

**FROM NIHILISM TO TRANSCENDENTALISM: A
STUDY OF THE SELECTED NOVELS OF
PATRICK WHITE**

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ABSTRACT

The present thesis explores the novels of Australian writer Patrick White in the spirit of the transcendentalism of Kant and Emerson. Like them, White was worried about the horrible condition of humanity. The World Wars, Holocaust, the growing spirit of nihilism and pessimism made people wary of life. They had lost faith in religion, God and Nature. Eliot called it a "spiritual graveyard" and there was no hope of redemption. Like Buddha, White pondered over the cause of problems giving birth to their suffering to arrive at a permanent solution as a remedy. White had also suffered much in his life. To find solutions, he travelled far and wide, studied men of wisdom and consulted the traits of religious beliefs to conclude that man himself is the cause of his sorrow. He has forgotten his divinity. Materialism has polluted his heart and mind. He has forgotten his soul. There was time when man was in communion with God as man had absolute faith in Nature and God. Due to dominance of science and materialism over spirituality, man has created a hell for himself. He finds comfort in money and materials, which is an anomaly, and so peace eludes him. In the transcendental ideas of Kant and Emerson, White found the secret to happiness. Excessive love of matter and belief in the supremacy of the intellect leads a man to vices like avarice, sex, gluttony, anger etc. No wonder, man falls prey to hostile forces. Man suffers because he breaks his relations with God, nature, and fellow beings. White affirms that we can enjoy happiness only by satisfying our fellow beings and loving all creatures, i.e. by developing spiritual relationships.

Through his experience and his study of profound writers, White learnt that sufferings are unavoidable. But they are also a necessity. They have their redemptive

value. Through suffering, man understands the suffering of others. Two sufferers join, have a positive dialogue, and find a remedy. They can share it with other human beings, making the universe a better place to live in. Failures are bound to come. A man may fail but his struggle never goes waste. Failures are the pillars of success. The problematic situations make man deeply wound, or deeply wise. If his attitude is positive, man does not feel broken. On the other hand, a glow comes on his face as reward.

White believes that nature is supportive of man. As Wordsworth says, it leads a man “from joy to joy”. Even if nature creates hurdles in his way, the sufferings make man stronger and more perfect. There is a meaning and purpose in life and nature helps to realize his real purpose. The characters in the novels of White are not dumb-driven cattle. Generally, they fail to move with society and suffer. But their suffering gives them chances for growth. In his novels, White shares the message of unity of man and God for peace and prosperity. But his characters learn this lesson only after suffering throughout their lifetime. Situations come in their lives when they feel helpless, but still, they do not leave hope. This message of hope and trust is the lesson of positivity to lead a man from nihilism to transcendentalism.

The qualitative research of this thesis has a universal scope. It deals with human suffering and its remedy. We are living in a world of cyber. Life has become so stressful that we have failed to enjoy a moment of absolute joy. The happiness part is missing in our life. The thesis explores the issues of trauma, fragmentation, loss of self, pessimism and depression, which are common symptoms found in the modern man.

The topic of this study is ever new but more relevant in the present scenario when human beings all over the world are suffering from the ravages of Covid-19. Moreover, the danger of the Third World War is threatening man. White warns that the human ego can prove havoc, and the solutions taken by war are not permanent. On the other hand, humility, unconditional love, understanding and mutual respect are the fundamentals of a happy life and peaceful living. The thesis entitled *From Nihilism to Transcendentalism: A Study of the Selected Novels of Patrick White* highlights the need for spirituality and connectedness. For a better future for humanity, *Vasudev kutumbkam* is the remedy found in the novels of Patrick White. White warns through his characters as Dr. Radhakrishnan points out in his famous book *Recovery of Faith*: “Our age is still in desperate need of that which religion alone can give” (1). The thesis fulfils the objectives of my study and justifies the hypothesis with which the research was started. By exploring the novels of Patrick White, it is affirmed that one gets the strength and wisdom to solve the problems of life. As with every topic, there is much scope for further research on the works of White.

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LALIT CHAWLA

INTRODUCTION

“Our age is still in desperate need of a spiritual reawakening, a recovery of faith” (Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, *Recovery of Faith* 1).

Our scriptures and ancient texts point out that man is a traveller. S. Vaswani in his book *Discover Yourself* remarks “man, today, has become a traveller in space. He has set out on the outward journey. His entire life is a wandering”. Since the dawn of history, man has been seeking happiness. He hankers after worldly pleasures for permanent peace, which is an anomaly. Earthly delights are confined to the senses, hence short-lived. The endless source can give permanent peace. Man does not want goods only but God also. His personality needs growth and development in all the aspects. He should be sound physically, intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually. If he wants inner peace and world peace, he needs a balance between the body and the soul, emotions and the intellect. P.D. Bhagwan’s famous book *Antar ki Khoj* states “man is 2% physical and 98% mental and spiritual. But the physical claims most of his attention, time, and energy” (14). Lala Hardyal, in his book *Hints for Self Culture*, writes that “Man is a composite creature: he needs not only Money, but also Morality, Mirth, Music and Mystery” (61). As such, development in all aspects: “intellectual, physical, aesthetic, and ethical, is required. These are the four facets of a complete life” (viii).

It has been observed that humans have become reluctant to perform their designed duty. Apparently, man has turned his back on God. He thinks that money and materials can make him happy. He wants to lead a comfortable life by all means.

Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev has categorically remarked in his lectures that the present age is comfortable but the most depressing age. Man has created a 'wasteland' and 'spiritual graveyard' in his life, says T.S Eliot in his poem *The Hollow Men*. His approach to life is nihilistic. Man has killed God in the darkness of noon, says Nietzsche in his book *Thus Spake Zarathustra*. Human beings are devoid of traditional values. Fraudulent practices have overpowered them, giving rise to a decline in moral values. They get pleasure in disturbing others. For their personal benefit, human beings are prepared to harm their fellow beings. People are cautious of their rights, but least care for their duties. They always plan to amass money and materials at the cost of honesty. Corruption is rampant to make them disunited. They are the cause of their sorrow but blame others for their agony. These are the symptoms of nihilism.

Under the impact of nihilism, man has destroyed nature for his material gains. Instead of serving the needy and the indigent, he has become the cause of their suffering. Man does business with God, Nature, and the Universe. His relationship with all these depends on profit and loss. Religion is the realization of self and God. It is a way of life. Not symbols, but the spirit of religion can redeem man from all his miseries. When depressed due to his wrong perceptions and deeds, he says God is nowhere, though he talks of Him. The only solution to alleviate man from his adverse condition lies in transcendentalism. The transcendentalists say that God is all and all in God, asserting thereby the universal brotherhood *Vasudev kutumbkam*, i.e. oneness of man and oneness of God. In *The Divine Image*, William Blake presents the essence of Transcendentalism:

And all must love the human form,
In heathen, Turk, or Jew.
Where Mercy, Love, and Pity dwell
There God is dwelling too. (Last Stanza)

As such, man should expand himself like Whitman. He should consider the whole world as an expansion of his soul. He should have a positive attitude towards life. He should know himself first. He should realize himself to realize God. Man should serve man as God. Man reaps what he sows. This scientific law is the law of karma. Selfless service is the way to peace and prosperity. If people are at daggers drawn and impose their ego on others, war is the outcome. Otherwise, man is not warring by nature. Without true religion based on truth, universal brotherhood, service, sacrifice, and love, the world will be broken up into pieces, starving for peace. Whitman wrote *Song of Myself* in which he sang the divinity of the soul:

I see something of God each hour of the twenty-four, and each
moment then,
In the faces of men and women I see God, and in my own face in the
glass,
I find letters from God dropt in the street and everyone is signed by
God's name. (Section 48)

Kant and Emerson, like Whitman, propounded a transcendental view. They declared that man is redeemable; intuition is above reason; and the individual is above society. Patrick White supported this theory for peace and prosperity. The individual is important because individuals make the society, nation, and the world. For world

peace and individual development, it is necessary to know the self, i.e. soul, which is part and parcel of the Over-Soul, i.e. God. It is transcendental knowledge or fundamental knowledge to get rid of all suffering. Moreover, sufferings are inevitable and necessary for spiritual progress due to their redemptive power.

The researcher has endeavoured to trace nihilism and its remedy found in the transcendental view point projected by White. This study explores the transcendental vision depicted in the selected novels of Patrick White, the first and the only Nobel Laureate of the 20th century in Australia. The Swedish Academy awarded him Nobel Prize in 1973 for his unprecedented and unique contribution to English literature, creating a separate identity for Australian literature. Though he tried all forms of art like poetry, short stories, plays, and novels, his art of novel writing is superb. The epic and narrative art of this grand old master made their mark in the history of world literature. Since he is the only Nobel Laureate of Australia and his outlook is universal and transcendental, the researcher does not find it necessary to mention his contemporaries. Moreover, he is an institution unto himself and is unparalleled since his contribution to Australian Literature is unique.

The writings of White are an epitome of human consciousness. He is a serious novelist who attempted to explore the mystery of human sufferings to find meaning of life in his novels. His novels are full of wit and wisdom. His vision of life is coloured and powerfully influenced by his inner mind, and his novels are efforts of self-dramatization. His art is not for art sake but for life sake. To explore his writings allows exploring possibilities of spiritual growth. Patrick White discarded the postmodern techniques and wrote famous novels such as *Happy Valley* (1939), *The*

Living and the Dead (1941), *The Aunt's Story* (1948), *The Tree of Man* (1955), *Voss* (1957), *Riders in the Chariot* (1961), *The Solid Mandala* (1966), *The Vivisector* (1970), *The Eye of the Storm* (1973), *A Fringe of Leaves* (1976), *The Twyborn Affair* (1979), *Memoirs of Many in One* (1986) and *The Hanging Garden* (2012) articulating his transcendental vision. The world was passing through a crisis period after two World Wars and the Jewish Holocaust when Patrick White started writing. Human faith in nobility of man was shattered by the mass killings of the Jews. Darwin wrote his seminal *The Origin of Species* and Spengler wrote his famous book *The Decline of the West* highlighting the moral and spiritual darkness engulfing man. Freud and Einstein supported evolution theory. Pessimistic writers like Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Jaspers, Strindberg, O'Neill, Kafka and others brought nihilism and pessimism. Virginia Woolf highlighted trauma advocating the futility of life. In *The Sense of an Ending* (1968), Frank Kermode observed that the future of humanity was uncertain. Yeats, Lawrence, Hemingway and other writers of the twenties and thirties forecast sad future of mankind. The message of Sartre and Camus was also horrifying. Resultantly human faith in religion was shattered. The world's future looked bleak with the emergence of the Cold War, and the challenges of the colonial powers oppressed the Australian people. A nihilistic wave gripped the psyche of the Australians. Need of the hour was the use of literature for hope and peace. Patrick White, like Shakespeare and Leo Tolstoy, used his art of writing for the revival of faith and hope.

The main focus of Patrick White is the suffering and helplessness of man. But unlike Thomas Hardy and John Updike, his characters get new awareness and

struggle for redemption in life. They are life-like creatures, and face the limitations of human beings. White has created a galaxy of characters who do not behave like dumb-driven cattle. Generally, they fail to move with society and suffer. But their suffering gives them chances for progress and upliftment. White has made a psycho-analytic analysis of his characters. Each novel depicts the inner self of the characters to understand them. Through his characters like Voss, Stan Parker, Amy Parker, Theodora Goodman, Himmelfarb, Ellen Roxburgh, Laura Trevelyan, Arthur and Waldo, Hurtle Duffield, and Elizabeth Hunter, he explores the problems of displacement, dispossession, and alienation. They suffer in their struggle to realize the value of human life and the transcendental self.

The present study has examined and investigated the force of nihilism and pessimism and analyzed the themes of sufferings and redemption. In this study the elements of transcendentalism are explored and investigated. The issues of greed, love and sex are also examined in the select novels.

- In *Happy Valley*, each character suffers but at the same time struggles to achieve self-realization. Dr. Oliver studies the law of suffering and perception of life.
- *The Living and the Dead* shows the situation of prevalent society due to World War II and introduces the theme of redemption and self-realization through Elyot Standish.
- *The Aunt's Story* highlights the 'illusion of reality and reality of illusion' through the character of Theodora Goodman. It shows the transcendental faith of the novelist.

- *The Tree of Man* deals with the theme of life, showing inherent transcendence even in the ordinary life of a simple man Stan and his wife, Amy, who make the rugged bushy land fertile.
- *Voss* is the story of the spiritual journey of a German explorer Voss and Australian orphan Laura. After a long struggle, the protagonist learns that man has his limitations. He is not God.
- *A Fringe of Leaves* deals with the basic theme of the human search to find meaning and value in life. Through Ellen Roxburgh, White teaches the reader to face all situations in life boldly.
- *Riders in the Chariot* studies the religious vision of Patrick White. The novel explores the basic theme of suffering to redemption through the four sufferers who have the same idea of the chariot symbolizing God.

The following chapters explore the themes of sufferings and redemption depicting the journey of the characters who suffer and ultimately attain redemption understanding the meaning of life and death.

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Chapter: One

Brief Candle

This chapter is named as Brief Candle as all the important issues discussed in the study have been briefly discussed to enable the readers to understand the main problems and issues discussed in the thesis. The life and achievements of Patrick White; his confrontation with the forces of pessimism and nihilism; his positive philosophy of life; his deep interest and influence of transcendentalism are discussed in brief in this chapter. “The grand old master of Australia” and writer of the famous novel *The Tree of Man*, Patrick White was Australia's only Nobel Prize winner in the 20th century. He excited great interest among the critics and reviewers of the world. In Australia, there was a mild critical reaction against him. But in Britain and America, his novels excited great interest for his passion for natural life and his love for the serenity of life. American novelists such as John Updike and Thomas Pynchon wrote about the collapse of human civilization. They viewed America as running downhill. Frank Kermode observed that time had reached a critical juncture and the future of humanity was uncertain. Yeats found that the twentieth century marked his apocalyptic gyre's final days, to begin again. T. S. Eliot, D.H. Lawrence, Hemingway and other writers also expressed their sad vision.

Patrick White's full name is Patrick Victor Martindale White. He was born in London to Australian parents in 1912 and taken back to Australia after six months. He was asthmatic from his childhood and belonged to a family of shepherds. Without literary background, he had to face many difficulties in getting his education. Every

morning was a challenge and every evening an experience for him. After studying in private schools in Australia for some period, he was sent to London for proper schooling as desired by his mother. There he felt himself in the British cage. So, he returned home after his school education and worked on his uncle's sheep farm for two years as a jackeroo. He again returned to England to graduate from Cambridge. However, during vacation, he went to Germany to study modern languages and became interested in German and French literature. White did his graduation from King's College, England. After graduation, he settled in England to write novels, short stories, and poems. His purpose was to write fiction like Marx to create a new future for mankind. Patrick White discarded the postmodern techniques and wrote famous novels such as *Happy Valley* (1939), *The Living and the Dead* (1941), *The Aunt's Story* (1948), *The Tree of Man* (1955), *Voss* (1957), *Riders in the Chariot* (1961), *The Solid Mandala* (1966), *The Vivisector* (1970), *The Eye of the Storm* (1973), *A Fringe of Leaves* (1976), *The Twyborn Affair* (1979), *Memoirs of Many in One* (1986) and *The Hanging Garden* (2012), articulating his transcendental vision of life. Thomas L. Warren (1981) observes that the novels of Patrick White focus on human relationships. Like a researcher, he ponders over life's problems to find solutions. White learnt that life is a process-all of consciousness. The life process is the same, while young or old. Nature may seem antagonist, but it is the best companion and teacher. Humility, simplicity, and purity are the essence, and religion the way of life. No valuable achievement is possible without pure suffering.

Leena Zafar (2003) observes that "White emerged as the trend setter as he depicted the problems, challenges and cultural issues of Australia in a vivid and

lyrical style in his novels” (Zafar 12). Timothy Van Niekerk (1990) observes that the conspicuous feature of White’s novels is his “passion for transcendence expressed through imagery and symbols” (Niekerk 1). The present thesis entitled: *From Nihilism to Transcendentalism: A Study of the Selected Novels of Patrick White* explores his significant novels in the light of transcendentalism. The world was passing through a period of crisis after two World Wars and the Jewish Holocaust when White started writing. The world's future looked bleak with the emergence of the Cold War, and the challenges of the colonial powers oppressed the Australian people. The wave of nihilism and pessimism gripped the psyche of the Australians. The need of the hour was the use of literature for hope and peace. Like Shakespeare and Leo Tolstoy, Patrick White used the art of writing to revive faith and hope for the people of Australia. He created a galaxy of characters who do not behave like dumb-driven cattle. Generally, they fail to move with society and suffer. But their suffering gives them chances for progress and upliftment.

White has made a psycho-analytic analysis of his characters. Each novel depicts the inner self of the characters to understand them. His significant characters include Voss, Stan Parker, Amy Parker, Theodora Goodman, Himmelfarb, Ellen Roxburgh, Laura Trevelyan, Arthur and Waldo, Hurtle Duffield, and Elizabeth Hunter. They suffer in their struggle to find the value of human life and the transcendental self. In his novels *Happy Valley* (1939) and *The Living and the Dead* (1941), the main focus of Patrick White is the suffering and helplessness of man. Still, unlike Thomas Hardy and John Updike, his characters get new awareness and struggle for redemption in life. They are life-like creatures and face the limitations of

human beings. His writings provide an opportunity to explore the possibilities of spiritual growth.

The objectives of the study are the following:

- 1) To analyze the themes of sufferings and redemption in the select novels of Patrick White
- 2) To explore the elements of transcendentalism in the select novels of Patrick White.
- 3) To investigate the issues of greed, love and sex in the select novels of Patrick White

Review of Literature of Past and Present

The following critics have expressed their divergent views on the novels of Patrick White. In his 1990 review entitled "Desert Metaphors and Self-Entitlement in Patrick White's *Voss*", Shirley Paolini opines that Voss has escaped the old world and discovered the new. He has suffered and searched the abyss of self. His fate though dubious and ambiguous from a Christian moral standpoint, is less compelling than his struggle and final integration into the land and the universal one.

In "Patrick White's *The Tree of Man*", Garret Barden asserts that the sudden expansions punctuate the passage of time in Stan Parker's consciousness. Suddenly he understands, and his understanding subsequently colours the material world in which he lives.

Debra Journet has written an article on "Patrick White and D.H. Lawrence: Sexuality and Wilderness in *A Fringe of Leaves* and *Lady Chatterley's Lover*". He opines that "this psychological journey is paralleled in both novels by a physical journey which takes the woman away from a corrupt society into a freer natural world, finally to return her changed-to the society she has to lift."

Anitha S. in "Realization through Suffering in the Select Novels of Patrick White: *Voss*, *The Eye of the Storm* and *Riders in the Chariot*" concludes that characters of White struggle in their life in their quest for redemption and spiritual elevation. In "Australian Commonwealth Literature and Patrick White's Selected Novels *The Eye of the Storm* and *The Vivisector*", Shree Devi opines that in these novels, White portrays suffering as a necessity, and it is the path of purification that leads to spiritual insight.

Anup Kumar Rakshit, in "Patrick White's *Voss*-A Journey towards Meaning", concludes that *Voss* is undoubtedly a vivid portrayal of humanity's search for meaning and value in existence. *Voss* is also White's emerging Australian self.

K. Rajasri, in "The Theme of Self-Realization in Patrick White's *A Fringe of Leaves*", concludes that through *Ellen White* teaches us to suffer from the dignity and to find strength in loneliness.

In her paper entitled "Texting the Scripture: Sri Guru Granth Sahib and Visionary Poetics of Patrick White", Ishmeet Kaur opines that for White, too, the ultimate truth is central. He condemns religious institutions and dogmas followed by allowing the proper understanding of spirituality.

In her study *Theme of Quest as Depicted in the Novels of Patrick White*, R. Padmavathi concludes that Patrick White makes us aware of alternative existence and shows that understanding and reconciliation are possible for the person who struggles sincerely and in humility.

H. Soman Manjore, in his study *Patrick White-A Study of Humanism in His Selected Fiction*, asserts that as most of Patrick White's novels are about suffering and oppression, his humanistic concern is prominent.

In her study *The Heroes in the Novels of Patrick White*, Reena Singh remarks that Patrick White's heroes confirm the writer's most profound conviction that the meaning of life is obtained by exploring inner experience, by travelling on the road to transcendence.

In his study *Journey Motif in Five Contemporary Novels*, Ramesh Kumar Misra says that suffering, indeed, purges the dross of the protagonists, and they manifest signs of attaining the state of simplicity and humility towards the end.

In her study *The Novels of Patrick White: A Critical Study of Themes and Variations*, Ms Krishna Barua opines that Patrick White remains one of the most versatile and compelling loving novelists. A. Sheeba Princess, in her study *An Exploration of Space Relationships in the Novels of Patrick White*, remarks that in all the novels, "the events and actions take place in the inner, living and ecological spaces and these spaces are associated and interconnected" (34).

S. Anitha has written an article entitled "Suffering as Realization in the Selected Novels of Patrick White". She has explored the conflict between body and

soul of the characters. They suffer and achieve redemption and spiritual bliss only through sufferings. Dr. B. Siva Priya, in her article "Storm, the Agent of Purification and Transformation: A Study of William Shakespeare's *King Lear* and Patrick White's *The Eye of the Storm*", concludes that both the central characters suffer a lot and undergo a transformation in their path to self-actualization.

Robert McCrum, in his March 2015 article "The Guardian book review of *Voss* by Patrick White", argues that it is one of the best novels by Patrick White. *Voss* is "the lone rider on his journey to self-realization."

In his Nov 2016 review of *The Tree of Man* by Patrick White, Edith La Grazina explores the themes of hope and faith depicted in his novels. His novels inspire the people to lead a happy and contented life. White emerges as the real philosopher who has given a new direction to his people. In his study, *The Relationship between the Protagonist and Theme in the novel The Tree of Man by Patrick White*, Dr. Zalzulifa observes that his novel *The Tree of Man* has epic dimensions depicting the struggle of man against the hostile forces of nature and society.

In his 2005 study entitled *Moral Vision in the Novels of Patrick White*, K. N. Sharmila opines that each novel of White depicts the journey as a symbol of man's progression towards perfection after discovering the core of darkness within himself.

In his 2018 study entitled *Transformative Transcendence: Modernist Sacred in the Novels of Patrick White*, Mr. Ahmad Mehrali Dastjerdi observes that each novel of Patrick White is an exploration and therapeutic journey of his characters struggling for the redemption of life.

In her 1999 study "The Quest Theme in the Selected Novels of Patrick White and Margaret Laurence," V. Sangeetha concludes that White and Laurence have been mainly concerned with the quest for the cultural, national, and personal identities of the protagonists.

In his 2008 thesis entitled "Satire and the Quest for Identity in the selected works of Patrick White", Mahmood Azizi asserts that White's satire directs toward historical and contemporary beliefs and practices. White has depicted the cornerstones of Australian identity and sensibility in his novels.

In the journal article entitled "The Theme of Revelation in Patrick White's Novels" published in March 1977, the writer Cecil Hadgraft asserts: "When a new classic is added to those in the line of tradition, T.S. Eliot has remarked, then a retrospective shifting occurs-the present, as it were, modifies the past-and there is a slight readjustment of relations and values" (56).

In her thesis entitled "Finding a Place: Landscape and the Search for Identity in the Early Novels of Patrick White", Yasue Arimistu observes that the landscape of White is realistic as it depicts the struggle of characters to overcome alienation, and nihilism. In a copyright research paper entitled "Patrick White's *Voss*: A Psychoanalytical Approach", Xavier Pons contends that White's *Voss* is a real modern hero who struggles in his life to escape from the burden of nihilism and boredom in his quest of spiritual edification. The psychoanalytical approach is clearly in point in this research study.

The famous critic Carocci has written a journal article entitled "Extreme Place and Metaphysical Experience: the Australian Desert in Patrick White's *Voss*".

In this novel desert has symbolical significance. It is dark and blank, and Voss ventures to express and write about his burden of psychological possession. But at the end of the novel Voss does gain spiritual sublimation. At the end of his Journey, Voss loses his supposedly godlike stature and has to face the limits and weaknesses of a human being. His death by decapitation represents the loss of his leadership and the conquering of his pride. It makes the reader rethink the meaning of failure and the implications of knowledge, which is not a matter of geography but of suffering in the country of the mind.

In her 2003 thesis entitled "Major Novels of Patrick White: Study of Theme and Vision", Leena Zafar observes that the novels of White are relevant for the pessimistic and nihilistic people of the world. His novels are psychological and spiritual case studies. His novels are inspiring, illuminating and entertaining.

In an article entitled "Quest Motif in Patrick White's novel *Voss*", the writer B. Siva Priya points out that Patrick White writes on a variety of subjects to suit his needs. But the central theme of his books is the search for oneself, which is essential to understanding the meaning of life. The goal of the quest is to learn more about one's actual self and to find a new and different way of being via sustained hardship and experience. Patrick White's main protagonists, whether male or female, frequently battle through multiple tiers of experience before achieving their identity. This essay describes the journey that Voss, a German explorer, takes on his quest for identity.

In his review entitled "Patrick White and Iris Murdoch-Death as a Moral Summons in *The Eye of the Storm* and Bruno's *Dreams*," Graeme Sharrock

concludes: "The moral summons comes to the reader at the close of the book as at the close of life. The sense of an impending end draws us to contemplate how it will all end and simultaneously sets us up for the final instant. Whether at that moment we are facing our nothingness or our infiniteness may depend on whether we have been reading Iris Murdoch or Patrick White" (123).

Research Gap

After making a review of available literature on Patrick White, the researcher concludes that there is much scope for further study. Different researchers have taken up different perspectives on life in their research works. Some concentrate on the theme of loneliness, some on suffering, and some on spirituality. Others study the theme of growth. Some ponder on the theme of post-colonialism. Some have tried to explore humanness in the novels of Patrick White. However, no full length study on the topic *From Nihilism to Transcendentalism: A Study of the Selected Novels of Patrick White*. Through this study the researcher wishes to create new knowledge and fill the gap.

Friedrich Nietzsche and the Philosophy of Nihilism

Historically, Victorian age (1837-1901) was an era of peace, prosperity and growth in all aspects. Queen Victoria died in 1902 and after her death the age of Victoria ended. A new age of uncertainty, pessimism and nihilism started with the World Wars and with the collapse of the capital market resulting into mass unemployment. Pervasive vogue of loss of faith and decadence of moral and spiritual values are the conspicuous features of the age. Schopenhauer and Nietzsche propagated nihilism. New stylistic techniques were invented to depict the wounded psyche of the people

and the spirit of decadence of faith. The Greeks had absolute faith in Nature and God as they enjoyed blissful life. The Greeks were free from the anxieties and tensions of life and they were morally and spiritually great. They believed that man can be happy only if he is in communion with God. The Greeks and the Elizabethans had absolute faith in God, religion and Nature. There was no confusion in their minds and they had divine elements in their soul and mind. Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, and Karl Jaspers brought revolution in art and literature propagating the theories of futility of life and meaningless of human existence.

White discarded the theories of the Existentialists and depicted in all his novels a continuous journey from nihilism to transcendentalism. He took the challenge and drastically changed his novels' themes and plot structures. *The Myth of Sisyphus* of Camus explores the pervasive vogue of the absurdity of human existence. The writers after the World War II took up the themes of loss of self to propagate the issues and problems of man confronted with the valueless society. Zarathustra cries alone thus: "Can it indeed be possible! This old Saint in his forest hath not yet heard that God is dead" (Nietzsche 5).

Emergence of Existentialism

Soren Kierkegaard (1813–55) and Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900) were famous as "fathers of Existentialism", and they expressed their distrust of the traditional ideas of Socrates. Kierkegaard advocated the immortality of the soul. Friedrich Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1833) prompted Beckett and Ionesco to write about nausea and angst that engulfed the contemporary man. Patrick White rejected the philosophies of nihilism, pessimism, and existentialism and created characters whose

causes of misery and salvation have been explored in the current study. Loss of self is a notable theme in both British and American fiction. The deflation of self has been extensively discussed by D. Laing and Sypher Wylie. But in all the significant novels, Patrick White seeks redemption and meanings for his characters trapped in the abyss of darkness and nihilism.

Camus borrows the myth of tormented Sisyphus to prove his ideas about absurdity, despair, and the endless anguish of man. He and other Existentialists firmly believe that man is never at rest and peace as all his plans and projects inevitably fail. Success and happiness are elusive in his life. Man's psyche is trapped in the pit of darkness and he is bound to suffer alienation, absurdity and boredom of life. Galloway believes that no man in this universe can escape the burden of absurdity and he can never enjoy the sense of achievement. The contemporary writers who wrote under the influence of Sartre and Camus represented the battered and wounded war heroes trapped in the abyss of pessimism and despair. The heroes of the quest become absurd and lost protagonists. They are tattered and fallen beings suffering from eternal disillusionment and frustration. The sense of death, destruction, and the loss of self, experienced by the injured troops, is a striking aspect in American books from the "Roaring Twenties". New cultural changes were brought about by the Great War, and many lost sight of traditional values in their pursuit of wealth. The perplexing challenge of portraying a self that appears to have lost its reality was one that "Roaring Twenties" novelists had to deal with. The concept of the machine man and the notion of the mechanical self were developed as a result of Darwinism.

The realization that man represents a minute portion of the energy that permeates the universe was brought home by Kepler's laws and Freud's investigations into the unconscious. God, so to speak, stopped manifesting Himself in man in the era of Freud and Einstein. The playwrights were faced with the perplexing issue of the corrosion of self after World War II because reality had become flexible. The tsunami of hostility swept throughout the entire world as a result of the 1930s Depression and World War. The Holocaust and the systematic murder of Jews caused a spiritual degeneration. German thinker Sigmund Freud's investigations into the unconscious gave thinking a fresh start. The philosophers advanced novel theories and argued that man represents a very small portion of the energy that permeates the universe. The scientific and rational concept of human evolution was promoted by Freud and Einstein. Traditions, rituals, and religion all vanished. Although Faulkner is very much concerned with portraying the external world, his primary goal is to show the inner struggle of his protagonists. We encounter Quentin as a mentally damaged protagonist in *The Sound and the Fury* by Faulkner, which describes the "mental processes of humans talking with themselves". Virginia Woolf brought a revolution to the world of British fiction; she broke with the traditional fiction style of Thomas Hardy and the realistic social fiction pattern of the Victorians.

Virginia Woolf had witnessed the cruelties of the First World War and had observed the traumatic life of the soldiers who fought the German forces for five years. The soldiers remained away from homes and experienced trauma. Virginia Woolf delineated the psyche of a trauma survivor. He was portrayed by American novelists as an unfortunate by product of social conditions, one who is ready to end

his life because he lacks purpose in life. He is sick and wounded, depressed, and restless. Hemingway and William Faulkner produced soulless creatures in the Roaring Twenties as a result of their depression and alienation. The American war novelists received new inspiration from the surrealism of Strindberg, the mental iceberg of Freud, and the philosophy of Bergson. The protagonists of Ernest Hemingway and William Faulkner are cynical, melancholy, sickly, and wounded; they are the cultural offspring of the Roaring Twenties. They have a variety of psychological disorders brought on by their recurring nightmares of war and the killing of men. They become intellectually impaired as a result of their wartime experiences. F.C. Copleston observes thus:

The philosophy of Camus, so far as I know it, seems to me to be simply a very clear perception of the situation attendant on the 'death of God'. It is, if you like, unblinkered atheism. (Copleston 16)

Patrick White recognized that the "unblinked atheist" philosophy of gloominess is not the final philosophy as it is misleading, leading only to moral disorder and personal loneliness. Sartre and Camus's philosophies provide no message of good news or redemption. Nihilism and pessimism were promoted by Kierkegaard, Heidegger, and Jaspers, who believed that life was pointless. This pessimism is the legacy of the writers of the previous two generations. Most people were unable to maintain their optimistic beliefs. The writers used symbolism to portray modern man's anguish, loneliness, perplexity, and sense of loss. According to Patrick White, man lacks a conventional mode of self-identification and is rootless in a sophisticated, mechanical culture.

Psychoanalytic Study of the characters of Patrick White

The psychoanalytical theories of Freud and Post-Freudian thinkers have been relied in this study to investigate the causes and symptoms of depression and neurosis as experienced by the protagonists of White. Freud discusses the theory of displacement of self in *Interpretation of Dreams* (1899). Jacques Lacan's *Mirror Stage* (1949) examines psychic pressures and tensions resulting into neurosis. Eric Fromm's *Escape from Freedom* (1941) explores the suppression of individual freedom leading to degeneration of sensibility. Similarly, R.D Laing wrote *The Divided Self* (1961) to give an account of schizoid and symptoms of schizophrenia. Dr. Karen Horney focused on human psychology and explored the causes of neurosis in *Our Inner Conflicts* (1966). Ihab Hassan's *In Quest of Nothing: Selected Essays, 1998-2008* (2010) and *Radical Innocence* (1961) describe the growth of trauma and the impact of fractured identities on the mind and sensibility of the individuals. Carl Jung in his book *The Undiscovered Self* claims that most of the problems which are faced by modern man are due to his progressive alienation. Cathy Caruth published *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (1996) and in this book, she explored all the causes and symptoms of trauma. The protagonists of White experience trauma in their life in one way or the other and a detailed investigation of their abnormal behaviour and attitude is depicted in this study. Lacan, Karen Horney, Ihab Hassan, Sypher Wylie propounded the theories of neurosis and trauma to investigate and explore the mental icebergs of human mind. Erik Erikson and Stryker in his *Symbolic Interactionism: A Social Structural Version* (1980), and Goffman in his *Human Behavior and Social Processes* (1963) made observations on the

abnormal human behavior. Diane Marcotte in her article *Irrational Beliefs and Depression in Adolescence* (1996) discusses the nature of depression. All the latest theories on trauma and neurosis are applied to investigate the psychological ailments of the protagonists of Patrick White, who suffer from the above ailments in one way or the other.

Patrick White and his Passion for Theories of Transcendentalism

The world witnessed in the middle of nineteenth century, a revolutionary movement in America called Transcendentalism, which brought out the renaissance in American literature. It was the first American intellectual movement that led to the transformation of American culture, philosophy and ideologies. The word transcendentalism was primarily used by German intellectual thinker Immanuel Kant to assert the limitations of human mind. He declared that man cannot touch God by logic. The movement depicted the inherent divinity of each individual and vindicated the freedom and independence of the individuals. The movement changed the thought pattern of the Americans about religion, literature and the world of Nature. Lawrence Buell contributed to the growth of the comprehensive anthology and recorded the writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Margaret Fuller and Walt Whitman. He also recorded the contribution made by Henry James and Nathaniel Hawthorne. All these writers took inspiration from the Romantic Poets of England and laid emphasis on the freedom of the individual, the force of divinity and the positive view of life. They rejected the pessimistic and nihilistic view of life and advocated redemption and positivism in life. Walt Whitman wrote *The Leaves of Grass* to celebrate the divinity of self. He took up the themes of democracy,

individuality, growth of self, the supremacy of self, and nature. He laid emphasis on universal communion with all people and on the mystery of life and death. He propagated the spirituality of life and universality of brotherhood.

Nathaniel Hawthorne, the great story writer of America, was not a blind follower of the movement, but believed in the ideas of positivism and the divinity of Nature as elaborated by Emerson in his writings. The optimistic potential of Hawthorne is significant in his writings. He also dwells on the evil and blackness that may be contained in the human heart. This reveals his ambivalent position on Transcendentalism. There is no doubt that Hawthorne had close personal ties to Ralph Waldo Emerson, Margaret Fuller, Bronson Alcott and Henry David Thoreau. Because of the enigmatic nature of his work, which is often full of allegory that cannot be clearly distilled to one coherent meaning, many have attempted to make an argument about the content of Hawthorne's own ideals.

It is to be pointed out that the transcendentalists did not reject material life. They understood that life is a combination of body and spirit. They propagated all-round development of the individual to make a better society, nation and the world. They asserted that man needs to recognise his potential. Man is not a sinner, but a part and parcel of the divine. He has unparalleled powers which he should use for the betterment of the society and his own elevation. Man should awaken his inner powers. First he should learn to rely on himself. Emerson wrote many essays and gave more than 1500 lectures to teach unto man his divinity. The transcendentalists taught not to leave the world, but worldliness. However, they were not in favour of formal religion. They declared, like Vivekananda, that human body is the temple of

God. Emerson's church consisted of one man and that was himself. They realized the interconnectedness of each and all. They advocated the spirit of *Vasudev kutumbakum*. The Transcendentalists were non-conformists but not escapers. Thoreau spent two years as a hermit at the banks of the Walden Pond in the forest, but afterwards returned to Concord. He refused to pay the tax money, being spent by government for enhancing slavery. Instead, he accepted to go behind the bars. Similarly, Whitman had worked for different publishing houses. He expanded his self and included all men, women and animals, body and spirit, good and evil, life and death, joy and sorrow since as Whitman says in *Song of Myself*: "They are but parts, anything is but a part/ See ever so far, there is limitless space outside of that" (Stanza 45). In this way, the transcendentalists taught the value of sufferings and oppositions to make man stronger, nobler and superior to face every calamity of life in the right spirit. The ideology of the transcendentalists had an indelible impression on the mind and sensibility of White.

Patrick White discarded all the theories of nihilism and existentialism and wrote novels to depict the themes of suffering and redemption. Views of transcendentalism apply to my thesis. Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) propounded his transcendental and metaphysical philosophy expressing his faith in the greatness of the human soul and the freedom of man and nature. In his seminal work *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant asserts his belief in rational thoughts and agrees with the empiricists that reason is supreme. Man can achieve a sublimation of life through rational thoughts and freedom of spirit. For Kant, it is possible to draw general conclusions about the sensible world by explaining how human understanding

structures all experiences. Emerson and Kant impacted the philosophical vision of Patrick White.

Patrick White turned to Immanuel Kant and Emerson and found transcendental philosophy as the correct answer to cope with existential anxieties, absurdities, and alienation. He put his faith in freedom, individualism and the strength of the human soul. White explores the themes of hope and mysticism to ensure the manifestation of God. He portrayed the characters who struggle against life and its existential realities and suffer but gain spiritual strength and redeem themselves in the end. White wrote novels to depict his transcendental vision of life, discarding nihilism and pessimism that had gripped the psyche of modern man in Australia. He created a galaxy of characters who struggle bravely for survival in the harsh imperialistic society of Australia. They face many indignities and suffer exile and alienation, but continue their struggle to know themselves.

Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines transcendentalism as “a philosophy that asserts the primacy of the spiritual and transcendental over the material and empirical”. It is a form of philosophical idealism based upon taking charge of one's life. It is a path to uphold the glory of the man, about converting ordinary to extraordinary, about experiencing life at its peak. There is an emphasis on non-conformity. Intuition, individuality, the goodness of man, and the unity of the whole creation are supreme. The word 'transcendentalism' was derived from German Romantic philosophy propounded by Kant. Because of the supremacy of intuition over intellect, philosophers like Kant and Hegel had already affirmed that man could experience reality by direct spiritual insight. Emerson and other New Englanders

acquired this attitude partly from Germans directly and partly from English interpreters like Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Carlyle. It suited them because they understood that the church's religion had become too conservative. They sought to depart from established practices that separated people from God.

In his book *Nature* (1836), published anonymously, Emerson summed up his philosophical idea of the world and the universe and the purpose of creation. He declared that “the foregoing generations beheld God and nature face to face; we through their eyes...Why should we not have a poetry and philosophy of insight and not of tradition, and a religion by revelation to us, and not the history of theirs” (Emerson, 23). In order to build a connection between man, nature, and God, the transcendentalists supported a new religious philosophy that honoured the innate knowledge in human souls over church doctrine and law.

Patrick White found the theory of transcendentalism, propounded by Emerson and Kant as the right solution to come out of the sad plight into which man has fallen. Nihilism and existentialism fail to give peace of mind, which is the most wanted but the least granted thing in the present setup. In his initial two novels, characters feel helpless to escape this dilemma. *The Happy Valley* has no grain of happiness in itself. People fail to leave the valley or the negative attitude that has crept into society. Everybody feels bored with his daily routine. They find no solution to come out of this barrenness of mind. There is no creativity. They don't live life but just spend it anyhow. *The Living and the Dead* also shows the situation of prevalent society. People are spiritually dead, though physically alive. The turbulence of World War II has made them emotionally bankrupt. They want to keep

themselves in a cocoon and least dare to come up for positive change. In such situations, White finds spirituality as the only right solution. In further novels, the characters make a journey from nihilism to transcendentalism. They are ready to struggle and suffer for spiritual progress since no alternate solution is compatible. Ultimately, they feel progressive and invigorated. White agrees that a spark of transcendental joy is worth the struggle of millions of years. His novel *The Tree of Man* (1955) brought him international fame. The novel explores the hardships of Stan Parker:

The man was a young man. Life had not yet operated on his life. He was good and look at; also, it would seem, good. Because he had nothing to hide, he did perhaps appear to have forfeited a little of his strength. But that is the irony of honesty. (23)

The novel unfolds the story of a simple young man Stan Parker who, with his wife Amy, settles in the suburb of Sydney. The writer has made his simple life special; ordinary made an extraordinary. Stan is the archetype of the man himself. He struggles hard and makes the rugged bushy land fertile, making Australian land the panorama of life. He grows vegetation and also develops a garden. Stan and Amy's presence in their garden makes one think of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. As such "genesis myth" of the Bible comes into view. He positively faces natural calamities and performs the duties of a "human" towards man, God, nature, nation, and so on. He saves a young girl from the burning house and participates in the War for the country's sake. Stan Parker and Amy produce son and daughter for the growth of the family and society. However, he is careful of all the four perceptions of human

life: Artha, Kama, Moksha, and Dharma. Dharma is the term for moral behaviour. Artha is the pursuit of money and prosperity while remaining bound by the rules of dharma. The Kama refers to enjoying life while upholding morals and ethics. Moksha implies enlightenment or unity with God. These four purposes or *manoraths* of life abound in the scriptures, especially those of the Hindu religion, which encompasses humanity at large. Life teaches Stan the values of life and the reality of human existence. He shuns the pessimistic approach and learns how to lead a simple and happy life.

Stan raises himself from sex to super-consciousness. He had married Amy as a social necessity. But he is not engrossed in sex. He is aware that the natural world has a uniting force because he is the son of Mother Earth and Nature. He sees meaning in life. He remains humble and suffers hard to achieve his target but never loses heart. On the other hand, his wife, Amy is materialistic. She runs after the 'silver nutmeg grater' which the Bishop's wife had given to her at the time of her marriage. On the other hand, Stan grows "gold" crops in the fields. Amy hankers after physical needs and indulges in sex with the grocer, but Stan forgives her and rises in life. He sees his image in his grandson and dies a conscious death, knowing that "One and no other figure is the answer to all sums". In this way, he transcends life by his sheer hard work; and his knowledge of God makes his identity a part of the Over-Soul. Patrick White has written an epic of life in this novel. Giving a review of this novel in 1955, *the New York Times* remarked that Patrick White had written the *Australian Book of Genesis*.

In *A Fringe of Leaves*, Patrick White depicts the relationship between Ellen Roxburgh and Jack Chance. The plot describes the protagonist's journey from England to Australia, to the sea and the bush. The aborigines capture and torture Ellen and molest her sexually. White comments thus: "She was finally unhooked, then the shift and she was entirely liberated" (221). Australia is a country "more strange than beautiful" (24).

Suffering and Alienation of the Characters:

Alienation leads to the sufferings of the characters of Patrick White. Most of his characters suffer alienation, the emptiness of life, and have a quest for redemption. In *Voss*, the main protagonist suffers isolation from society. The novel mainly deals with the aborigines' life, society and culture. His journey to the desert explores his quest for identity and the emptiness of his life. Patrick White's *Voss* (1957) explores how local people appear in European culture. The local people are harsh, brutal, and immoral. In his novels *Voss* and *A Fringe of Leaves*, Patrick White makes the representation of aboriginality, and both the texts open up spaces that accommodate cross-cultural issues depicting the mixed identity of the characters. The values of the imperialist culture are carried in Mr. Bonner's garden in *Voss*. The White culture has been brought to the strange Australian landscape, just like horticulture science.

Keith Garebian, comments thus:

The garden is not primeval feature of the Australian landscape, for its organization and upkeep are the material evidence of colonial progress where life can take root and prosper in uncleaned wastes. (White 2)

The novel remains one of his best novels, based on the expedition of Ludwig Leichhardt, a German naturalist and explorer. He made his journey in 1848 to explore the Australian continent. The novel highlights the theme: “The mystery of life is not solved by success, which is an end in itself, but in failure, in perpetual struggle, in becoming” (Voss 265). In the novel, the protagonist Voss belongs to Germany and meets Laura, a young orphan and British-born Australian spinster living with her uncle Mr. Bonner, a wealthy draper, to perform as a patron in the expedition. Laura is of reserved nature but she is bewitched by the devil-may-care spirit of Voss, who believes that man can do anything and everything provided he has the will to do. Both form spiritual and emotional relationships and have telepathy during the expedition. In addition to Voss and some settlers, the expedition party includes a convict named Judd just released from the prison, Palfrey, and two aborigines.

It is notable that horticulture science has been unable to vanquish the ghost of Mr. Bonner's garden. “The wands and fronds of native things intruded still” (3). So the garden of Mr. Bonner can be read as a space where the indigenous and imperialist cultures “meet, clash and grapple with each other, in a highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination” (4). They have to pass through desert land and then face heavy rains during the trip. The party splits into two parts, the other led by Judd, reminding one of the Judd of the Bible who betrayed Jesus. Voss offered the natives his hand in friendliness, but they rejected it out of cruelty. They had already killed a black fellow. He found himself alone and became the victim of Aborigines who killed him. Voss is killed by one of his party members, an aborigine, beheading him

and his blood falling on the Australian land. Before death, he understands that man is not God and has his limitations. His pride disappears. He becomes conscious of life and death. He feels the presence of Laura beside him, and Laura also has telepathy though at a distance of thousand miles from Voss, thus making their oneness at the critical juncture in the invisible presence of God. He asks Laura to pray for him.

Twenty years later, Bonner plans a celebration to honour Voss by erecting a statue in his honour. He learned from his long life that God is great and merciful and that life is full of difficulties. They appear to be expressing a thwarted desire for acceptance, hope, and salvation, through implication. Patrick White elaborates on this fundamental subject in his writings. He made a clear transition in his later work from the arid nihilism of his first two novels to transcendentalism. White believes that man's suffering seems to be teaching him humility and finally guiding him to redemption.

The Evolution of Patrick White's Thought and Belief

In a largely Christian setting, suffering is associated with mysticism. Without referring to orthodox religion, Patrick White comes across as a deeply religious writer who seeks spiritual truth. He defends a theory of hope and the idea that man is redeemable. In his later writing, he articulates this conviction in ever-clearer terms. His seeming need for cosmic order and significance seems to be so intense that he will occasionally forego the artistic cohesion and harmony of his work in order to make an expression of optimistic faith. The characters in *Happy Valley* mostly accept their suffering helplessly and submissively; on rare occasions, they revolt and attempt to change their course. They encounter obstacles and are again defeated by

luck or circumstances. They are doomed to suffer; it is an unchangeable aspect of their existence. Briefly stating, all characters suffer in one way or the other. The external circumstances cause them suffering, but at the same time, they are aware of currents within currents. The characters are outsiders in the novel and are bound to confront the hostile universe alone. They fail to comprehend the existential realities and are doomed to suffer; it is an unchangeable aspect of their existence. Patrick White's desire to seek out a secure and tranquil life is expressed in his novels. Patrick White writes of it thus:

Life in jerks... in stages. It ought to flow, theoretically, in an even rhythm (9). There never was co-operation in Happy Valley, not even in the matter of living, or you might even say less in the matter of living.

In Happy Valley the people existed in spite of each other. (28)

The Aunt's Story depicts the aunt's alienation. She is a spinster but has a deep understanding of life. Therefore, she keeps a distance from people. She feels that no one in society can comprehend her. In Australia, Europe, and the United States, her story switches between reality and illusion. She is a misfit in society as she emerges as a mystic. She is so depressed by her alienation that at the end of the novel, she becomes insane. She realizes that committing matricide is the only way to liberate herself from the terrible energy that is encircling and imprisoning her. However, Mrs. Goodman passes away shortly after that difficult internal struggle and it isn't until then that Theodora may finally escape into self-fulfilment.

Patrick White's novel *The Eye of the Storm* uses a storm metaphor to depict the characters' alienation. Power, fame, and wealth fly away because of the storm that

ruins the life of the protagonist. In *The Vivisector* (1970), the protagonist Hurtle Duffield is involved in many sexual relationships, which bring him psychological anguish. Suffering appears inevitable, and only through it does he get awareness about life. Patrick White has depicted the scenes of moral and spiritual understanding of the characters subjected to suffering by the oppressive forces.

White's novel *A Fringe of Leaves* (1976) explores the struggles of the characters to forge their identity in colonial Australia. Ellen is a Victorian lady who represented Australia's historical conditions as a penal colony in the 19th century. After Ellen's shipwreck and the natives' murder of Austin, she becomes increasingly alone. In contrast to the first half of the book, White treats Ellen's time with the tribe differently. Ellen experiences a sense of freedom and excitement among the locals that she is unable to experience in Austin's stuffy Cheltenham social circles. However, a lot of Ellen's incarceration is similar to her treatment at the hands of the Roxburghs: "They anointed her body regularly with grease and charcoal and plastered her head with beeswax, and struck it with tufts of down and feather" (239). Ellen must adhere to a set of rules with the tribe that are similar to those she had to observe when she changed into Mrs. Roxburgh in England. She must battle to flourish in the new social environment. Taylor argues that social, political, and educational policies need to demonstrate cultural awareness since cultural misunderstandings may make it difficult for people to appreciate their identities. And when it does, cultural misrecognition leads to alienation and cultural exile. According to Cohen, colonial plantation dwellers had to battle for their survival and well-being.

Patrick White's *Solid Mandala* (1966) depicts Mandala as a symbol of totality where opposites make the whole. The novel has a simple story but a deeper meaning. It is a tale of two brothers-Arthur and Waldo, the twins but contrasting in opinion. They meet us in the novel when they are old, retired persons, walking hand-in-hand with their pet dogs and enjoying the same bed. Both live together in the same room, and both are unmarried. From the very birth, they have been living together. But they have different aptitudes. Waldo prefers intellect, and Arthur loves emotion, the traits of the head and the heart respectively. Accordingly, Waldo thinks he is superior to his brother, who is childish and mentally- retarded. Waldo is proud, well-read, and serving in a library, but fails to understand life. On the other hand, Arthur is straightforward, good-natured, loving, kind, and contented. He has served in a grocery store and a garage, but he understands life better. He always takes care of his brother Waldo. However, both of them lack self-confidence and are interdependent. There is no regularity, sociability, and adjustability in their life. None of them goes to church on Sundays.

The simple-minded Arthur collects four unique marbles for the four characters to form a solid mandala, but Waldo does not accept his gift. The novel has only four characters: two men Arthur and Waldo, and two women Dulci and Mrs. Poulter. Dulci was a wealthy Jewish girl whom both of them wanted to marry. But Waldo thought he was well-read, so she would automatically prefer him while Arthur had platonic love for her. Resultantly both of them remained unmarried. As regards Mrs. Poulter, she is a next-door neighbour who sometimes goes for walks with Arthur but never with Waldo. The latter is intelligent but has no fellow feelings and blames his brother for his mistakes. Waldo fails to respect Arthur for his good habits

but wants to establish his superior identity and ultimately makes a suicide. However, Arthur blames himself for his death and kills himself in the asylum.

Through Waldo and Arthur's characters, Patrick White has given us an epic of life like *The Tree of Man*. Life is a combination of contrasting attitudes. Both are necessary and unavoidable. Day and night, good and bad, head and heart, love and hate- all are significant. The opposites combine to make a whole. Wisdom lies in selecting the accurate in the given situation. Both are distinct but complementary halves of human nature. Intelligence and love-both are necessary. Both unite to form wisdom. However, each problem is a challenge and makes us more intelligent and wise. To understand life in totality is the religion of the self, the way to transcend in life spiritually. The meaning of life lies in its wholeness, but the whole in each life is individual. Ultimately, life has its purpose.

White's novel *The Vivisector* (1970) describes the powers and limitations of an artist. Through the character of Hurtle Duffield, he studies the role of an artist as a creator and destroyer like God. But he is not God. Human pride is the hindrance to reach God. Ego goes, and divinity grows. However, an artist devoted to his art can get salvation. Hurtle Duffield is born in a low-income family group and sold to a well-off family of the Courtneys for his betterment. He gets to go on long trips with his 'new' family. Once on their way to England, they see a living dog under dissection. His adoptive mother is horrified. But the artist's third eye works like a knife. It penetrates the inner reality of the person. He gets a chance to slip away and participate in World War. After long, he settles in Australia and becomes a painter. He vivisects all whom he meets with the knife of his keen attention and draws his

portrait. He has affairs with many women but does not indulge in anything else but makes them the objects of his paintings. He creates pictures of the good-hearted harlot Nance Lightfoot, grocer Cecil Cutbush, his hunch-backed adoptive sister Rhoda, her friend Olivia Davenport and so on. Ultimately, in his pride, he attempts to paint God but fails. God is all-pervasive but away from human pride. He understands that way to God lies in submission and humility. In this way, his sincerity towards art makes him learn the lesson of life. At every step, the writer aims to make us self-conscious. The artist, through his devotion to art, transcends life.

Patrick White's *The Eye of the Storm* (1973) depicts his primary theme of self-realization through suffering. The eye of the storm becomes a source of peaceful life and death to the novel's protagonist, Mrs. Elizabeth Hunter. She learns that power, money, and fame are all ethereal and cannot stand the test of time. In this way, suffering becomes a source of spiritual growth for her. We can understand the suffering of others only when we suffer ourselves. Nature is at every step to assist and teach us. God is a life-giver as well as a destroyer of life and seems revealed in nature. For Elizabeth, the storm's eye transforms into God's eye.

In her youth, the main character Elizabeth Hunter was a stunning, affluent, and powerful lady. She has still tried to maintain herself in her old age. Her death is at hand. Three devoted nurses, her advocate (once her lover), and the cook are in her service in Sydney mansions. She always craved more and more clothes, jewellery and all and enjoyed delicious food, beautiful and majestic surroundings, and so on. She longs for the satisfaction of her senses even now. Her authoritative attitude had become the cause of her husband's death and the estrangement of her son and

daughter, Basil and Dorothy. They had an eye on the family property, so they told her to shift to a nursing home. But luckily, on her way, she experienced a storm in the stream, which could devour her in no time.

She learnt a lesson about life. She became empathic and regretted that she had not treated her husband and her children rightly. She formed good relations with her servants. She called the legal advisor and made a will. She bequeathed her property to her children and a portion meant for her servants and the legal advisor. In this way, suffering became a source of peace for her. She could live and die in peace. The storm became a source of her self-consciousness, a blessing in disguise. On the other hand, her son and daughter both had gone wrong. They were selfish and wanted to kill their mother to get her property. Moreover, being frustrated, they had incest in the parental home. No doubt their mother had made huge mistakes in her life. But before death, she atoned for them, formed good relations with her servants, and transcended life, making a noble identity.

White's novel *A Fringe of Leaves* (1976) contains the basic theme of the human search to find meaning and value in life. The novel adopts the story of Eliza Frazer. She was an Englishwoman from the 19th century who went to see her brother-in-law with her spouse. Their ship met a wreck, and the aborigines killed her husband and the crew. They imprisoned her, stripped her of her clothes, and enslaved her. In the novel, the protagonist Ellen is a simple English farmer girl married to a rich man and a scholar, Mr. Austin Roxburgh, 20 years senior. She abides by him and his family; he also cares for her. They go on a trip to see Garnet, the husband's brother. But the aborigines kill Austin, along with the crew. However, Ellen is saved

and imprisoned by them. In their camp, she has stripped off her clothes and has to accept their culture. Ellen satisfies herself with a fringe of leaves to cover her private parts. In this way, she keeps her identity as a civilian, but dying of hunger, she accepts human flesh to save her life. Ellen comes to understand the difficulty of the aborigines in maintaining themselves.

An escaped convict Jack Chance offers her help to run from aborigines. In the natural background, the bush culture revives her strength and she allows him to seduce her. They reach the coast, and the convict leaves her and goes to his safety point in the jungle. The woman feels liberated. On her return journey, an English young man Jevons offers his hand and proposes to her for marriage. Here she has four conflicting loyalties:

- Loyalty to her dead husband
- Loyalty to her rescuer
- Loyalty to her own
- Commitment to her adoptive class

She ponders over and ultimately thinks of her loyalty to herself. To find meaning and value in life, she accepts the hand of Jevons. Consciousness is what the novelist wants of the so-called social animal, i.e. man. We owe our duties towards the self, the other-self, i.e. society, and the universal self, i.e. God.

Novels taken for research:

1. *Happy Valley* (1939)
2. *The Living and the Dead* (1941)

3. *The Aunt's Story* (1948)
4. *The Tree of Man* (1955)
5. *Voss* (1957)
6. *Riders in the Chariot* (1961)
7. *A Fringe of Leaves* (1976)

Chapter: Two

Sufferings and Happiness

Patrick White explores the themes of sufferings and happiness in his novels. He believes that human life is full of trials and tribulations, and only a few people enjoy real happiness. Like Thomas Hardy, White thinks that happiness is an occasional episode in the drama of life. There is no place for the weak and the cowards, and for the firm and daring people, the world is charming and full of pleasures. In *Happy Valley* and *The Living and the Dead*, the first two novels, characters face untold suffering and are depicted as trapped and helpless. Being lonely and depressed, they feel that life is futile and meaningless. But interestingly, in the journey of life, they explore the real meaning of life and eventually attain peace of mind and moral strength. White structures his plots on sufferings and happiness, depicting a positive attitude toward life. In the *Tree of Man*, life is seen broadly and suffering is used as a blessing, to bring humility which brings happiness. Like Shakespeare he declares that sufferings are a benediction. Problems are a sign of life and they give strength to human soul. Main cause of suffering, he declares, is that man has forgotten his divinity. He has shun traditional values .White believes that hope and faith are the mantra of happy life and sufferings make man realize of his inner strength.

Patrick White is burdened with transcendental ideas believing that the purpose of art is not to entertain but to help individuals find the real meaning of life. The human being is captured by and becomes the instrument of art as a result of some fundamental impulse. He closely observed the philosophical movement of

Existentialism. The rise of science and technology developed the craze of man for money. With the growth of capitalism, man lost his worth. The absolute aloneness of man and the futility and disillusionment of his greatest desires were emphasized by Albert Camus and Jean-Paul Sartre. The man is rootless and without God amid a sophisticated, mechanistic world. Man must eventually face a seemingly pointless universe, says Sartre. He feels nausea and absurdity of life. Nietzsche also advocated the philosophy of nihilism. Man finds himself alone, and his alienation is the leading cause of his traumatic sufferings in the modern world. David Riesman wrote *The Lonely Crowd* and explored the significant causes of man's alienation. The world was sceptical after the War and Depression of 1930, and a wave of hostility swept the globe. The degeneration of faith was caused by the Holocaust and the wholesale murder of Jews. The machine-man emerged as a result of Kepler's laws, Spengler's *The Decline of the West*, and Darwin's *Origin of Species*.

Image of mechanical self impacted the mind and sensibility of the contemporary writers. German thinker Sigmund Freud's investigations into the unconscious gave a new perspective of life. The philosophers advanced novel theories and argued that man represents a very small portion of the energy that permeates the universe. The scientific and rational concept of human evolution was promoted by Freud and Einstein. Traditions, rituals, and religion didn't exist. In response to Nietzsche's claim that "God is dead and we have buried Him long ago," the guy questioned the fundamental nature of God. The Existential philosophy, which was advanced by Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, and Karl Jaspers, revolutionized the arts and literature.

Failure, according to the Existentialists, is man's inevitability. The powers of nature are harsh to humans and always act in opposition to their desires. Life will inevitably involve suffering. Every human endeavour is doomed. All acts and objectives are pointless in this meaningless world. The works of Sartre include *Existentialism is Humanism* (1946), *Being and Nothingness* (1943), *No Exit* (1944), and *Nausea* (1938). Sartre noted in his book *Nausea* that man must use his freedom to get rid of his sickness. Death is an insane thing that cannot be avoided. He illustrated how the nature of a man's divided identity is: "I want to leave, I am out of place, I don't know where I should go. It seems there is no place for me, and it seems I am unwanted" (Sartre 2).

All religious ideas that had supported humanity for ages were destroyed by Sartre. People became mired in despair and pessimism as a result of his harmful views about existence and emptiness. *The Stranger* (1942), *The Fall* (1956), and *A Happy Death* (1972) were all published by Albert Camus. He came to the conclusion that the only philosophical issue currently facing man is suicide. Sartre and Camus portrayed the metaphysical hopelessness of modern man in this way. The man changed into an intellectual lost in the night. Kierkegaard, Heidegger, and Jaspers also discussed the issues of existence and the crisis of man's identity. The existentialists believed that there was no hope. The works of Camus or Sartre have no message of salvation. They reflect only pessimism in the mental climate of the time. The wave of pessimism started with Strindberg, O'Neil and Kafka. They depicted the mood of despair and gloom in their works. The dramatists related to *The Theatre of the Absurd* such as Ionesco, Beckett, Pinter, and Albee, depicted the ludicrous

situations and the themes of modern man's suffering, such as his sense of loss, confusion, and loneliness. They exhibited a frustrated yearning for salvation, hope, and acceptance.

White closely observed the individual's growing cosmic chaos and alienation, and dedicated himself to finding solutions to these problems for a happy life. In his novels, Patrick White depicts the crucial issues of redemption and salvation by rejecting all the contemporary ideas of nihilism and pessimism. From sterile nihilism, there is a clear progression toward transcendentalism containing a message of salvation. White explores the mystery of human sufferings, and in these novels, suffering is seen as an inevitable part arousing in characters a stoic acceptance of fate. The characters learn humility through suffering, which helps them find redemption. In the context of Christianity, suffering is given a mystical meaning, and White comes across as a religious novelist in search of holy truth. Patrick White supports the philosophy of optimism and the idea that man is redeemable, rejecting conventional viewpoints of pessimism and nihilism as well as the principles of Existentialism.

White's novels *Happy Valley* and *The Living and the Dead* reflect his deep yearning for cosmic meaning and order:

Life in jerks...in stages. It ought to flow, theoretically in an even rhythm... Everything would be beautiful. (*Happy Valley* 9)

The novel *Happy Valley* depicts the concept of suffering. In the epigraph of the book, White quotes Mahatma Gandhi, who says:

It is impossible to do away with the law of suffering, which is the one indispensable condition of our being. Progress is measured by the amount of suffering undergone... the purer the suffering, the greater the progress. (3)

No wonder most of the characters suffer because of others' cruel deeds. The characters in *Happy Valley* accept their sufferings submissively. They struggle to control their irrevocable destiny that thwarts their happiness. Suffering seems to be ordained and inevitable, and the characters in *Happy Valley* struggle to escape. The novel's plot consists of scenes of existential pessimism and the helplessness of man. There is a pervasive sense of foreboding and doom that hangs over the town. The town is an ugly, grim, and nasty living entity. Since there is no happiness in the so-called Happy Valley, Patrick White employs irony. In a community where animosity, malice, and unhappiness are pervasive, happiness cannot flourish. White writes thus:

There never was co-operation in Happy Valley, not even in the matter of living, or you might even say less in the matter of living. In Happy Valley the people existed in spite of each other... In summer when the slopes wear a scurfy yellow and the body of the earth was very hot, lying there stretched out, the town, with its cottages of red and brown weatherboard, reminded you of an ugly scab somewhere on the body of the earth. It was so ephemeral. Some day it would drop off, leaving a pink, clean place underneath. (28)

Patrick White uses the imagery of a scab to describe the town's horror. Patrick White uses horror images to depict the scenes of horror and terror. The slopes are described

as "scurfy yellow" and the city of the Happy Valley is described ugly. Ironically, the houses are ghostly and the roads are unsafe. The school of the town is pervaded with the atmosphere of horror and terror. White describes the town as "a choice of evils" (15). The imagery of "scab" and "festering sore" expresses the dark and ugly picture of the town evoking despair, darkness and death. White gives the images of "dead geranium", depicting the ugly and dismal environment of the town. Patrick White writes thus:

That was Happy Valley. God, that street. And the window was stuck. Across the way a geranium had died in Mrs. Everett's pot (37)... the geranium dead on old Mrs. Everett's window-sill, with Mrs. Everett's geranium face wilting and inquisitive above the pot. Mrs. Everett, like her geranium, no longer underlined the seasonal change. She twittered in a dead wind (115),...that old woman virulent above a dead geranium in a window-box,... So you let loose a wind of hate that flapped in the dead geranium leaves. (218)

White conjures up the idea of a dead geranium, like Happy Valley. Mrs. Everett's "geranium face" embodies the women of the community. Like a dried-out and lifeless shrub, she "twittered in a dead wind" (17). Ironically, the dead wind described in the early section of the novel is transformed into "a wind of hate that flapped in the dead geranium leaves" (17). White conjures forth a mood of decrepitude, decay, and death. The images of "the virulent old women", "the dead wind," and the "wind of hate" intensify the atmosphere of pessimism. The main characters of Patrick White struggle with the forces of evil to overcome their conflicts.

In *The Aunt's Story*, Theodora realizes that she cannot be free to find herself as long as the evil forces threaten her from all sides. Mrs. Goodman dies, and the external evil disappears. In *Happy Valley*, Oliver Halliday and Alys Browne firmly believe that they are surrounded by the stifling atmosphere of the Valley. Happiness and peace of mind are unachievable. They try to run away but fail to escape the forces of evil. The letter of Oliver clearly states thus: "But Alys, I can't. I won't willingly destroy" (294). His family leaves the town of evil, but Alys remains there. Alys goes on hoping against hope, but all hopes of happiness dash to the ground. She is doomed to suffer in Happy Valley confronting with the pervasive atmosphere of malignancy and doom. The Happy Valley threatens with the destructive dark clouds giving the message of futility and destruction:

Spring was a transitory humour or exhalation that dried and evaporated, disappeared with the barley grass and the weaned lamb. Happy Valley became that peculiarly tenacious scab on the body of the brown earth. You waited for it to come away leaving a patch of pinkness underneath. You waited and it did not happen, and because of this you felt there was something in its nature peculiarly perverse. What was the purpose of Happy Valley if, in spite of its lack of relevance, it clung tenaciously to a foreign tissue, waiting and waiting for what? It seemed to have no design. You could not feel it. You anticipated a moral doomsday, but it did not come. So you went about your business, tried to find reason in this. (116)

The image of scab is used to depict the nature of human sufferings. Patrick White talks about the absurdity with its undercurrent of despair. White uses subtle irony to describe the imminent chaos and disorder in the world of Happy Valley as he writes: “Hilda Halliday was almost forty. Oliver was, thirty-four. But they were happy she said” (69). Alys Browne’s prediction is threatening as she says: “It will rain and rain, and I shall not go out, and tomorrow perhaps it will rain, she said, and I am perfectly happy, why, she said” (43). White has highlighted the sufferings of the novel's characters in the poignant language. They are willing prisoners living in a stifling atmosphere of the Valley. Patrick White evokes the themes of futility and wait like Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*.

There are situations suggesting unfulfilled expectations and despair in the characters. Their life is on hold, and they are facing a crisis of helplessness as White writes: “At Happy Valley man was by inclination static” (115). All the characters live in inertia experiencing a feeling of helplessness. Hilda Halliday is waiting for the letter to help the family move to Queensland. Her wish accomplishes at the end of the novel. Her son Rodney finally joins the Sydney Boarding School to escape his classmates' torture. Ernest Moriarty is sick and defeated as he fails to move to another school. His vain wife Vic also remains disgusted as she fails to move from Happy Valley. Patrick White evokes Beckett's iconic image of waiting to intensify the characters' futility and hopelessness. Oliver feels: “You were waiting for something that you did not say, that you did not say, that perhaps after all you could not say. But you felt you ought” (78). Like Godot of Beckett, Alys is doomed to wait and suffer:

Nowadays she always seemed to be on her way between two points, or waiting, she waited much more than in the past, though now with a sense of fulfilment in waiting, as if it were some end in itself. (131)

She experiences excruciating pain and cries out thus: "But waiting as waiting is not so much waste time if it is part of a design" (220). Patrick White dramatizes the theme of futility of life and the theme of poignant suffering.

Patrick White rejects Beckett's theme of the futility of life and switches over to spiritual progress wrought by suffering. The theme of suffering is expressed through the symbolical labour pains of Mrs. Chalker, the scenes of poignant torture of Halliday, the wife of Oliver who suffers physically and emotionally in her life. Her son Rodney is the victim of the cruelty of his classmates who castigate him behind the school urinal during the break. Vic Moriarty suffers from sexual frustration. He is not recognized by the society. Clem Hagan is a victim of inferiority complex and her behaviour is aggressive and animalistic. Sidney Furlow is trapped in the bog of absurdity and boredom. The moods of desperation, gloom, and exasperation exist in the novel's episodes. Mr. and Mrs. Furlow have to feel desperate because of the moral degradation of their daughter. The sufferings are both internal and external as the characters are empathetic.

In his first novel *Happy Valley*, Patrick White appears to sensitively probe his characters' inner world, conveying the complex emotions in lyrical language to confirm the positive role of sufferings for redemption. White is concerned with exploring the real meaning of life and finding out the actual place of man in the universe. He firmly believes that sufferings eventually lead to moral and spiritual

enlightenment. The characters of White are intelligent and sensitive. But they are portrayed as strangers in the harsh universe struggling to escape the sufferings of life. White explores the deep layers of life and existence. Like *King Lear* of Shakespeare, his characters explore reality only after facing the storms of life. Oliver Halliday becomes aware of the causes of his failure as a husband and father. He boldly attempts to penetrate the inner layers of human intercourse. When he accompanies his son to a shooting trip but fails, says White that he “thinks the day had been a failure, he was a failure in relationship with Rodney, in relationship with Hilda” (192).

It is seen that the characters in *Happy Valley* are not purified by their suffering, though author has appended an epigraph which attaches virtue to suffering. But we must know that it is the first novel of White. However, the writer’s outlook for a better society and peaceful living in the turbulent world, is conspicuous. He understands that for a congenial atmosphere co-operation between the people is the necessary ingredient, which is missing in the so called Happy Valley. Patrick White writes of it:

There never was co-operation in Happy Valley, not even in the matter of living, or you might even say less in the matter of living. In Happy Valley the people existed in spite of each other. (28)

Oliver gets an insight into the things of life in his failure as he says: “The day had been a failure, he was a failure in relationship with Rodney, in relationship with Hilda” (192). He is doomed in his life as he develops illicit sexual relationship transgressing the moral code of society. But in the end, his life has a positive turn

when he tries to escape with Alys. Chance plays a significant role in halting the elopement of Oliver. Being a doctor, Oliver has to attend to the dead body of Moriarty, and thus his motive to escape from Happy Valley is thwarted. Oliver is helpless as he cannot escape from the ugly town of Happy Valley. They resign to the supremacy of Fate and experience psychological anguish. Their failure is an illuminating lesson to them. They believe life is a book of challenges, and failure is an inevitable part of life. Both Oliver and Alys fail to give shape to their lives and accept their fate stoically. The story of failure and defeat continues in the life of Ernest Moriarty, who looks sick, pathetic, and confused. He frankly confesses: "I'm a failure, I am a failure" (125). In desperation, he kills Vic and feels: "The chief reason was there was no reason" (272). Oliver feels: "You were always waiting for something that you did not say, that perhaps after all you could not say. But you felt you ought" (78).

White gives the tale of the suffering and failures of the characters. They suffer in their quest for the meaning of life. They are bewildered by the atmosphere of the harsh world where "reason has no reason". The main characters come out of the dilemma of pessimism and nihilism by exploring the mystery of death and logic prevailing in the universe. They get mystic awareness about the struggles of life, death, and suffering and the irrevocable nature of destiny in human life.

White portrays his characters as "Hollow men" in the pattern of T.S. Eliot, and they are allowed the freedom to struggle and explore in imitation of James Joyce. White employs the stream of consciousness technique to excavate his characters'

inner turbulent world. The past and the present combine with the episodes' future climate and the characters' fate. Patrick White writes thus:

The wind is wind is water wind or water white in pockets of the eyes
as once a sheep before time froze the plover call alewaloo at angle is
the wire that white voice across the plain on thistle thorn. (185)

Patrick White uses the tools of wit and irony to expose and ridicule the actions of Oliver and Moriarty; he reveals the follies and foibles of the characters:

She yawned, her whole face yawned, the little golden curls quivered at the side. When she went to bed at night, she took a comb and frizzed them out. Ernest said she had pretty hair. Oh dear, she said, this place isn't good for your asthma, Ernest, she said. They don't give you a proper screw. You're killing yourself, she said, which was as good as saying you're killing me. Only I'm fond of Ernest,.... (36)

The novel's central theme is suffering and redemption. White uses the pattern of images and symbols to depict the actions of his characters trapped in the harsh world of uncertainty and absurdity. The most powerful image is that of a hawk symbolizing his spiritual quest. The hawk symbol is extremely effective in the novel highlighting the need for spiritual awareness. It also arouses man's irrational desire to destroy simultaneously.

The second novel of Patrick White, i.e. *The Living and the Dead*, deals with the theme of sufferings and happiness. The novel has its setting in England, and the storyline deals with the physical and emotional experiences of the characters. Walsh

highly praised White for his dramatization of Australian culture. The novel's title stands for life's intricate problems of life and death. White holds that life and death are two crucial aspects of life. William Walsh (1976) observes thus: "A thing is not life just because somebody does it...It is just existence. By life we mean something that gleams, that has fourth-dimensional quality" (Walsh 8). Geoffrey Dutton comments on the structure of the novel thus: "The structure of the book saying that it is taught enough from the irony of the title to the picture of the Australian mountain town, enclosed by nature, burst open by human beings, to the deaths and destroyed loves which are too honestly un elevating to be called tragedy" (qtd. in Walsh 6).

The novel's title suggests the obsession with two aspects of life: life and death, and the novelist presents the main character Elyot who leads a lonely and isolated life. White continues his vision of transcendentalism, dealing with the theme of suffering and redemption. Patrick White focuses on the spiritual alienation of man and his quest for self-knowledge and the meaning of life. The novel's plot deals with the grey and lifeless aspects of life. White (1958) expressed his need for spiritual awareness thus:

Demobilization in England left me with the alternative of remembering in what I left to be an actual and spiritual graveyard, with the prospect of ceasing to be an artist and turning instead into the most sterile of beings, a London intellectual, or of returning home, to the stimulus of time remembered. (38)

Patrick White uses the stream of consciousness technique, and the plot begins with the novel's ending. In the novel's first chapter, he introduces Elyot Standish, who

lives in London in his house in Ebury Street. In the last chapter, Elyot is directionless and aimless, keeping a distance between himself and others. He watches a drunken man on the verge of death. Elyot wishes to act to save his life, but he expresses his inertia:

I must do this, his mind shouted, tossed out into the screaming of the bus. The lights spun. The whole neighbourhood moved. Except his feet. He was anchored where he stood. He was the audience to a piece of distant pantomime. (14)

The bus knocks down the drunkard, and he is seriously injured. This episode is crucial in depicting the endemic inability of the hero who goes home expressing his helplessness and inactivity, like Hamlet of Shakespeare. He emerges as an observer in the novel who observes the scenes of life and death hopelessly. His detachment is a conspicuous trait of his character. White repeatedly asserts distance and detachment from life, depicted as a charade. Externally, Elyot looks intelligent and sensitive and sees too much and too profoundly, resulting in inaction. In this novel, characters have two categories: the living and the dead. The living is he who participates in active life, but the dead hesitates.

In his novel *Voss*, Patrick White writes thus: "The mystery of life is not solved by success, which is an end in itself, but in failure, in perpetual struggle, in becoming" (*Voss*, 289). White wants to explore the meaning of living; he also signifies the living by presenting people who are unaware and detached from the active life. Such characters avoid activity and take refuge in the remote shell. "To the living, pleasure and pain are the means of discovering happiness in the moral world"

(2). Living for them is a painful experience. Elyot Standish wavers between the living and the dead. He shuns passion and emotional commitment and chooses death. He emerges as an observer, and is not actively participating in life activities. White traces Elyot's development. Elyot develops a perpetual frown as his mother says: "He chose distance even as a child" (106). Elyot's two main life principles are having "no part" and standing "a long way off". Patrick White has taken pains to depict the gradual development of his personality. Returning from Cambridge, he devotes himself to scholarship and sits alone in his room on Ebury Street. He is not happy as he is conscious of his life's sterility and emotional poverty. White comments thus:

He hated his own voice in the fog, an echo of Gerald Blenkinshop. They were drifting apart in the fog, saying goodbye, it was doubtful if they would meet again. You were always dismissing people. It was seldom you came any closer. You dug the ferrule of your umbrella in the pavement with a cold metallic hatred, walking homeward, as if you wanted also to deny the cold. (204)

Patrick White uses the phrases "charade" and "sitting upon the edge" to describe the apartness and indifference of Elyot. His inertia is a conspicuous trait of his personality. He has no sense of understanding and no urge to establish communication with others, as White writes:

You wanted to say, no, you wanted to say, there is something, Joe Barnett, that it is possible for us to communicate, as two people, standing at this moment on a common pitch, if only this, the

universality of two people, surely, Joe Barnett, it is possible to learn.

(236)

White uses the technique of flashback to convey the pressure of unfulfilled hopes and desires. He depicts the frustrations of human relationships. Elyot is regretful of his failure to communicate. He remains alone even in the company of women in his life. Hildegard Fiesell and Muriel Raphael profoundly impact him, but he fails to develop a real relationship with these women. Patrick White depicts his isolation thus:

Elyot was a shadow that fell across the substance of her friends, the men who brought her presents, who filled her drawing-room with conversation and cigar smoke. Elyot standing sideways. His manner was perpetually sideways. Smoothing his hair, she could sense his withdrawal. Or they sat in untidy silences. (132)

The phrases "standing sideways" and "shadow that fell" evoke the strain on the relationship between mother and son. White has described the complete emotional and spiritual estrangement of Elyot from his family, and this estrangement is a significant cause of his suffering. Marjorie Bernard (1956) comments thus: "It is unhappy book; all the characters are lost or frustrated or decadent so that it is difficult to know who are the living and the dead" (161). Eden emerges as a silhouette in the novel. She fails to excite interest and remains buried in her cocoon. She lacks credible reality and strikes as a shadow. Eden is a quick-tempered and spiteful child who is always screaming and crying. She grows into a dark, forbidding woman leading a life full of contempt and cynicism as she hates everything. Eden doesn't enjoy sexual pleasure and has an abortion leading her to a nervous breakdown. She

becomes neurotic and suffers psychological anguish. Her love for the carpenter Joe Barnett doesn't give her any happiness, and the affair results in distress and despair.

Eden gives vent to her psychological pain thus:

I believe, Joe, but not in the parties of politics, the exchange of one party for another, which isn't any exchange at all. Oh, I can believe, as sure as I can breathe, feel, in the necessity for change. But it's a change from wrong to right, which is nothing to do with category. I can believe in right as passionately as I have it in me to live. (239)

Eden gets shocked when Joe gets killed in the Civil War in Spain. Eden receives the news of his death and becomes numb and speechless. She becomes a “moving dead body”:

Yes, she said. The futility of Joe, as Joe. Just another drop. But the many Joe Barnetts, Elyot. It's the drops that fill the bucket. Her voice began to sound hollow from behind her hands. It's the bucket that'll make the splash, she said. (331)

Impact of Depression on the Psyche of Characters

In desperation, Eden goes to Spain herself in her commitment to her lover. Elyot envies her for her commitment to love. He feels that Eden has explored the mystery of existential reality. Unlike Elyot, Eden confronts reality boldly, and accepts Joe, who is just a carpenter and goes to Spain to die when he is dead and achieves fulfilment after his death. She has a strong personality, but her brother Elyot is like Hamlet, constantly wavering and unsure and uncommitted. James Creed Meredith (2007) observes thus:

In the *Critique of Pure Reason* and the *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant undertakes to examine the range and competence of the human mind itself, to clarify its distinctive faculties or powers, and thus to elucidate and define our capacity for acquiring theoretical knowledge of the world of appearances, the only world that is cognitively available to us as finite rational beings, and for determining our wills in accordance with an objective moral law on the basis of a freedom which that law first properly reveals. (10)

Nature of Futility of Life

Patrick White explores the futility and meaninglessness of life in terms of human relationships in this novel. He examines the truth of life through the eyes of Elyot. He suffers and eventually learns about his failure. The characters in the novel suffer because of alienation and isolation. White has given the imagery of "cocoon", "box", "envelope", and "closed-door" to intensify the characters' loneliness. In the novel *The Living and the Dead*, the house in Ebury Street reflects the decline in fortune of Catherine Standish. White describes the artificial living and futility of life of Mrs. Standish thus:

...the delightful Mrs. Standish, who sat home in her drawing- room, and smiled to herself when she heard the chiming of her French gilt clock. This had a golden tone. She surrounded herself with yellow gold, the brocaded curtains from Liberty's, and the flowered wallpaper, the neat, small, sprigged flowers which were just the thing at the moment. She was all day long going up and downstairs, just for

the pleasure of going up and down stairs, for enjoying possession of her territory. (39)

Mrs. Standish is shocked when she discovers Willy in the park with Maudie making love. She is mentally disturbed, and her house becomes a resort to suffering loneliness. She says:

I must go home, she said, I must make a scene, or not make a scene, I must escape to something more familiar. Above all she wanted to open her own door, hoping perhaps to find behind it a solution, or some contradiction of what she had seen. (39)

Alienation of Characters and Sufferings

The characters in the novel suffer acute psychological pain as they feel lonely and isolated. The struggles of their life end in despair, and they realize that their failures are inescapable. The vision of White is clear; human sufferings are inevitable, and man gets spiritual awareness only through his grief. Mrs. Standish tries to bury herself in her lonely room to escape from the trials and tribulations of life.

White has traced the gradual regression of her life. Mrs. Standish feels exhausted and weary as there is no charm in her lonely life. She spends much of her time in her lonely house. She suffers from being estranged from her husband. She suffers the pain of nostalgia and sits on winter afternoons alone with all curtains drawn. White writes thus:

Sitting alone in the house on winter afternoons, she has the intruding kind of nostalgic thoughts that are not unknown on winter afternoons

before the curtains have been drawn. It was sometimes difficult then to believe in the substance of, things, whether the furniture or events.

(41)

She becomes aware of the transient nature of life and the futility of human existence.

Meredith observes thus;

Kant claims that we also feel a particular kind of pleasure or satisfaction that reflects the universal constitution of the human mind in general. We 'rejoice', he says, to find that it is so purposive—as if by a lucky chance that favours us. (13)

Mrs. Standish gets this awareness when she feels alone to understand that life is full of suffering and failures. She contemplates her life's despair and loneliness, and feels disturbed:

It was immaterial, whether you discussed the subtleties of lobster the reminder, or what. It was like this. Everything was becoming like this. You had become a detached shimmer of phosphorescent green on the surface of facts, of events. Some day perhaps would come the bang. Only it was difficult still to believe in bangs. (43)

She becomes pregnant, and at that time, she feels emotionally threatened by the external forces. However, she tries to gain confidence and feels slightly reassured: "It was a safeguard, she felt unconsciously, against the expressionless malaise" (47). Her spiritual isolation increases as she watches her children grow, and it seems to her that there is no way to escape the sufferings of life. Her son Elyot also suffers from an

acute sense of loneliness. She retreats from a sense of inertia, haunted by the phantom of unreality, and shuns all material things. She cries alone in the lonely house losing all contact with the outside world: "I mean one loses contact, one loses contact with the substance of things" (211). White uses the image of substance in the novel to depict the psychological anguish of his characters.

Mrs. Standish appears as a lost creature far away from the world of reality. White describes the hollow existence of Julia, who is Mrs. Standish's servant. Her son Elyot is obsessed with the crucial problem of how he can escape the living dead and become a part of the living. Elyot is the most "sterile of beings, a London intellectual" (144). He is a scholar who "retreated into books. A second-hand existence" (144). Hiding in his study, he produced a book on Buchner "soon after finishing Cambridge". His "life, like his work, was arranged in numbered pages" (190). The novel begins with Elyot taking his sister, Eden, to the train station so that she can go to Spain and participate in the Civil War. In the early section of the novel, Patrick White describes each character's attitude toward life and its reality. Each character rushes to Spain to express his commitment. Joe Barnett, Eden's lover, goes to Spain to fight and die for the cause. Eden Standish begins to change after the news of Joe's death and vows her participation. Elyot is helpless as he makes no move to stop her. This failure becomes a part of his harrowing existence. As Elyot is returning from the station, he witnesses an accident that he looks like a stone:

The night dissolved without bringing you closer. Either to Eden, in spite of a chance moment of illumination, or to the excess humanity spewed out of pub doors. It was a remoteness once alarming, then

inevitably accepted. He closed himself to sentimental regret, and felt with satisfaction the drizzle on his face. (15)

As the plot progresses, Elyot meets with failures and becomes lonely and withdrawn.

The attitude of inertia is visible at the very beginning of the novel thus:

The whole side of the street came careening over into his close vicinity. I must do this, his mind shouted, tossed out into the screaming of the bus. The lights spun. The whole neighbourhood moved. Except his feet. He was anchored where he stood. He was the audience to a piece of distant pantomime. (14)

Elyot remains insensitive and indifferent to the accident and continues his indifferent attitude when facing difficult situations. He hesitates to get involved in life activities and prefers to stay away from the scene of action.

Images of Death, Emptiness and Decay

Patrick White introduces the images of death, emptiness, and decay for inaction. Elyot shuns the present for the sake of the past or future: "It was so easy to substitute the dead for the living, to build a cocoon of experience away from the noises in the street" (19). He continues to stand alone and passive brooding over the past in his empty life. In his mood of sullenness and morbidity, he closes his study door. Under the influence of liquor, he keeps thinking of the past. He ignores the actual activities of life: "It was this after all that every one of them had tried to do, his mother building her bright room. Eden taking the train to Europe... the Joe Barnett, each

with a nervous but convinced contribution towards the business of living”(20). White gives the image of construction to depict the turbulent world of Elyot thus:

Each one erected a structure in the face of shapelessness, building, if not in brick or stone, a resistance to annihilation... Even that emotional life he had not experienced himself, but sensed, seemed somehow to have grown explicit. It was as if this emanated from the walls to find interpretation and shelter in his mind. (20)

Patrick White's main focus in the novel is to depict the emotional bankruptcy of Elyot and his alienation as he stands alone in his empty room. Oliver, Alys, Rodney, and Margaret also had to become emotionally involved to move beyond self. White believes redemption is possible only if the characters develop an emotional relationship. The first insight comes in the scene when Kitty tells Elyot and Eden about the death of her estranged husband and their father. Elyot, for the first time, realizes the significance of emotional life. Eden virtually dissolves into tears at the news even though "she could not remember Father, but she cried, it came tumbling out" (105). White has described Elyot's state of mind as under:

Elyot stood there stiffly. He looked out of the window at the garden that was growing grey, at the drops that shuddered cold and clear on a rose bush by the window. He could see everything very distinctly. He had never seen anything so clearly, the red, curved thorn on the bush, the pattern of a spider's web. He had no part in this crying. He could not cry. He had no part in anything. It frightened him a little. He could feel himself tremble. (105-106)

Elyot feels cut off from the family and society as the plot progresses and lives alone.

He goes on becoming passive and not an active participant in life:

It began to occupy him more and more, his not being part of anything. When they all drew together round the fire, Eden sitting on Charlie's knee, and the stories Mother told of the hospital in France, of Mme de Bonneville, she was a countess, and at the same time a sort of saint in whalebone, Mother said, she made them laugh, she always did, but you had to force yourself to laugh, pull yourself in from a long way off. So that on the whole, because you had only just discovered this, you were sorry that Mother had come from France... He stood a long way off and watched. He began to develop a perpetual frown. There was a great deal that puzzled him. (106)

Elyot's alienation increases with the death of his father. He had grown more silent and felt happiest behind a closed door. Living alone in a private room was a luxury for him. The main feature of his character is self-imposed mental barricades. White depicts the graph of his alienation thus:

He found himself beginning to hate. When it was all over, Uncle Stephen decided on a year in Germany before Cambridge. It was a further fit of generosity that left you doubting your own capacity for gratitude. Events developed beyond your own will. You drifted on the wave of someone else's decision. And behind it all, there was still a suspicion that all this might be directionless. Was there a sudden and self-decisive, an undoubted moment of clarity? (111-112)

The drunken's accident in the novel is conspicuous and may be taken as a barometer to evaluate Elyot's morbid personality. His year in Germany involves an affair with his landlord's daughter, who predictably ends with her accusation that he was hateful: "he was unreal, detestable. He roused emotions that he couldn't return... There was very little he knew, least of all himself... Yes, Hildegard, he said, wearily. I'm all of that if you like. You're right" (130). His years at Cambridge developed him as a scholar, closing the door and retiring from life to his island study. Meanwhile, Eden has grown up and decided to become involved with life. She has a disastrous affair, becomes pregnant, has an abortion, and suffers a nervous breakdown. When she recovers, she begins working in a left-wing bookstore, where she learns of the Spanish Civil War and meets Joe Barnett, a carpenter with political interests.

Redemption Through Sufferings

The theme of redemption begins by describing the relationship between Elyot's mother and her last lover, Willy Collins. This relationship is an expression of pure emotions and sexuality. Kitty knows she had wasted her life: "Mrs. Standish had withdrawn since the evening in Maida Vale. She spent much time in bed. She lay there with a book or just looking at the wall. She could lie there for hours as if her moral collapse had exhausted physical initiative" (308). Elyot feels guilty and prepares himself to face the sensitive situation of his mother: "This should be understandable, Elyot sometimes felt. If one had been aware. If one had not taken refuge in one's own private shell" (307). When she tells Elyot that she is going, he points to the futility of her effort, but she insists because "she was convinced of the rightness of this . . ." (331). The novel has now come full circle. The last chapter has

the same situation as the first. We see Elyot sitting in his room all alone with feelings of loneliness:

Already, he was drifting in a half-resentful, half-reassured lethargy with the many themes that the house offered, only muted on his first opening of the door. The house was a receptacle. Alone, he was yet not alone, uniting as he did the themes of so many other lives. (333)

To conclude, Patrick White's novels *Happy Valley* and *The Living and the Dead* deal with the metaphysical theme of human sufferings and happiness. The characters suffer from alienation, but as the plots of the novels progress, they realize that sufferings are inevitable, and the real purpose of life is to explore the real meaning of life. The predominant themes of these novels are the quest for self-knowledge and the struggles of life to make life meaningful. At the end of *The Living and the Dead*, Elyot shows the transformation in his life as he changes from one who retreated behind closed doors to one who is ready to confront life and the existential reality. Julia is another significant character who emerges as an idealized prototype of a character achieving integrity and goodness. White says she "could achieve contact through the humble, factual detail" (132). White, in both *Happy Valley* and *The Living and the Dead*, depicts the themes of human suffering and the spiritual awareness of the characters.

White's novel *The Aunt's Story* (1948) is about the recovery and transformation of Theodora Goodman. She is depicted as a Ulysses figure as Mircea Eliade aptly remarks: "The narrative has a mythical base and it is easier to hear the

burden of being contemporary with a disastrous period of history by becoming conscious of one's place in a larger order of things. The goal of the wanderings of Goodman is to achieve silence, simplicity and humility" (White 146). The silence prevailing in the plot of the novel evokes transcendental feelings. The self becomes passive, and Theodora realizes the dichotomy:

You cannot reconcile joy and sorrow...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. (293)

White's *The Aunt's Story* describes the protagonist Theodora's alienation. She is a spinster and recalls her youth as an ugly, sensitive child and remembers how she fulfilled her head-mistress's unspoken prophecy:

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...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 see-my dear child. (64)

In this novel, White makes a positive statement of faith. The plot demonstrates a turning point of White's philosophy. The novel is a case study of a mad woman and her transcendental vision. White is not much concerned with the disease of madness, but he is concerned with the state of mind of a woman. White has explored the mystery of the human mind, which has the potential to grow and explore the mystery of existence. Madness is the process of learning and becoming good. Some people are born knowing this, whereas women like Goodman learn these values via their experiences in the insane.

Theodora is a unique character created by White, a woman of intelligence and integrity. She has exceptional courage to analyze her inner self and explore the real meaning of human relationships in the world of chaos and disorder. Theodora is sensitive and honest and arouses the readers' sympathy standing alone in the world and fighting with the external forces like a Greek tragic heroine of Sophocles. She is an outsider in the novel but gains insight and understanding. Her madness to eliminate the rational world becomes a logical conclusion to man's loneliness.

White's novels *The Living and the Dead* and *The Aunt's Story* foreshadow the theme of his later novels i.e. search for life and permanence in Australia. The former defines life as awareness, understanding, acute receptivity, while the latter reveals the Australians' fear of the mystery of the soul. The author, having returned to his native land, proposes to come to terms with it and to highlight what in *Voss* he calls 'our inherent mediocrity as a people' (476). In the novel *The Aunt's Story* the protagonist Theodora suffers hard due to chaos and disorder prevalent in the world but makes it a weapon to enjoy true happiness:

The water made her laugh. She looked at the world with eyes blurred by water, but a world curiously pure, expectant, undistorted. (290)

The Tree of Man deals with sufferings and happiness. The plot of the book is told using pictures and symbols and is based on real-world events, objects, and people. The plot looks to continuity rather than crisis to discover its meaning. It is an epic tale of humanity that follows the development of man as he searches for the true meaning of life. It is a story about a family and a chronicle of life with all of its rhythmic ups and downs during times of flood and drought, fire and storm. The story is divided into four acts, which correlate to the four seasons in Stan and Amy Parker's lives. White observes thus:

It suggests admirably that just as the small shack will become in time part of a home, then of a settlement, and then be all but swallowed up by a metropolis, so man himself will become in time part of a family. (Buckley 236)

In this novel White is concerned with sufferings and happiness of man. The plot unfolds a family tale and presents the story of death and continuity, growth and seasonal change. In reality, it suggests man's spiritual isolation. Patrick White observes thus:

I wanted to try to suggest in this book every possible aspect of life, through the lives of an ordinary man and woman. But at the same time, I wanted to discover the extraordinary behind the ordinary, the mystery and the poetry which alone could make bearable the lives of such people and incidentally, my own life since my return. (White 39)

White's novel *Voss* (1952) is based on history, dealing with the themes of human suffering and the mystical process of redemption. The plot consists of scenes of serenity, negation, and nothingness. In *The Aunt's Story* Goodman realizes that "There is nothing perhaps we shall live" (176). And the same sentiments are evoked by Voss: "To make yourself it is also necessary to destroy yourself" (38). White expresses his faith in the divine scheme that peace and salvation can be obtained by destroying the self. The novel's chief metaphor is "humility", symbolizing the acceptance and complete resignation of man before God. Voss suffers in life and gives psychological anguish to Laura also because he breaks his connection with God. His inner struggle creates dissonance, and at the end of the novel, he realizes that humility only can save him, and he must aspire to achieve humility. Voss is a man of destiny, determined to succeed and explore the unknown continent. He knows that he is bound to fail, but like a Greek hero he undertakes the project. Voss writes to Laura and refuses to give second thought that he will fail, but rants against humility. Laura has an insight into the hidden realities as she replies in her first letter:

Only on this level, let it be understood, that we may pray together for salvation, shall you ask my Uncle to accept your intentions, that is, if you still intend? (199)

Laura is portrayed as the conscience of Voss. She is fully aware of the existential realities and often warns him of the consequences. Throughout she scolds and advises him to be humble. However, Voss feels the strength of God and the moral significance of humility:

You have inspired some degree of that humility which you so admire and in me have wished for. If I cannot admire this quality in other men, or consider it except as weakness in myself, I am yet accepting it for your sake. (230)

Like Hamlet, Voss is in a dilemma. He knows the reality but expresses his will to explore and investigate. Hamlet fights to restore order out of chaos, but Voss wastes his energies to find life solutions. Voss continues struggling and running away from Laura and God. He has no courage to accept reality. It is Laura who gives the accurate picture and shares the novel's basic theme: "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". Voss suffers the agony of life because of his insensitive nature and uncompromising stand to escape the existential reality. To begin with, Voss is weak and fragile who cries for his safety. By accepting his limits as a man and not God: "he is nearest to becoming so" (415). Voss meets death in a ritual of beheading, suggestive of a crucifixion. Voss explores the mystery of suffering and happiness at the end of his life's journey.

White's novel *Riders in the Chariot* (1961) deals with the theme of sufferings and happiness, and the plot is replete with mythological images and symbols. One of the major protagonists namely Himmelfarb is called the Jewish Messiah and the Christian Christ. Some, like Reha, his wife, expect him to show the path to the world as Messiah. Like Christ, he died on Good Friday, two Marys (Mrs. Godbold and Miss Hare) mourned him, and Judas betrayed him. The plot is a reenactment of the Christ story in modern times. Patrick White describes Himmelfarb's inefficiency as a

saviour at the time of mock-crucifixion: “Very quietly Himmelfarb left the factory in which it had not been accorded to him to expiate the sins of the world”(469). White has portrayed the struggles and sorrows of a person in his pursuit for personal truth, knowledge, and comprehension of how external forces operate.

As a Jew, Himmelfarb stands in for the hardships of Jews. He was raised amid the Gothic darkness of German society. In order to achieve spiritual atonement, he destroys his bodily self. Malke and Reha, two women, urge him to work toward achieving this objective. Himmelfarb loses his destiny as a result of the dramatic events of Jewish persecution in Nazi Germany. He describes the agonising time he is going through, which is made worse by his sense of personal failure, to Miss Hare in the following way:

I still reject that I do not always have the strength to suffer. When all of them had put their trust in me, it was I you know on whom they were depending to redeem their sins. (172)

He seeks pain and devastation out of messianic longing. He rejects Rosetree's pleading with him to return home. Like other novels, White dramatizes man's conflict with the external forces and quest for redemption.

The plot of *A Fringe of Leaves* (1976) reminiscences experiences of a lady who, along with her husband went on a journey to Van Diemen's Land. She met with a shipwreck in 1839, and the Aborigines imprisoned her. White has described the unbearable miseries of Ellen Roxburgh. She becomes enslaved, and she loses her identity. But she still sticks to her fringe of leaves as a symbol of civilization. The

novel's plot revolves around the myth of a voyage and symbolically describes the impact of the sea voyage on the mind and sensibility of the characters. We find two kinds of journey in the novel: one on the Bristol Maid i.e. ship, and the other in the heroine's mind. There are horrible scenes of adventure faced by Ellen Roxburgh. She escapes from the clutches of the Aborigines with the help of a convict Jack Chance. The episode also pertains to the return journey motif. Ellen Roxburgh is a strong character who rose from the working class through marriage. The plot deals with her suffering and captivity. Following the shipwreck, the primitive Aborigines killed her husband and the crew. They imprisoned and stripped her off. They tortured and enslaved her. She was subjected to physical torture by the Aboriginal women. They frequently forgot to feed her. However, a convict named Jack Chance assisted her in escaping and guided her to the sea coast. She had been reduced "to an animal condition." She was now brave and free, with a transformed personality. Through Ellen, White teaches us to endure suffering with grace and find solace in solitude.

After returning to her community, she feels need of love to redress her wounds and sufferings. White has vividly described her grief, anxieties and her longing for freedom. Among the aborigines she has learnt to watch and face the problems of life. She has followed that acceptance gives birth to humility. She suffers more than all other heroines of Patrick White. She was the one who was taken captive by the Aboriginals and forced to dwell in the woods, a place of darkness and cannibalism. She has shown via her victory over them that she is a part of both the world of light and darkness. The thirty-year-old Mrs. Roxburgh had solid, masculine lips, a medium height, a straight hair part, a dark complexion, and grey-blue eyes.

Ellen Roxburgh most closely resembles Amy Parker in *The Tree of Man*. White's female characters strive and go through hardships in order to achieve self-realization.

A sick spouse was Ellen's burden, and she cared for him her entire life. She was unhappy in her marriage since her disabled husband didn't show her enough affection. Austin, though exhibited an unnatural attachment for her throughout his life, she endured suffering at "Dulcet" her entire life because she was denied freedom. Shakespeare is of the view that realization comes only when man faces the challenges of life like King Lear. In the same way, White believes that suffering is necessary to attain happiness and redemption. Ellen faces untold humiliation.

To sum up, White's novels deal with sufferings and happiness, and dramatize the intense struggles of the characters to achieve redemption. White believes that there is a strong urge inside every human to explore the mystery of death, suffering, and happiness and he always tries to find out the real meaning of life even in the face of suffering. White expresses his transcendental vision in portraying his characters in his novels. Meredith observes thus:

Kant claims that we also feel a particular kind of pleasure or satisfaction that reflects the universal constitution of the human mind in general. We 'rejoice', he says, to find that it is so purposive—as if by a lucky chance that favours us. (12)

The transcendental vision of White is explored while analyzing the selected texts of the novelist. His positive concern for the well-being of humanity led him to achieve the Nobel Prize. The main thesis of White is that the sufferings act as a therapy to overcome the sufferings of life.

Chapter: Three

Trauma and Self-Realization

This chapter explores the harrowing scenes of death, suicide, broken relationships, identity crisis, and trauma found in the novels of Patrick White. The theory of transcendentalism is applied to overcome the trauma of his characters. This perspective is new in the research domain of Patrick White. Interestingly, his novels depict the sufferings and traumatic experiences of the characters who struggle for survival in the harsh society of Australia. With the growth of the plots of his novels, there is a consistent growth in the characters. They realize that life is a struggle and journey of life is full of trials and tribulations. As such there is a need to confront the existential reality to seek redemption and spiritual salvation. This journey is significant and exciting as the transcendental vision of White gives new direction to the characters. White gives the message of hope and faith, believing that life has a purpose and that man should explore life's meaning. I have critically examined the texts of all select novels to dig out the inner landscape or investigate the psychic pressure of the protagonists of White.

Judith Herman (1992) wrote her famous book *Trauma and Recovery* in which she explored the causes and symptoms of trauma syndrome. She argued that in human life the wounds of the body are curable but the wounds of human psyche are incurable. Trauma is a serious psychological disease and it was very common with the soldiers who fought in the front. They had to lead a lonely life as they were always haunted by the scenes of death. Sigmund Freud wrote *Beyond the Pleasure*

Principle (1920) in which he investigated the symptoms of trauma. Freud contends that death consciousness is very common with the depressed people who have no will to live.

Freud observes that trauma “is a result of an extensive breach being made in the protective shield against stimuli” (Freud 35). During the World Wars the soldiers were shell shocked and felt sleepless. They suffered from multiple psychological ailments. Mrs. Virginia Woolf wrote *Mrs. Dalloway* presenting the psychological anguish of Septimus. Simone Weil contends that “the mind ought to find a way out, but the mind has lost all capacity so much as look forward” (21). Cathy Caruth observes thus: “In its most general definition, trauma describes an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the events occurs in the often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena” (Caruth1). Cathy has observed that there are five elements found in the people who suffer from trauma, elaborated as under:

- According to Cathy Caruth, the first element is when the individuals are traumatized at the younger age and they experience terrible mental changes which bring chaos in their life.
- Secondly, Cathy argues that the internal and external factors like depression fear and guilt, and the role of friends and relatives, lead to the development of trauma.
- The third element, she proposes, is the concept of dissociation in which the victim becomes detached from the traumatic experience as it occurs.

- Fourthly, according to Caruth, the grief aroused by an external source impels internal changes in the mind and thereby irreversibly changes one's identity.
- Lastly, Cathy talks of the loss of identity of the individual while living in the society, because of trauma.

This phenomenon of loss of identity is visible in the characters of Patrick White. The following symptoms were found by Cathy Caruth in the soldiers who were shell shocked and suffered from many psychological ailments: 1) Insomnia 2) Dementia 3) Nervousness 4) Depression 5) Repetitiveness 6) Nightmares 7) Hallucinations 8) Loss of interest in life 9) Death consciousness. Cathy observes that "trauma is not simply the literal threatening of bodily life, but the fact that the threat is recognized as such by the mind one moment too late (Caruth 62). It is investigated that trauma patients are the victims of anxiety, and aggression. This abnormal behaviour rests into the loss of self. The trauma patients often suffer sexual abuse and neurotic tensions.

Cathy Caruth continues her arguments in her book *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (1996). She talks about old memories, intrusive memories and nightmares. She has investigated the psychological impact of flashback and intrusive memories in the life of man. In traumatic state man often loses his touch with reality. His old memories disturb his mental peace. The nightmarish memories always haunt him. The characters of Patrick White, being lonely and depressed, contemplate suicide ideation. Jonathan Shay comments thus:

Severe trauma explodes the cohesion of consciousness. When a survivor creates a fully realized narrative that brings together the shattered knowledge of what happened, the emotions that were aroused by the meanings of the event and the bodily sensations that the physical events created, the survivor pieces back together the fragmentation of consciousness that trauma has created. (188)

Death Consciousness

White's characters under the impact of trauma many a time long to commit suicide. As an alternative, they build a cocoon to save themselves because they find themselves helpless to face life itself. In *The Living and the Dead* all the three major characters i.e. Elyot Standish, his mother and his sister, build cocoon of scholarship, friend circle and politics respectively as they fail to face life. This act on their part is suicidal. The war and Holocaust have made them death conscious like Septimus in Virginia Woolf's novel *Mrs. Dalloway* who becomes neurotic due to traumatic effects of war. The characters of White are also death conscious to face the existential realities. Freud observes that "Death is the great unknown and the gravest of all misfortunes" and the "main aim of all life" (Freud 123). In her work *Trauma and Survival in Contemporary Fiction* (2002), the writer Vickroy defines "trauma narratives" as "fictional narratives" that help readers to access traumatic experience (1). In *Trauma Fiction* (2004) Whitehead uses trauma theory to explore war narrative episodes of Hemingway's narrative.

Patrick White is a transcendental novelist as his novels depict the journey of his characters from trauma to self-realization. His service to humanity in boosting the

morale of a nihilistic society is memorable. He gave recognition to Australian literature. His novels provide a clue to better living, leaving behind other writers' pessimism and nihilistic ideas. His characters struggle for the vision of truth in life and death. Patrick White was aware of the wave of pessimism and nihilism which was in full bloom.

People had become directionless due to religious breakdown and the adverse effects of wars, depression and the Holocaust on their mentality. People lost the purpose and meaning of life. In his novels, White conveys the essence of his poetic vision to make the individual see. White wrote fiction which gave knowledge of the divine and became a source of the search for the divine. In his novels, White depicts the power of human imagination not merely as “partaking in the activity of God, but as replacing it” (White 12).

There is a search in his novels to understand life and the existential realities. The characters of White struggle to explore the meaning of life and to gain enlightenment. White declared that the human soul has powers infinite, and sufferings lead to self-realization. Immanuel Kant, Emerson, and Thoreau greatly impacted his mind and sensibility and he depicted his transcendental vision in his novels. He addresses the central question of the new world: how to make experience intelligible. Patrick White is gifted with a rare insight and poetic potential to convey the splendour of transcendence above human realities, rescuing a man from the void of the prevailing culture of nihilism and pessimism.

The Struggle to Understand the Divine Essence of the Human Condition.

In this chapter, the primary purpose is to explore how the protagonists of White's selected novels struggle to explore the reality. White affirms that sufferings are an inevitable and essential part of life. Sufferings make a man strong, and failures are the pillars of strength. All knowledge is within, and sufferings give a knock to the human soul. The central theme of White's novels is self-realization. White observes thus in *The Tree of Man*:

Life seems to be for many people deadly and dull. I have tried to convey a splendour, a transcendence, which is also there, above the human realities...I wanted to suggest my own faith in these superhuman realities. (During 19)

At the start of his career, White wrote novels like *Happy Valley* and *The Living and the Dead*. In these novels, the traumatic experiences of the characters are heartrending, but they seek redemption at the end of their traumatic journey. In *Happy Valley* the characters suffer endless pain though they relentlessly struggle to control their fate. Mrs. Everett is like a dead and desiccated plant. Oliver Halliday and Alys Browne lead a traumatic existence as the atmosphere of evil pervading the Happy Valley exhausts them. Oliver writes a grave letter to Alys: "I can't I won't willingly destroy" (229). Her sufferings lead her to self-sufficiency and peace. H. P. Heseltine (1963) comments that White has depicted the wounded psyche of the characters in this novel. He has dramatized the inner struggle of the characters. Elizabeth Loder (1963) observes "that all the novels of White depict the transcendental philosophy of White" (83). Patrick White believes in the powers of

soul and spiritual healing like Wordsworth, Thoreau, and Whitman. The novel *The Aunt's Story* culminates in getting spiritual sublimation to the protagonist. She goes beyond the mundane realities and finds solace in her spiritual existence. She accepts the dichotomy of the world consisting of illusion and reality. Some critics regard this novel as White's novel of experimentation. He moves between reality and horror. *The Aunt's Story* is a challenging novel dealing with trauma. The plot juxtaposes the opposites: present and past, illusion and reality, sanity and insanity.

The novels of White aim to fill the spiritual gap. For this, he uses nature's sights and sounds. He adopts the stream of consciousness and uses surrealism. Three sections of the novel stand for three phases of Theodora's life. They are named as 'Meroe', 'Jardin Exotique' and 'Holstius'. Meroe refers to her birthplace; Jardin Exotique is the place where she stays during her journey to Europe, and Holstius is symbolic of her spiritual understanding of illusion and reality. After her mother's death, she goes on a European tour for self-realization, where she stays in Hotel du Midi in France. Theodora also spends some time in an American village and meets Holstius.

White's *The Aunt's Story* has received multiple interpretations. McLaren (2014) observes that the novel has been "discussed in the context of building Australian identity, of challenging the realist tradition by insisting on a mystical or transcendental dimension of human life" (82). Morley (1972) observes that *The Aunt's Story* is a Quest novel depicting the theme of redemption and enlightenment. It is called "a modern Odyssey by the critics" (63). Ashcroft (2014) argues that this wholeness for White is not a utopia but a reflection of that. Theodora is a "Ulysses figure", says Veronica Brady (1978),

Spiritual Journey of Theodora

Gail Jones (2005) opines that “Ulysses is an important myth underlying the text of the novel. Theodora’s mother is at one stage figured as Penelope, her father as Ulysses, then Theodora is Ulysses becoming man as it were” (Jones 157). Aruna Wittman (2015) has conducted a comparative analysis of *The Aunt’s Story* and Paul Schreber’s novel *Memoirs of My Nervous Illness* (1902), focusing on White’s representation of madness. White used stylistic techniques to intensify the thematic effects of the novel. According to Wittman: “These effects recreate encounters with radical, altered states while debating the issues of sanity” (Wittman 141). She argues that “the journey of Theodora is to achieve spiritual sublimation, she must face the continuous intersecting between the physical and spiritual worlds in the search for a final, redemptive harmony” (Wittman 144). Mircea Eliade opines that the novel is about the discovery of self and exploration of truth. Meroe symbolizes peace and tranquillity.

Theodora makes communication with nature and enjoys complete serenity in the lap of nature. Nature leads her, as Wordsworth says, from “joy to joy”. God reveals Himself to her, and she forms an affinity with natural things. Theodora learns that prophets walk in the desert. But she feels chaos and disturbance in the cities of America and Europe on her so-called pilgrimage to those countries. Theodora, like White himself, finds sub-civilization there. Reminiscences of her home place haunt her. She is unable to bear separation from her native land. The landscape of Meroe is dead and desolate but still a source of inspiration and spiritual bliss to Theodora because she has an affinity with the surroundings. The landscape is sacred to her for

discovering herself. Her father had informed Theodora that “there is another Meroe...a dead place, in the black country of Ethiopia” (25). Meroe is depicted as a “legendary landscape” (25). White was influenced by the transcendental ideas of William Wordsworth who found harmony in Nature and God. Meroe is a typical landscape demonstrating the power of the spiritual forces of Nature:

But to tell the story of Meroe was to listen also to her own blood, and, rather than hear it quicken and fail again, but my darling, there is very little to tell. (20)

Meroe lived in her life and she often felt the sensation of its presence in her soul. She often walked alone enjoying the peace of mind while walking on its grass:

The water in the creek was brown and warm. Frogs brooded, and magpies flew low. Light yawned out of the hills, and from the yellow thickets of the gorse. Theodora stood and let the water lip her legs. (40)

Theodora’s Exploration of Self

Theodora has a natural passion for communing with the landscape. She is very fond of swimming in the water floating on the surface in her skinny body. She looks like a fish listening to the sounds of life in Meroe. She experiences strange sensations as she watches the water running and wind blowing. In the shallow water her body gleams and shines. She feels immersed in Nature. Theodora struggles to explore "peace of mind" (26). Theodora's struggle is transcendental as she is anxious to know the mystery of nature, life, and existence. She says: “It is necessary to see things, to observe all around you” (113).

Theodora is an explorer who begins her journey of life with a mission to explore the mystery of life and death. She wants to see into the life of things. She is tied to the landscape by her brown skin as White writes: "If gestures were completed, it was according to a law of motion, which takes yet, whose eyes burned still, under black hair, which she still frizzed above the forehead in little puffs" (12). Colours employed in the plot have symbolical significance highlighting the multiple nature of Meroe's landscape: "The hills were burnt yellow. Thin yellow scurf lay on the black skin of the hills, which had worn onto black pockmarks where the eruptions had taken place. And now the trees were more than ever like white bones" (87). Gail Jones (2015) opines that "Theodora is the mystical saint of White" (156).

The early life of Theodora is shrouded with mystery and romance. Her mother was an egoist and father was a dreamer. She was regarded as an outsider and often she was derided and humiliated. She was a spinster, ignored and despised by the people. But she had a strange mythical vision as she could see into the life of things like a prophetess, making her "an institution an aunt" (12). Theodora goes away from Meroe but the landscape remains in her heart for ever. She confesses thus: "Out of all this exhaustion formed the clear expectant weather of autumn, smelling of chrysanthemums and first frost" (87). Theodora feels the presence of the landscape everywhere she goes and moves. It is within her mind and heart and always she seeks inspiration from it.

Exploration of Self through Alienation

Patrick White has depicted the character of Mrs. Goodman through the layers of colours. She lives alone and her alienation has metaphysical significance. She sits on

the sofa alone but has no strength to touch the couch with the shapes of her bones. Patrick White writes thus: “She sat on her sofa, like a marble statue wearing silk, and read Heredia and Leconte de Lisle” (68). She is depicted as a thin frame, spineless and emotionless appearing like an apparition. The imagery of marble and metal help White to portray her ghostly figure as she looks like a witch. The images of solid metal and bronze and silk are employed to portray the hard and insensitive nature of Mrs. Goodman. She had strange liking for hard and solid things as she liked “to arrange things, the ornaments in cabinets, or on little tables in the drawing room, then to sit and watch what she had done”(26).Patrick White denies her insight:

To Mrs Goodman everything had a form, like bronze or marble. She saw clearly, but not far. She saw the cattle going down to drink. She saw the sunlight as it lay among the brushes on her dressing table. She heard the passage of her own silk. (67)

Mrs. Goodman is a strange character who can see and observe the impact of external forces on the mind and psyche of people. But she does not have the spiritual strength to see things far and to feel the spiritual power of external forces of Nature. She is responsible in bringing financial ruin of her weaker husband who fulfils her reckless demands. Often she would use her knife to “watch the expression on his face and scent the warm blood that flowed” (68). She is a destroyer symbolically like her daughter Fanny. She is regarded as a mad woman as her existence is shallow and reckless. Ironically the novel is about the living spirit and the dead spirit. In spite of everything Theodora emerges at the end of the novel as an explorer and as a person who is spiritually alive. She is the only character in the novel who is aware of the

spiritual power of the roses. She believes that the roses are the ornaments and symbols of her splendid isolation. Mrs. Goodman is a psychic wreck. She is restless and abnormal in her temperament. She has all the symptoms of a neurotic personality. She is dissatisfied with her life as White writes: "She beat the window with the handle of her riding crop; she beats, she beats the jags that were left in the frame" (68). White portrays a frustrated individual in the character of Mrs. Goodman, who has no control over the natural world. Mrs. Goodman is White's archetypal mother. She is possessive, selfish, and domineering.

Fanny is an interesting character in the novel. She is the only character who has an insight into the depth of Theodora. She is "as pretty and pink as roses" (23). Fanny seduces a rich landlord but Theodora is a frigid woman leading an abnormal life. White describes Fanny's response to nature thus:

There was a small pale grub curled in the heart of the rose. She could not look too long at the grub thing stirring as she opened the petals to the light. "Horrid, beastly grub," said Fanny, who was as pretty and pink as roses. Theodora had not yet learnt to dispute the apparently indisputable. But she could not condemn her pale and touching grub. She could not subtract it from the sum total of the garden. So, without arguing, she closed the rose. (23)

Fanny is a girl of tastes who loves only the beautiful things of Nature. On the other hand Theodora accepts both ugly and beautiful things of Nature. Theodora has "great understanding" (33). She likes the natural beauty of her Meroe:

After she had hidden in the garden, she looked at her hands that were never moved to do things that Fanny did. But her hands touched her hands became the shape of a rose, she knew it in its utmost intimacy. Or she played the nocturne, as it was never meant, expressing some angular agony that she knew. She knew the extinct hills and the life they had once lived. (32)

Theodora had strange passion for music and she used the tunes to overcome the depression and frustration of her life. She believes that music has the medicinal powers to cure the ills of life. She plays on music to overcome the anxieties and tensions of her lonely existence. Patrick White observes thus:

The concert had begun. The violins made a suave forest through which Moraitis stepped. The passage of the cello was diffident at first, struggling to achieve its own existence in spite of the pressure of the blander violins. Moraitis sat upright. He was prim. He was pure. I am a peasant, he said. And he saw with the purity of primitive vision, whether the bones of the hills or the shape of a cup. (116)

White has depicted the spiritual depth of Theodora thus: “Father did not speak. He respected silence, and besides whether it was summer or winter, the landscape was more communicative than people talking” (34).

In White's novels, silence assumes a dominant role. The spiritual understanding of Theodora is not an inactive process. As the plot progresses, she continues her quest for enlightenment. White narrates the hawk episode to depict the sensibility of Theodora. One day she walks with Frank in the paddock but is

unwilling to kill a hawk because she feels it “spoke of words that were brief and fierce” (35). White speaks of her sense of understanding and relationship with the hawk thus:

She took aim, and it was like aiming at her own red-eye. She could feel the blood beat the other side of the membrane. And she fired. And it fell. It was an old broken umbrella tumbling off a shoulder. Theodora laughed: It is done. (74)

The hawk shooting episode is symbolic signifying the death of evil forces. She says: “I have a core of evil in me that is altogether hateful” (126). She feels liberated as she declares: “I shall continue to destroy myself, right down to the last of my several lives” (126). Theodora overcomes her emotional volcano and feels a unique sense of thrill and excitement in killing a little hawk. She surrenders her vanities and frailties. Theodora plans to kill her mother who represents the evil. She is sick of the monstrous appearance of her mother. She thinks the appearance and presence of her mother oppresses her mentally. Theodora does not kill her mother but is a victim of guilty consciousness. Mrs. Goodman is always enclosed by the “shell” of her ego. Unlike her mother, “whose hands were small and bright with rings, but hard as a diamond, glittering, brittle and complex” (67), Theodora has no shell. The image of ring, garnet and other jewels in connection with Mrs. Goodman recurs throughout the book.

Spiritual Awakening of Theodora

As the plot progresses, White depicts the stages of spiritual enlightenment of Theodora. The turbulent mind and her disordered existence is symbolically

dramatized through the desolate landscape. She walks on the yellow grass in silence but soon she discovers that the hills and the trees have entered into her soul giving her spiritual strength. She finds the meaning in her life through the objects of Nature. She discovers the real meaning of truth “that one cannot possess things with one’s hands, and that the world that is perceived spiritually and aesthetically may not seem to have a corresponding objective reality” (26). She perceives truth of life and existence through her communion with Nature. On her twelfth birthday a stranger appears in her life: “The lightning strikes the oak tree lying on the ground in front of her house. She feels killed but picks herself up and gives a pale laugh” (42). The sudden birth of a calf thrills her as she feels the productive powers of Nature. She achieves peace of mind and throws away all the doubts of her life. The man who was given his dinner says: “You will see them because you have eyes to see. And they will break you” (47).

Holstius embodies Theodora's true self. He helps her to explore herself in the pure environment. Her father and the man who was given his dinner also play a positive role in her spiritual progress. Theodora feels isolated after she leaves her home and all her perceptions are lost. The property is disposed by her mother after the death of her husband. She goes to Sydney where she is away from her landscape. until she becomes a middle-aged spinster. In Sydney, she feels alienated and feels cut off from the landscape of Meroe. In her life, Theodora is obsessed with the burden of exploration of truth and the real meaning of life. She feels restless when she feels that she has broken with her landscape which had been a source of her spiritual strength. She is bound to live without friends, lovers and Nature. After her mother’s death, Theodora goes on a spiritual journey to Europe. In France she stays at the Hotel du Midi and finds that it is a microcosm of the degraded state of Europe:

The garden was completely static, rigid, the equation of a garden. Slugs linked its symbols with ribbons of silver, their timid life carefully avoiding its spines...Walking slowly, in her large and unfashionable hat, she began to be afraid she had returned to where she had begun, the paths of the garden were the same labyrinth, the cactus limbs of the same aching stone. (146)

Theodora longs to enjoy the scenes and sights of blooming roses. Her memory of the landscape of Meroe haunts her, and she feels depressed. Theodora longs to commune with the roses: "In its own right it possessed, and rejected, absorbing just so much dew with its pink and yellow mouths, coldly tearing at cloth or drawing blood. She feels sick because the garden was untouchable" (146). In France, Theodora "confronts the physical barriers which enclose the people inside on the one hand, and the unresponsive garden on the other. She cannot escape into a comfortable isolation" (173) as she used to do in Meroe. She feels cut off from the natural world of peace and bliss in Europe. The landscape outside the hotel is dominated by the sea:

They began to walk along the street, along the asphalt, promenade, on one side of which, protected by brick and stucco, glass and iron, life was being led. But the other side, the sea side, flowed. They had put an iron railing between the asphalt and the sea. (186)

The sea represents the natural world but is separated from humanity by the solid, inorganic material. In France, human life is artificial existing behind the protection of brick and stucco, glass and iron, just as theory is a safe substitute for fact" (187). She suffers because she has lost contact with nature which had been a source of spiritual

strength. She meets the Greek girl Katina who brings her back to the bony country of the black volcanic hills “through her recollection of her conversation with the people of France” (148). She meets the exiled Russian General Sokolnikov in the hotel and Theodora enters into the imaginary world of Sokolnikov:

Theodora listened to his voice leading her into a clearing, where they had fixed a little amateur stage, on which the curtain had not yet risen.

Looking at the flat surface of the curtain. (182)

Theodora gets lost in the dead past of Sokolnikov's imaginative drama, which has symbolic significance. The stage curtain clearly defines two boundaries in the scene; one is where Theodora lives, and the other is the world of illusion of Sokolnikov. The distinction between these two worlds becomes bewildering. She gets trapped between illusion and reality. Her mind wavers between the landscape of Meroe and the landscape of Europe. In this part of the scene, White gives the symbol of a garnet ring inherited from her mother in her early life: "Sometimes Theodora could feel the hatred in her mother's hand. She could feel the pressure of the rings" (99). In Europe, she has lost her link with Nature and home:

Her feet were rooted now in mute needles...Across the clearing, trees had begun to move. It was these that frightened. She smelled the fire. She smelled the voices, their smell of sweat, and dark hair, approaching out of the darkness, this was thick with hair. In general disintegration of firelight, and darkness, and burning resin, and sailing trees, the belt round her waist was no great guarantees of personality. (213)

Theodora loses the sense of reality when she gets lost in the world of old memories. She feels confused; even the people she meets at the hotel appear unreal. However, for the first time she can communicate with the natural environment:

But it was not the hour of much attention, so nobody listened to Alyosho Sergei. Sea lulled the bodies into fresh attitudes of anticipation, sleep, and melancholy. Directly under the sun, the rocks, orange and stubborn, were painfully oblivious. (236)

For the first time Theodora understands the true meaning of life as she accepts all the illusions. She confesses: "I have reached the age of tolerance" (236). She feels that she cannot dare to break with the past. Her association with Nature alone can relieve her from her distress. Sufferings are inevitable in life and Nature is the only source of understanding the mysteries of life and death:

All that afternoon Theodora Goodman, walking hatless between houses, past trees, near the fragments of stone walls from which lizards looked, heard the words of Sokolnimikov. Like rubber, they departed and returned. Now her motives were equally elastic, because Sokolnimikov had made her doubt. So she could not take the direct road. Roads did not lead through the infinite landscape in which she hesitated, least of all the obvious red coast road. As the town thinned out into advertisements and tins, she wandered higher, where the needle turrets of signorial villas were strangled by roses, and the nightclub still wore its daylight tarnish. She walked on the edge of the lavender hills. (247)

In France, Theodora goes to a historical place symbolic of European society, famous for the glories of Napoleon Bonaparte: “the smell of nettles, and possibly a dead bird, some personal exaltation or despair” (248). White has presented the scene of a fire at the Hotel du Midi. Theodora escapes the tragedy and is allowed by Nature and Fate to carry out her mission to explore the truth of life. She has an urgent desire to return home. Theodora experiences the regressive power of that most fierce of nature’s elements. Theodora struggles to revive her lost energies to begin her new venture. She remembers Meroe and her mother and feels energetic when she puts on her garnet ring again. Theodora looks at the endless sky of America as White writes:

Theodora could smell the dust. She could smell the expanding odour of her own body, which was no longer the sour, mean smell of the human body in enclosed spaces, but the unashamed flesh on which dust and sun have lain. She walked. (274)

Liberation of Soul

Theodora feels liberated when she escapes from the stifling environment of corrupt European society. The memory of Meroe keeps haunting her. Ann McCulloch (1983) argues: “Home for Theodora will ultimately be within herself and will exclude any real contact with an external world” (13). She destroys the tickets in her acute depression and longs to go home. She is sick of the stifling environment of Europe and feels that it is a world of moral and spiritual decadence. In the train she meets an American who is lost in the material world leading a wretched and degraded artificial life:

But the man scabbled on the surface of life, working himself into a father lather of importance under his laundered shirt. She heard the man's words, which were as significant and sad as the desperate hum of telephone wires, that tell of mortgages, and pie, and phosphates, and love, and movie contacts, and indigestion, and real estate, and loneliness. (266)

Theodora knows that the heart has a silent speech, and it is tough to reach enlightenment. It is enough to know that "you cannot tell all things always in words" (281). She feels homeless and her new name Pilkington is without any history. She becomes mad at the end of the novel as she longs to go back home. No wonder in desperation she "dissolves into nothing more than air or water" (134). Theodora is spiritually enlightened in her state of insanity and in this situation White comments thus: "When your life is most real, to me you are mad" (23). She becomes a neurotic wreck but in this state of abnormality she explores the core of transcendental reality like King Lear of Shakespeare. It is apparent in her attempt at a mental journey back home:

Theodora walked beyond the yard, beyond the dry flags of com, and the gate upon which the red dog was stiffly lifting his leg. She walked to that point on the road where she had left off. She continued, climbing higher, where the road led, though this was less determinate. It wandered over rocks and sand, almost obliterated, or else its ruts curt deep where floods of rain had run, giving these scars the appearance of natural formation....Theodora heard the crackle of

undergrowth. Sudden glimpses of the black trees struck cold. Then, there was a small plateau and a house, which she imagined must formerly have been the final objective of the faint road. (284-285)

The sight of the house situated at the top of the hill reminds her of the glorious scenes and sights of her Meroe landscape. She observed that a madman had lived and expired there and interestingly “nobody knew what his intention had been” (63). Theodora loses no time to enter into the house to feel the sensations in blood and heart. The bliss of Nature once again purifies her soul and she feels thrilled. She looks through the window and feels the growth of spirituality in her inner soul. She feels the sensation of liberation of her soul. The natural scenery empowers her as she enjoys the freedom of the spirit. Theodora observes that “the process of disintegration that was taking place at the foot of the mountains should have been frightening and tragic, but it was not” (286). Theodora meets Holstius here who reminds her of her father walking on the frost. White writes thus: "She was walking with her father on the frost at Meroe, or sitting with him in his room, in which the pines were never quite still" (288). Theodora's father had given her the lesson that “Life was divided, rather, into the kinder moments and the cruel, which on the whole are not conditioned by sex” (34). For the first time she feels a unique sensation when she listens to Holstius:

You cannot reconcile joy and sorrow... or flesh and marble, or illusion and reality or life and death. For this reason, Theodora, 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. (293)

Theodora feels the sensation of comfort and peace when she meets Holstius. She gains spiritual elevation and in this state all her fears, problems and existential threats vanish away. When she stands, “the numbness of her whole body leaves her with an intensely clear vision” (289) of her body. She feels like a child:

The water made her laugh. She looked at the world with eyes blurred by water, but a world curiously pure, expectant, undistorted. She could almost have read a writing on the bark of any given tree. (290)

The sights of Nature transport her into a new world providing her spiritual bliss: “looking through the trees for the tree walking, which in time would become Holstius” (290). Holstius emerges as a Godly Spirit and Theodora feels the need for “wholeness in things” (290).

Patrick White wants her to plunge into the depth of a spiritual burning fire to “see things for the first time” (39). She goes against the traditional society. She is an ancient priestess who enters into the darkness of the self. She enjoys the natural and naked poetry and the inner strength with the explicit purpose of life. Her vision is transcendental beyond the ken of an ordinary person. Patrick White has shown his transcendental vision of life and existence through the saintly character of Theodora. She represents a powerful goddess archetype, the Crone, who has the supernatural power to listen to the hidden voice of nature. In her father's company, Theodora can ride and hunt in the bushes of Meroe and is close to the Artemis archetype, a virgin

Goddess. Bolen (1984) observes that she is truly "one in herself with her mission to explore the sacred and inviolate without modification to meet male standards" (Bolen 36).

A few characters in the novel do understand her gift of poetic vision. The Syrian hawkler tells her that she has the eyes to see into the life of things. A Greek visiting cellist Moraitis declares that Theodora is not an ordinary woman, she has the spirit of a prophet, and it is good to "come from a country of bones because it is easier to see" (98). Miss Spofforth and at the end of the novel Holstius, also acknowledge a spiritual fire in her:

She would have touched her hand and said: 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 the agonies of music, you are not creative. (63)

Theodora unites in herself the "myriad iridescent fragments" of which we are composed:

Henceforward we walk split into myriad fragments, like an insect with a hundred feet, a centipede with soft-stirring feet that drinks in the

atmosphere; we walk with sensitive filaments that drink avidly of past and future, and all things melt into music and sorrow; we walk against a united world, asserting our dividedness. All things, as we walk, splitting with us into a myriad iridescent fragments. The great fragmentation of maturity. (133)

Indeed, the plot of the novel *The Aunt's Story* centres on Theodora Goodman, who begins her spiritual journey in her quest for peace and reconciliation, and spiritual sublimation. It is necessary to point out that Theodora is brought up in an environment paving the way for her natural desires for spirituality. Emerson observes thus:

The power which resides in him is new in nature, and none but he knows what that is which he can do, nor does he know until he has tried. Not for nothing one face, one character, one fact, makes much impression on him, and another none. This sculpture in the memory is not without pre-established harmony. (Emerson 24)

To conclude, Patrick White has explored Theodora's character who abandons her worldly desires and embraces madness to achieve spiritual bliss and peace of mind. She seeks salvation in frenzy. Patrick White's *The Aunt's Story* is the story of Theodora, who begins her journey in life to explore its meaning and the significance of truth. She wants to know the importance of humility, spiritual salvation, and the serenity of life. The hills and the black landscape of Meroe are the life-blood of Theodora. She explores her identity through this landscape linked in name to "the black country of Ethiopia" (23). The image of Theodora is simple and profound. She

is an introvert and loves loneliness. As a child, she said: "I would like to know everything".

The Trauma of Stan and Amy Parker

White's *The Tree of Man* explores the trauma of Stan and Amy Parker. It is the story of a pioneering farmer, Stan Parker, who comes and settles on a small isolated part of the virgin wilderness near Sydney. His journey is full of trials and tribulations. He suffers the trauma of alienation in his struggle to strike roots despite formidable odds, which assail life endlessly. The central theme is confirmation of life and its traumatic sufferings. Stan learns that alienation, grief and trauma are inevitable, and man must fight against the forces of Nature and Fate to seek redemption at the end of life. As Madeleine Fisher, one of the characters realizes towards the end of the book: "Lives....can only touch, they do not join" (434). The mystery of man's nature isolates him even in a tender relationship. Toward the novel's conclusion, Parkers suffer endlessly; the great fire, outbreak of war, and the years of "mud and metal" (199). Stan also suffers from his wife's infidelity, and all these episodes are traumatic. He suffers a period of great suffering and desolation. Cathy Caruth asserts that trauma is experienced and witnessed through "a response to an unexpected or overwhelming violent event or events that are not fully grasped as they occur, but return later in repeated flashbacks, nightmares, or other repetitive phenomena" (Caruth 91). The "nostalgia of permanence and the fiend of motion" (14) increased Stan's wanderlust, but he always returned, never satisfied. The death of his mother decided his fate. He decided to settle down whether "for liberation or imprisonment" (15) he could not decide. Emerson observes thus:

Man is his own star; and the soul that can
Render an honest and a perfect man
Commands all light, all influence, all fate;
Nothing to him falls early or too late.
Our acts our angels are, or good or ill
Our fatal shadows that walk by us still. (Emerson 1)

Patrick White's *Voss* (1957) is the adventurous story of a German explorer. In *Voss*, the wilderness becomes a manifestation of God and a place to gain spiritual enlightenment. Voss is fully aware of the transcendental powers of Nature and God. He discovers an image of his own soul in the wilderness. Chellappan writes:

Patrick White's work reveals a preoccupation with mysticism, with the individual's search to grasp some higher, more valid reality that lies beyond or behind everyday social existence. (35)

Voss believes that life and death are inevitable parts of life. Man must struggle and endure suffering: "To make yourself, it is also necessary to destroy yourself" (38). Destruction of self symbolizes the awakening of self:

Man begins to hear a voice that fills the Heavens and the earth, saying that God is within him. I find this amazing revelation of my immediate relation to God, a solution to all the doubts that oppressed me. I recognize the distinction of the outer and inner self; the double consciousness that within this erring, passionate, mortal self sits a supreme, calm, immortal mind, whose power I do not know; but it is

stronger than I; it is wiser than I; it never approved me in wrong; I seek counsel of it in my doubts; I repair to it in my dangers; I pray to it in my undertakings. It seems to me the face which the Creator uncovers to his child. (16)

Voss and his Metaphysical Struggle

The impending failure always haunts Voss, the leading cause of his trauma. His desperate struggle against the forces of fate becomes the cause of the suffering of Voss and Laura, which thwarts his aspirations. He wants to achieve humility but fails. Voss is conscious of the inevitable nature of failure inherent in his venture. His failures become the cause of his trauma. Trauma means something beyond the expectation and the acceptance of a subject. It comes immediately to an individual but exists in its psyche forever. Its frequency fluctuates within the victim's mind and body but it never leaves the casualty. Laura is aware of the psychic problems of Voss, who expresses his inner thoughts in a letter written to Laura: "the gifts of destiny cannot be returned. That which I am intended to fulfil must be fulfilled" (163). Kant observes thus:

Given the fact that the ultimate limits to human social and political activity are not themselves available for review and because any attempt to infer such limits from particular structures is inherently vulnerable to perspective. (Kant 14)

At the end of his life's journey, he understands the real mystery of life, as Laura says to Voss: "Man is God decapitated. That is why you are bleeding" (387). Voss dies at the novel's end in a beheading ritual suggestive of a crucifixion.

The Scenes of Sufferings and Trauma

White's novel *Riders in the Chariot* (1961) is replete with episodes of sufferings and trauma. Himmelfarb is the central character representing the agony of the Jews who were tortured and mutilated by the Nazis. White has depicted the traumatic experiences of the Jews through the struggles of Himmelfarb. Mrs. Godbold and Alf Dubbo consider him as Christ crucified. White portrays the scene of re-enactment of crucifixion faithfully. The readers witness the plight of the Jew's tortured body. Himmelfarb believes that he is a chosen person born to bear the burden of the Jews. White has created his character and atmosphere in the narrative, borrowing from the historical episodes.

White has explored the traumatic life of victims of the Holocaust. The Jews suffered the traumas of the Holocaust as they experienced the loss of memory and became the victims of neurosis and depression. Hannah Arendt published *Men in Dark Times* (1968), *The Human Condition* (1958), and *The Life of the Mind* (1978), in which she discussed the nature of the power structure of the Nazi army. The SS guards passed draconian laws to crush and bulldoze the individuality of the Jews. White firmly believes that the Jews are outsiders and rootless aliens. Malke and Reha inspire Himmelfarb to destroy himself to seek redemption. He has to accept his destiny after the horrifying events of the Jewish Holocaust. He experiences the real trauma as he lives through the nightmare period.

The Nazis committed atrocities on poor and innocent people. The prisoners suffered alienation and trauma since life was very uncertain in the Concentration Camps. Himmelfarb witnessed the miserable condition of the Jews. The Jews living

in the ghettos got infected with deadly diseases such as diarrhoea and typhus. He accepts the messianic mission to save the Jews. He says to Miss Hare:

I still reject that I do not always have the strength to suffer when all of them had put their trust in me. It was I, you know, on whom they were depending to redeem their sins. (172)

In his last days when he is on the verge of death, he understands the meaning of life and the value of redemption and salvation. The transcendental vision is revealed to him:

It seemed to him as though the mystery of failure might be pierced only by those of extreme simplicity of soul, or else by one who was about to doff the outgrown garment of the body. (121)

Redemption as a Therapy to Overcome Depression and Pessimism

White's novel *A Fringe of Leaves* depicts the struggles of the characters to overcome the burden of depression and pessimism. The bush section explores the difficult period of cultural negotiations. The aborigines capture Ellen and imprison her. It reminisces "her imprisonment at the hands of the Roxburghs in the English world" (16). She suffers brutalities and humiliations in her captivity.

R.F. Brissenden (1969) observes thus: "The land of Australia for White offers a timeless dimension of experience, the only medium, the only terminology through which he could make fully meaningful his own intensely personal view of the world" (4). Mrs. Roxburgh married Austin, who was older. Her brother-in-law, Garnet Roxburgh, seduced her. Her ship *Bristol Maid* wrecked, and the longboat took the survivors. The aborigines killed the Captain and Austin Roxburgh, and this tragic

episode shattered her faith in God and religion. She became pessimistic and believed life was useless and futile, and man's struggles ended in despair. Sartre observes in his *Being and Nothingness* that "consciousness is the trans-phenomenal dimension of being in the subject" (7).

Moreover, Sartre contends "that it is a necessary and sufficient condition, in order for a knowing consciousness to be the knowledge of its object, that it be consciousness of itself as being that knowledge" (7). Mrs. Roxburgh was made a prisoner. The aborigines cut her hair and gave her brutal treatment. Ultimately, a convict Jack Chance came to her rescue. He helped her escape and led her to the sea shore. Love brings back normalcy and puts new hope and faith in the wounded mind of Mrs. Roxburgh. The caring love of the convict aroused sexuality in her. She felt the presence of darkness:

What she longed to sense in the behaviour of these human beings was evidence of a spiritual design, but that she could not, any more than she could believe in a merciful power shaping her own destiny. (247)

To conclude, *A Fringe of Leaves* depicts an individual's quest for identity and redemption. Her journey is a long chain of trials and tribulations and a heartrending tale of painful experiences. Ellen feels liberated at the end of the novel:

Her torn hands were left clawing at the air. "Jack! Don't leave me! I'd never survive! I'll not cross this field let alone face the faces. But she did. She plodded gravely across the rows of tended plants as though they had been put there, cool and sappy, for the comfort of her feet. (333)

White has depicted the sufferings of Ellen and her eventual redemption in a lyrical language in the novel. Mrs. Roxburgh is happy: “Yes, I am glad, of course...for my return to the world. I have been so long out of it. I may not easily learn to adapt myself to its ways” (392).

To sum up, White has given a profound vision of life in the novels taken for study. We find characters facing traumatic conditions. They may lose or win the battle of life provided they surrender or face them boldly and sagaciously. The protagonists face trials and tribulations in a positive spirit. In the first two novels, hard destiny grips them, which they fail to overcome but learn the lesson of glad acceptance and fortitude. But further novels of White bloom with the high spirit of spirituality. By meeting the challenges of fate and circumstances, the characters learn to persevere patiently and know themselves. Ultimately they confirm that life is a mixture of dualities, and God is the answer to all sums. The Providence throws problems in our way for our upliftment and self-awakening. Life without problems would be dull, static, and uninteresting. The journey towards self-realization is not a smooth pathway. It is a challenging trail, and one has to go through multiple experiences that are self-exploratory. For White, the priority of life is to seek reality. As such, his characters learn the secrets of life after facing traumatic situations, to make their lives more meaningful. No doubt, a single trauma can shatter and make us helpless and ruined. But White believes in man's hidden potential, which can transform his life. It is the secret of self-realization, which he shares with us.

Chapter: Four

Nihilism to Redemption

In the post World-War novels, the conspicuous feature is the corrosion of self. The characters grapple with problems and struggle throughout their life. The writers of this period understood that the wave of nihilism and pessimism had significantly impacted people's lives. Wars, Holocaust and the Great Depression made them lose their faith in life itself. They came to understand that there is no cure for chaos and no remedy for human sufferings. Nihilism and the loss of self brought new themes and new challenges. The novelists of Post-World War II had to face the new concepts of truth and reality and the emergence of disintegration of self. Darwin was the first scientist who propounded the concept of machine man. The scientific laws of Kepler and the psychoanalytical theories of Freud further led to the spirit of skepticism and nihilism. Freud argued that man is merely a tiny fraction of energy. In the age of Freud and Einstein, God ceased to exist. Joseph Wood Krutch contended that “modern malaise, nausea, angst, alienation, loss of identity, entropy, nihilism were forces that had dehumanized and deflated the heroes” (79).

The age of Freud and Einstein witnessed the emergence of new nihilistic forces such as uncertainty of life, pessimism and nihilism. Man was in the grip of anxiety and his self was trapped in the net of pessimism and nihilism. The old values degenerated fast and dollar became the God. This was an age of nihilism and absurdity. Nihilism became an inevitable reality because existence became an illusion and mind, consciousness and soul lost their meanings. Nietzsche, Jean-Paul

Sartre, Albert Camus, and Karl Jaspers came to the conclusion that man is doomed to fail as all his projects are irrelevant. Kafka created lost and fragmented characters suffering from the neurotic ailments. They are sick and decadent living in a directionless cosmos. Dostoevsky, Marcel Proust, and James Joyce followed Kafka whose characters are deflated beings living a purposeless life, confronting chaos and disorder. The novels of Aldous Huxley, Graham Greene, William Faulkner, Elizabeth Bowen, Virginia Woolf, and James Joyce depict anti-heroes burdened with anxiety and absurdity of life.

Evolution of Nihilism: Trends Towards Loss of Self

Sartre's ideas of absurdity and Kierkegaard's *The Sickness unto Death* (1946) propagated the anxiety, disorder and the spirit of nihilism. The loss of self became a popular theme as the British and American novelists created the protagonists who are the victims of trauma and despair. They have no understanding of the real meaning of life as they grope into darkness. The modern individual is split because of "the sickness unto death". Religion no longer sustains him and he feels cut off from the cosmos living in a valueless society. Friedrich Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1833) propagated the false belief that God is dead. No wonder, the spirit of scepticism, doubt and despair gripped the psyche of modern man. Wendell Phillips (1881) highlights the relevance of nihilism in the contemporary society thus:

Nihilism is the righteous and honourable resistance of a people crushed under an iron rule. Nihilism is evidence of life ... the last weapon of victims choked and manacled beyond all other resistance. It is crushed humanity's only means of making the oppressor tremble.

... I honour Nihilism since it redeems human nature from the suspicion of being utterly vile, made up of heartless oppressors and contented slaves. ... This is the only view an American, the child of 1620 and 1776, can take of Nihilism— any other unsettles and perplexes the ethics of our civilization. (123)

Nietzsche's arrogant "I Will" rejected God, Church, Community and Family. This led to the growth of the virus of alienation bringing him all the fears, desperation and trauma. Freud's *Civilization and its Discontents* (1915) further led to the growth of pessimism and nihilism. He found that man is bound to bodily desires and the gratification and frustration of the body. White came under the influence of Thoreau and Emerson who discarded the material things of life and propagated the idea that only spiritual and metaphysical ways of life can bring happiness and redemption. In one of his *Lectures* (1842), Emerson observed thus:

The materialist insists on facts, on history, on the force of circumstances, and the animal wants of man; the idealist on the power of thought and of Will, on inspiration, on miracle, on individual culture. These two modes of thinking are both natural, but the idealist contends that his way of thinking is in higher nature. He concedes all that the other affirms, admits the impressions of sense, admits their coherency, their use and beauty, and then asks the materialist for his grounds of assurance that things are as his senses represent them. But I, he says, affirm facts not affected by the illusions of sense, facts which are of the same nature as the faculty which reports them, and

not liable to doubt; facts which in their first appearance to us assume a native superiority to material facts, degrading these into a language by which the first are to be spoken; facts which it only needs a retirement from the senses to discern. Every materialist will be an idealist; but an idealist can never go backward to be a materialist. (1)

Quest for Redemption of Characters of White

White wrote novels to depict the heartrending journey of life, seeking an escape from nihilism and describing his characters' quest for redemption. White's *Happy Valley* (1939) is a study of man's sufferings and chaos and disorder prevailing in the universe. The opening epigraph to *Happy Valley* highlights the inevitable nature of human sorrows and sufferings. Alys is granted absolute freedom by her neglectful father but she leads a lonely life as she lives in the confinement of a Convent. Here she learns the meaning of loneliness and "like most lonely people living alone", says that she "likes lonely people" (39). The residents of the Valley consider her a snob and a neurotic girl but she says "she has at least a spine". But she emerges as "a dangling bundle of chiffon rage" (38).

Alys Browne is often seen dressed in mauve, "a dangerous colour" (38) taking pride in her reputation of "being pretty well read" (39). She cultivates a "mysterious look" (39). Interestingly, Alys struggles to keep her confidence in spite of her depressed and lonely existence. She cannot "altogether decide" (40). She cannot "make the effort" (40). She likes to talk "about the past, because it is something achieved and distinct" (98). She finds comfort in "patting things" (102).

She is haunted by her “formless and volatile existence” (98). And White has chartered her dismal future as she is entrapped into “a sudden direction that is inevitable” (42). It is worth noting here that the wave of existentialism impacted White.

Escape from Alienation

White has expressed his concern about the prevailing environment of futility and frustration. The man stands devoid of God. Sartre’s famous words “une passion inutile” indicate that stages of life are relevant. The characters in *Happy Valley* accept their suffering dumbly. They try to control their destiny, but fate overpowers them. The plot abounds with unmitigated pessimism and nihilism. The characters confront the helplessness of life. They live in an environment of gloom and doom. But White has depicted the mood of redemption and resurrection in the plot. Little progress, however, is made by the past sufferers in Happy Valley. Dr. Oliver Halliday returns to his wife and resolves to change the nature of his existence by positive means. He tries to make the marriage work, but his thoughts are still with Alys Browne, his mistress. The “suffering is negated by the self-serving interpretation of it by Halliday in spite of his moral collapse” (197). He attempts to escape from Happy Valley with her for a new start in America. Oliver Halliday agrees that Alys Browne will always be part of him. It is not easy to live in Happy Valley, which is “poor and dirty, with skinny old women rooting about in their backyards, like so many rickety fowls” (46). The town only inspired hatred among people: “Happy Valley is pain” (27).

Holistic Approach of Redemption

Escape to life is not the solution to life. The characters of White learn to fight with the forces of Nature and chaos and struggle to bring order in their life. They suffer but eventually emerge the real heroes fighting with the existential realities of life. This is the beauty of White and this is why he was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature. Nature or the isolation is not the real solution. Life is a mixture of spirit and matter; body and soul. So, all the characters look realistic as they fight with life to attain the real fulfilment.

The Images of Death, Decay and Decadence

In *Happy Valley* White has employed the images of death, decadence and decay: “The bloated corpses of flies, the shriveled plants, the virulent old women watching from behind window boxes, the dead wind, and wind of hate shroud Happy Valley an aura of evil” (23). Alys cannot escape and remains in Happy Valley. All the characters who live in the Happy Valley are enslaved by the forces of evil. They desperately want to run away but they are doomed to stay there and suffer. They have to wait and wait like the characters of Beckett. Their life is hopeless and they suffer hopelessness of waiting. Patrick White writes: “At Happy Valley, man was by inclination static” (15) and shows his protagonists frozen into inactivity. White’s *The Living and the Dead* (1941) continues the theme of nihilism and redemption. Patrick White explores the spiritual isolation of man, and his quest for a meaningful life. The novel is cerebral in tone, depicting the sterility of characters and the futility of life. The plot is lifeless, grey, and in parts, tedious. White felt the need for spiritual ways of life as he wrote thus:

Demobilisation in England left me with the alternative of remaining in what I felt to be an actual and spiritual graveyard, with the prospect of ceasing to be an artist and turning instead into the most sterile of beings, a London intellectual, or of returning home, to the stimulus of time remembered. (38)

Elyot lives in an environment of chaos and disorder. He remains unmoved even after hearing the news of death of his father: "He had no part in his crying. He could not cry. He had no part in anything. It frightened him a little" (106). White has depicted his dilemma and moral bankruptcy thus:

He hated his own voice in the fog, an echo of Gerald Blenkinsop. They were drifting apart in the fog, saying goodbye, it was doubtful if they would meet again. You were always dismissing people. It was seldom you came any closer. You dug the ferrule of your umbrella in the pavement with a cold metallic hatred, walking homeward; as if you wanted also to deny the cold. (204)

Elyot lives in isolation. His relationship with women also remains remote and unsatisfying. Hildegard Fiesell and Muriel Raphael are upset over his neurotic behaviour. He fails to develop a love relationship with Connie Tiarks, and she is dissatisfied with his deep hatred and isolation. Even in his childhood, Elyot feels separate and withdrawn. He avoids intimacy with his mother. White observes thus:

Elyot was a shadow that fell across the substance of her friends, the men who brought her presents, who filled her drawing-room with

conversation and cigar smoke. Elyot standing sideways. His manner was perpetually sideways. Smoothing his hair, she could sense his withdrawal, or they sat in untidy silences. (132)

White depicts the nihilistic and pessimistic vision of life. Marjorie Barnard, while giving an opinion of the novel, says: "It is an unhappy book; all the characters are lost or frustrated or decadent so that it is difficult to know who are the living and the dead" (161). Elyot is a typical character, lonely and depressed, living in a world of fear. The main features of his character are his withdrawal and his fear of commitment. He is ineffectual and desiccated.

The conditions in *Happy Valley* and *The Living and the Dead* are undoubtedly discouraging. The characters feel helpless before the circumstances. But still, White does not leave hope. He makes them gladly reconcile with the situations but keeps the flame of positive thoughts burning. They believe suffering will make them spiritually strong. After all, man can be crushed but not broken. They can improve their condition when found an opportunity. Elyot, in *The Living and the Dead*, leaves his "cocoon of London intellectual" after the death of his mother. He goes on a journey by boarding a bus, likely to make relations with nature and the people around, paving the way from nihilism to redemption.

Patrick White's novel *The Aunt's Story* is one of the most famous novels of White, dealing with the journey of Theodora from nihilism to redemption. The plot begins with the theme of the disintegration of identity and the struggle of Theodora to achieve freedom. Theodora attempts to attain some sort of epiphany in the hostile

universe. She dedicates her whole life to overcoming suffering and attaining truth. The plot explores Theodora's spiritual odyssey by highlighting her childhood recollections and relationships with other characters such as Frank, Clarkson, and Moraitis. As the story progresses, Theodora gains in spirituality. Her spiritual journey is transcendental in "her attempt to destroy: the great monster self; her physical development"(128).

White depicts Theodora's childhood experiences, describing her natural desire for spirituality to win over her physical development. Theodora is mentally disturbed by the presence of her "monstrous mother who is a small, neat, hateful woman with small, neat buckled shoes and many rings" (5). To depict her inner strength, White describes Theodora as a "volcanic fire". She is gifted with the volcanic fire to fight the external forces and guard her spirituality like a relentless warrior.

Loss of Identity of Characters

Patrick White's *The Aunt's Story* is a detailed work of the disintegration of the identity of the heroine of the novel. The novel's main plot focuses on the theme of a spiritual journey of Theodora, who carries out her struggle for freedom and spiritual redemption. She emerges as a new woman of White venturing to gain freedom and seeking redemption, despite the harsh and oppressive environment of her home Meroe. White came under the influence of James Joyce, the writer of 'Ulysses'. Like him, he depicts the spiritual journey of Theodora employing the subtle images of the volcano and dark black colours. After her mother's death, Theodora becomes a volcanic woman fighting with external forces. She emerges as a brave warrior who guards her spirituality and fights all external threats. The splintering of her personality is a crucial stage of her spiritual development. She severs all her ties with

the external world and social institutions and escapes into apparent unreality.

Marjorie Barnard (1959) says:

At last she accepts quite simply the dictum of society that she is mad. Always she has asked less and less in the faint hope that she might be allowed that modicum. Always it is denied to her. The world is arraigned, not Theodora. (54)

The novel is about the cruelty and oppression prevailing in the world. Theodora is alone fighting with the oppressive forces of nihilism and pessimism. White has presented her sympathetically while expressing his condemnation of the world. She is an outcast living without friends, family, and home. White has employed several images and symbols in the novel, such as fire, volcano, bones, and hawks which help to comprehend the spiritual growth of Theodora. Levi observes thus:

In doing so, White separates physical nature from spiritual development which, according to Western Philosophy, they complete each other, and the absence of either of them makes one uncertain of the existence of external reality. (Levi 339)

Theodora's main motive is to explore the mystery of life and existence like Hamlet of Shakespeare. She assumes madness like him to fight the corrupt environment.

Theodora expresses her will to explore truth thus:

I shall go outside now. She looked with caution at the yellow face of the house, at the white shells in its placid, pocked stone. Even in sunlight, the hills surrounding Meroe were black. Her own shadow was rather a suspicious rag. So that from what she saw and sensed, the

legendary landscape became a fact, and she could not break loose from an expanding terror. (15-16)

White talks of her mother as a strange figure with her witch-like appearance: "her hands were small and bright with rings but hard as a diamond" (67). She is a symbol of evil and destructiveness as she is "glittering brittle and hard" (67). White describes her character through the images of hard metallic things: "Mother's voice crackled at the fire. She wanted her rings. Her small head was as bright and as hard as a garnet beside the fire" (27). Patrick White denies her insight:

To Mrs. Goodman, everything had a form, like bronze or marble. She saw clearly, but not far. She saw the cattle going down to drink. She saw the sunlight as it lay among the brushes on her dressing table, She heard the passage of her own silk. (67)

Theodora turns inwards from her childhood. She is "sallow in a yellow sash" while her sister Fanny is "pink and white as roses in the new dress" (23). Theodora has a unique perception and sense of understanding. She wants to explore the mystery of life, death, purpose of living, and sufferings prevailing in the world:

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. (45)

To conclude, the main focus of Patrick White in this novel is to explore Theodora's search for self and redemption. She experiences physical and psychological anguish. She becomes mad, but she can explore truth and freedom in her acute state of

suffering. Her spiritual journey begins with her physical sufferings from her loneliness. But the novel ends with her affirmation of life and exploration of truth. The forces of chaos and disorder fail to shake her but give her inner strength to fight the forces of evil.

Patrick White's novel *The Aunt's Story* did not get a very encouraging response from the reviewers and the critics. He was disheartened, but it had a lukewarm response. White conceived *The Tree of Man* to overcome "the great Australian emptiness" (White 118). He experimented with his theme of transcendentalism at a time when the values were fast declining, and the wave of nihilism and pessimism had gripped the psyche of the Australian people. He observed thus:

The novel was an attempt to portray every possible aspect of life through the lives of an ordinary man and a woman. But at the same time to discover the extraordinary behind the ordinary, the mystery and the poetry which alone could make bearable the lives of such people and incidentally my own life since my return. (White 118)

The Tree of Man is the result of White's historical decision to settle in Australia after the War. The plot is set on the outskirts of Sydney and unfolds the heroic struggles of an ordinary man. The people of Australia came to believe that life is monotonous and futile. Thelma Herring (1973) observes that Patrick White wrote this novel to convey "a splendour; a transcendence, which is also there, above human realities" (Herring 136). The book is a serious attempt to penetrate behind the surface of life with new insight to discover its redeeming features. The novel's plot is a transcendence tale of

a pioneering farmer, Stan Parker, who comes and settles on a small, isolated part of the virgin wilderness near Sydney. The critics highly appreciated the novel because "it filtered transcendentalism through colonial realism"(During 20).

Stan Parker is a man with "fair curly hair on his head and forearms" (During 20). He marries and has children. He finds that within a short period, many families like Quigleys, and the O' Dowds arrive and populate the area. World War I breaks out, and Stan Parker has to join the army. After the war, he returns home to discover that his wife Amy has committed adultery. It makes him sad and pessimistic. His faith in God crumbles. But he recoups and consoles himself with the thought that forgiveness is the divine virtue he needs to learn. This novel's simple plot highlights life's struggles and the prevailing forces of enlightenment and transcendence in the universe. The novel is packed with multiple images depicting the conflicts of duality and the play of the opposites. The landscape is full of the imagery of nihilism, pessimism, and uncertainty of life. But in the deeper layer of the plot, there is a striking current of hope and redemption. Mark F. N. Franke (2001) talks of Kant's grave concern about the predicament of modern man and the need to restore order in the universe thus:

In the course of Kant's lifetime (1724–1804), the modern nation-state was beginning to develop as a means through which certainty, peace, order, unity, and calculability could be established in social and political life. Along with this development came the lesson that, while danger, conflict, and disorder might be largely excluded from the confines of civil society, these anarchic forces inevitably still condition the ultimate viability of the state externally. (5)

The earlier part of the novel depicts the conflict between the "fiend of motion" and his "nostalgia of permanence" (13). His life wavers between "ending and beginning" (14) as Stan moves "in search of permanence" (14). As the plot progresses, the tension between permanence and change continues. At the metaphysical level, the symbolical pattern echoes the trees of Genesis. White's imagery alludes to biblical motifs that resonate with crucifixion and Resurgence. The plot is significant for its unique feature of his notion of transcendence and the depiction of enlightening experience. This traditional novel effectively communicates representations of the transcendent through images and symbols. The cross associated with the tree symbol is a "cosmic symbol par excellence. It is dualism in nature and the union of opposites and represents spiritual union and the integration of man's soul in the horizontal vertical aspects necessary to a full life, it is the Supreme identity" (Cooper 45). Edward Edinger (1987) observes thus: "Other pairs of opposites that gather around the cross include the lance-bearer and the sponge-bearer and (in some representations of the event) even the sun and moon" (Edinger 99). Patrick White writes thus:

The light shone on the dust of the carpet, of which the pattern had worn away. Weariness was almost bliss. The flowers of the vases were so taut, so tight that only a law of nature was preventing them from flying apart by strength of their own stillness. (415)

These lines of Patrick White are famous and describe his transcendental vision of life. These lines outline the struggles of Stan Parker and his chief tension: "Then more than at any other time, the nostalgia of permanence and the fiend of motion fought inside the boy, right there at the moment when his life was beginning and

ending” (14). The imagery of tree represents the notion of permanence as Stan Parker desired: “In the streets of towns the open windows, on the dusty roads and rooted trees, filled him with the melancholy longing for permanence” (13). The tree is a universal image like the leaves of grass used by Walt Whitman in his *Leaves of Grass*.

The tree is a universal image with several sets of significances. In one of its key roles, it shows the synthesis of heaven, earth, and water. The Cosmic Tree indicates universal manifestation proceeding from unity to diversity and back to unity, the union of heaven and earth. (Cooper 176)

Carl Jung, in his *Collected Works* (1955), also observes that “the alchemists saw the union of opposites under the symbol of the tree” (Jung 109). White has presented tree as a cosmic symbol of creation and regeneration. The tree symbol is the oldest and the most effective symbol found in the history of mankind. “The tree symbol is used as a way of life; the rich symbol which controls the birth and death. The tree symbol represents eternity, man comes and goes but the trees remain bringing peace and bliss to human beings” (Jung 110). The story revolves around ordinary people, commonplace things, and every day events. It seeks to find its truth, not in crisis but in continuity. The novel *The Tree of Man* is a simple novel and a subdued work of White depicting the primary struggles of man's life and the theme of permanence and transcendence. It is an epic story related to human existence. Man takes birth, grows and tries to find meaning in life. Ultimately he dies and is reborn. This circle continues. Vincent Buckley (1964) comments thus:

It is a family saga, a chronicle of life with its rhythmic ebb and flow in flood time and drought, fire and storm, with its seasonal growth from springtime through summer and autumn to the decline of winter and the promise of springtime. (Buckley 426)

Vincent Buckley examined the theme of universality in the novel. He investigated the layers of the images and symbols alluding to the mythical and Biblical episodes connected with the creation of humanity. R.F. Brissenden has pointed out the rhythmic structure of the novel, and H. J. Oliver has talked about its universality:

It suggests admirably that, just as the small shack will become in time part of a home, then of a settlement, and then be all but swallowed up by a metropolis, so man himself will become in time part of a family, then part of a society, and finally be involved in mankind. (Oliver 168)

Simple and Sensuous Style of White

Patrick White has used the simple and sensual style borrowing from William Wordsworth and Leo Tolstoy to depict life's panoramic view. The plot deals with the elemental and universal concerns of man. White deals with the themes of transcendence and universality exploring the mystery of life. The plot is loaded with the images signifying the theme of suffering and redemption. The novel *The Tree of Man* depicts the images of snake, fire, and flood which are highly significant:

Passionate volumes of smoke towered above the bush, and in that smoke dark, indistinguishable bodies, as if something were being

translated forcibly into space. The men of Durilgai straggled along the bush tracks, in groups, discussing other fires, or singly, looking at the ground. The latter were surprised at the details of sand, stones and sticks they saw. They had discovered in the earth an austere beauty that they now loved with a sad love, that comes when it is already too late. The fire causes this inevitably to happen to solitary men. They are reconciled to the lives they are leaving behind, as they ride between the black trees, and the yellow light lowers, and the animals begin to run towards them, instead of away. (164)

Images of Mortality and Immortality: The Cycle of Life and Death

Patrick White uses the images of mortality like "light lowers" and the "black trees" in this novel section to highlight death. Stan had seen a snake, and this primitive symbol represents the mythical cycle of birth and death. J. C. Cooper outlines its significance:

Depicted as a serpent or dragon biting its own tail. My end is my beginning. It symbolizes the Totality, primordial unity. It is the cycle of disintegration and reintegration power that eternally consumes and renews itself; the eternal cycle; cyclic time...It can both support and maintain the world and injects death into life and life into death. (123-4)

Patrick White describes the cyclical movements in the life of Stan Parker. There are images of permanence and change echoing Stan's life's "ending and beginning" (14).

Stan and Amy Parker fail in their understanding of each other, and they drift increasingly apart. Stan's father was a blacksmith, and the image of fire in the novel is highly effective. Stan's mother is "a humourless and rather frightened woman with watery blue eyes. She began reading literature as a protection from the frightening and unpleasant things" (11). Her God is "a pale -blue gentleness" (11). White writes: "She had tried to see her God, in actual feature, but he had not" (11). Stan declares at the outset of the novel that Ned Parker's "God was a fiery God, a gusty God" (11). In her relationship with Stan, Amy is portrayed as a greedy woman, "greedy for bread" and "for his love" (32). Her possessive and objectifying impulses extend to her children, who are "prison of her bones" (62), while Stan sees "a whole tangled ball of mystery in his wife's womb" (54).

Theme of Spiritual Growth

Amy rescues an orphaned boy in the floods, and in this situation, she would "imprison the child by force of love"(97). Stan's spiritual growth lies in his "submerged half" (408), and this changes his life and imparts the transcendental vision. His indifferent attitude results in emotional separation from Amy. She is a weak personality as she fails to rise above her limitations, thereby creating a void in her life. Carolyn argues that "The characters represent two studies of failure; the one illuminating and the other obscuring" (Bliss 52). White observes thus: "She had not succeeded in eating her husband though she had often promised herself in moments of indulgence that she would achieve this at some future date" (127). Amy expects the spiritual growth through Stan after marriage:

She would beg the sad, pale Christ for some sign of recognition... She turned the pages [of the Bible] respectfully. She said or read the words. And she waited for the warmth, the completeness, the safety of religion. But to achieve this, there was something perhaps that she had to do, something that she had not been taught, and in its absence, she would get up, in desperation of activity, as if she might acquire the secret in performing a ritual of household acts, or merely by walking about. Suspecting she might find grace in her hands, suddenly, like a plaster dove. (28)

Amy is rooted in the kitchen and family. She fails to think beyond and is unable to formulate a view of the transcendent. She seeks to “acquire the secret of religion holding in her hands the grace of God like a plaster dove” (89). Her image of God is described thus:

But she did not receive the grace of God, of which it had been spoken under coloured glass. When she was alone, she was alone. Or else there was lightning in the sky that warned her of her transitoriness. The sad Christ was an old man with a beard, who spat death from full cheeks. But the mercy of God was the sound of wheels at the end of market day. And the love of God was a kiss full in the mouth. She was filled with the love of God and would take it for granted until, in its absence, she would remember again. She was so frail. (32)

Amy depends upon Stan in her exploration of spirituality: “I do not know God, Stan will not let me” (429). She blames Stan for her spiritual bankruptcy. David Tracey argues that “the real marriage is between Stan and the Earth Mother ...his true lover

and bride in sacrifice to whom Stan hopes to achieve self-dissolution, which Stan misinterprets as spiritual transcendence” (Tracey 50).

She had begun to hate the wind, and the distance, and the road, because her importance tended to dwindle. Just then, too, the wind took the elbow of a bough and broke it off, and tossed it, dry and black and writhing, so that its bark harrowed the girl's cheek, slapped terror for a moment into the horse, and crumbled, used and negative, in what was already their travelled road. (27)

An interesting scene is depicted when Stan is fully immersed in the physical love of Amy. Both the lovers melt into their love and feel the need of spiritual power to confront the harsh realities of the cruel universe and Nature. White says: “these are moments of closeness and insight, underlined frequently by the impact of external calamities: the man and the woman cling to each other in storm” (44). They “experience a meaningful intimacy of spirit on meeting again after the floods” (86). Ironically these moments are transient and cannot sustain them for a long time. Patrick White highlights their inner predicament thus:

“Well” he said hiding his love, “and what happened? Anybody come?” “Nothing” she said, diffident beneath her hat, and wondering whether she should offer some sign... “What do you expect”, she said, “a steam engine?” Her voice broke the cold stillness too roughly. She stood squeaking the handle of her bucket, a sound of which the air was less shy. She too, was ashamed of her voice. She was ashamed of not being able to say those things that she should. All day long she

had listened to the bell on the cow, the laughing of a bird, the presence of her silent house. Her thoughts had chattered loudly enough, but took refuge now. (35)

Amy and Stan Parker do not openly share their secrets of heart. They experience a threatening void and a sense of emptiness separating them. They long to fill the void and struggle to achieve redemption:

She began to walk away from the cow. She walked through the trees of the piece of land that belonged to them. There was a blurry moon up, pale and watery, in the gently moving branches of the trees. Altogether there was a feeling of flux, of breeze and branch, of cloud and moon. There would be rain perhaps, she felt, in the dim, watery world in which she walked. In which their shack stood, with its unreasonably hopeful window of light. She looked through the window of the man made hut, at her husband lying asleep on a bed. There were the pots standing on the stove. A scam from potatoes falling from the lip of a black pot. She looked at the strong body of the weak man. Her slippers were lying on their sides under a chair. She realized, with a kind of flat, open-mouthed, achieving detachment, that she was looking at her life. It should have been quite simple to break this dream by beating on the window. To say, Look at me Stan. But this is not possible, it seems. So she was forced back from the poignant house, into the world of tree and cloud, that was at present her world, whether she liked it or not. Her feet drifting through the bracken. And this child I am to have, she said. That her body was

making in spite of itself. Even the sex of the unborn child had been decided by someone else. She was powerless. Her skirt drifted against the rough bark of trees. Everything she touched drifted out of her grasp almost once, and she must grow resigned to it. (62-63)

Patrick White employs the imagery of creation and regeneration in this paragraph depicting the inner struggle of Amy and her confusion about the working of universe around her. The moon is described as "blurry", "pale", and "watery", and Amy is walking in a world which is dim and generating a feeling of flux. She drifts helplessly in the world of wonder and romance "with her skirt drifting against the bark of trees" (63). She is in a predicament and feels helpless to break the spell of uncertainty. The imagery of house brings chaos and disorder in the life of Amy. The house is "poignant and the light of the window is unreasonably hopeful" (60). Stan knows that his separation is inevitable and the destiny is throwing dice against him. He longs to escape from turbulent world of Amy. White comments thus:

Stan Parker, who had fallen asleep tired, in a draught, dreamed that he could not lift the lid of that box to show her what he had inside. It does not matter, she said, Stan, I do not want to see. (316)

White gives the image of a locked box; he cannot open the box lid where his real heart is hidden. But Amy is unwilling to look at the box; she doesn't want to see what is hidden. She "fends off his self-revelation with a dishcloth, which becomes a curtain separating them and also separating them from reality and truth" (318). Stan and Amy "began to be kind to each other" (318). They live like strangers showing

impersonal kindness and consideration. Both lead a passionless life of mediocrity, lacking love emerging as two poles of the globe. White observes thus:

Sometimes at night they would wake singly and listen to each other's breathing, and wonder. Then they would fall asleep again, because they were tired, and would not dream. Habit comforted them, like warm drinks and slippers, and even went disguised as love. (342)

White gives a pessimistic conception of life and love. Stan and Amy meet and live close but without understanding each other. The problem with them is that they fail to communicate. Stan Parker was feelingless and he never enjoyed the company of his father and mother. After the death of his mother he leaves the house and the town “so that some people said that young Stan Parker had no feelings, but it was just that he had not known her very well” (9). His friend Ossie Peabody feels thus: "Because he would have liked to talk to Stan, mostly he avoided him” (154). Stan, however, “often thought of things he would have liked to tell Ossie, but Ossie was not there and so he forgot” (155). Stan emerges as a self-contained and self-enclosed person.

Exploration of Self of the Characters

The main motive of White is to excavate the inner turbulent world of Stan Parker and Amy. He penetrates through the layers of trauma to understand the core of reality. There are many frustrated actions of Stan and Amy, who make desperate efforts to resolve the mystery of human relationships. White describes the harmful and destructive aspects of nature and their impact on Stan's mind and sensibility in the initial stages of his spiritual growth. He becomes fear-ridden:

In one place Stan Parker saw, stuck in the fork of a tree, the body of an old, bearded man. But he did not mention this. He rowed...And soon the old man, whose expression had not expected much, dying upside down in a tree, was obliterated by motion and rain. (74)

Amy watches the doors open, realizing that she is on the verge of collapse. The feeling of her disintegration gives her a psychological pain as she remains obsessed “with what could have been her relationship with opportunities left ungrasped and human souls unexplored” (291). Amy remains dissatisfied as life's mysteries remain unresolved. White uses the words "might have", "could have", "if", and "but", depicting the uncertainties and ambiguities of life and existence. He expresses her anxiety thus:

What then, was so disturbing about it all? The young man, whose socks she had mended for a while, would leave the house as was natural. But she might have told him something of herself, any day now, something that nobody else had been told, that she might have told perhaps to the child they had found in the floods, who was that blank sheet of paper which is necessary for which confessions of love, but who had gone while she still fumbled. (237)

Patrick White focuses on the confirmation of life, exploring the truth that alienation of individuals is natural and inevitable. As Madeleine Fisher realizes at the end of the novel saying: “Lives... can only touch, they do not join” (434). The mystery of man's nature isolates him even in the tenderest relationship. The Parkers, despite being “simple” (402), failed to “know” (402) each other. When her son deserted her,

Amy was not surprised, for she knew that "each was his own globe, or world of thought" (246). She resented the mystery of her husband of "some personal experience enclosed in him" (67). The conflict arises from a lack of communication between the husband and wife. And this theme is prevalent in the fiction of White. Marjorie Barnard observes that White shows "each man's life is a mystery" in this novel.

Quest for Permanence

Parker's quest for permanence and his desire to strike roots simply illustrate his life and career. He passes through four distinct stages: innocence, experience, suffering, and reconciliation. The novel has four parts. The first part describes the springtime of Parker's life. They share their integrity and build their home. This section also describes the devastating floods which overwhelm the Parkers and the neighbours. The second section describes summer of their life i.e. the period of quiet happiness and contentment for the Parkers as they live with their two children, Ray and Thelma. This section closes with the fire scene and the war outbreak. The third part delineates the autumn of discontent, "the years of mud and metal" (99) dominated by the years of drought. White presents the infidelity and adulterous sins of Amy, the family's gradual disintegration, and a period of traumatic suffering. The Parkers take a different course and lose themselves in the eddies of life. The last section of the novel deals with the "winter of life" (360). It is a period of solemn "evenings" (365) and a period of understanding and reconciliation. Parker explores the mystery of life and its transcendence. He gives up his pessimism and resigns himself to the scheme of the order of the universe. Stan Parker emerges as a mythical hero, demonstrating

the central thematic quest for permanence and continuity. G.A. Wilkes calls Stan a "mute visionary" (28). When the novel opens, Stan "was a man" (12).

The plot of the novel *The Tree of Man* is full of Biblical images alluding to the themes of universality and permanence. White is concerned with the life and struggles of his mythical hero Stan Parker who seeks redemption at the novel's end. Most critics agree that White depicts the theme of creation and redemption. He opens roads and "rooted trees" (13), and he is filled "with the melancholy longing for permanence" (13) and wishes to explore the distance and yet "stay put" (13). "The nostalgia of permanence and the fiend of motion fought inside the boy" (14). Still, he was never satisfied. His mother decided his fate for him. He made up his mind to settle down "whether for liberation or imprisonment" (15). However, he married Amy and began the journey of life. He felt that his "life as he lived was enough" (34).

Stan feels contented in the early phase of life as he is leading a simple existence: "He loves enormous, smooth tree that he had left standing outside the house he loved" (35). White depicts the adventurous nature of Stan to strike the roots, and his capacity for love. This was, what he was always searching for if he had known it, "nostalgia of permanence" (14). In this countryside, he developed his home and cultivated the land. One day a traveller came who was selling an elixir and Bibles and started talking to them about the beauties of the Gold Coast and the far-off countries he had visited. But Stan remained quiet. He got the first shock of life when his wife Amy suffered her first miscarriage. He experienced loss and psychological anguish. Stan became silent and humbler for failing to comprehend existence's

meaning. He was in a depressing mood because he couldn't communicate with Amy about "some personal experience" (67).

Patrick White has given complete freedom to his hero to grow, develop, and explore the realities of human existence. His father, Ned, was a blacksmith at Willow Creek. His mother wanted her son Stan to be a teacher or a preacher: "You must promise to love God, and never to touch a drop" (11). But Stan enjoys complete freedom as Sartre observes thus in his *Being and Nothingness*:

If human reality is freedom, and human freedom is total, absolute and unlimited then all situations are equivalent in freedom, and there is no reason to change the concrete conditions in which humans live even if they appear terribly oppressive. (Sartre 505)

Stan doesn't become a teacher or a preacher but leads a simple life. He felt a deep sense of failure in his ability to divulge her secrets of life and participated in the fire rescue operations exhibiting his compassion for his fellow beings. The changing moods of his wife bring restlessness in his life, and he finds the communication gap increasing in understanding with Amy. She understands the limitations of Stan's life:

He had driven a mob of skeleton sheep and a mob of chafing, satin cattle, he had sunk a well in solid sugar, and built a house, and killed a pig; he had weighed out the sugar in a country store, and cobbled shoes, and ground knives. But he had not continued to do any of these things for long because he knew that it was not intended. (13)

However, he accepts “her mysteries as she could never respect and accept his” (147). In such a situation, he watches the storm raging in the landscape; his spirit leaps up as he experiences nature's power and mystery. Like William Wordsworth and Robert Frost, he feels that "his new humility, weakness, and acceptance had become virtues...and he was in love with the heaving world, down to the last blade of wet grass" (151). White borrows the ideas of transcendentalism from Walt Whitman, who writes in *Song of Myself* and talks of "corroborating forever the triumph of things." Stan falls in the mud on a rainy day, which marks his life's turning point as he admits: “It was a turning point. My disbelief appeared as far farcical as my fall. At that moment I was truly humbled” (144). This celebration of the earth, of "the rightness" (151) of the world, leads him to new mysticism. He feels that nature is the manifestation of God as he experiences an awareness of "a motion and a spirit" in true Wordsworth's language contained in his poem *The Tintern Abbey*. Stan is entirely committed to the land, his growth reflecting the earth's rhythms.

White reflects the early part of Stan's life in clear Wordsworth's language: "the best portions of a good man's life". Stan's heroic powers erupt in the fire at Glastonbury. His dormant romanticism comes to the surface when he comes under the spell of the beauty of a girl Madeleine: “All that he had never done, all that he had never seen, appeared to be contained in this house” (176). His simple and straight life took a decisive turn as it tasted moments of madness like anyone" (179). Stan becomes inarticulate as he is aware that nothing could be “effected by human intervention” (210). The terrifying war experiences revealed to him the effects of

mass killing, barbarity, and suffering of the soldiers. The image of death and the apathy of the people is expressed thus by White:

People did not care, as they shaded their feeble eyes or mopped their greasy skins. They just did not care, that is, in the early, passive stages. Later on, when the fires broke out, and got out of control, and scorched along the gullies, and arrived in the fowl yards, and entered windows, so that the limp curtains were a pair of demonic flames, then the people woke up at last and realized that they did not want to die. (157)

He explores the nature of life and death and the play of the eternal cycle of life and death: "his eyes were lost in hopefulness" (212). The death and devastation of War mystify Stan, but interestingly, war destruction brought him no despair but instead fostered optimistic hope in him. He started thinking about the destruction of nature, storms and floods, and war killings as part of the inevitable cycle of life. He delves beneath the mystery of all experiences to "see and explore" (213). White gives the imagery of stagnation to describe the inner turbulent world of Stan Parker:

There were many dead things in the landscape-the grey skeletons of trees, an old weak cow that had stuck in the mud and did not rise again, lizards that life had left belly upwards. It seemed at times during that summer that everything would die. (157)

Stan feels the permanence of everything in life, and he is confident that "only he could prove it" (213). Stan is continuously growing restless because of the loss of

communication. He couldn't reach a meaningful rapport with his son and daughter and share his perceptions even with his wife. His relationships with his wayward son are not cordial despite his efforts for redressal. He reflected thus: "it is too early to say who is good" (276). In this situation, the land was closer to him than his children. Over time the mysteries of life and nature are revealed to him. Amy's infidelity shatters Stan, and his son's delinquency intensifies his anguish. He declares: "I try to find the answers, but I have not succeeded yet" (31). He becomes a wounded soul burdened with despair and psychological anguish. But he still hopes for the "simplicity of true love and goodness" (150). He dreams that Amy is dead and his universe is uncertain without God. In the milk bar of Con, he reflects on his troubled life, and the warmth and wholeness of the Greek family and this comparison disturbs his wounded psyche.

Stan feels like a lonely island cut off from his family. He is in the grip of tensions, anxiety and disorder. Torn between two extremes "he couldn't understand the disturbing forces of chaos and disorder being simpler" (402). His disenchantment ultimately leads him to explore the real meaning of life and permanence. He discovers a struggle brewing inside and outside, and as his understanding grows, he learns that sufferings chasten the spirit of man. David Tracey observes: "The Tree of Life is an expression of the inner unconscious drama of the soul, an inner drama which is mirrored in the events of the nature" (34). As the plot progresses, Stan acquires insight and depth and develops the mystic attitude of William Wordsworth and Robert Frost. He neither condemns nor scorns but returns home; the fears and doubts recede, and he enters a new phase of life. He begins to understand humanity

better. Geoffrey Dutton observes, "*The Tree of Man* is not a novel about the land but about human relationships, their chance illuminations, and their long darkness" (30). Stan goes to the theatre, and his experience of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* on stage accelerates his inner turmoil. The likeness of the two situations troubles him. White writes thus:

the half-submerged world became familiar as his own thoughts. He remembered things he had never told, and forgotten. He remembered the face of his mother before the burial, when the skull disclosed what the eyes had always hidden, some fear that the solidity of things around her was assured. But in the dissolved world of flowing water, under the drifting trees, it was obvious that solidity is not. (73)

He began to ponder over his alienation and dilemma, expressing his need for a Horatio to lessen his traumatic sufferings. The infidelity of Amy Parker haunts him. He is troubled that "the play of his life is over" (406) and both he and his wife Amy "had survived, and were surviving" (399). He learns that failure in life is necessary for insight. He goes to the Church in his state of trauma, but he fails to get the awareness of transcendental truth at this stage. He observes thus: "It is not natural that emptiness shall prevail, it will eventually fill, whether with water or children or dust, or spirit" (407). His continued existence comforted him, and he began to view life as a gift of God. It seems the book of knowledge opened before him as he contemplated: "what I intended of me and for me" (407). He recoups from the shock of life, and there is a gradual transformation of physical strength. For the first time, he becomes whole, complete, and integrated. Stan's understanding of life reflects the

teachings of Zen Buddhism, which teaches not to negate but to live and enjoy the glories and grandeur of love, life, and nature.

Stan Parker emerges like an actor in the cosmic drama rising from his soul's discord and agitation. He explores the mystery of human sufferings and concludes that they are deep and vast. He struggles to retain his wholeness against the flux of things, and his life becomes a symbol of devotion to earth. Amy Parker also remains confused and bewildered as she fails to understand the mystery of human relationships. She fails to establish a genuine connection with Mrs. O'Dowd and Doll Quigley. White comments thus:

Young Mrs. Parker would have liked to offer her friend words of love and assurance, but she was prevented. And they were being washed farther apart. The waters were lapping at the spokes of the wheels.

The two women began to accept the distance. (81)

Lack of communication becomes a major cause of their estrangement from their children. Amy tries to possess her son and fails. The parents also feel the gravity of emptiness. Stan asks a touching question: "Who has got what?"(357) in reply to his wife's nagging doubt about Thelma. Both experience the void and suffer anguish. They feel disconnected from children. The death of her son is indeed poignant and heartrending:

So she was still sitting, an old and heavy woman with her legs apart, when Stan came in, and from her distance, she saw that he had suffered and that she would not be able to help.

"What else are we intended to do if we have failed in this?" asked the old man, who had been creased by his journey.

His skull was hollow-looking.

"It is so late," he said.

Then she stirred, and shivered, choosing stupidity.

"There will be a frost," she said deliberately.

"And I have not attended to the fire."

"At your age," he pursued. "With nothing to show". (465)

Amy's psychological trauma is expressionless after the death of her son. She feels virtually ruined by the loss of her son. She cries, giving vent to her agony thus: "When we lay ourselves said his wife, forcing back her unhappiness into her mouth. The mysteries are not for us, Stan, Stan, Stan?"(464). Both of them look lonely and perplexed. Stan admits his failure in life, facing and enduring his tragedy, but Amy is unwilling to resign to fate. She was a "weak woman who had failed in everything in life and always prayed for strength" (465).

Amy is a tragic figure like Myra of *Riders to the Sea*, whose growth White distinctly describes as development. Her frustrations, dreams, and passionate nature strike against the solid background of her husband and home. She is neither good nor evil but very alive to her changes as per Stan's mood. Stan and Amy sit in the garden after her son's death, the centre of the "cold and golden bowl of winter" (474). Stan observes "the grave moments of life" (474). Giuseppe Tucci (1961) reiterates thus:

Man places in the centre of himself the recondite principles of life, the divine seed, the mysterious essence. He has the vague intuition of a light that burns within him and which spreads out and is diffused. In this light, his whole personality is concentrated and it develops around that light. (26)

Despite the odds of life, Stan continues to put faith in God as he believes that "God resided in the minutest, humblest part of being" (476). He reaches the ultimate step of growth; he believes in the pureness of the existence of being. Stan believes that the sufferings of man are transient, and his positive attitude continues developing. He acquires an awareness of God's immanence in the natural world. It is clear to him that "One, and no other figure, is the answer to all sums" (477). He seriously contemplates the questions of creation, redemption, and faith: his final awareness of the joy and the thrill of life as he says:

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. (477)

Stan ponders over the triumphant expression of life's creative force and the natural world's hidden mystery. Patrick White uses the elemental symbols of fire, rose, music, and fish suggesting fundamental values and richness of life. Stan is aware that "he was a prisoner in his human mind" (49). Amy, too, "accepts her isolation" (318) and longs for some event to fill up "the house's emptiness" (318). The house she lives in also "stands alone" (109). The novel's atmosphere is of mythic proportions as

White writes: "there in the scarred bush, that had not yet accepted its changed face, the man soon began to build a house, or shack" (16). Amy is not satisfied with the working of nature as she says: "There is such nastiness in the evolution of a synthetic soul" (386).

Thomas Hardy was upset when he saw urban England. He was pained to see the destruction of the countryside. Patrick White also depicts the loss of the virgin land of Stan Parker with the emergence of the urban culture in Sydney. Their houses have become tombs, and the people are spiritually dead. White has depicted the scenes of materialism and mass-produced ugliness as he writes:

Then those people would retire into the brick tombs which they had built to contain their dead lives, and tune into the morning radio sessions, and as they stood on the floral carpet, in a blaze of veneer, would wonder what simple harmonies had eluded them. (479)

White observes that Stan is "enclosed in the circle of its light" (10). This image of centrality recurs in the novel. There is now "a unity of eyes and firelight" (10). The image is suggestive of divinity. With the developing awareness of death, Stan continues to seek evidence of God. He struggles to achieve true permanence "taking the form of a communion of soul and scene" (397).

To conclude, Patrick White's novel *The Tree of Man* accurately represents the quest for the meaning of life of the characters. The novel is a journey from physical to metaphysical. We find the presence of the transcendent God in the course of the novel's plot. Problems are the sign of life. Stan Parker has to undergo so many tribulations in life, but his face is radiant at the end of the novel. The plot is

straightforward and vivid, and the hero's spiritual growth is the novel's conspicuous feature. It may be called a religious novel because it deals with the metaphysical and transcendental issues of life. The concluding lines of the novel assert the continuity of life when Stan utters: "So that, in the end, there was no end" (480). Jung observes thus:

the symbol of the cosmic tree rooted in this world and growing up to heaven-the tree that is also man. In the history of symbols this tree is described as the way of life itself, a growing into that which eternally is and does not change; which springs from the union of opposites and by its eternal presence, also makes that union possible. (110)

Patrick White's *Voss* (1957) and *A Fringe of Leaves* (1976) deal with the theme of nihilism to redemption. White discards the attitude of nihilism and pessimism, evoking the spirit of transcendentalism of Emerson. White firmly believes that the primary function of art is not entertainment but to inspire the readers to seek the meaning of life. He says: "Art is a kind of innate drive that seizes the human being and makes him its instrument...It is something necessary for him to sacrifice happiness and everything that makes life worth living for the ordinary human being" (291). His vision is closely akin to the metaphysical ideas of searching for spiritual yearning and achieving the psychic potential of the human spirit. Voss and Laura are two poles, one living in Sydney and the other exploring the mystery of the universe. Voss dies, and Laura retires from the world and becomes a schoolmistress. The death of Voss stands for man's quest for the spiritual meaning of life. White depicts the end of Voss in transcendental and mystical dimensions thus:

Voss did not die...He is there still, it is said, in the country, and always will be. His legend will be written down, eventually, by those who have been troubled by it. Come, come. If we are not certain of the facts, how is it possible to give the answers? ‘The air will tell us’, Miss Trevelyan said. (442)

The plot of the novel is about the struggle; about the trials and tribulations of Voss who was a German explorer. Walsh (1977) noticed that the “story consists of three movements, the preparation for the expedition, the journey in 1845 across the continent itself, and the aftermath which consists of a second minor expedition to investigate the calamity of the original exploration and what follows from it” (43). White has used the deadly imagery of bones to intensify the atmosphere of terror and the hollowness of life in imitation of the Theatre of Absurd and the novels of Kafka. The landscape depicted in the novel is crowded with animals, birds, and insects intensifying the death and darkness of life. Interestingly like *Volpone* of Ben Jonson, each insect has an association with a particular character. The death of Voss is thus evoking the imagery of regeneration and transcendence:

As for the head-thing, it knocked against a few stones, and lay like any melon.... His dreams fled into the air, his blood ran out upon the dry earth, which drank it up immediately. (419)

There is sublimation even in the death of Voss as his life is a long and inspiring journey that is meaningful and spiritual.

White’s novel *A Fringe of Leaves* (1976) is also based on the theme of voyage and exploration of life through the experiences of pain and human sufferings.

The plot of the novel deals with dual journeys leading to spiritual enlightenment. The journey of the heroine is extremely risky and dangerous but at the same time the journey leads to moral and spiritual growth of the heroine. Ellen Roxburgh comes in contact with the prisoner Jack Chance who plays a vital role in her life to confront the existential challenges. When Roxburghs come back from Australia; “the husband is returning to meet his brother Garnet; the wife returning from the adopted nature to her original one; the convict returning to the place he escaped from, and life itself returning to the sources” (119). Walsh (1977) considered this novel as one of the most satisfying achievements in White’s career. The novel explores the quest of an individual who experiences physical and psychological anguish in his quest for identity and individuality. Ellen is liberated as White remarks:

Her torn hands were left clawing at the air. “Jack! Don’t leave me! I’d never survive! I’ll not cross this field let alone face the faces” But she did. She plodded gravely across the rows of tended plants as though they had been put there, cool and sappy, for the comfort of her feet.
(333)

There is consistent and remarkable transformation and spiritual growth in the life of Mrs. Ellen Roxburgh. She is the only character in the novel who achieves sublimation and redemption at the end of the novel. She explores the truth of life and the real meaning of human existence: She realizes that “Life is a series of blunders rather than any clear design, from which we may come out whole if we are lucky” (392). Mrs. Roxburgh shuns her depression and does achieve redemption at the end of the journey of her life. She is happy: “Yes I am glad, of course...for my return to

the world. I have been so long out of it, I may not easily learn myself to its ways” (392). White seeks inspiration from the Romantic poets and the transcendental philosophers describing the mysticism expressed by William Wordsworth and Thoreau. Nature is a moral metaphysical force in this novel. Nature is depicted as an image of God and man has the option to explore the transcendental depths of the universe through Nature. White believes that the destruction of self is essential to achieve sublimation. Hence the protagonist embarks on the dissolution of self to gain transcendental vision

White's *Riders in the Chariot* (1961) is mystical, philosophical, and historical, dealing with the theme of spirituality and religious faith. The theme of suffering and redemption dominates the plot as White discards the ideas of nihilism and pessimism. The Christian imagery and symbolism intensify the theme of man's quest for the real meaning of life and salvation. The protagonist Himmelfarb is called Messiah by his wife Reha and the disabled dyer though many people do not reckon him. White has faithfully re-enacted the scene of the crucifixion. His tortured body symbolizes the spirit of sacrifice and the ritual of salvation. He is the Christ for the Judas. Mrs. Godbold and Miss Hare mourn him. Judas betrays him but afterwards hangs himself.

Ironically, Himmelfarb doesn't emerge as the Savior of the Jews and humanity at the novel's end. Ultimately, he saves himself: "Very quietly Himmelfarb left the factory in which it had not been accorded to him to expiate the sins of the world” (469). In real terms, it is the modern story of an individual trapped in the rut of life, grappling with the absurdity of existence. There is a lack of heroism and

depth and significance as White is interested only in portraying an individual's trials and suffering and eventual understanding of truth and spiritual enlightenment. He seeks redemption of life through sufferings as Theodora seeks redemption through her insanity and Voss through his ritual of beheading.

White has traced the growth and development of Himmelfarb, describing his early life, his relationship with his parents and friends and the Holocaust incident. Colin Wilson observes that the outsider is the man who stands alone as an outcast in society. Himmelfarb is an outsider in society like Mrs. Godbold and Miss Hare. They are not allowed to make intellectual and economic achievements. This attitude is the leading cause of their depression and frustration. Since they are Jews, their sufferings are pre-ordained. The locals hate them, and they have to live in isolation. They are devoid of human rights, and their venture to seek salvation and spiritual enlightenment is the novel's central theme. All four major characters of the novel are outsiders and society denies them the opportunity to grow and progress. Interestingly they join together to fight oppressive forces. They explore each other's mysteries and join together to achieve a way out to overcome suffering and seek redemption. Himmelfarb is capable of giving a new direction to the Jews. His role is conspicuous and significant as he ventures to seek salvation.

To sum up, all the selected novels such as *Happy Valley* (1939), *The Living and the Dead* (1941), *The Aunt's Story* (1948), *The Tree of Man* (1955), *Voss* (1957), *Riders in the Chariot* (1961) and *A Fringe of Leaves* (1976) depict the theme of nihilism to redemption. Patrick White is a serious novelist who attempted to explore the meaning of life. His message is to embrace every moment of life with a positive

outlook. Absurdities are bound to happen, but if we tackle them bravely and sagaciously, they become blessings in disguise. Accordingly, all his characters in these novels confront existential realities and are capable of turning their tragedies into triumphs. They make the right choice to make their life more worthwhile and purposeful, leading from nihilism to redemption.

Chapter: Five

Transcendental Revelation

In this chapter the transcendental vision of Patrick White is explored. It is observed that Patrick White has exhibited an exceptional obsession with his quest for reality and the meaning of life in the light of his transcendental vision. The chapter explores the impact of Kant and Emerson's theories of transcendentalism on his mind and sensibility. White represents the concept of transcendence in all his major novels. A conspicuous feature of *Happy Valley*, *The Tree of Man*, *Voss*, *The Aunt's Story*, *Riders in the Chariot*, *A Fringe of Leaves* and *The Living and the Dead* is the pattern of imagery deployed in these novels. White's imagery is a crucial mode of expression in his work, as the imagery and the structure of the symbols in his plots articulate his transcendental vision. His metaphysics shares Christianity's essential characteristics and the traits of various religious theories that brought about social and spiritual revolution in the world. White's main focus is to explore the nature of transcendental reality and its impact on the life of the people. David Tracey opines that "White's conception of transcendence is consistently challenged by the archetypal significance of the images he employs, which point to a contrary process of psycho-spiritual regression in his protagonists (21).

Imagery of Faith, Love and Hope

White's imagery has biblical resonances and archetypal interpretations. The imagery is highly allusive, suggesting traditional symbolic values. The images reflect a notion of transcendence as the trials and tribulations of the characters bring transcendental

revelation. There is a dilemma in his mind that he reproduced in his novels. The novels explore the Christian ideas of "faith" and "God" but the dichotomy is evident in the plots of his novels. White explains the purpose of his writing thus:

Every possible aspect of life through the lives of an ordinary man and woman. But at the same time to discover the extraordinary behind the ordinary, the mystery and the poetry which alone could make bearable the lives of such people and incidentally my own life since my return.
(118)

White's novel *Riders in the Chariot* (1961) got Patrick White the prestigious Miles Franklin Award. The novel's central theme is searching for divine knowledge and the ultimate perfection of existence. He explores man's relations with a society that influences man's life, but the undercurrent is spiritual and metaphysical. The Chariot is a recurring symbol in the novel. It is a symbol of transcendence shared by all four characters. The characters yearn to explore the mystery of the divine truth as the symbol refers to the Prophet Ezekiel's Chariot. The characters have a clear vision and spiritual understanding of existence. Each character struggles to seek relationship with the divinity. James McAuley (1962) argues that "there is no doctrine of redemption advanced or implied, but the resolution of the book is enigmatic and ambiguous" (61).

Chariot as the Symbol of Revelation

The Chariot stands for the "Chariot of Revelation". This symbol recurs in the plot. Himmelfarb is burdened with the divine mission to redeem the people trapped in the abyss of darkness. He discusses this issue with his wife Reha, "who seeks an answer

and with Miss Hare, whom he asks: Will you not admit the possibility of redemption?" (173). White argues that riders are those whom God will save, and Himmelfarb is anxious to know the power of God. White uses the metaphor of 'saved' frequently. Miss Hare asks, "Oh! Dear, what will save us?" (3). Peter Beatson (1976) observes that "most of the characters of White find themselves actually or potentially inflicting suffering on others" (36).

Happy Valley (1939) is a seminal novel by White depicting the characters' journey from nihilism to revelation. He believes in the individual's liberty and insists on his rationality to gain spiritual transcendence. Ironically, Man stands away from God. Mrs. Everett suffers in her life journey, but she seeks transcendental revelation as her journey progresses. Mrs. Everett has a wilting "geranium face and, like a dead and desiccated plant, she twittered in a dead wind" (37). Later, "the dead wind and the metaphor of a wind of hate control the movement of the plot" (7). Patrick White employs the images of death and decay like the dead corpses of flies in *Happy Valley* to depict the tragic experiences of the characters.

The novel examines the alienation of the characters and their struggle for redemption in life. No doubt, the landscape is depressing and stifling, but their struggle to escape from the stifling environment is motivational. Majority of people inhabiting this valley are failures in their attempts to settle in Happy Valley. They struggle to escape but feel trapped in the destructive atmosphere of the Happy Valley. Consequently, they are dissatisfied with their lives. In order to illustrate the state of mind of the characters living in Happy Valley, the author uses the landscape in a symbolic way. The inhabitants of this valley fail to come to terms with it. As such, the valley is depicted as harsh and inhospitable.

Oliver Halliday and Alys Browne are willing prisoners of the hostile environment and submit to their fate. Hilda Halliday is waiting for the letter which would help the Halliday family to escape from Happy Valley and to migrate to Queensland. Her wish is fulfilled in the end, bringing a ray of hope into their life. Her son, Rodney too is anxious to leave Happy Valley to escape from the brutal tortures of school mates. Alys is doomed to wait only like the characters of Beckett:

Nowadays she always seemed to be on her way between two points, or waiting, she waited much more than in the past, though now with a sense of fulfilment in waiting, as if it were some end in itself. (131)

Journey from Nihilism to Transcendentalism

Patrick White evokes the sentiments of Beckett's drama *Waiting for Godot* expressing modern man's existential dilemma as he writes: "Waiting, waiting, waiting for what ...waiting in the dark" (263). White is conscious of the futility of life and the reality of human suffering, but simultaneously, he explores the real meaning and the real solutions to life's dilemmas. His characters seek spiritual progress through the ordeal of suffering. Everyone in the novel suffers. Hilda Halliday suffers from the psychological ailments due to infidelity of her husband. Her nervous breakdown is caused by tuberculosis. Her awareness of Oliver's infidelity results into her emotional breakdowns. Margaret Quong, the part-Chinese girl in *Happy Valley*, is persecuted and psychologically molested by children. She suffers from being married to a Chinese. Ethel Quong's sufferings begin when she marries to a Chinese. The disdain of the young girl caused unrest in the mind of Chuffy Chambers. Sexual frustration grips the psyche of Vic Moriarty. The

inferiority complex gives psychological pain to Clem Hagan. Boredom, anxiety and disorder bring depression and frustration in the life of Sidney Furlow. White writes: “It made you cry, having nothing to do, or read a book” (84).

To conclude, the novel *Happy Valley* abounds with the images of life's defeat, failure and futility. The characters are free to act and bring transformation to their lives. The beauty lies in their struggle to confront the forces of chaos and disorder operating in the world of Happy Valley. It is an experimental novel. White wrote *The Living and the Dead* (1941) to depict the value of life and the struggles to exist in a harsh environment.

Metaphors of Living and Dead

The plot of the novel *The Living and the Dead* hinges upon the significant metaphors of ‘living’ and ‘dead’. These are two crucial and inescapable poles of life. White focuses on the themes of suffering and alienation. The protagonists strive to gain meaningful patterns of life. White himself described the need for spiritual salvation when he wrote:

Demobilization in England left me with the alternative of remaining in what I felt to be an actual and spiritual graveyard, with the prospect of ceasing to be an artist and turning into the most sterile of beings, a London intellectual, or of returning home, to the stimulus of time remembered. (White 38)

The novel begins with the ending as White employs the flashback technique. The writer introduces Elyot Standish in the novel's early pages who lives in Ebury Street

in London. The story concludes with his moral awareness and understanding of the problems of existence. He goes to the railway station and then comes back to his Ebury Street home. By chance he watches a drunken man in a critical situation. But he doesn't act at all. Elyot could save the life of a man from death but he remained inactive like Hamlet:

I must do this, his mind shouted, tossed out into the screaming of bus.
The lights spun. The whole neighbourhood moved. Except his feet. He was anchored where he stood. He was the audience to a piece of distant pantomime. (14)

The drunken man is killed. Elyot Standish goes home. The incident forms the core of the plot. This minor episode reflects Elyot's inertia and inability to act. He emerges both as "an observer and an audience; life to him is a piece of distant pantomime" (14). The metaphors of distance and detachment control all the episodes of the novel. Patrick White traces the development of Elyot who is acutely conscious of his isolation. He discloses the secret of his father's death and his role in the life of his father. "He had no part in this crying. He could not cry. He had no part in anything. It frightened him a little. And he stood a long way off and watched. He began to develop a perpetual frown" (106). Mrs. Standish comments thus: "He chose distance even as a child" (246). He remains cut off from the active life. White employs the phrases such as "no part" and "standing a long way off" depicting his "inertia" (111). His withdrawal from active life is his main problem. He is aware of his emotional deprivation as he is the victim of acute frustration. White observes thus:

He hated his own voice in the fog, an echo of Gerald Blenkinsop. They were drifting apart in the fog, saying goodbye, it was doubtful if they would meet again. You were always dismissing people. (204)

Elyot is conscious of his inner weakness. He loves loneliness and wishes to seek detachment: "It was a remoteness once alarming, then inevitably accepted" (13). Elyot lived in isolation from his very childhood. He is in the habit of remaining detached. He is conscious of his life's emotional bankruptcy, and this splendid isolation is the leading cause of his suffering. Says Thoreau in his *Walden Pond*:

We must learn to reawaken and keep ourselves awake, not by mechanical aids, but by an infinite expectation of the dawn, which does not forsake us in our soundest sleep. I know of no more encouraging fact than the unquestionable ability of man to elevate his life by a conscious endeavour...Every man is tasked to make his life, even in its details, worthy of the contemplation of his most elevated and critical hour. (54)

White employs the technique of stream of consciousness to depict the psychological pressures on Elyot's mind and his unfulfilled hopes and desires. He has a unique quality of gauging the limitations and frustrations of human beings. Elyot regrets his failure to communicate not only with men but women also. His sexual relationship with women is distressing. He has the feeling of emotional bankruptcy as he withdraws from active life. Elyot is not even thick with his mother as he loves to avoid her. White employs the images of inertia depicting Elyot "sitting in untidy silences" (132). Elyot emerges as "a damper: the shadow that fell" (132).

Elyot was a shadow that fell across the substance of her friends, the men who brought her presents, who filled her drawing-room with conversation and cigar smoke. Elyot standing sideways. His manner was perpetually sideways. Smoothing his hair, she could sense his withdrawal. (132)

Elyot and his sister, Eden belong to two different worlds. They are poles apart representing “the living and the dead” (132). Eden is an abnormal personality leading a strange and detached life. She is cut off from the social activities. She lacks the strength of character and the courage to confront the harsh realities. She has no warmth and she has no regard for the passions and sentiments of others. She is dry and a bore failing to excite interest in others. Eden’s first sexual adventure proves counter-productive as she is unresponsive and detached: “This then was sex, the ruffled bed, the sense of aching nausea, the dead weight” (147). White has depicted various causes of her frustration. Her first abortion leads to her nervous breakdown. She falls in love with Joe Barnett who dies in the Civil War, Eden goes there to participate in the war, transforming her into a living character. To conclude, women characters of White are depressed and frustrated but continue their journey of life in their quest for moral and spiritual resurrection. They fight against the forces of chaos and disorder and emerge as extraordinary heroines of White.

Theodora Goodman’s Spiritual Quest and Revelation

The Aunt’s Story is a study of the protagonist’s spiritual life, blending the present and past, illusion and reality, sanity and insanity. It focuses on White’s quest for truth in relation to the mystery of life. It is an exploration of Theodora’s life in the context of

the theme of transcendentalism and its significance in life. The body is perishable but the spirit of man is eternal. Thoreau went to the Walden Pond to search for the metaphysical and transcendental values in life. For Theodora, the landscape of Meroe is the Walden Pond to explore the hidden mysteries and the transcendental realities. The landscape gives her unique sensation like Walt Whitman, who recognises grass as the manifestation of the Holy Spirit. Like Wordsworth, Theodora is in communion with the landscape and feels the bliss of life at the turbulent period. She goes to the landscape for peace by walking in the paddocks or floating in the brown waters. Emerson describes at the beginning of Chapter I on *Nature* that it is “true solitude as going out into nature and leaving behind all preoccupying activities as well as society. When a man gazes at the stars, he becomes aware of his own separateness from the material world” (8). He continues that the stars were meant to allow him realize the “perpetual presence of the sublime”. Being visible every night, they demonstrate that God is ever-present.

Away from Meroe landscape, Theodora is a non-entity as if a thing broken off from the parent plant and removed to a place that cannot sustain it. Naturally, she withers and dies without producing either a simple root or leaf. In this way, Theodora, becomes a divine figure who had explored the deep mysteries of life and existence and Soul. She has always been part of Meroe and never existed as a separate entity. Her quest for a unity in things is, therefore, a search for something that already existed in herself. She makes it her mission to connect herself with reality, the reality of universal wholeness. For that she goes beyond the boundaries of reality itself because the only reality for her is Meroe landscape. At

Meroe landscape, she experienced reality in an intense but intuitive and transcendental way. As such, her attachment to her home will be analysed as a spiritual progression towards unity with nature and the divine. In *Nature*, Emerson observes thus:

Nature offers perpetual youth and joy, and counteracts whatever misfortune befalls an individual. The visionary man may lose himself in it, may become a receptive “transparent eyeball” through which the “Universal Being” transmits itself into his consciousness and makes him sense his oneness with God. In nature, which is also a part of God, man finds qualities parallel to his own. There is a special relationship, a sympathy, between man and nature. (12)

The Aunt's Story of White is a memorable novel presenting Theodora Goodman as its protagonist. She seeks transcendental revelation and explores the patterns of the true meaning of life in her life journey. The plot is a psychological study. White presents the heroine's gradual development: her withdrawal from life, her madness, and the consequential revelation. He explores the inside of the heroine and her struggle to gain metaphysical awareness and enlightenment. Theodora arouses the readers' sympathy due to her daringly fighting against the world's forces. She gains insight and understanding at the end of her life journey. Her insanity is the main cause of her loss of self bringing her traumatic isolation. She achieves serenity in her frenzy and gains moral and spiritual awareness. Theodora is a great heroine of White who achieves her salvation in the oppressive and cruel environment of the modern world.

Marjorie Barnard observes thus:

At last, she accepts quite simply the dictum of society that she is mad. Always she has asked less and less in the faint hope that she might be allowed that modicum. Always it is denied to her. The world is arraigned, not Theodora. (Barnard 54)

Patrick White dramatizes the spiritual journey of Theodora's life. The external forces compel her to seek salvation in madness. She thinks of her mother, Mrs. Goodman, "whose hands were small and bright with rings, but hard as a diamond" (67). White associates her with jeweller and the images of the ring, garnet and other jewels recur throughout the plot in connection with Mrs. Goodman. A similar picture stands for Una Russell, who liked "to arrange things, the ornaments in cabinets, or on little tables in the drawing room, then to sit and watch what she had done" (26). The novel's plot sheds light on White's spiritual quest and a mystical-mythical vision. In a nutshell, *The Aunt's Story* (1948) presents visionary characters giving message of spiritual powers to the world. Theodora is attached to the landscape both physically and psychologically. She is capable of extracting spiritual sustenance from it, recognizing the truth within, that is intrinsic to it. This knowledge comes to her not through intellect but through intuition and transcendental awakening. Says Emerson: "The Over-Soul is not an autonomous entity detached from the world, but as effective in this as it is in the human mind. Man can participate directly in the divine both through observation of nature and introspection" (9).

Faith in the Growth and Continuity of Life

The novel *The Tree of Man* depicts the story of growth and continuity of life on the pattern of transcendentalism. The main focus of White is on themes of suffering and

redemption and transcendental revelation. The novel's plot revolves around ordinary people and commonplace events and situations daily found in man's life. The symbolic pattern of the tree and the objects of nature form the main structure of the novel. The plot has epical dimensions dealing with life, birth, death and redemption. The plot unfolds the spiritual journey of Stan who struggles to explore the mystery of life and death: "So that in the end there were the trees...So that, in the end, there was no end" (480). Following the four seasons, the book has four parts corresponding to the seasons in Stan and Amy Parker's lives.

The plot unfolds a family tale where the members fail to communicate with each other and suffer due to alienation and spiritual deprivation. Stan and Amy Parker represent humanity. As they fail to understand each other and grow old, their hopes and attempts at communication become problematic. They live in their own shells. Thelma depicts the nature of their alienation thus: "Just the business of two people discovering each other by degrees and not discovering enough, as they live together" (344). Stan and Amy are immersed into one body in the early part of life. They feel a great need for each other as they want to launch a crusade against the forces of Nature. White points out that "there are moments of closeness and insight, underlined frequently by the impact of external calamities; the man and the woman cling to each other in the storm" (44). They "experience a meaningful intimacy of spirit on meeting again after the floods. But, these moments are rare and transitory, unexpressed, they quickly lose substance" (86). Amy and Stan love to conceal their passions and sentiments in their game to outwit others. They sense a void and become aware of metaphysical despair. They fail to fill their void as they become poles apart with the passage of time. Amy reckons it thus:

She began to walk away from the cow. She walked through the trees of the piece of land that belonged to them. There was a blurry moon up, pale and watery, in the gently moving branches of the trees. Altogether there was a feeling of flux, and breeze of branch, of cloud and moon. There would be rain perhaps, she felt, in the dim watery world in which she walked. (60)

White employs the images of "blurry", "pale", "watery", "dim", and "darkness" to depict the void of Amy and Stan. They live in a world of trees and clouds, producing "a feeling of flux" (60). Amy "appears to be drifting helplessly in this dreamy world: her feet are drifting through the bracken"(60). Her "skirt has drifted against the bark of trees; all that touches has drifted out of her grasp" (60). She fails to get peace and rest as she longs for the redemption of life. She is engrossed in watching pans and pots, and their life is passionless. They live with a void in their life:

Sometimes at night, they would wake singly and listen to each other's breathing, and wonder. Then they would fall asleep again, because they were tired, and would not dream. Habit comforted them, like warm drinks and slippers, and even went disguised as love. (342)

White has depicted the struggles of Stan and Amy in the novel. They suffer but do not lose faith in Nature, God and Religion. They gain moral and spiritual awareness at the end of the book. Their consciousness of a void ultimately leads them to get spiritual redemption as they explore meaning in life.

Exploration of the Mystery of Life

White's *Voss* is a novel meant to explore the mysteries of life. Voss knows that it is essential to destroy the self to achieve moral and spiritual strength in life. He says: "To make yourself, it is also necessary to destroy yourself" (38). The main focus of the plot is humility based on Christian ethics. Voss and Laura desperately struggle to gain humility and spiritual awareness. Voss is a determined character who fights against the harsh forces like a Greek hero. His sufferings are in the tradition of Greek tragedies. Only Laura understands his defeat, desperation and struggle to understand the meaning of existence and the role of destiny in his life. Mrs. Sanderson thinks: "He is a handsome man, of a kind...and, I do believe, asking to be saved" (161). But his real self is pervert; he is aggressive, arrogant, vain and pervert. Being conscious of his destiny, Voss writes to Laura: "The gifts of destiny cannot be returned. That which I am intended to fulfil, must be fulfilled" (163). He is a fighter and castigates failure seriously. He expresses his dogged determination thus: "Ah! The humility, the humility; this is what I find so particularly loathsome" (96). He proposes to Laura for marriage, and Laura responds thus:

Only on this level, let it be understood, that we may pray together for salvation, shall you ask my Uncle to accept your intentions, that is, if you still intend? (199)

Voss is aware of his fate and firmly believes that he can achieve salvation and redemption only through Laura. Like Shakespeare's Hamlet, Voss is in the dilemma of "to be or not to be". He is an explorer but a restless character. Laura stands for his submerged conscience, and Voss confesses his tragic situation as he writes to Laura:

You have inspired some degree of that humility which you so admire and in me have wished for. If I cannot admire this quality in other men, or consider it except as weakness in myself, I am yet accepting it for your sake. (230)

Voss continues to express his agony as his relationship with Laura develops. Laura goes on admonishing and inspiring him to comprehend the existential reality. White has depicted the inner struggles confronted by Voss and Laura in a sympathetic and lyrical language. Laura urges him to follow the path of truth and accept the more fantastic plan of Nature and God:

I understand you are entitled, as a man, to a greater share of pride, but would like to see You humbled. Otherwise, I am afraid for You. Two cannot share one Throne. Even I would not wash your feet if I might wash His. Of that I am now certain, however great my need of you may be. Let us understand this, and serve together. (256)

White has given insight into the inner world of Voss, who struggles in his life by sitting on the fence and ignoring the universal reality. All efforts of Laura fail as he continues to be adamant and behave obstinately and arrogantly. Like a Greek hero, he articulates his emotional bankruptcy and obstinacy in a letter written to Laura:

...but I cannot kill myself quite off, even though you would wish it, my dearest Laura. I am reserved for further struggles, to wrestle with rocks, to bleed if necessary, to ascend. Yes, I do not intend to stop short of the Throne for the pleasure of grovelling on lacerated knees. (231)

The journey of Voss's life is exceptionally touching and tragic. Laura says to Voss: "Man is God decapitated. That is why you are bleeding" (387). Voss finally dies in a beheading ritual, which is strongly suggestive of a crucifixion.

White's novel *A Fringe of Leaves* (1976) deals with the theme of a voyage on the pattern of *Voss*. The plot constitutes the historical events and adventures of an explorer Leichhardt. The main plot deals with the experiences of Eliza who is shipwrecked off the Queensland Coast. The aborigines imprison her. The central metaphor of voyage forms the core of the novel's structure. The journey on the ship and the inner journey of the heroine's mind structure the plot of the novel. She develops relations with the convict Jack Chance who helps her escape the prison. The 'return' journey is fascinating: "the husband is returning to meet his brother Garnet; the wife returning from the adopted nature to her original one, the convict returning to the place he escaped from; and life itself returning to its sources (Wilson 119).

Ellen Roxburgh belongs to a middle-class family. She rose in her social ladder through marriage and hard work. She devoted her precious time to improve her manners and values of the high society. She was young in age but her husband was much older. Her sexual seduction by Garnet was the first cause of her depression and psychological trauma. Her ship wrecked and Mrs. Roxburgh was the only survivor. She was made a prisoner by the aborigines. She "wore a dress with a fringe of leaves in the wild camp, which the Aboriginal women tore" (12). She was treated like an animal and stripped off her clothes. The aboriginal women tortured and abused her in every possible manner. Her hair was cut and she was made to starve. She lost her liberty and self-respect. She was reduced to an enslaved person and "to

an animal condition” (34). She developed a relationship with Oswald Digman who was a cabin boy.

An escaped convict Jack Chance helped her escape from the prison. She developed sexual relations with the convict. She longed for love and support as her wounded heart cried in despair. The novel's plot consists of two domains: England and Australia. England resembles a land of civilized people, and Australia is presented as a penal colony: "a country of thorns, whips, murderers, shipwreck and adulteresses” (280). The critics observe that White's novels incorporate a quest for an individual's identity who achieves and explores the real meaning of life through painful experiences. Ellen, at last, abandons the savage culture and feels liberated and elated:

She plodded gravely across the rows of tended plants as though they had been put there, cool and sappy, for the comfort of her feet. (333)

Nature as the Manifestation of God: Wordsworthian Vision of God

White employed the images of nature depicted as the manifestation of God and observed that man could seek redemption and spiritual dignity through his faith in Nature and God. He believes that there should be the destruction of self to reach God and seek His glory. Ellen understands that she can gain spiritual edification only through her love of nature. She has explored all the significant aspects of nature and feels solace in her company. The novel closes with an atmosphere of serenity and calmness. Mrs. Merivale expresses her soft words for Ellen: "I wonder how Mrs. Roxburgh would react to suffering if forced with it” (21).

Ellen predicted in the last section of the novel that: "Life is a series of blunders rather than any clear design, from which we may come out whole if we are lucky" (392). Mrs. Roxburgh expresses her happiness and satisfaction as she feels liberated and gains spiritual awareness: "Yes I am glad of course, for my return to the world. I have been so long out of it, I may not easily learn to adapt myself to its ways" (392). Ellen had experienced multiple phases of life in the savage land of Australia. She had witnessed the brutality of the cannibals who drank human blood and delighted after the bloody feast. She expresses her identity in the world of savages:

What she longed to sense in the behaviour of these human beings was evidence of a spiritual design, but that she could not, any more than she could believe in a merciful power shaping her own destiny. (247)

The novel *Riders in the Chariot* is set in Sydney of White's imagination. The plot is structured around the Biblical themes of sufferings and expiation. The characters are aware of human existence's mysteries and aspire to achieve sainthood. They are described as "illuminates" but are social outcasts called "burnt ones." They "are the riders of chariot sent by God" (13). White uses them as protagonists of the novel to convey his theme of transcendental revelation. The novel is White's most realistic exploration of his characters' social and questing behavior in a surrounding world of evil and skepticism. Mary Hare leads the life of a spinster living with her father in a dilapidated villa called "Xanadu". Like Theodora Goodman she lives alone in the company of nature. Mordecai Himmelfarb is a Jewish refugee and a survivor of the Concentration Camps of the Nazis. White describes him as the "suffering Messiah". The workers of the factory crucify him in a mock ritual. The other important

character is Ruth Godbold, alias Mrs. Godbold who emerges as a preacher. She is like Julia Fallon of *The Living and the Dead*. Alf Dubbo is an honest painter who enjoys a transcendental vision of life. As understood by Mrs. Godbold and Alf Dubbo, Himmelfarb has crucifixion like Jesus Christ. The imagery of the holy blood on his hands and brow heightens the seriousness of the plot. He dies on Good Friday as a Christ, and Mrs. Godbold and Miss Hare mourn him. Judas Harry Rosetree, a Judas, betrays him though he hangs himself after his betrayal. He is "amongst the first to receive our Savior" (498).

Patrick White has employed the story of Himmelfarb as a framework replete with old symbols. The storyline excites the anxiety and fear as the plot explores the mysterious existence of human beings in the universe. Himmelfarb, presented as the Messiah-Christ, performs the function of a Savior of the Jewish people. White comments thus on crucifixion: "Very quietly Himmelfarb left the factory in which it had not been accorded to him to expiate the sins of the world" (469). Mrs. Godbold and her daughters struggle to know the mystery of crucifixion. White's primary focus is on the individual's trials and suffering in his search for meaning of life. The real issues discussed through a pattern of symbols like "light" and "darkness" intensify the novel's seriousness.

The conspicuous feature of the novel is the spiritual dimension of Australia. The Christ-Messiah symbolism is employed by White to investigate the mysteries of sufferings and value of redemption. Himmelfarb passes through the ordeal of pain and agony in his quest of spiritual edification like Voss and Theodora. He is put on the Cross and he suffers poignant anguish which leads him ultimately to atone for the

sins of mankind. Himmelfarb emerges as a religious figure; a Messiah and a Saint at the end of the novel. Patrick White details the life and achievements of Himmelfarb. White's interest in the psychological anguish of the Jews is remarkable. According to Colin Wilson, White has observed the Jew as a lonely person fighting against the evil forces and regarded as an outcast by society. Mrs. Godbold, Miss Hare, Himmelfarb and Dubbo, all are social outcasts neglected and discarded by the society. They are socially, economically backward people.

The notion of a persistent soul searching for the meaning of life and seeking revelation is a dominant theme in the novels of White. This novel is undoubtedly different from the other novels by Patrick White. It explores the theme of personal quest and illumination that may come from within the soul of the individual. Each character in the novel undertakes this quest for self-knowledge and exploration of the mystery of suffering and redemption. White observed that all his novels are about religion. Many of his characters seek God with whom they can form dialogue and a meaningful union. Each character in the novel has profound mystical beliefs demonstrating a capacity for love, following the fundamental commands of the Bible. White has given the metaphor of stripping off the onion layers to reach the centre as Miss Hare comments: "I had to suppose: Eventually I shall discover what is at the centre, if enough of me is peeled away" (52).

The truth seekers and those with any share of the divine enlightening gifts are anxious "to raise other men into a perception of the infinite" (34). On the other hand, evil mongers never get peace of mind and enlightenment. Their lives are hellish, and such people are incapable of self-analysis. In this novel, all major characters convey

a spiritual and mystical yearning for truth. They experience some understanding of the mystery of life. They gain spiritual awareness and develop a unique transcendental vision. Indeed the novel *Riders in the Chariot* is his most realistic exploration of his characters' social and questing behaviour in a surrounding world of evil and skepticism. However, their love for others causes them constant physical and spiritual pain. Frederick W. Dillistone (1967) observes thus:

The four characters involved represent the established families of early settlers (Miss Hare); the varieties of Anglo Saxon immigrants who came in haphazard ways to the new continent (Mrs Godbold); the primitive races of the interior (Dubbo); and the new immigrants, often refugees, who, coming from many nations, have sought a new life in Australia since World War II (Mordecai Himmelfarb). (7)

Patrick White is concerned with the revelation and vision of life and the universe through his characters and the plot hinges upon Jewish and Christian mysticism. White believes that God is a "Divine Power and a Creator". The conspicuous feature of the novel *Riders in the Chariot* is the pattern of images and symbols used to depict the mysticism of his characters. Four important characters belong to different sections of society and from diverse backgrounds. White believes that music and fiction are the best mediums to communicate the spiritual. The central metaphor is of the chariot pointed out by Alf Dubbo, and this concept comes to Mordecai Himmelfarb, a learner of the ancient Rabbinical mystical works. The wine merchant at Wynyard believes in perfection. He wanted to achieve excellence in everything and wrote poems, epigrams and fragments dealing with metaphysical themes. Mary emerges as a Christian mystic:

She had been translated: she was herself a fearful beam of the ruddy,
champing light, reflected back at her own silly, uncertain father. (24)

Patrick White borrowed “Xanadu” from Coleridge’s poem *Kubla Khan*, and the “Pleasure Dome” was created only for the owner's pleasure. It was “brilliant and elegant, golden, golden, in a frill or two of iron lace, beneath the dove-grey thatching of imported states, its stables and bachelor quarters trailing out behind” (15). Her father warned Miss Hare to be serious in life and “forbade her to play with the ring: “It is not a toy...you must learn to respect property” (6). Miss Hare loves nature as she enjoys watching the morning's spectacle when “all that is most dense becomes most transparent, and the world is dependent on the eyes of the beholder” (17). Norbert Hare expresses his pessimistic philosophy: “all human beings are decadent. The moment we are born, we start to degenerate. Only the unborn soul is whole, pure” (36).

White refers to the process of degeneration which is inevitable in birth and death. Man grows every day in this world, from childhood to death. White evokes the mystical thoughts of William Blake, who stated that “when a person is in a state of innocence, he is pure and his soul is free from all impurities” (Blake 12). Miss Hare is the only character in the novel with a pure soul and lives in the company of nature. She loves animals, plants and birds. Like William Wordsworth, she has divine faith in nature as she lives according to the commands of nature. White has created her to belong to the world of animals. She dedicates her life to exploring the mysteries of nature and the universe:

Specked and dappled, like any wild thing native to the place, she was examining her surrounding for details of interest. Almost all were alive, changing, growing, personal, like her own thoughts, which intermingled, flapping and flashing with the leaves, lay straight and stiff as sticks, or emerged with the painful stench of any crushed ant.

(15)

White has used circular images for Miss Hare who is “curled like a foetus in the grass” (22). She resembles Theodora Goodman because she also longs to merge with the elements of nature. She, “too has rejected worldly life and lives in solitude. She longs to enjoy the scenes and sights of Nature to explore the mysteries of life and death and she longs for the ecstasy of complete liberation” (21). She often cried alone, not out of grief, but it was a source of comfort to her, and she was happy to find her mother, Eleanor Smith, surviving out of her four sisters and having a baby child Mary, the actual child of nature. She was thankful to God as she said: “Only our Father in Heaven will be able to tell my pet why He made her as He did” (21). Mrs. Hare accepted Him as the creator of a moral and a social system. She remained a rejected and downtrodden woman of society. Mary Hare, the little girl, enjoyed freedom as White writes:

She drifted through the pale water of her mother’s kindness like a little, wandering, transparent fish, in search of those depths, which her instinct told her could exist. (22)

Miss Hare wants to enjoy an independent life. She recollects how Mr. Hare died during World War II drowning in a cistern, and Mrs. Jolly joined as a maidservant.

Jolly was also negative, like Mrs. Flack. Miss Hare preferred loneliness. Says Jolley: "I am always happy, of course, more or less. It is that a lady does expect something different, a house and however, and kiddies' voices" (53). Mary said to Mrs. Jolley, "I do not know. This is my life. This is my home" (53). White has comparatively studied the mystic Mary and shallow Mrs. Jolly. David J. Tracey regards Mrs. Jolley to be the teeth mother:

In a sense, this archetypal figure is a guardian of human evolution, for if it were not for the devouring monsters of the deep, humanity would surely have succumbed long ago to the delightful prospect of eternal paradise. (92)

The plot of the novel is packed with the scenes of supernaturalism Miss Hare recollects the old memories of her Xanadu house. The scenes of hallucination heighten the supernatural atmosphere. White has presented Mrs. Jolley as a witch considering her "to be unregenerate evil, a creature from the primordial realm" (93). White has reported her hallucination thus: "She would appear in doorways or from behind dividing curtains and cough, but very carefully, at certain times, she carried her eyes downcast" (63). Mrs. Flack is a widow and the evil spirit present in the novel. She came in contact with her on the way to the Church. She lived at Middle Street. Miss Hare expresses her thus: "Friendship is two knives ... They will sharpen each other when rubbed together, but often one of them will slip and slice off a thumb" (82). Miss Hare is the victim in the novel. Everyone hurts her, and people take sadistic pleasure in hurting her. White describes her eternal anguish thus:

As Miss Hare went out into the green prevalence, the arrowheads of grass pricked her; she was the target of thousands. But she had experienced worse, of course. So she went down through the militant sharp, clattering grass. (88)

Mary, too, was a source of much trouble and psychological anguish to Norbert. She had a destructive effect on his life and hated her father and cousin Eustace Cleugh. Norbert “thought of her sickly, pathetic child; he secretly told his wife: Who would even have thought I should get a red girl! By George, Eleanor, she is ugly!” (40). He exclaims: “Ugly as a foetus! Rippled out too soon” (56). She was a psychological case that disturbed others, and mainly, she was a source of trouble for her father. One day she was found munching the stick of a plant, which drove him mad. He cried in despair: “Munching! Munching!” (34). He was so exhausted that he took out his pistol to shoot himself in frustration. Interestingly each character in the novel projects some destroying image upon another. Mary, and Mrs. Jolley are destructive figures. Norbert's attempted suicide is the outcome of the destructive tendencies in their life. White describes the scenes of horror and destructiveness thus:

Then he appeared more afraid than before as if she were looking truly monstrous from that height and angle, as she held the pole towards him. He was crying now, like a little boy, out of a pale, wet mouth. Someone! He was crying. Mary! Don't! Have some pity! (57)

Mary was a hysterical child, and nobody trusted her. She made the pole towards him to save him, but he couldn't hold it. She rushed home to fetch the deaf coachman

William Haskin. Norbert Hare was responsible for his problems. He had constructed Xanadu, which was a source of psychological anguish. The big ancient villa was a mere object of European lavishness and artificiality. He had created many barriers which tormented him psychologically. According to David Tracey, Norbert created an alien and a proud structure to express his artificiality: "Norbert involves the destructive spirit of the land. Soon after the completion of this Pleasure Dome, it is seen that the native cynicism of the grey raggedy scrub begins to destroy his palace, and within a few years this Dome started disintegrating" (Tracey 15). White gives the image of decay and grey rags to describe the process of disintegration morally and spiritually. Tracey reiterates thus: "The scrub, which had been pushed back, immediately began to tangle with Norbert Hare's wilfully created park, until, years later, there was his daughter, kneeling in a tunnel of twigs which led to Xanadu" (15).

The novel's plot hinges upon four visionaries; each outcast or exiled like Mrs. Godbold from England and Alf Dubbo from primitive races of the interior; Miss Hare is a child from a dysfunctional family, and Mordecai Himmelfarb is a victim of the Jewish Holocaust. Their fates become intertwined as they struggle to explore the mystery of the Divine pervading the universe. All four characters join together to explore the mystery of human existence. Patrick White shows supreme mastery in employing flashback techniques and blending the past and the present. Of the four, Himmelfarb dominates the plot. He is determined to put his strength and endurance against insuperable odds. He looked ugly, enjoying under the shade of the plum tree. Himmelfarb is presented as a reluctant Messiah. Voss and Himmelfarb have much in common. Both are German. Both come to Australia, where they are strangers. They

both have a somewhat sarcastic outlook, driven to destroy their physical selves for transcendental revelation.

Miss Hare experienced a unique divine sensation in the company of Himmelfarb. At first, "they ignored each other, lost in their worlds starting back at the material world as if to take a last look at those familiar forms which further experience might soon remove from their lives" (91). The tree and its sacred shade become a turning point in their meeting, paving the way for redemption: "It was perfectly still, except that the branches of the plum tree hummed with life, increasing, and increasing, deafening, swallowing them up" (91). Himmelfarb told Miss Hare in a discussion that he was a Jew and different from other human beings. He narrates all the secrets of his early life. It is significant to observe that most of the characters of Patrick White live in a directionless world struggling to find the meaningful patterns of life. Parkers' children in *The Tree of Man* remained close to their mother, Amy Parker. Mordecai Himmelfarb struggles to develop the spiritual strength.

The striking feature of the character of Mordecai Himmelfarb is transcendental vision. He started learning the scriptures in his early life. But his father was against his religious madness and wanted him to be worldly wise. "Do you want to load the boy already? And worst of all, with Hebrew"(101). He ignored his father's directions and continued learning the rituals and norms of Hebrew religion of the Jews. So "the mere mention of his mother involved him more deeply than ever in the metaphysical thicket from which he was hoping to tear himself by force" (112). He came in contact with a girl Reha who used all her strategies to make her husband perform the role of a mystic. Her expectations brought her frustration, and her failure resulted in her suicide. She hanged herself to death: "And she would hang her head

because she sensed the distance between aspiration and the possibility of achievement and she was unable to do anything to help him” (125). Reha Himmelfarb failed in her mission, but everything was a manifestation of God for Himmelfarb.

In the life of his mother, Malke, the same situation occurred. Her communication with his father was only through letters. She could not bear that he had abandoned his faith. She was afraid that her son would be doomed: "Oh! Mordecai! I can only think I have failed him in some way and dread that I may also fail my son”(16). She died of sudden illness. She feared that her son wouldn't be allowed by his father to grow independently. He was a dealer in furs and a Russian emigre. He was like an ostrich. He was always mentally disturbed because he couldn't gather strength to fight with the harsh environment. Mordecai believes that his mother is a witch. She often changed her identities. Malke Himmelfarb was a kind lady who cared for the poor and the oppressed. She would give them presents and look after their children. Himmelfarb was skeptical: "Religion, like a winter overcoat, grew oppressive and superfluous as spring developed into summer, and the natural sources of warmth were gradually revealed” (101).

Cantor Katzmann was a tutor appointed by his mother to teach him Hebrew. White writes: "His triumph made him proud, shy, exalted, indifferent, explosively hilarious and incommunicative of his true feelings” (103). He concluded that the world had changed. He made tremendous efforts to resolve his dilemmas that wounded his psyche. He realized "that God will recognize a good Jew. It is more important today...that the world should recognize a good man” (111). Malke firmly

believes that the Jews will be transformed and a new world order would be brought about by the Jews. Himmelfarb observes: "I would like to think I am both...but sometimes wonder whether I am anything at all" (111). He "acknowledged his mother, whose guidance, whose example and deeds might well redeem the whole race. Excepting one who is beyond redemption" (112). Himmelfarb was treated as the "Other" at Oxford University because he was a Jew. He came in contact with Catherine, and his friends believed they would marry, but it was not pure love but only infatuation. She was killed in a bombing attack by the Germans. He proposed to Reha Liebmann, who rejected the proposal:

Oh, dear... I must try very hard. Forgive me that I should behave like this. Just now. I am afraid I may fail you also in other ways... Not yet. And I cannot express myself. But we-some of us, although we have not spoken-know that you will bring us honour. (112)

Ultimately she consented to marry following all the rituals of the Jewish religion. Many dreadful events took place in the life of Himmelfarb. The Nazis raided his house; the Gestapo captured his wife, and people never found her again. He was mentally disturbed and blamed himself for this tragedy. He surrendered to the Nazis, having been broken. They took him to the gas chamber, where he narrowly escaped death. Himmelfarb had gone through the nightmare of Jewish persecution in Nazi Germany. He accepted the messianic mission and believed himself to be ordained.

Miss Hare and Her Transcendental Vision of Life

Miss Hare expressed her transcendental vision of life. She believed that the end of evil lies in its supremacy. Evil destroys everything but ultimately it gets destroyed.

“But the earth is wonderful. It is all we have. It has brought me back, otherwise I should have died” (154). It may be called "Rebirth" or metamorphosis. Here Patrick White refers to the Hindu philosophy of Karma and reincarnation. The Jews were pleased to name Miss Hare “hidden Zaddik” (155). They believed "the creative light of God poured into the Zaddikim that they saw the Chariot of God” (155). Zaddikims are the servants of God:

May it be Thy will, O Lord our God and God of our fathers, to conduct us in peace, to direct our steps in peace, to uphold us in peace, and to lead us in life, joy, and peace, unite the heaven of our desire. (174)

The Jews struggled for several days to escape the terror attack of the Nazis. They were terrified by the German soldiers' bomb shelling and mass killing. Women cried for what they had left behind. The Jews had a traumatic experience and led a nightmarish existence. Patrick White has described in detail the harrowing scenes of the Jews rushing and boarding the trains to save their lives from the atrocities of the Germans. Himmelfarb's wife, Reha believed that her husband was a chosen man of God. "But we-someone of us –although we have not spoken – know that you will bring us honor” (140). Patrick White refers to the spiritual role he has to play in his life to save the life of others. Aril, her brother in Palestine, observes that: “You, I seem to remember, Reha had decided were to play the part of Messiah” (214). He had declared that he would be the Messiah for the Jews. The Nazi guard in Auschwitz had predicted the divine strength of Himmelfarb. He wanted him to remain outside the gas chamber. Patrick White commented thus when they arrived in Sydney:

The party of immigrant Jews looked anxiously for those who must be waiting to receive them. Only the rather peculiar, not exactly different, but different passenger, Mr. Himmelfarb, in his dark, sweaty, suitable clothes, stood, and continued standing apart. He had, in fact, already been received. As the heat smote the tarmac, there appeared to rise up before him a very definite pillar of fire. (216)

White describes an apocalyptic vision of Himmelfarb through the image of “fire.” He is called the pillar of fire dedicated to the service of the Jew Community. He has “received” the message from God that he is a chosen man and he is one with God. He accepts the order of God and prepares to serve humanity. He begins doing menial jobs as he says: “The intellect has failed us” (221). Following the Command of God he accepts sufferings of life rejecting the offer of Miss Hare to save him. Rosetree urges him to run away to save his life but he rejects the plea. He says: “When the time comes for my destruction...it will not be decided by men” (342). He tells Miss Hare to show his spiritual strength. “You will not be blamed” (455).

There is a strange feeling of contentment on Himmelfarb’s face. His spiritual strength confounds the mob. There is a peculiar sign of pride on his face and the feelings of contentment. He exhibits humility discarding all worldly pleasures. Like Voss, he seeks redemption through his belief in the messianic role. He lies dying as he recollects his father's words, “Always separate during the illusory life of men, now they touched it seemed at the point of failure” (479). The natural humility of his wife inspires him:

It seemed to him as though the mystery of failure might be pierced only by those of extreme simplicity of soul, or else by one who was about to doff the outgrown garment of the body. He was weak enough to make the attempt which demands the ultimate strength. (480)

The symbolism becomes confusing and contradictory at this part of the novel. After his crucifixion Himmelfarb emerges as the Messiah-Christ. Himmelfarb attains peace of mind and spiritual bliss after his sacrifice. He is in communion with God. In his death, he seeks confirmation of his redemption and freedom from the worries and cares of life. The hidden mystery of the universe is explored as he emerges as a Messiah. He pursues a transcendental vision in which "the thousands waited for him along the banks of the interminable river" (491). He gets metaphysical strength of life and his soul becomes supreme as he gives the divine message that "The mountains of darkness must be crossed" (491). Patrick White dramatizes the uncertainty of purpose and direction through the character Himmelfarb who refuses to accept the role of Saviour. His redemption lies in his realization of failure. All these spiritual issues become conspicuous through a pattern of symbols. As the name suggests, Miss Hare performs the character of an animal, and her skin conveys messages to her. She considers herself a dog and observes thus: "For many years when there were people here, I sat under the table amongst the legs and saw an awful lot happen" (89). The animal imagery is very effective in the novel in conveying the existence of nature. She is described as "curled, like a ringtail possum" (510). Miss Hare describes "herself as sinking into the earth when the time comes for her death, and the grass will grow out of mess" (72). Patrick White has employed the imagery of nature and animals to dramatize the power of nature and God. Miss Hare becomes

all-pervasive, she is "scent, sound, dew, and the glare of lights; she is all but identified, and direction had at last chosen her; she is at once with Nature and God" (493). Miss Hare physically disappears but "continues her presence in spirit" (520). Miss Hare experiences her sense of pain and sorrow of the crucifixion. She shows her sympathy though society rejects her because of her ugly appearance. Patrick White has created Miss Hare as an animal-woman who strongly understands the Divine and the spiritual presence in the universe. The novels *The Aunt's Story* and *The Tree of Man* also highlight the difference between the natural against the artificial.

In his novel *Riders in the Chariot* White has exposed the destructive tendencies present in urban society. People living in big cities are cut off from nature and, therefore, bound to suffer physically and psychologically. White believes in Rousseau's "Back to Nature" theory and believes that the primary cause of man's suffering is his disconnection from the world of nature, which is a manifestation of God. Miss Hare remains a demented creature despite her appealing actions and beliefs. Miss Hare is contrasted with Mrs. Jolley and Mrs. Flack, who are the active forces of evil:

There is one of the evil ones! How evil, I am not yet sure. But she has entered into a conspiracy with another devil, and will bring suffering to many before it destroys them both. (174)

Miss Hare often talks of women who are "agents of evil" and devils spreading evil and unrest in the universe. Miss Hare believes that Mrs. Flack and Mrs. Jolley are evil characters. They are her antithesis, and their values are dehumanizing and degrading. Patrick White expresses the dehumanizing effect of urban living and sees

the metropolitan cities as the manifestation of mass-produced ugliness. People living in cities have shallowness of mind and spirit. They are callous and inhuman as they lead hypocritical lives. They are not what they are, looking nice and decent, but internally, they are diabolical. Mrs. Flack's telephone conversation with Blue instigating him to crucify Himmelfarb is a fine example of the cruelty of the urban people. She comments on "the deliberate burning of his house" (471), revealing her evil intentions to commit murder or arson. The evil of Mrs. Flack is dramatized in the novel to justify the presence of evil in the universe. James McAuley (1962) observes thus:

Between the divisions of mankind there seems to be no prospect of any crossing of the lines. All are what they are, and act from their natures. There is no doctrine of redemption advanced or implied. (81)

White follows the allegorical rules of the traditional epics. He has created characters belonging to categories of good and evil, and the conflict is depicted on the metaphysical scale as redemption doesn't come to them quickly. They have to pass through the ordeal of suffering, and in the process, they realize and understand the glory and magnificence of God and Nature. White has depicted the gamut of emotion, desire and reflection expressed in the characters of *Riders in the Chariot*. He has dramatized the gradual growth and development of the characters on a journey of self-exploration and discovery, grappling with the forces of evil.

White's irony is subtle and effective. Mrs. Godbold is the sole survivor of Xanadu, presently a settlement of fibro homes. The universe of *Riders in the Chariot* depicts the scenes of a soul-destroying plastic nightmare as the people are lonely and

desolate. They are empty people compelled to lead a life of desolation and emptiness. Ironically, Mrs. Godbold accepts the life of futility and sterility. In nutshell, White employs the allegorical form bordering on mysticism, presenting the themes of suffering and redemption. Symbolism follows the tradition of the morality plays of the Elizabethan Age implying in the novel that goodness prevails. The characters undergo much suffering, pain, and even physical death, but they finally achieve salvation, whereas evil is punished and destroyed. Mrs. Flack and Mrs. Jolley are diabolical characters:

Night thoughts were cruellest, and often the two women, in their long, soft, trailing gowns, would bump against each other in the passage, or fingers encounter fingers, and they would lead each other gently back to the origins of darkness. They were desperately necessary to each other in threading the labyrinth. Without proper guidance, a soul, in hell might lose itself. (535)

Like Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Patrick White creates his imaginative hell. Two women who embody evil guide each other. Mrs. Flack and Mrs. Jolley are evil characters bound in the wheel of fire. Himmelfarb's role is symbolical who emerges as the Messiah of humanity. The novel *Riders in the Charoit* deals with the severe metaphysical and transcendental issues that torment human beings. The purpose of the novel is to resolve the dilemmas of modern man. John Colmer (1982) argues that "the human being in White's canon can only achieve an understanding of good after an immersion of evil" (98).

To sum up, Patrick White's novels explore the theme of transcendental revelation. The characters struggle and fight against the natural forces to explore the natural pattern and the meaning of life, i.e. truth. The main focus of White is to find the mystery of evil and the eternal conflict between good and evil. White rejects the nihilistic and pessimistic view of life. Each character explores the existential mystery of life and finds the lasting value of love and mystic glory pervading the universe. The supernatural power of love, grace, and goodness is man's ultimate aim and the only source of happiness and peace of mind. The protagonists of the novels of White like Stan, Theodora, Voss, Ellen and Himmelfarb have such revelation which gives them transcendental joy, and they find meaning in life. The transcendental vision of Patrick White depicted in the novels is the primary source of his strength, and it is valuable for all ages and all times.

To conclude, White is a transcendental novelist as he believes in the positive and metaphysical view of life. All his characters suffer but at the end get moral and spiritual enlightenment. They don't escape from the existential realities because it is not the purpose of life to escape but to face the challenges of life. Whitman's *Song of Myself* (1855) is full of transcendentalist imageries echoing Emerson's emphasis on the power of nature and individuality. While their thoughts and language constantly find resonance in each other, Whitman and Emerson have different attitudes towards the human body. Emerson holds a relatively restricted view of the human body. On the other hand, Whitman praises the human body equally. Margaret Fuller launched her career as a transcendentalist leader when the transcendentalist movement was in full swings under the leadership of Ralph Waldo Emerson. She insisted on living in a way that would not betray her beliefs about women's equality during a time when

women were expected to marry, raise families, and do little else. Transcendentalism was a major literary and philosophical movement that emphasized the power of the individual and the inherent goodness of people. Transcendentalists celebrated personal freedom, promoted a deep appreciation for nature as well as utopian social change, and saw little value in organized religion, social institutions, and government. By questioning gender roles, critiquing social injustices, and surrounding herself with people who valued her intellectual ideals, Margaret Fuller sought to transcend the expectations placed on women in the 19th century.

Conclusion

Three years of research against the topic *From Nihilism to Transcendentalism: A Study of the Selected Novels of Patrick White* has resulted in the following notable outcomes:

- 1) Patrick White (1912-1990) is the only Australian novelist who won the Nobel Prize in 1973 for his therapy to boost the morale of the depressed society. He has a deep concern for humanity at large. Due to World Wars, people lost faith in life; and religion failed to give direction. The discoveries of science destroyed the very foundations of man: his trust in God and nature. Resultantly atmosphere of pessimism gripped the psyche of each individual and the writers propagated the theme of nihilism and the futility of life.
- 2) Philosophers such as Nietzsche and Schopenhauer promoted suicide to get rid of this meaningless existence "where but to think is to be full of sorrow", as says Keats in his *Ode to the Nightingale*. White believed in Vivekananda who said "Remedy for weakness is not brooding over weakness but thinking of strength". He turned to Immanuel Kant and Emerson and found transcendentalism the only solution to nihilism and pessimism. He wrote fiction to highlight and propagate the message of hope and faith as the remedy to explore truth and to overcome pessimism and nihilism. White is the most celebrated Australian novelist who devoted his writing career to express his concern to depict the problems and dilemmas of his protagonists who struggle against the existential realities of the harsh world, being stranded and wounded by the forces of Depression and World Wars.

- 3) White was aware of the forces of pessimism and nihilism which wounded the psyche of the people of Australia. People were haunted by the scenes and events of World Wars as they developed the dark vision of life and modern civilization. No wonder, there are clear references of World War II and the atmosphere of death and destruction in his fiction.
- 4) The fiction of White is written with a transcendental vision as he struggled in his life to explore the mysteries of life and death. In all his novels, White struggled to resurrect a world of hope and optimism where people can enjoy spiritual bliss and redemption, and freedom from the worries and sufferings. White takes up the moral responsibility to depict the psychological anguish of the protagonists alienated from religion and God.
- 5) The textual analysis of the novels of White reveals that he has dramatized the cause and the symptoms of the pessimism and nihilism experienced by his protagonists haunted by the painful memories of the World Wars and lived with the burden of guilty consciousness. He depicted the journey of each character who seeks redemption fighting with the forces of pessimism and nihilism.

The textual analysis of the novels of Patrick White reveals that all the major protagonists suffer from the virus of pessimism, depression and nihilism. But their journey is a quest from sufferings to redemption as they achieve awareness of life and death. In the beginning of their journey, they are much disturbed. But they go on persevering with fortitude. In the novels we see their confrontation with the mysteries of life and sufferings. In the very first novel *Happy Valley* we see White's concern for "life in jerks...in stages" and he declares that "it ought to flow, theoretically in an

even rhythm". He quotes Mahatma Gandhi to justify that human sufferings are unavoidable and a necessary part of life. Says Shakespeare in his play *As You Like It*: "Sweet are the uses of adversity".

The main focus of Patrick White is the suffering and helplessness of man. But unlike Thomas Hardy and John Updike, his characters get new awareness and struggle for redemption in life. White has created a galaxy of characters who do not behave like dumb-driven cattle. They are life-like creatures and face the limitations of human beings. Generally, they fail to move with society and suffer. But suffering creates chances for their progress and prosperity. Each novel explores the inner self of the characters. The significant characters of White like Voss, Stan Parker, Amy Parker, Theodora Goodman, Himmelfarb, Ellen Roxburgh, Laura Trevelyan, Arthur and Waldo, Hurtle Duffield, and Elizabeth Hunter struggle to realize the value of human life and the transcendental self.

The characters of White are his representatives and they represent the ideas and perceptions of the writer. They are the outcome of his sincerity, struggle, and study of the book of life. It is said that necessities impel, and circumstances compel. White had to face innumerable problems to find his place on earth. He was not born great, nor had his greatness thrust upon him. Instead, he achieved greatness through his sincere efforts. He was born to Australian parents but not in Australia. He studied and wanted to settle in England, where he was born. He did not have a background in literature. But his mother desired that he should get an education in London and he did though he felt himself there "in a cage". However, after his studies, he planned to become a writer and started writing fiction and poetry in England. He wrote his first

novel *Happy Valley* when he was 27. The second novel, *The Living and the Dead*, was the outcome of the Second World War in which he also participated as an Intelligence Officer. There, he made companionship with a Greek gentleman Mr. Manoly Lascaris, who became his lifelong companion and friend.

The turbulent period of World War II and its after-effects made him learn like Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, that man is not warring by nature. Intrinsicly man is peace-loving, but he indulges in wars and upheavals to satisfy his ego. Being a sensitive soul like Buddha, the problem before him was whether he could do anything to alleviate human suffering. He travelled widely and read the writings of the great masters of the world like Kant, Wordsworth, Dostoevsky, Carlyle, Rabindranath Tagore, Mahatma Gandhi, Emerson, and others. In the writings of transcendental writers of India and America, he found solutions to human misery. He also studied different versions of religion like Christianity, Hinduism, Judaism, etc., and found that religion is the basic necessity of man.

The first objective of the study is “to analyze the themes of sufferings and redemption in the select novels of Patrick White”. The chapter *Brief Candle* explores the socio-political forces and impact of these forces on the mind and sensibility of White. He wrote novels to depict the struggle of his protagonists to seek redemption and to explore the meaning or truth of life and its existence. White realizes that the essence of religion is the need of the hour. The purpose of an artist, he thought, is not only entertainment but working for the peace and prosperity of the individual to form a better world. The transcendental ideas of Kant and Emerson and the message of Indian philosophy of oneness and divinity of man impressed him the most. The

materialism of England and America made him realize that man himself is the cause of his sorrow. He has created 'a spiritual graveyard', as says T.S. Eliot. The only way to come out of this crisis, he contended, is the recovery of faith in life and God. In his third novel, *The Aunt's Story*, his emphasis is on spirituality. Like Theodora, White retraced his steps to his native land or home place, i.e. Australia. He settled permanently in the suburbs of Sydney to meet the challenges of life and fulfil his mission of finding meaning and purpose in life.

In all his novels, White has traced the journey of his characters for a smooth, beautiful and meaningful living. The characters feel depressed and alienated due to their wrong notions. They seek comfort in things and hanker after money and materials. It results in broken relationships: the prime cause of their suffering. White has also investigated the ideas of greed, love, and sex in his novels. Excessive desire or greed for money and materials gives rise to meanness. Desires generally remain unfulfilled, which causes much suffering. Desires, if fulfilled, give rise to more desires and to fulfil those desires, man has to suffer again. And this vicious circle continues, making man unhappy. Similarly, worldly love and sex for experience and enjoyment give rise to untold suffering. Sex, he believes, is a social necessity and marriage a sacred institution. Love means sacrifice and fulfillment. But illegal relations are unhealthy for man and society.

The second objective of the study is "to explore the elements of transcendentalism in the select novels of Patrick White". In the second chapter entitled: *Sufferings and Happiness* textual analysis of all the select novels of White has been made in the context of the theme of suffering and happiness. He believes

that human life is full of trials and tribulations and only a few people of the world enjoy happiness of life. Like Thomas Hardy, White believes that happiness is an occasional episode in the drama of life. There is no place for the weak and the cowards and for the strong and daring people the world is charming and full of pleasures. White believes in the spirit of transcendental philosophy that one should have greed for the proper knowledge and love for God, and His creation. He believes that man is not a creature but a creator of suffering or happiness from his angle of thought. By performing his duties in the right spirit of religion, he is immune from unhappiness. He is divine incarnate. He has the innate capacities to create permanent joy and make this earth a beautiful place to live.

White has a positive outlook. According to him, sufferings teach humility, the most robust character in human life. Lord Buddha says that life means suffering and to live is to suffer. But we can make it easy with fortitude, endurance, and the art of ignoring. Similarly, White declares that there is no room for despair and nihilism. He agrees with Hemingway that man can be crushed but not broken. Absurdities are bound to happen. But a spiritually sound person can tackle any condition of life boldly, without losing his balance. He believes like Milton that "Mind is its own place and in itself can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven". The words of Emerson constantly resound in his ears:

- ❖ Man is his own star. Our acts our angels are.
- ❖ Nothing can bring you peace but yourself.
- ❖ Nothing can bring you peace but the triumph of principles.

Through his characters, White upholds the theory of transcendentalism propounded by Emerson and Kant. He declared that though not attached to any religion, he had religious faith, and this faith he believed was the solution to all human problems. He proclaimed that problems are the sign of life, and rightly tackled, they prove a blessing in disguise. The characters suffer and struggle, but they learn the lesson and meaning of life before death.

The third objective of the study is “to investigate the issues of greed, love and sex in the select novels of Patrick White”. In the third chapter entitled: *Trauma and Self-Realization* the texts of White are analyzed to explore the impact of transcendental ideas of Emerson on the psyche of the characters who embarked on a spiritual journey to find out the real meaning of life and existence. Patrick White’s *A Fringe of Leaves* (1976) deals with the basic theme of human search to find meaning and value in life. In the novel, the protagonist Ellen is simple English farmer girl, married to a rich man and a scholar. Her husband, Mr. Austin Roxburgh, is 20 years senior to her. She abides by him and his family, and he too cares for her. They go on a trip to see Garnet, the husband's brother. On back journey Austin, along with the crew is killed by the aborigines. Ellen is made captive and stripped of her clothes. She has only a fringe of leaves to cover her private parts. Now, she has to follow the commands of the aborigines to save her life. She is tormented and sexually molested. They give her their diseased child to feed milk from her breast. She despises the dirty child, but the motherly instinct already disallowed to her awakens. She is kept on fast for three days, and then she has to eat human flesh to save her life because she is dying of hunger. Now she realized that she was also a human being like them. Her

pride in upper society is gone. Had she not shown respect to them, they might have killed her. However, she kept a fringe of leaves as a token of civilization, and her suffering made her learn the value of life. In this way, trauma brought self-realization to Ellen.

White divides his characters into two parts: the living and the dead. The living were those who get awareness, but those who remain bound to things only are spiritually dead. The living had a positive outlook on life and were awake. On the other hand, those engrossed in the imaginary world and having a negative, egoistic and nihilistic approach are metaphorically dead. They have to suffer at every step. Kant has given the theory of *Noumena* and *Phenomena*. The phenomena are a physical reality, while noumena are absolute reality. The sensory organs of human beings are not able to see the hidden truth like God. The spiritually dead persons fail to differentiate between the *Noumena* and *Phenomena*. They consider matter as the only reality and satisfy their bodies and senses. They waste their life. They fail to realize its meaning. White believes that human birth is the gift of God. The purpose behind it is to be more and more perfect. Sufferings, he believes, are thrown by God on our way for our wellbeing. They give us the strength to meet the challenges. Ultimately, they make us humble. Ego vanishes, and we learn the secret of life.

In *Voss*, the protagonist Voss thinks he is God, so he can do anything and everything. In his journey to map the Australian land, consisting of deserts and jungles, he faces challenges from nature and human beings. He meets with failures, but failures make him learn the lesson of life. He declares:

The mystery of life is not solved by success, which is an end in itself, but in failure, in perpetual struggle, in becoming. (289)

To make yourself, it is also necessary to destroy yourself. (38)

One of his aborigine companions beheads him. His entire ego is gone. Before death, he believes that man is man and God is God. Man has his limitations. Only when man surrenders before God, he gets heavenly bliss. Voss dies in peace but before death he sends his beloved Laura heart-to-heart message to pray for him. It shows White's mysticism. Their love is not sex but pure love. There is meaning in their life, and Voss understands this only when he suffers and surrenders his ego before the Almighty. He realizes that man is divine, but he has his limitations. His identity as a Ulysses figure is recognized, and a time comes when his statue represents a myth.

White gives the message of spirituality through his novel *The Aunt's Story*. The novel's protagonist, Theodora Goodman, is a misfit in society. She has an affinity with nature and wants to realize its mystery. Her mother Mrs. Goodman does not like her wanderings in the natural surroundings, and scolds her every moment. Theodora's sister Fanny is worldly-wise, and like her mother she loves city life. After the death of their father, Theodora is in the brutal clutches of her mother in the city. When an old friend of her father comes to their house, her mother does not let him sit with them at the dining table, and Theodora serves him dinner on the veranda. White teaches through this incident the shallowness of Mrs. Goodman and the transcendent connectedness of Theodora. Once she goes on a shooting trip with her brother-in-law under compulsion. There she does shoot a hawk, but forms an affinity with the bird.

After her mother's death, Theodora goes on tour to Europe for spiritual realization. But she is upset with the show of materialism. In France, on her stay in the hotel, she finds there a display of nature, but the high and solid castle-like boundary walls have crushed the spirit of nature. She is disturbed. The temporary relations she had made with the General's family were also an illusion. Theodora retraces her steps to come back home. The scene of Holstius is the culmination of teaching her that life consists of dualities. We have to accept both good and bad, day and night, joy and sorrow, since they co-exist. White has given the secret of life in Holstius' words:

You cannot reconcile joy and sorrow...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. (289)

In the fourth chapter entitled: *Nihilism to Redemption* White's vision of nihilism and redemption of life is explored. The *Tree of Man* is an epic of life containing the story of a simple God-fearing couple, Stan and Amy. The publication of this novel made him worldwide famous. Stan and Amy work hard in the jungle, away from parents and relations. They make a simple home and struggle enough to make the barren land fertile and grow crops and vegetation for livelihood. More people come, and the barren land of Australia becomes a panorama of life. They give birth to a son and daughter, Ray and Thelma, for social needs. They have to face untold calamities of

nature. But Stan always thinks positive. For him thunderbolts, floods, and devastations have a meaning and purpose of God. White believes in His mercy, love, and magnificence. He wrote this novel, as he said, “to form a relationship between God and blundering human beings”. Stan goes to participate in the War to meet the nation's requirements. He saves a young girl from the burning house. Stan risks his life without indulging in sex with her. Similarly, he performs his duties to protect people in times of flood and other natural calamities.

However, Amy remains hungry for Stan's love. To satisfy her physical needs, she indulges in sex with a stranger in the absence of Stan. The knowledge of this incident makes him terrified. But still he ignores her blunder and consoles himself. He had better prospects in mind: to know the meaning and purpose of life. Before death, he realized God and man's place in the universe. His wife was greedy for his love and the silver nutmeg grater the Bishop's wife had given to her as marriage gift. But Stan had a passion for God and nature. He loved nature more than his wife, resulting in founding of a beautiful colony where he could commune with other human beings. Through Stan, White gives the message of transcendentalism and connectedness i.e. *Vasudevikutumkum*. He concludes that life should go on with God as Father and all other human beings as brothers and sisters. White believes that a spark of heavenly bliss is worth more than the struggle of hundreds of years. The following quotations of White from *The Tree of Man* always resound in the ears of the reader:

So that in the end there was no end. (480)

One and no other figure is the answer to all sums. (477)

There is a conspicuous growth of transcendental revelation after the first two novels of Patrick White. In the first two novels, characters suffer because they reside in the web of nihilism. The entire atmosphere of Happy Valley is sad, gloomy, and bleak evil. There is non-cooperation. All the characters suffer and try to get rid of this atmosphere. They seek happiness from others as Dr. Oliver from music teacher Alys, resulting in the frustration of his wife and son. All suffer but fail to leave the valley. They conclude that fate is against them. They learn to accept and reconcile with their fate to avoid suffering, but do not give up. Similarly, in the novel *The Living and the Dead*, "the characters are so much oppressed that they build a cocoon of experience away from the noises of the street" (19). They fail to have a dialogue even with their family members e.g. mother, sister and brother. Elyot Standish is a "London intellectual" who builds a "cocoon" of scholarship because he is afraid of life. He meets with many situations where he could actively play his role, but he remains helpless. Even the news of his father's death fails to move him. On his way back home, after seeing his sister off at the railway station, he sees a drunken man likely to be crushed by a bus. But he remains inactive like Hamlet as ever.

Elyot's mother, Mrs. Standish, has excessive greed for things, resulting in a broken relationship with her husband. She builds a cocoon of friend circle who give her gifts. But she ignores the calls of her human birth for which she has to repent when there is no help. In the same way, his sister Eden makes the cocoon of politics. For political purposes, she experiences sex with a labour class youth named Joe Barnett without loving him, and aborts his child. White considers marriage as a sacred institution to meet the social requirements, but castigates illegal relations in life. It is noteworthy that after the death of Joe Barnett in the Civil War in Spain, her

soul awakens, and she also goes to Spain for her participation. In this way, his death becomes the source of her awakening.

In the same way, death of his mother Mrs. Standish paves the way for Elyot Standish to go out of doors and board a bus to see “lovely faces”. In a sense, he moves toward spirituality when the nihilistic grip of his mother is removed. Again in *The Aunt's Story*, Theodora has to wait for the death of her mother so that she could achieve her sublimation. It is to be noted that both Mrs. Goodman and Mrs. Standish love things, not men and nature, which results in disturbance of their family relations. White warns to be careful in this regards. Relations, he says, should be based on love which teaches sacrifice and renunciation.

Like Emerson, White believes that each is needed by all. No man is an island unto himself. It is the message of transcendental philosophy based on connectedness. Through his novels, White delineates the same philosophy for world peace. The characters of his novels suffer due to the grip of materialism and defective angle of thought. But he knows that man is a composite creature. He needs not only goods but God also. Emotional and spiritual development is more important than mental development. The protagonist of the novel *The Living and the Dead* is a 'London intellectual', but he is afraid of life. He feels incompetent to commune with others. White agrees that happiness comes to us if we give happiness to others. We kill our conscience in a state of indifference toward the needy and the poor.

Like Vivekananda, White believes that selfishness is sin, and unselfishness is God. Transcendentalism means to think high both for yourself and your fellow beings. That's why Whitman, in his *Song of Myself*, sings the glories of man. He

declares each man consists of the same elements and has spiritual unity with his fellow beings and the whole life. For him, a leaf of grass is as important as any other object in the universe. It gives rise to closeness. We can solve most of the problems of existence by communication. Mahatma Gandhi said, "I don't know how people find time to hate when it is already too short of loving". In the same spirit, White has shown sympathy for the aborigines. They are ancient residents of Australia, but British colonizers usurped their land, which became the cause of their aggression.

The fifth chapter entitled: *Transcendental Revelation* explores the need of transcendental revelation in the life of man to overcome the sufferings of life and to seek redemption. In his novels *Voss* and *A Fringe of Leaves*, White shows the grievances of the aborigines. Voss tries to make friends with them. But they want to extract vengeance against the White settlers, resulting in the beheading of Voss and the killing of Ellen's husband. Ellen is made captive and stripped of her clothes. She has only a fringe of leaves to cover her private parts. Ellen is the daughter of the labour class who upgrades herself by marrying Austin Roxburgh, 20 years senior to her and even impotent. They mould her in their sophisticated culture. She learns the manners and false pride of high-class society. But after the killing of her husband, she has to follow the commands of the aborigines to save her life. She is tormented and sexually molested. They give her their diseased child to feed milk from her breast. She despises the dirty child, but the motherly instinct already disallowed to her awakens. She is kept on fast for three days, and then she has to eat human flesh to save her life because she is dying of hunger. Now she realizes that she is also a human being like them. Her pride in upper society is gone. Had she not shown

respect to them, they might have killed her. However, she kept a fringe of leaves as a token of civilization, and her suffering made her learn the value of life.

The purpose and meaning in life were now clear to Ellen Roxburgh, like Himmelfarb in the *Riders in the Chariot*. He also had a narrow escape in the Nazi camps. To save his life, he ran toward Sarsaparilla, the imaginary town of Australia. Destiny saved Himmelfarb like Ellen. A young convict Jack Chance helped her escape and escorted her up to the seashore. On the way, the natural atmosphere of Australia revived her instinct, and she succumbed to his sex. Ellen told her that she would ensure his safety. But he slips back into the jungle because he fears that the British soldiers will catch him. On the shore, an Englishman proposes to her and asks for her hand in marriage. She has to decide whether she should be faithful to her dead husband, or the convict Jack Chance who saved her life, or follow her intuition to start afresh as a transformed personality. As directed by her intuition, she accepted his hand. Nature and her suffering had played their role in changing her. She had lost pride in high society. A convict had saved her. Now she believed in the goodness of man and spiritual connection between each and all. White here also gives an epic of life like *The Tree of Man*.

White's novel *Riders in the Chariot* highlights the transcendental theme of unity and divinity of man as the true nature of religion. All the four characters in the novel are sufferers of society. Society fails to understand them like Theodora in the novel *The Aunt's Story*. The Chariot symbolizes the 'Chariot of Redemption'. The four characters are riders. White gives his message of brotherhood through them. Mary Hare is the owner of a shattered villa of her father called "Xanadu", where she

stays. White has taken this name from Coleridge's poem *Kubla Khan*. We find her enjoying the company of nature. Like Theodora, she has associations with nature and learned the lesson of sympathy from her.

Miss Hare's name suggests animal imagery showing the unity of all creation. She sees a stranger sitting under a plum tree. Out of human compassion, she goes to him and enquires about his whereabouts. He replies that his name is Himmelfarb, a Jewish refugee from German. He had a narrow escape from the Nazis in the Concentration Camps. He also tells about his parentage and declares that his mother has been his mentor and guide. She taught him the lesson of true religion and the purpose of man on earth. Due to her inspiration, he became a Jewish priest but is reduced to a "suffering messiah" now. The third character is Mrs. Godbold. As her name suggests, she is a God-fearing lady and a washerwoman. She has the milk of kindness and motherly love for every creature of God. She sympathizes with other sufferers like Himmelfarb, Miss Hare, and Alf Dubbo. Alf Dubbo is an honest painter, and he believes in human virtues and the goodness of God. He has painted a picture of four riders in a chariot driven by four horses. The four characters meet and discuss their perception of life.

Himmelfarb is the most important character and is crucified in a mock crucifixion by the factory workers where he worked. He is considered a religious outcast. Miss Hare is a spinster and considered mad like Theodora, hence an outcast in society. Dubbo is a born outcast like Himmelfarb. All four characters love humanity, but the community has no respect for them. White affirms that they are the selected ones, "the chosen few", to give the message of connectedness, spirituality,

and transcendentalism. Their suffering has contributed to their humility and fellow-feeling. Due to alienation from society, they have found chances for spiritual growth. They get illuminated and learn the mystery of life. They are rightful riders of the Chariot sent by God. White wrote this novel when the War was over, but peace and stability were missing. All four characters believe in the dictum: "Not me but You", which is the spirit of religion. They are ready to take part in the sorrows and sufferings of others, and by helping others seek self-realization.

Outcomes of the Study

The study shows that Patrick White is a transcendental novelist. He believes that life is beautiful and worth-living. He follows Emerson, Kant, and Buddha to postulate the importance of facing the turmoil and tribulations of life. He gives new hope and will to live through his characters like Theodora, Stan, Voss, Himmelfarb, and Ellen Roxburgh. To make people understand the value of life and fight against the forces of nihilism and pessimism, he asserts the value and need of painful experiences. Uncertainty of life, the decline of moral values, and the increasing trends in science and technology bring stress and suffering to individuals today. White believes that human sufferings are inevitable but redemptive. They make us more and more perfect by making us realize our hidden potential.

The study deals with the issues of trauma, fragmentation, loss of self, pessimism, and depression which are common symptoms found in the modern man. White exhorts never to give in before difficulties since life is full of possibilities. He teaches glad acceptance, faith, and hope because problems are a mark of life. The only need is that we should be in tune with nature and the divine. My study

concentrates on the spiritual journey of the characters who struggle in a harsh and nihilistic environment.

Social Relevance of the Study

The topic of the thesis *From Nihilism to Transcendentalism: A Study of the Selected Novels of Patrick White* is ever new but more relevant in the present scenario. “The time is out of joint” says Hamlet, and my topic deals with human problems and searches for their permanent solutions. White gives his message in tri-fold formula: never give up, see the bright side of life and be spiritually sound. A spiritually enriched person can positively tackle any condition of life without losing his balance. During the years 2020 and 2021, we have had a severe attack of Covid-19 which taught the value of life and the need for connectedness. People were depressed, suppressed, alienated, and aloof, and had withdrawn from life. The corona warriors like doctors, pharmacy officers, nurses, and their support staff and police like Stan risked their lives to save the masses. The world is facing the danger of the Third World War. White warns that the human ego can prove havoc, but solutions taken by war are not permanent. For advancement of science, industry and society benefit, the study is relevant as work-life balance which is the need of the hour. Balance between life and work is necessary since the development of a nation depends on the scientists, industrialists and other officials working for the benefit of the society. It is possible only by maintaining balance between life and work for which this study provides a way.

The present study concentrates on transcendentalism which means openness and connectedness. The core point is *Vasudevkatumbkum* which is the only solution

to human problems. The heart should have more consideration over the mind. Science should work under the spirit of religion. It should work for human wellbeing and not for destruction and devastation. Universal brotherhood is the transcendental message of White, Emerson, and Kant to come out from the nihilism into which the world has fallen today. Further research can explore more gems of wisdom in White's novels to create full-fledged human beings out of a 'heap of broken images', as says T.S. Eliot. True happiness lies in glad acceptance of the dualities of life.

The thesis fulfils the objectives with which the present research was undertaken on the topic *From Nihilism to Transcendentalism: A Study of the Selected Novels of Patrick White*. The present study will inspire the new generation to seek redemption in life and will help them to overcome sufferings of life. The texts of White are inspiring and fretful to lead a noble and happy life.

In the postmodern society man is threatened by the forces of chaos and disorder as he is haunted by the wars and the nuclear holocaust. In these circumstances the relevance of this study is paramount in instilling in him the values of redemption and positivism in life. As White's novels have been written in the background of war which appears as an aetiological agent in their life, it echoes how war and conflict is an atrocious and avoidable phenomenon which torments human beings. Ostensibly, it sends a clear message for peaceful mutual co-existence i.e. *Parasparopagraho Jivanam*.

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