she fired "a secret life was shattered" (AS 119), another step toward self dissolution. The physical journey her mother's death allows is only a further movement towards the ultimate destruction.

In the second part Theodora is in Europe at the Hotel du Midi amid strange people, Katina Pavlou, General Sakalnikov, Mrs. Rapallo, Wetherby and Lieselotte. Though Varvara, Ludmilla and the Principessa are present only in name, all of them are
nearer to figments of Theodora's imagination, "split . . . myriad figments" (AS 135) of herself, or of people in her past life, or seem to be people who have undergone her experiences. As Beston puts it, she is "the master puppeteer of her various personages" ("The Several Lives" 2).

The first person Theodora meets in the "jardin exotique", Katina Pavlou, a little girl, is a "double" of herself: "Theodora Goodman had become a mirror, held to the girl's experience. Their eyes were interchangeable, like two distant unrelated lives mingling for a moment in sleep" (AS 142). The General, an image of her father, pits himself against Mrs. Rapallo, reenacting the drama at Meroë - masculine impotence in the face of the demonically powerful female. Both of them argue about the ownership of the nautilus, and the General asks Theodora to rob it from Mrs. Rapallo's room. When she does she is overcome by a sense of imminent disaster: "And now she knew that it must. It had as good as happened. . . . Her heart turned in her side, because, she knew, the nautilus is made to break" (AS 213). Later, a fire breaks out in the hotel, and it is not surprising that Katina, the General and she are safe, while Mrs. Rapallo perishes. Just before she comes out of the hotel she wears her mother's garnet ring which is now "part of the flesh" (AS 247). Past is integrated
with present and she is now at peace, no longer tormented by her mother. Overwhelmed by a wave of nostalgia she tells Katina that she is about to return to Abyssinia" (AS 252), and Katina, filled with a similar longing, prepares to make her return to her childhood world:

Already, from her corner, Katina Pavlou watched the slow smoke rise from white houses and sleepily finger the dawn. She sat upright, to arrive, to recover the lost reality of childhood. (AS 251)

Theodora's personal odyssey had taken place against social chaos and disintegration, as behind her fantasy world can be glimpsed aspects of a world that is devoid of meaning, as observed by Brian Kiernan. He sees Europe as "the gothic shell" (AS 145) to be fought over as the General and Mrs. Rapallo fight over the nautilus shell (White 30). Manfred Mackenzie likens Theodora to one of Spenser's knights, but in this "baleful atmosphere," she says,
Theodora's quest for meaning in life turns into a crazy anti-quest; she has to grope for a mock Grail, the nautilus, which disintegrates the same way that 'the gothic shell of Europe' (AS 139) will eventually disintegrate. As a quester she has only the choice of illusions of reality and the reality of illusions, and the nautilus is either or both. ("Later Novels" 7)

With the fantasy world broken, Theodora continues her journey toward nothingness. She makes her way back to Australia through North America. As she crosses the country by train she looks out of the window at the passing scene and is intoxicated by the flowering of corn. But "sometimes against the full golden theme of corn . . . was a counter point of houses. . . . Then in a gust, Theodora knew that her abstraction also did not fit. She did not fit the houses . . . Theodora Goodman was a discord" (AS 259-60), and she gets off the train at a small town. As she walked she smiled at the "discovery of freedom. In her hand she still held, she realized, the practical handbag, that last link with the external Theodora Goodman" (AS 263). Determined to destroy the last shreds of her personality, she took out the
tickets meant for her passage back to Australia and tore them to pieces. This, she felt, was an act of honesty. She even changes her name attempting to destroy her social identity:

Theodora could have cried for her own behaviour, which had sprung out of some depth she could not fathom. But now her name was torn out by the roots, just as she had torn the tickets, rail and steamship, on the mountain road. This way perhaps she came a little closer to humility, to anonymity, to pureness of being. (AS 269)

In this state of nothingness Theodora is closest to being complete because when man comes to terms with the abstract nature of the world, then the horizon is his. As Satre says, "the appearance of the self beyond the world - that is beyond the totality of the real is an emergence of human reality in nothingness" (Being and Nothingness 51). Theodora, dissolved of her external self, wanders away to an abandoned shack where she encounters her last fantasy figure, Holstius, who reminded her of the Man who was Given his Dinner. Theodora's resentment for the external world tears her apart and Holstius asks her to "accept the two irreconcilable halves" (AS 277).
You cannot reconcile joy and sorrow, Holstius said. Or flesh and marble, or illusion and reality, or life and death. For this reason, Theodora Goodman, you must accept. And you have already found that one constantly deludes the other into taking fresh shapes, so that there is sometimes little to choose between the reality of illusion and the illusion of reality. Each of your several lives is evidence of this. (AS 278)

She is now filled with peace and reborn "whole" with his "healing" touch:

In the peace that Holstius spread throughout her body and the speckled shade of surrounding trees, there was no end to the lives of Theodora Goodman. These met and parted, met and parted, movingly. They entered into each other, so that the impulse for music in Katina Pavlou's hands, and the steamy exasperation of Sokolnikov, and Mrs. Rapallo's baroque and narcotized despair were the same
and understandable. And in the same way that the created lives of Theodora Goodman were interchangeable, the lives into which she had entered, making them momently dependent for love or hate, owing her this portion of their fluctuating personalities, whether George or Julia Goodman, only apparently deceased, or Huntly Clarkson, or Moraitis, or Lou, or Zack, these were the lives of Theodora Goodman, these too. (AS 284)

Now when her life is most real, she is considered "mad", and Mrs. Johnson brings the doctor to take "crazy Annie" (AS 286) away. But Theodora has achieved a vision of reality having eliminated the "self", the redemptive vision which is not gained by Oliver or Elyot in the previous novels because they did not destroy the self. However critics like David Tacey and John Beston do not agree that getting rid of the ego-self leads to a heightened vision. It "is more often associated with madness" says Tacey (Mother-Goddess 357). And so it has been. Theodora is called "mad" by those who do not understand. Her movement through life, if viewed from outside will seem a descent as she
is subject to delusions and is "different". But an inward exploration reveals that Theodora's movement is one of progression into richer and fuller experiences and into a deepening and widening sense of the true nature of things. She is the first of White's protagonists to discover "Reality within the world by shedding her social roles and identifying selflessly with the external forms that reassert themselves in the fluctuations of the natural world" (Kiesman, "Novels of White" 465).

The novel is shaped on the archetypal quest myth, the protagonist embarking on a quest to discover the ultimate Reality. Her father's references to another Meroë, than the Australian house they lived in, "a dead place, in the black country of Ethiopia" (AS 23) provided the inspiration for her spiritual odyssey, which had actually begun even before her mother's death. George Goodman himself had embarked on a perpetual odyssey "more actual even than the dream of actuality ... on which the purple water swelled beneath the keel, rising and falling like the wind of pines on the blue shore of Ithaca" (AS 66). But in the end he had failed in his quest having never seen "Greece" (AS 85).

As White has used the theme of voyaging, Thelma Herring in "Odyssey of a Spinster" and Patricia Morley in Mystery of
Unity have connected Theodora's odyssey with the myth of Odysseus. Both critics associate the landscape of Meroë with the Greek island - in the novel Theodora herself perceives an analogy between Meroë and Greece: "Greece, you see, is a bare country. It is all bone," said Moraitis. "Like Meroë, said Theodora" (AS 108). While Morley connects Theodora with Nausicaa:

In Father's quest, Theodora is Nausicaa, the young Phaecian princess who conducts Odysseus to her father's court. Even as a child, Theodora had sensed that she was really "guiding father" despite his show of leadership. (72)

Herring connects her with Telemachus:

In the early scenes with her father, sharing his life on their estate, she plays Telemachus to his Odysseus, and mourns the dwindling of Meroë as Telemachus mourns the wasting of his substance by the suitors - but here, ironically, it is Odysseus himself who is responsible for the decay ... (15)
However, after her father's death she takes up Odysseus' role and sets sail:

The sea of pines swelled, hinting at some odyssey from which there was no return. . . .
But Mother had not embarked. Her world had always been enclosed by walls, her Ithaca, and here she would have kept the suitors at bay, not through love and patience, but with suitable conversation and a stick. (AS 89)

Mrs. Goodman, says Morley, is not only the ironic version of Penelope, but also the sea-nymph Calypso (who kept Odysseus imprisoned for seven years, as Mrs. Goodman holds Theodora captive) the tyrant Polyphemus . . . and Circe (73), and Theodora's meeting with Pearl Brawne is paralleled with Odysseus' encounter with the sirens:

Theodora would have blocked her ears with wax, she could not bear to face the islands from which Pearl sang. (AS 127)

And the last part where Theodora strips herself of all her possessions, Herring says, is similar to "Odysseus returning to Ithaca in the
disguise of a beggarman, (and) the greeting given her by the Johnsons' scruffy red dog suggests Odysseus' welcome from his old dog Argus . . ." (14). While the allusions are present in the novel, the myth is not used directly as a framework, as stated by Morley (68). Instead, as Herring rightly points out, the Homeric allusions are used indirectly to give shape and meaning to the characters and theme (14).

Similarly, various other images and colours have a thematic importance. Repeated images of wood, birds, bones, the nautilus shell, fire, define the protagonist and her spiritual odyssey. Colours and wooden images suggest the physical appearance of Theodora. The yellow house and black hill are linked with Theodora's yellow skin and black hat or dress, emphasising her close identification with Meroë. While Theodora is described as "yellow", her sister is "pink" like the rose, the two colours differentiating the sisters indicating their varied natures - one being spiritual, while the other is superficial. Bones are a symbol of Meroë, "the country of bones", and as the schoolmistress prophesised, Theodora saw clearly, "beyond the bone". (AS 63), her Odyssey taking her beyond the Australian Meroë. Birds, the nautilus shell and fire are symbols of destruction. The shooting of the hawk and duck are symbolic
acts of suicide, while the nautilus like "the gothic shell" is meant for destruction. Even as a child, Theodora was obsessed with the power of fire and wanted to write about it - a river of fire, a burning house (AS 53). Later, in her fantasy, the hotel is consumed in fire. Fire brought her fantasy world to an end, destroying everything, and recreating the purity of the beginning.

We thus follow Theodora through the archetypal stages of experience - from her secure world in early childhood on Mercé, the paradisal state of innocence, followed by suffering leading to "the great fragmentation of maturity" (AS 133) and finally to the state of humility and simplicity which White believes is the proper state for man.

Critics see the pattern of comedy in The Aunt's Story. "Structurally", says Patricia Morley, "the novel "is a comedy . . . (as it) ranges through all the different phases of comedy, from the first or most ironic phase, to romantic phases of comedy which approach the romance proper" (67). While the novel does possess all these elements: the ironic - Theodora, the daughter devoted to her hateful mother - the comic - the fight over the nautilus - and the romantic - the movement towards deliverance, these elements of the "comic" are quite lost in another pattern
- the tragic - which makes a stronger impression. This pattern is marked by the heroine’s isolation, perception, agony of mind, suffering, failure, movement towards annihilation and dissolution, and in organizing this second pattern White has done more than write a comedy. As Frye says with "romance, tragedy, irony, and comedy as episodes in a total quest - myth, we can see how it is that comedy can contain a potential tragedy within itself" (Anatomy 215). And Theodora Goodman’s story of transition unfolds through the mythic frame of a tragi-comedy, or "dark comedy" which teases and troubles and is painful (Styan 46), a pattern which White uses again in The Solid Mandala. The Aunt’s Story adumbrates the central theme, ideas and structure of all the following novels and serves as a resonant keynote.

**The Tree of Man**

Through the world's wilderness long wandered man

Safe to eternal Paradise of rest.

(Milton, *Paradise Lost* XIII. 313-14)

A cyclical conception of life characterises almost all mythical thought, and *The Tree of Man*, which is organised in a four fold pattern, follows the cyclical or spiral path, with the myth
of Adam as the key point on the circumference joined by images of journey, suffering, death, and life. The protagonist, Stan Parker, extends the quest started by Theodora Goodman, and the novel traces his dramatic struggle towards the ultimate revelation. Stan Parker's life is not a re-enactment of the Creation myth as pointed out by critics, but a re-enactment of the exile of man's life, his life sentence on earth, occasioned by the Fall.

The novel opens with a man driving into the wilderness intending to start a life there:

A cart drove between the two stringybarks and stopped. . . . The man who sat in the cart got down. . . . Then the man took an axe and struck at the side of a hairy tree, . . . It was the first time anything like this had happened in that part of the bush . . . The name of this man was Stan Parker. (TM 9-10)

It was the beginning of his journey towards God - as a child "he had tried to see (his mother's) God, in actual feature, but he had not" (TM 11) - and a fulfilment in life - "He was nothing much. . . . So far, he had succeeded in filling his belly. So far,
mystery was not his personal concern, . . . " (TM 12). He had become neither a preacher nor a teacher as his mother had hoped and had tried his hand at various jobs but "had not continued to do any of these things for long, because he knew that it was not intended. . . . To stay out was, in fact, just what the young man Stanley Parker himself desired . . . " (TM 13). Filled "with the melancholy longing for permanence" (TM 13), he struggled "between two desires . . . the nostalgia of permanence and the fiend of motion . . . " (TM 13-14). In the Christian paradigm of history, the Adam who leaves Paradise wanders in the lower world, a wayfarer who will go on until the end restores him to the beginning, to God. He has also to do battle with a monster within himself and go through suffering in order to complete his journey. In The Tree of Man Stan Parker is the wayfaring Adam who journeys through life until a moment of illumination fills him with peace.

Stan Parker's life follows the course of the seasons and the book starts with the promise of spring - the beginning of the Parkers life in the wilderness. Stan had not married Amy out of love, he
did not decide to marry the Fibbens girl, if
decision implies pros and cons; he simply knew
that he would do it, and as there was no
reason why the marriage ceremony should
be delayed, it was very soon performed, . . .
(TM 24)

He brings her to the bush, but from the outset there is a conflict
between them with Amy pitting herself against nature and Stan
aligning himself to it. The wind blew heavily:

All and all were flung together, twig and
leaf, man and woman, horse's hair and ribbony
reins, in the progress that the landscape made.
But it was principally a progress of wind.
The wind took back what it gave.
"Does it always blow in these parts?" . . .
He made a motion with his mouth. It was
not one of the things to answer. Besides, he
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. (TM 27)

His acceptance and her resistance were the beginning of the discord. While he was involved with the mystery of life, she was involved with its process. Hers was a corporeal vision contrasted to his spiritual one, and their contradictory natures are revealed in their response to a pedlar of Bibles - while his stories of the Gold Coast only made Amy think of "her possessions" (TM 41), it evoked a restlessness in Stan: "As if other glittering images that he sensed inside him without yet discovering, stirred, heaved almost to the surface" (TM 39). Her emphasis on material objects was opposed to his "subtler longing" (TM 39), and he wondered if "his life of longing (would) be lived behind the wire fences" (TM 42) that he had put up around his land. But in spite of his longing he was not yet ready for the release and could not interpret the orange fire of evening, burning and blazing in its distance with a prophetic intensity...

The man... did not try. He had not learned to think far, and in what progress he had made had reached the conclusion 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. (TM 49)

The first natural disaster the Parkers faced was a flood
from which Amy acquired a little boy left homeless, a child
"she might now perhaps possess" (TM 91). But the boy disappeared
leaving behind him a coloured glass which had been his play
thing. The lost child, like Stan Parker, did not belong, so he
escaped. But Stan was still caught in his earthly life and had
to go on till he transcends it. Bub Quigley, the idiot child, as
David Tacey remarks, was another "rarefied version of Stan
himself" (Mother-Goddess 132): "this boy's eyes were bright in
his older face looking for things" (TM 183). Bub's sister was
also a "purity of being" who Stan "recognized but could not
apparently convert into terms of his own reality" (TM 218). And
there was Mr. Gage who was not caught in a world of reality.
He was "a child, . . . an animal, or a stone" (TM 106), an artist,
who committed suicide and was acknowledged a genius after
his death.

Amy's need to possess is finally fulfilled when she has
a child and she virtually consumes her first born, Ray, with love: "She could not love him enough, not even by slow, devouring kisses. Sometimes her moist eyes longed almost to have him safe inside her again" (TM 115). But once Thelma, the second child, is born, Ray is ignored, and he grows up to be an aggressive, rebellious child. Devoid of love and attention he killed the three new born puppies of Blue, his mother's dog. This act foreshadows his future criminal life.

The Parkers did have their moments of passionate union and Stan is seen to have shared with Amy a "contentment of absolute perfection" (TM 111). But the moments were brief and lasted "till the man grew thoughtful at mouth. His substance, which has been solid enough, omnipotent even, an hour or two before, had begun to thin out..." (TM 111-12). However satisfying his everyday acts seemed it was not enough and he pursued some elusive but more enduring goal, and, this visionary sense isolated him from his wife. He grew alienated from her:

Stan Parker would sometimes fail to recognize his wife. He would see her for the first time. He would look at her and feel. This is a different one, as if she had been several...
Or again, they would look at each other in the course of some silence, and she would wonder what she had been giving away. But he respected and accepted her mysteries, as she could never respect his. (TM 147)

She wanted to possess him: "He should, by rights, have been chained by her power of soft darkness" (TM 148) she thought, but he was not. Stan remained elusive. Amy's love for the material world made her look at Madeline with awe. Madeline sparked off fantasies in her as she was everything Amy could not become. And when a fire broke out at the Glastonbury mansion Amy sent Stan to save the lady.

Since Adam, each generation faces a reincarnation of the serpent, and Stan's temptation was Madeline. At the sight of her he was consumed in a fire of passion, and:

wished he could sink his face in her flesh, to smell it, that he could part her breasts and put his face between.

She saw this. They were burning together at the head of the smoking staircase. She
had now to admit, without repugnance, that the sweat of his body was drugging her, and that she would have entered his eyes, if she could have, and not returned.

But once outside he saw that "Madeline's beauty had shrunk right away, and any desire that Stan Parker might have had was shrivelled up" (TM 180). The fire, which had aroused him also destroys his passion. It was also the end of Amy's fantasy. Years later after the war Stan returned to the place to finish "this unfaithfulness to his house" (TM 217) and purged himself of any feelings of guilt.

. With the end of the summer of experience came the autumn - the period of suffering. Stan's exile and loneliness was intensified after the war, and his inner emotional conflict made him resent his family and neighbours and he distances himself further from them: "there were individuals who said Stan Parker had gone a bit queer from the war" (TM 221). He went off on long drives to isolated parts of the bush to be part of "the mystery of stillness" (TM 220), forgetting his wife for "the time being, knowing that he would return to her, . . . even if his soul ventured out beyond the safe limits on reckless, blind expeditions of discovery
..." (TM 220). It was also too late to reach out to his son who had grown into a criminal. On the other hand, his daughter had become a superficial society lady, the kind White sharply satirises. And the total estrangement with Amy came about when Stan discovered her affair with a salesman. However, the affair ended in frustration, and she saw that "she was not to come close to this man . . . or perhaps to anyone" (TM 329). Stan realized that "they had entered a fresh phase of life, that something was spent" (TM 332), and "in time the man and woman come to accept each other's mystery" (TM 333). The two were not ordained to "take strange paths . . . Two people do not lose themselves at the identical moment, or else they might find each other, and be saved. It is not as simple as that" (TM 356).

With the new phase started with the advent of winter, Stan Parker moved closer in the direction of his search for God. The world of nature was very close to Stan's progression:

The night of the storm or shower, when he had got wet, Stan Parker had never seen more clearly . . . In his fever he could not have been cleaner swept. All that he had lived, all that he had seen, had the extreme simplicity
of goodness... He was surprised at the newness of what he saw. (TM 391-93)

His communion with nature also grew:

... (a) communion of soul and scene was taking place, the landscape moving in on him with increased passion and intensity, trees surrounding him, clouds flocking above him with tenderness such as he had never experienced. (TM 397)

He became not only part of nature but also the centre around which all else was arranged:

... the old man's chair had been put on the grass... (which) had formed a circle in the shrubs and trees... It was perfectly obvious that the man was seated at the heart of it, and from this trees radiated, with grave movements of life,... All was circumference to the centre, 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, and at which the man would blink from time to time, with his watery eyes, unequal to the effort of realizing he was the centre of it. (TM 474)

As Burns notes "the last circle but one" infers to "the ultimate domain of the pure spirit, of the transcendant God" (178). He is finally led to the last stage of the Christian drama when he sees "God" in a gob of spittle:

... the old man continued to stare at the jewel of spittle. A great tenderness of understanding arose in his chest. Even the most obscure, most sickening incidents of his life were clear. In that light. How long will they leave me like this, he wondered, in peace and understanding? (TM 476)

Just then Amy interrupted his thoughts with talk of the silver nutmeg grater that she had found. But Stan went on to have his final vision of oneness:
I believe, he said, in the cracks in the path. On which ants were massing, struggling up over an escarpment. But struggling. Like the painful sun in the icy sky. Whirling and whirling. But struggling. But joyful. So much so, he was trembling. The sky was blurred now. 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. (TM 477)

He then died without communicating his vision to Amy. He had always been inarticulate, unable to "express the poem that was locked inside him" (TM 29); many a time he had longed "to express himself by some formal act of recognition, give shape to his knowledge, or express the great simplicities in simple, luminous words for people to see. But of course he would not" (TM 221), and even at the end "he could not tell her . . ." (TM 478). But the continuity of nature carried on: "In the end there were the trees". Stan had shared with the trees the natural cycle of life and now his grandson walked through them "putting shoots of
green thought. So that, in the end, there was no end" (TM 480).

The novel thus repeats the myth's pattern of journey, suffering, death and life, as Stan Parker, the heir of the fallen Adam moves through the passage of conflict and suffering towards a new life beyond time.

Stan Parker’s struggle in life which led him to the final reconciliation is a movement from romance which "expresses the passage from struggle through a point of ritual death to a recognition scene" (Frye, Anatomy 187) of comedy. The cyclical structure of the novel also follows the cyclical movement described by Frye, which, he says, is divided into four main phases, the four seasons of the year, the four periods of day, four aspects of the water-cycle and four periods of life (Anatomy 160). The novel is similarly divided into four main parts following the course of the four seasons - starting from spring when the time is usually morning: "In the clear morning of those early years" (TM 31), and ending in water, marking out the stages of Stan Parker's life - youth, maturity, age, death. The different aspects of water, rain and river also make an impact on the protagonist. The first storm he faced made him realize that "he was altogether insignificant. A thing of gristle" (TM 47). The flood which destroyed
many lives left him the image of death which haunted him throughout his life. In the summer rains, Stan experienced a new humility which made him part of nature. "... he began to know every corner of the darkness, as if it were daylight, and he were in love with the heaving world, down to the last blade of wet grass" (TM 151). The drought in autumn was, as Walsh calls it, "the watershed" of his married life (White 30), but in winter, once again, the storm brings about a clarity of vision, and he became not only part of nature but also the centre of it. With the death of Stan we have a new Stan Parker walking through the trees, a symbol of the continuity of life. The novel thus following the central process or movement of death and rebirth (Anatomy 158), comes a full circle.

From the cyclical movement within the order of nature is a dialectical movement from that order into the apocalyptic world above (Frye, Anatomy 161-62), into which Stan's vision finally releases him. Manfred Macenzie also points out to "this apocalypse or revelation ... the final separation ... (as) Stan's is a vision of an eternity that allows him to transcend natural process ..." ("Tree" 99). Like Theodora Goodman, Stan Parker has achieved his goal through humility, simplicity, and suffering.
Through the lives of the varied characters and incidents White has suggested "every possible aspect of life" and revealed "the mystery and poetry" of existence ("Prodigal Son" 39).

Voss

Pride and worse Ambition threw me down
Warring in Heav'n against Heav'ns matchless King.

(Milton, Paradise Lost iv, 40-1)

In the quest-myth, the hero's journey is followed either through "desert, jungle, deep sea, or alien land" and it is in these fearful regions the monster is usually encountered (Campbell, Hero 77). In Voss, Patrick White again gives his version of this basic mythological theme of the quest, his protagonist, Voss, undertaking a journey into the harsh deserts of Australia, "the disturbing country, ... to attempt the infinite" (V 35). The monster he faces is his pride which almost destroys him, but he is saved by his eventual realization of his humanity. The novel is based on the legend of Ludwig Leichhardt, a German explorer, who attempted to cross Australia from east to west and disappeared without a trace.
Voss, a German, feels compelled to enter Australia, the country which is his by right of vision" (V 29) and unlike those people who:

walked the sandy earth, eating bread, or sat at meat in their houses of frail stone foundations, ... the lean man, ... became familiar with each blade of withered grass at which he stared, even the joints in the body of the ant.

Knowing so much, I shall know everything, he assured himself, ... slowly breathing the sultry air of the new country that was being revealed to him. (V 29)

The knowledge which he seeks however "only comes of death by torture in the country of the mind" (V 440), and the spatial voyage becomes in essence a spiritual one, a journey into the depths of oneself.

In contrast to Voss who dares the desert is Mr. Bonner who "huddles" against it:
They were two blue-eyed men, of a different blue. Voss would frequently be lost to sight in his, as birds are in sky. But Mr. Bonner would never stray far beyond familiar objects. His feet were on the earth. (V 17)

For Bonner Australia meant wealth and material comfort. He did not care to know the interior, and was in fact afraid of it which made him question the German's decision:

"You are quite certain you are ready to undertake such a great expedition?" he dared to ask.

"Naturally," the German replied. He had his vocation, it was obvious, and equally obvious that his patron would not understand. "You are aware, I should say, what it could mean?"

"If we would compare meanings, Mr. Bonner," said the German, ... "we would arrive perhaps at different conclusions." (V 20)
The gulf between them is enormous: "Mr. Bonner read the words, but Voss saw the rivers. He followed them in their fretful course" (V 23), and the German longs "to enter his own world of desert and dreams" (V 26). The tension that exists between the two men is found in all White's novels, where the conscious few are pitted against the unconscious many who are the "chattering monkey society devoted to snobbery and slander" (Frye, Anatomy 48).

Laura Trevelyan, Mr. Bonner's niece is however different from the "huddlers". Intelligent and perspective, she questions material values, and comes to the:

decision that she could not remain a convinced believer in that God in whose benevolence and power she had received most earnest instruction from a succession of governesses and her good aunt. . . . She was suffocated by the fuzz of faith. She did believe, however, most palpably, in wood, with the reflections in it, and in clear daylight and water . . . She had read a great deal out of such books as had come her way in that remote colony, until her mind seemed to be complete. . . . Yet,
in spite of this admirable self-sufficiency, she might have elected to share her experience with some similar mind, if such a mind had offered. But there was no evidence of intellectual kinship in any of her small circle of acquaintance, certainly not in her family. . . . (V 9)

The intellectual kinship she longs for is provided by Voss. The two of them are very much alike in their isolation and self-sufficiency. Looking at Laura, Voss thought, "such beautiful women were in no way necessary to him. . . . He was sufficient in himself" (V 15). But a "mystical communion" develops between the two of them after Voss leaves on the expedition. Distance is not an obstacle to their love and their entire affair takes place in the imagination, they "do not meet but in distances, and dreams are the distance brought close" (V 295). The domestic reality of the Bonners is a static order which can produce little but mediocrity. Their "Home" is artificial, and, Voss's physical journey across the Australian desert, and Laura's spiritual one is a move away from this artificial statis.
In relation to his fellow men, Voss is their leader and even Lord. Harry Robarts is simple and good "but superfluous" (V 21), "an easy shadow to wear" (V 31). He is subservient to Voss throughout the expedition, until he meets his ghastly but inevitable death in the Australian wilderness. Voss knew Le Mesurier "as he knew his own blacker thoughts" (V 33), but Le Mesurier sees deeper than Voss does, prophesying their fate in his poetry. Like Harry, he is also dependent on Voss and when finally Voss gives up his Godhead, Le Mesurier slits his throat. Palfreyman is the Christian whose life revolves round his hunchback sister. For him, Voss is a kind of deliverer. This image of Voss as God is something that Voss himself believed in. For Voss, the Divine Power is Man, and he is the Divine Power. This aspiration to Godhead isolated him from everyone else because God is above all human weakness:

he did not expect much of love, for all that is soft and yielding is easily hurt. He suspected it, but the mineral forms were an everlasting source of wonder; feldspar, for instance, was admirable, and his own name a crystal in his mouth. If he were to leave that name
on the land, irrevocably, his material body swallowed by what it had named, it would be rather on some desert place, a perfect abstraction, that would rouse no feeling of tenderness in posterity. He had no more need for sentimental admiration than he had for love. He was complete. (V 41)

Hence, when he learns that Laura has abandoned her faith, he is outraged:

"Ach," he pounced, "you are not atheistish?"

"I do not know," she said. . . .

"Atheists are atheists usually for mean reasons," Voss was saying. "The meanest of these is that they themselves are so lacking in magnificence they cannot conceive the idea of a Divine Power." . . .

"But the God they have abandoned is of mean conception," Voss pursued. "Easily destroyed, because in their own image. Pitiful because such destruction does not prove the destroyer's power. Atheismus is self-murder." (V 89)
It is a suicidal act for him because he saw himself as God. He cannot see Divinity as any other Power except in relation to himself and a Moravian brother rightly tells him: "You have a contempt for God because He is not in your own image" (V 47).

Having placed himself as God he is devoid of all humility: "Ah, the humility," he says, is what is "so particularly loathsome. My God, besides is above humility" (V 90). Laura then "saw him standing in the glare of his own brilliant desert. Of course, He was Himself indestructible" (V 90), and feels only pity for him. But she is also alarmed and says: "'To maintain such standards of pride, in the face of what you must experience on this journey, is truly alarming.' 'I am not in the habit of setting myself limits' " he replied (V 90). This arrogance which stems from his pride is presented right from the beginning. When Mr. Bonner asks him if he has studied the map: "The map?" said Voss. "I will first make it" (V 23). And he believes that it would be better if he went alone and barefoot into the country rather than in company. Even his appeal to Le Mesurier to join the expedition is in terms of the ego:
Every man has a genius, though it is not always discoverable. Least of all when choked by the trivialities of daily existence. But in this disturbing country, so far as I have become acquainted with it already, it is possible more easily to discard the inessential and to attempt the infinite. You will be burnt up most likely, you will have the flesh torn from your bones, you will be tortured probably in many horrible and primitive ways, but you will realize the genius of which you sometimes suspect you are possessed, and of which you will not tell me you are afraid. (V 35)

Though Voss is aware that the expedition will destroy him, he has to make it in order to prove his divinity, and he tells Le Mesurier, "To make yourself it is also necessary to destroy yourself" (V 34). Later to Laura he says "Your future is what you will make it. Future, is will" (V 68). The expedition of "pure will" (V 69) is thus doomed to disaster from the start.

Once the expedition starts and the party journey inward, Voss feels as if he is entering a "gentle healing landscape" (V 124) and is contented. As they approach Rhine Towers he
is further drawn towards the beauty of the valley, but not to the place itself and does not want to stay there. But when Palfreyman faints he is compelled to stay on. It is here that he meets Judd, the convict and Angus. Voss is fascinated by the magnificent homestead that has been built in the wilderness but says, "It is not for me, ... to build a solid house and live in it the kind of life that is lived in such houses" (V 131). The wilderness is his home and he is enfolded in it.

Laura begins to occupy his thoughts and Voss identifies the landscape with Laura. "He continued to think about the young woman, there on the banks of the river, where the points of her wooden elbows glimmered in the dusk" (V 152). Later he dreams that "they were swimming so close they were joined together at the waist, and were drowning in the same love-stream" (V 187). Even when he is in pain she is present. They were riding on, Voss wondered how much of himself he had given into her hands. For he had become aware that the mouth of the young woman was smiling. It was unusually full and compassionate. Approbation must have gone to his head, for he continued unashamedly
to contemplate her pleasure, and to extract from it pleasure of his own. They were basking in the same radiance, which had begun to emanate from the hitherto lustreless earth. (V 208-09)

Voss is now no longer self-sufficient as Laura becomes part of him. He acknowledges that she has inspired some degree of humility in time. But he has not yet descended from his Divinity and tells her "I am reserved for further struggles, to wrestle with rocks, to bleed if necessary, to ascend" (V 217). Earlier at Christmas the fact that Judd and Palfreyman wanted to celebrate Christmas angered him. He did not want to bring Christ into his landscape which was his "by illusion" (V 197). The stage is set for his "Fall".

The party enter Aboriginal territory and the natives are hostile. Their attempt at friendship is rejected and they start losing cattle and food. They stumble across the parched interior and are plagued by drought and disease. The torrential rains that follow turn the country into a sea of mud and the men become desperately ill. Voss himself administers his sick companions: "Laura had prevailed upon him to the extent that he had taken
a human form, at least temporarily" (V 159). The thought that he would have to "renounce the crown of fire for the ring of gentle gold" (V 211) had tormented him but he realizes that the two of them "had been married an eternity" (V 259), indirectly accepting salvation from her hands. Hereafter every event is accompanied by dreams of Laura. As K. Chellappan points out "Laura is the dreamy or creative counterpart to his exploratory self and his recollections or visions of Laura humanise him" (26).

The men were reduced to skeletons and lay huddled together when a group of Aborigines approached them. Voss asks Palfreyman to face them, literally sending him to his death, but he is unafraid, "I will trust to my faith" he says, and walks out unarmed thinking of various incidents in his life:

Over the dry earth he went, with his springy exaggerated strides, and in this strange progress was at peace and love with his fellows. . . .

All remembered the face of Christ that they had seen at some point in their lives, either in churches or visions, before retreating from what they had not understood, the paradox of man in Christ and Christ in man. (V 342)
But "one black man warded off the white mysteries" (V 342) with the spear he throws at Palfreyman which struck him in his side and killed him. Having watched the horrifying spectacle, Judd feels that they are not "intended to go any further" (V 345) and decides to return. Turner and Angus also join him and the party splits. But they do not survive. Turner and Angus die agonising deaths while Judd survives only in the flesh for his mind is tortured and in the end he makes Voss appear a Christ figure:

"He would wash the sores of the men. He would sit all night with them when they were sick and clean up their filth with his own hands. I cried, I tell you, after he was dead. There was none of us could believe it when we saw the spear, hanging from his side, and shaking." (V 443-44)

On the other side of the continent, Laura is rocked by a fever having been transported in spirit to the wilderness - a figure of "saving grace": "I shall not fail you," she said, "Even if there are times when you wish me to, I shall not fail you" (V 363). She follows his physical and spiritual progress and each
is so aware of the condition of the other that "they were drifting together. They were sharing the same hell, in their common flesh" (V 364). She points out that he is no longer God. "Man is God decapitated. That is why you are bleeding" (V 364) and Voss finally accepts it. Her teaching has forced him to renounce his strength. But Laura knows that to save him she has to make a sacrifice: "... some big sacrifice ... something of a personal nature that will convince a wavering mind. If it is only a human sacrifice that will convince man that he is not God" (V 370). And she decides to give away her maid, Rose Portion's baby which had become her own child. At this point Voss gives in to God. When Le Mesurier asks him his plan: "I have no plan," replied Voss, "but will trust to God" (V 379). The admission breaks Le Mesurier, the abject disciple, and he slits his throat.

As Laura recognizes that Voss has become humble she understands Christ's suffering, and the progression Voss has made: "'Of God into man. Man. And man returning into God'. . . . 'When man is truly humbled, when he has learnt that he is not God, then he is nearest to becoming so. In the end he may ascend' " (V 386-87).
Alone after Harry also dies, Voss is afraid and realizes that he "had always been most abominably frightened, even at the height of his divine power, a frail God upon a rickety throne . . ." (V 390), and he turns to Jesus to save him. The Aborigines then ask Jackie to kill him and simultaneously Laura's fever also breaks: "'O God,' cried the girl, at last, tearing it out. 'It is over. It is over.' " (V 395). But she knows that her sacrifice has not been made and hopes to be forgiven: "He will forgive, for at that distance, I believe, failures are accepted in the light of intentions" (V 396). Laura's journey into "the country of the mind" (V 446) is over. Thus it is through Laura, "the woman who unmade man to make saints" (V 188) that Voss's experience is interpreted, and it is she who leads him to the discovery that he is man, not God, which makes Brady feel that Laura and not Voss is the protagonist of the novel ("Laura as heroine"). However, as Brady notes elsewhere all Voss's figures are androgynous characters ("Question of Woman"), and Laura is the feminine principle in Voss, the Jungian anima, the positive force - not the femme fatale David Tacey makes her out to be (Mother-Goddess 255) - that leads Voss out of his hellish depths. By continuing the novel even after Voss's death White transforms history into myth, as Laura and the others carry on the story and make Voss a legend.
In trying to make himself God, Voss had made himself into a satanic figure. Peterson notes that both the names, Lucifer and Voss mean light (249). Like Satan who aspired to Godhead, Voss attempts Divinity, and identifies himself as God:

Voss was jubilant as brass. Cymbals clapped drunkenly. Now he had forgotten words, but sang his jubilation in a cracked bass, that would not have disgraced temples, because dedicated to God.

Yes. GOTT. He had remembered. He had sung it. It rang out, shatteringly, like a trumpet blast. Even the depths lead upward to that throne, meandered his inspired thoughts. He straightened his shoulders, lying back along the croup of the crazily descending horse. It had become quite clear from the man's face that he accepted his own divinity. If it was less clear, he was equally convinced that all others must accept. After he had submitted himself to further trial, and, if necessary, immolation. (V 144)
And Pride and Ambition which drove Satan from Paradise to Hell also drove Voss to hell. Voss's ambition to transcend humanity, to transfigure it and attain the level of divinity is what leads him to the inevitable fall - "fall" to be understood here as a retreat from truth. The "indispensable suffering" that all White's characters must go through reduces Voss's ego and dissolved of the self, he accepts his humanity: "I am no longer your Lord, Harry" (V 366) Voss tells the lad. In all humility he trusts God and cries to Him: "O Jesus, rette mich me! Du lieber!" (V 390). He is thus redeemed and resurrected, resurrection implying an awakening to his true being. And this brings him closer to God.

As pointed out by John and Rose Marie Beston ("Theme of Spiritual Progression"), Laura's doctrine and Le Mesurier's poem "Childhood" trace Voss's spiritual progress. However I do not agree with their interpretation that the three stages are childhood, Godhead, and Renunciation. The first stage of "God into man" refers not "to the act of creation whereby God breathes a spirit into man, and with it some of his divinity" (Bestons 99-100), but to the divinity in man which is exploited by the protagonist, whereby he believes in his own Divinity, that he is God. The second stage, "Man", is when he surrenders his divinity
and accepts his humanity, and in this humility and acceptance, he is resurrected and returned to God. Similarly in the poem "Childhood", the first stage is the first paragraph: "Man is King" (V 296). The third paragraph of the poem reflects the second stage of Voss's humility which strengthens him: "As I grow weaker so I shall become strong" (V 296). And the fourth paragraph is the realisation that he is "not God, but Man", a realization which makes him eternal:

O God, my God, I pray that you will take my spirit out of this my body's remains, and after you have scattered it, grant that it shall be everywhere, and in the rocks, and in the empty waterholes, and in true love of all men, and in you, O God, at last. (V 297)

so that finally it is said: "Voss did not die. He is there still, it is said, in the country, and always will be" (V 448).

Wilkes has also observed that the novel further offers "an independent 'mythical' structure in the aboriginal beliefs about the migration of souls, and the distribution of the spirit through nature after death" ("Voss" 141). Paffreyman's death is interpreted
by Harry in these terms for he saw "the white bird depart out of the hole in Mr. Palfreyman's side" (V 344). Le Mesurier's poem also believes in this concept and he explains: "Dying is creation. The body creates fresh forms, the soul inspires by its manner of leaving the body, and passes into other souls" (V 361). And Voss in his death becomes part of the landscape with his spirit returning to earth: "His dreams fled into the air, his blood ran out upon the cold dry earth, which drank it up immediately" (V 394). He is now "part of the Dreaming, the creative power that re-defines reality for the aborigines and transcends time" (Nimmie Pooraya 44). Patrick White believes that like the Aborigines one should develop a timeless relationship with the land if one is to become part of it. Hence as Brady notes, in his novels, unlike the protagonist of the American novel, Moby Dick, who masters the environment, White's protagonists are mastered by the land ("The Novelist" 174).

The landscape constitutes the centre of Voss's quest for it is the confrontation with this powerful force which makes Voss realize that he is all too human. The desert also symbolizes the Old Testament God of wrath and anger bringing instant justice on sinful man, Voss's sin being his pride and ambition. The desert
is the place of transformation and suffering. Human relationships are also related to the desert as both are "vast", not bound by time but stretching to eternity. K. Chellappan sees the desert as a symbol of "the human soul divested of all its attachments or the emptiness of the mind in which God has to bloom" (27). There are other recurrent nature images which "mirror the relationships between Voss and the forces which threaten his integrity" and these have been examined by Jean Paul Durix ("Natural Elements" 345-52).

Voss typifies the tragic hero described by Frye, as he is superior to his men, but not to the environment (Anatomy 33-4). He is also filled with an "aggressive will, intoxicated by dreams of its own omnipotence" (Anatomy 214) which isolates him from everyone and leads to his fall. "With his fall, a greater world beyond his gigantic spirit had blocked out becomes for an instant visible" (Anatomy 215), it "is the resurrection that follows the death, the epiphany or manifestation of the risen hero" (Anatomy 215). Voss's spiritual progression certainly fits this pattern, his tragedy being a prelude to the divine comedy, the Christian scheme of redemption and resurrection. But this upward movement does not allow for the novel to be called a comedy as Morley
does (116). And in Voss's tragedy White has presented the condition of modern man who is "rootless, no longer believing in God, yet uncertain of his nature and his relationship to the universe, recklessly, even self-destructively embarked on a quest to discover his potential and to assert it against the world." (Kiernan, White 51).