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Suffering as Realization in the Selected Novels of Patrick White

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Abstract:

Patrick White is the most prominent, literary guru of the Australian literary circle whose arrival marked the most important stage in the growth and development of Australian literature. To White, Art is both expression and communication. As communication, White's task in his novels, as expressed in his work *The Solid Mandala*, is to convey the essence of his poetic vision, to make the individual see. White seeks knowledge by both intellectual deliberation and intuitive identification. His art is, however not simply a vehicle of knowledge but a mode of knowing. He believes that human imagination has Divine powers. In fact, he dramatises, through his novels, the human imagination not merely as "partaking in the activity of God, but as replacing it." With this in mind in each of his work there is a search for ultimate meaning, where a plain, awkward, ugly life acquires a rich escape into idealised selfhood, and the evolutionary development of his characters toward a "superman" state.

White's process towards "knowledge" becomes not primarily a process of the artist's making, but rather a process of the artist's discovering the ultimate frontiers of human existence. He believes that, if the doors of perception were cleansed, everything would appear to man as it is, that is infinite and his artistic function is a matter of penetrating the hard shell of social habit until he exposes that peculiar vibration which makes each person what he is. Hence in White's novels reality is all inward and it concentrate on the elected characters realising their fullest potential and each elected character makes a further step towards becoming the super being. They are poet-seers, to convey splendor transcendence above human realities, gifted with a peculiar insight into the nature of reality, rescuing man from void of his culture, and involved in a process that enables them to affirm Divine essence of the human condition. The unconscious remains the true reservoir of man's spiritual energies. It is necessary therefore for those who take the inward path not to forsake the world altogether, but to return to it with new insight into the hidden divinity.

The analytical study is aimed at expounding how the protagonists understand their problems or mistakes; undergo or endure suffering that enables them to realise the vision of their strong self. It discusses the novels of Patrick White namely: *Happy Valley*, *The Living and the Dead*, *The Aunt's Story*, *The Tree of Man*, *Voss*, *Riders in the Chariot*, *The Solid Mandala*, *The Vivisector*, *The Eye of the Storm* and *A Fringe of Leaves* and is projected to illustrate how the characters in all the select novels make an attempt towards achieving realisation by undergoing a process of transition through the sufferings undergone physically or mentally. From the epigraph of his first novel, which describes moral progress as being dependent upon the law of suffering, White's writing demonstrates the necessity of suffering in human life. White affirms the life of spirit by hinting at the life's hollowness. His vision encompasses not merely the inevitability of

suffering in man's experience but the possibility that suffering may be both exemplary and redemptive, for the individual who suffers and for all those involved and gracefully embracing it can build a stronger awareness and provide wisdom.

Keywords: Patrick White, Suffering as Realization

The current study entitled *Suffering as Realization in the Selected Novels of Patrick White* is an analytical attempt of White's novels in which the protagonists undergo suffering that enables them to realise their strong self and expounds how Patrick White makes a concerted effort to bring in the painful experiences of the protagonists to discover themselves and their struggle to know the extent of their spiritual resources. The search for self-realisation and various forms of the concept of knowledge are the major themes; they are linked with the questions of man's free will to decide his own fate, to govern his own life. The dilemma whether the individual is completely trapped by his own nature or whether he has the capacity to dominate it, is seen through his novels, in the light of man's duty to realise his abilities as well as his limitations and act accordingly. Patrick White had said:

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

From this perspective, realism merely confirmed the status quo; could not heighten life. Man is in need of some aid to uplift him. Man is an existent who lacks common measure with other existents. Though free, he must liberate himself; though human, he must humanise himself. One may recognise his own human spirits by his capacity to step inside his own self and look back. Moments of self-transcendence takes place when one not only notices the beautiful sky and clouds, but in addition while one notices his/her own self. Such moments of vision or transcendence might occur spontaneously or one can create moments of vision as one develops spiritually. This study reveals how an individual learns to open the doors of his being and look deeply into his own self. If he actually spends considerable time looking inward, such exploration would be constructive and that is what the select novels deal with.

Happy Valley

Happy Valley is remarkable as a first novel, with its great theme of progress through suffering supported by a firm structure and strong characterisation. It was written in 1939 and won Australian Literature Society's gold medal. It tells of a married doctor's love affair with a music teacher. Here, White portrays suffering in human relationships intensified by life in a small Australian mountain town. The novel can be seen as White's emergent talent for exploring the consciousness of outwardly ordinary people with spiritual aspirations and for working with the symbolic possibilities of Australian landscape. The main theme of this novel is suffering, that indispensable condition of our being, out of which joy or death may come. The story takes place in the mid-to-late 1930s. Happy Valley is a township in New South Wales at the foot of the Snowy Mountains. It used to be a gold-mining boom town, but then it's sparsely populated, a sleepy bush town with little going on. It's a town of few amusements, just the pub, the weekly picture hall and the annual races, and in a place where everyone knows everyone else, the arrival

of a stranger (Hagan) is a big event. What really raises interest though is when bored men and women start to look around for something to distract them from the torpor of everyday existence - then infidelity is really interesting. But as the name implies, Happy Valley is not a particularly happy place: most of the townspeople are prey to frustration, disappointment and boredom. White draws a skillful picture of the isolated town, small and run-down as:

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 particularly perverse. (HV 138)

For Oliver Halliday, the town's recently arrived doctor, Happy Valley is the embodiment of pain. Happy Valley is a place of dreams and secrets, of snow and ice and wind. In this remote little town, perched in its landscape of desolate beauty, everybody has a story to tell about loss and longing and loneliness, about their passion to escape. At the heart of the story are the attempts some characters make to break free of the crushing gravitational pull of the town. "I must get away", thinks Dr. Oliver Halliday, Alys Browne, and Sidney Furlow. Dr. Halliday, trapped in a loveless marriage with an older woman, is looking for a transfer to Queensland, but is distracted by a blossoming friendship. Alys Browne wants to escape to California, and is waiting for her ship (or her shares) to come in. Many want to leave the town - it's doubtful though whether they'll actually ever manage it. But Happy Valley is not a place that can be easily left, and White's vivid characters, with their distinctive voices, move bit by bit towards sorrow and acceptance.

The incident of the beating of a child by an overwrought teacher leads eventually to murder, death and the frustration of plans in the lives of people connected with the incident. Life of course, is like that: the universe seems at times to strike people down with blind malignance. But Patrick White obviously wants to say something more than this through the select novel. As an epigraph to the novel he quotes some words of Mahatma Gandhiji:

It is impossible to do away with the law of suffering which is the one indispensable condition of our being. Progress is to be measured by the amount of suffering undergone . . . the purer the suffering the greater is the progress. (Brissenden 16)

The main theme of the novel as stated in the epigraph describes suffering as the one indispensable condition of the being and speaks of measuring progress by the amount of suffering undergone. 'Suffering' and 'progress' are the key words. The protagonist of the story, Oliver Halliday, by his suffering - firstly through alienation from his family and secondly, through separation from Alys, his lady love, he achieves a new inner life, or moral progress, to use Gandhiji's term. The solution of Aly's and Oliver's liaison is not the sentimental one of escape to California, nor the tragic death but the acceptance of pain and suffering, and its transformation and sublimation into love for all men. Oliver's discovery that this is possible prefigures Holstius' advice to Theodora Goodman in *The Aunt's Story* that she should accept the two irreconcilable halves of joy and suffering, life and death. Oliver Halliday's confident belief,

that there is “a mystery of unity about the world” (HV 166) which underlies its temporal expression in cleavage and pain, reflects White’s own conviction. The beneficial effects of suffering, is developed well in this novel.

The Living and the Dead

Happy Valley was followed in 1941 by *The Living and the Dead*. In that somnambulistic novel, White attempted to establish his credentials as a European high modernist. It is an interesting sombre family portrait of life during the outbreak of Second World War. Set in England in the early part of the twentieth century, the novel is based on the theme how emotional death is communicated from one generation to another. As the title embodies itself the novel deals with two groups of people, the spiritually living and the living dead, but it leaves the two groups unrelated to each other. This seems to follow of necessity from the conception of the dead as totally isolated, unable to make contact with other human beings. As in *Happy Valley*, White shows in *The Living and the Dead* the gulf between the living and the dead being bridged by love and redemptive suffering.

In *The Living and the Dead* the relation between the two groups is simply one of contrast, a great gulf standing between the two groups. The horror of Elyot’s state of living death is related to the horror of pain and suffering in Spain, and to the destination of physical death for man and beast alike, identified with the dead dog staked in the marsh. But this also points up the feeling of distance, the conception of the problem as remote-in Spain, rather than in London. The attempt by the “living” Joe and “dead” Eden to come to grips with death and suffering simply results in their leaving the stage.

Set in London, mainly in the thirties, the most part of the novel deals with three main characters: Elyot Standish, his sister Eden and their mother, and their response to life. Mrs. Standish, getting old, delicately sensual, charming and faintly ridiculous, is a finely observed and beautifully sustained piece of characterisation. The main emphasis falls on her two children: Elyot, a donnish, reserved and detached young man who holds himself aloof from life, participating in it and observing it without ever committing himself to it; and Eden, who throws herself impulsively and unselfconsciously into experience.

In the opening, White uses the image of a cocoon to indicate withdrawal from life, and connects this to the plain descriptive meaning that Elyot likes to remain shut in his room. Near the end of the novel the cocoon image begins to expand and move towards a statement of hypothetical identity. The white cocoon of Elyot’s lit room at night begins to assume the aspects of tomb or grave clothes. Within this receptacle Elyot is contained, and into it washes “no intrusion from the outer darkness” (LD 283). When the cocoon becomes a “private shell” (LD 307), Elyot refuses even to attempt to understand or accept his mother’s fall from grace. He lacks the emotional energy to condemn and is content, like the dying Mrs. Standish, to abandon the incident to an atticful of sordid mistakes. The attic, repository of dead objects, seems to provide a suitable graveyard.

After Mrs. Standish’s death, Elyot drifts in a state of Limbo, instead of the isolation of the tomb-like white cocoon. The queasy drunk whom Elyot had rejected in the first chapter is “accepted” (LD 333) and is part of himself. The invisible but impassable walls which have divided Elyot from other people throughout the book started dissolving. As the novel closes,

Elyot leaves the house in Ebury Street in which he had existed for so long and walks out, not merely into the London night, but into life. He has no apparent goal, but he is at least liberated from his family and the past. In the end it is pictured, a bus received Elyot Standish. He was bound nowhere in particular. There were no reservations of time or place, no longer even the tyranny of a personal routine. He felt like someone who had been asleep, and had only just woken.

The novel ends with Elyot embracing the lost world of his childhood. His former life is over. He has at last broken free from his ego-bound state. He feels distance unfurling; the bus journey attempts to suggest a spiritual journey or quest which is to reach safe harbour at last. The journey into unconscious regions of the psyche is crucial though sometimes perilous undertaking in the life of the individual. When it occurs, psychic energy is withdrawn from the social arena and sinks down into the inner world, activating primordial instinctual forces. This can lead to a pattern of renewal, where the individual is overwhelmed by what he encounters in the lower realm. In the select novels of this chapter White has strived a lot to bring in theme of progression.

The Aunt's Story

Similarly, the novels, *The Aunt's Story* and *The Tree of Man* make clear, Reconciliation involves a very long and painful journey, addressing the pain and suffering of the victims, understanding the motivations of offenders, bringing together estranged communities, trying to find a path to justice, truth, ultimatum and peace. Reconciliation cannot be imposed from outside. It is *within*. One has to come across lot of sufferings to undergo the spiritual reconciliation. To a mind that is bamboozled by materiality's aggressive and insistent attempts to hold life and substance hostage to its limitations, spiritual healing seems unbelievable. To experience that spiritual healing, the harmonising power of God, one needs to embrace spiritual nature. It is a tremendous relief and uplift to obtain glimpses of our immaculate and outstanding spiritual wholeness and deal with how the protagonists achieve spiritual reconciliation or spiritual harmony through the sufferings they have undergone.

By *The Aunt's Story* the individual is made to see the world through the eyes of the central character, Theodora Goodman, but at the same time it is never allowed to forget that most people look at things in a very different way, and that Theodora herself must appear to them as rather strange and puzzling, a person at once comic and pathetic, and always faintly disturbing. Throughout *The Aunt's Story* the inner and outer realities seek to become identified; a distinct line is drawn between what actually happens to Theodora and what happens within her. Perhaps such distinctions are unreal, and deliberately intended by White to be so, for all reality is no more than a perceived reality, and the stream of experience which goes to make up the individual self makes distinctions between what has its own tangible existence and what does not. At the same time the other part of self which seeks to establish integrity and order within the stream of experience, to wrest from its significance and spiritual or physical pleasure, is vitally concerned with identity, its own and that of the outside world. Yet identity implies fixity and restriction, from which the self struggles to escape, and from this struggle emerge tension and conflict. Thus, at the deepest level, alienation of the individual from the outer 'reality' is seen as alienation within the individual himself, as he struggles to reconcile that part of the self which seeks to impose identity, constancy, with that part which seeks to escape it. It seems the deciding factor in the struggle will be the inner spiritual and emotional resources of the individual.

In the case of Theodora Goodman, the outcome of her journey to the solitary land “in which no fellow footfall is ever heard” is ambiguous, but in order fully to understand the nature of the ambiguity, close attention must be paid to the progressive stages of the journey. Awkward, shy, proud and physically not very attractive, Theodora is one of those who can never deceive herself into forgetting that “there is no lifeline to other lives.” The basic source of Theodora’s isolation, however, is a peculiar honesty and intensity of vision she observes herself and others with a naked, innocent and painfully uncompromising eye, which cuts her off from her fellows, and which finally drives her into the comfortable refuge of insanity. The man who was given his dinner prophetically tells Theodora, “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” (AS 32). And Miss Spofforth, her teacher, recognises that Theodora is one of those who will see clearly, beyond the bone, but who will suffer because, although honest, she is barren; lacking the artist’s vanity, which is moved finally to express itself in objects, she will be rewarded only by moments of passing affection, through which the opaque world will become transparent.

Theodora is the first of White’s *illuminati*, the forerunner of Laura and Voss in Voss, of mad Miss Hare and Himmelfarb in *Riders in the Chariot*, indeed of all those who have been at once blessed and cursed with the ability to see with unusual clarity; and who have as well, perhaps, a sense of perfection, an awareness, of the infinite in everything, an intuition that behind or immanent in the world of ordinary, imperfect experience there is another world of timeless order and beauty. As her name implies, Theodora Goodman has a special virtue, and it is the gift of God. For Theodora this sense of otherness is awakened first by her vision of Meroe.

As a child Theodora may be able to accept the realities of ordinary life, peacefully and unquestioningly, but as a woman she finds them increasingly difficult. Living in the world of normality becomes in the end an unbearable torture, far more terrifying than the legendary landscape of Meroe; and as she begins to lose her hold on sanity the image of Ethiopia, black and burning, increasingly dominates her imagination. “I have seen and done,” she writes to her sister, “and the time has come at last to return to Abyssinia” (AS 269). She in fact returns to Australia from a world tour; but in the middle of America she leaves the train that has been moving across the endless summer plains of yellow corn and wanders off into her own black Abyssinian inner world. Meroe has triumphed: she has indeed returned to her Abyssinia. But Abyssinia means much more than madness as Abyssinia is the dream of perfection, the dream which in Theodora’s case has led to madness because she cannot reconcile joy and sorrow or flesh and marble, or illusion and reality, or life and death.

Theodora continues to experience her own defeat as fulfillment. She is happy enough to be consumed. The savagery of the maternal source is no longer felt or recognised by her. At an unnamed station in the south-west of America Theodora abandons her train and her plans to return to Australia, and walks off into the beckoning landscape of Mother Nature. She has found her Abyssinia. In this select novel, the dragon to be slain is within the heroine. With the nautilus broken, the hotel burnt, the illusions exposed, Theodora moves to the end of her journey. She is simply made aware that the state of being is a state of tensions, disparities, irreconcilables, which she in her madness is finally taught to accept. While resisting the idea that one thing is irreconcilable with another, the self is divided; acceptance of this irreconcilability is essential to serenity, the pure state that Theodora has at last achieved, at the expense of her own identity, by the end of her journey. The irreconcilables, once accepted, become complements.

White represents through *Theodora* the qualities within a man which one must conquer. The illusion of enlightenment has exerted tremendous power, both within and outside the fictional frame. For *Theodora's* quest, White uses four levels of experience - from the innocence of childhood, through experience, suffering and death, to redemption. The successful quest has few main stages: conflict, death-struggle, and discovery or exaltation of the average through suffering as means.

The Tree of Man

White wanted the next novel *The Tree of Man* to suggest "every possible aspect of life, through the lives of an ordinary man and woman," and at the same time to reveal the extraordinary behind the ordinary.

Stan Parker, the central figure of the novel, carves himself a home out of the wilderness, and brings to it his wife Amy. They raise two children, both of whom bring disappointment and mortification. They experience the calamities of flood, fire and drought. They drift apart. Stan goes to the war, Amy commits casual adultery. They come together again; they grow old and die. If these are the 'elementals' - loneliness, hardship, sorrow, joy, death - then they are equally present in *The Aunt's Story*. The difference lies in the fact that *Theodora* is her own world, and the different patterns that emerge are those of her own mind and imagination; in *The Tree of Man* these 'elementals' are given their embodiment in a changeless yet ever changing setting, an outer world whose exterior reality regulates to a great extent the interior reality, and with which the individual must come to terms.

The novel opens with a man alone, except for his horse and dog, in the virgin bush. He establishes a farm, marries, has children and grandchildren, and dies. By the time of his death his farm has been reduced to a pocket of land surrounded by the enveloping flood of suburbia. Patrick White's main intention, clearly, is to give a comprehensive picture of the life of a man and his family, a group who can be taken as representative of common humanity, but whose lives, like the two towering stringy barks, stand out with a distinct shape of their own against the involved and meaningless tangle of society.

The protagonist of the novel Stan Parker enjoys an ecstatic communion with the Earth Mother, even though he is virtually obliterated in the course of his worship. It is clear that Parker is 'married' to Nature, and that Amy, his wife, is merely his house-mate and child-bearer. She hardly ever engages or arouses his deep emotional self, but remains strangely external to his true erotic life. The release they find in each other is temporary and in the end inadequate, not through any selfishness or egotism, but because the man and the woman seek in two different directions their release and fulfillment.

To Stan, both son and daughter are strangers to him, and Amy's efforts to penetrate cause only the further removal of her husband who, no longer believed anything could be effected by human intervention. Despite Stan's increasing tendency for isolation, his struggle with a God he cannot understand and who refuses to reveal himself is not brought to a head until Amy's adultery, after which Stan goes through his own dark night of the soul on the streets of Sydney, spewing his God into the gutter in complete and abject despair. But through Amy's act and his own rejection, further barriers are broken: the opposition of God, which has withdrawn from him, left him altogether light and carefree and at this stage, Stan's detachment started evolving.

The most memorable aspect is the rendering of the marriage of these two people is the way in which he suggests the waxing and waning not so much of their love for each other and for their children, as of their understanding. Love is there, it is what each seeks in the other and it is what grows between them. But they are driven by an even deeper hunger to communicate, a hunger which is satisfied rarely and imperfectly, and which, especially for the woman, remains a source of continual frustration. They never attain the rapport they long for with their children; and, as the years pass, Stan and Amy, though still loving and needing each other, become locked more and more securely within the circles of their own souls.

The climax of the novel comes with the illumination that is granted to Stan Parker as an old man in the moments before his death. A great tenderness of understanding rose in his chest and it was clear that one, and no other figure, is the answer to all sums. But this revelation is incommunicable. It dies with him, and his wife is left alone, dimly comprehending that she has lost her husband without ever really understanding or sharing in the most secret and vital elements of his life.

This is a vision of perfect bliss, the pure caressed and nurtured by Mother Nature. As Parker is drawn towards death, his experience of unity becomes overwhelming. He sees his 'God' reflected in every minute object, in every blade of grass, ant, or crack in the concrete path. Stan is neither saint, nor seer, nor sceptic. He is an eternal youth caught up in an uprising of the unconscious which is more pathological than mystical. Stan's death and illumination are credible and his remoteness, his essentially solitary condition, has some effect on Amy too. She lacks detachment, and is for the most part lost if she has nothing to do. Lacking the powers of concentration and the rigorous of mind that might allow her to escape the claims of the contingent, she absorbs but does not retain. She experiences death many times, but of her own, she has already suffered a kind of death in her own marriage, and afterwards remains inviolate. Disengagement from him leads her to possible revelation. She discovers that, "if she could have held his head in her hands and looked into the skull at his secret life . . . she might have been placated" (AS 150). In the end she stalks through the boundless garden with her gammy leg and destructive manner, interrupting Stan's quietude and communion with Nature. Stan's quest for permanence is also a quest for true knowledge, the spiritual wisdom which enables man to perceive the truth. Thus the basic image for Stan's quest, as reflected in the novel's title, is not progress along a road or way, but growth. And the way is inward, coil by coil, towards the central core.

Riders in the Chariot

Riders in the Chariot is White's most comprehensive achievement, which digs deep and gives the imagination a vision of transcendent love with, more impact on the inward eye. It symbolises an identity of humanity and divinity and all the four central characters can rightly be called as the sides of the soul of a giant Everyman, which is seen in this select novel as a divine quaternary. The four main protagonists of this novel: Miss. Hare, Mrs. Godbold, Mordecai Himmelfarb and Alf Dubbo symbolises the soul of everyman and makes clear the idea that God driven world without God is at its most desolate. It reveals the idea that suffering through religious experience is used as a tool, for man's struggle to transcend the dreary, everyday life.

Riders in the Chariot is the story of the lives of four loosely connected people whose common link is the mystic experience of the chariot and traces their lives towards the point where they realise they share the same vision. All the four main characters are outsiders with deeply different lives made more difficult because they are religious visionaries. Each experience the same vision of four horses drawing a chariot into a shining future. By taking part in the sorrows and the sufferings of the others and by actively indulging themselves in helping others all the four characters achieve the vision of realisation.

Voss

The novel Voss is recognised as the crowning achievement of White in re - creating the land, the settlers and the aborigines, and in presenting a separate Australian identity. The novel Voss can rightly be termed as a study of Man and depicts the alienation of the individual from society and the nature of 'reality' perceived behind appearance, in a much more complex way. This novel mainly revolves around the protagonist Voss and, deals with the life of Australian aborigines and as well as their emerging life, society and culture, and strives to explore the vital wholeness that can be found in human relationship by undergoing suffering.

Voss, White's most demanding and most impressive novel is about an exploration in general and as much an exploration in particular. It is the tragic story of a terrible journey and it clearly portrays throughout, the individual's struggle to find self, his search for a deeper understanding and a realisation of his potential. The hero of this novel remains exploring in an Australian environment, a mind, a way of thinking, which is foreign territory to most Australians.

The protagonist Voss, in his mad ambition to ascend to become God, is busy cutting himself off from all that is merely human, or rather, personal and that is his pride in imagining himself as God, he is blind to the reality. As the novel progresses, he was left in a desert for exploration of the land and there, the desert becomes the place of salvation. The desert defeats Voss's claim to be God and awakens in him a knowledge of the true God who is not merely a projection of Voss's image of himself but something totally another from the world, cruel to the extent that He is absent from the world, but kind enough that, He releases Voss at last from self - seeking. The desert which Voss went in exile for exploration is the key to his success of achieving the vision of realisation of God. The journey is set as both physical and a spiritual one, not only an expedition into the interior of the continent, but a quest into the inner being of his own self. At first, he is shown as arrogant, complacent, and is determined to follow his own ideas. He concedes rarely to the opinion of his fellow expeditioners, and is always guided by his "pure - will". Voss along with his explorers cross draught plagued desert, and then water - logged lands until they retreat to a cave where they lie for weeks waiting for the rain to stop. As the expedition progresses, the travelling party splits in two and nearly all members eventually perish. In course of the journey his pride is humbled by being one with suffering in all directions and when caught by native aborigines he lends his hand in a friendly way, but mistook by one of the native settlers, is killed. Though Voss is killed, he attains the realisation of vision of God being human. Traditionally, desert is a place of suffering and hardship and in Voss it is a place where deep truths are revealed.

Whether one is illuminated or consumed is according to White determined not by God, but by the quality of one's own life and that is what White clearly recreates in Voss. After great anguish, Voss dies. But, his soul is reborn in others as he expands into a legend. Voss does not

change in himself; rather, he changes his notions about himself, due to the sufferings he undergone and in the end successfully thrives in achieving his vision of realisation of God in the suffering of others.

The Solid Mandala

The next novel taken for study *The Solid Mandala* explores another world, the world which its first two epigraphs describe as being 'in this one' and 'wholly within'. Starting from the facts of death and suffering, the novel examines the meaning of life, permanence, and freedom. This great theme is developed through probing man's twin consciousness or the apparent duality of his nature. The twin brothers, Arthur and Waldo Brown, embody man's flesh and spirit, reason and will, and more importantly, the interdependence and essential unity of these attributes.

In *The Solid Mandala* the inner life assumes personified form in the figure of Arthur Brown, the retarded shadow-brother who urges his intellectual twin, Waldo, to see exactly what is taking place in the inner world. Arthur strives to show Waldo that he is caught up in the hidden complex-the subtle knot at the centre of the glass marble-and that he must extricate himself from it before any spiritual maturity can be achieved. Arthur suggests a way out of the bondage by means of a careful consideration of inner contents. The twin brothers, with their contradictory characters: the well-adjusted but spiritually barren and the clumsy but intuitively percipient. Their alien status or deviation brings them persecution and suffering but who in a mystical way are also the elect, victorious in their misfortune. In the novel a glass marble performs the same function for the "simpleton" Arthur: "God, he said, and the spit spattered on Waldo's face, is a kind of sort of rock crystal." The shiny marble, with its solid knot of colour at the centre, points to the solidity of the spiritual life which just comes, as a gift of grace to those who are simple in heart. It comes from a simple acceptance of being accepted. Broadly speaking this novel is an actual world set against the realm of imagination, the physical against the intellectual which portrays individual's struggle to find self, his search for a deeper understanding and a realisation of his potential.

The Vivisector

The novel *The Vivisector* taken for study in this chapter follows the life of a Sydney painter, Hurtle Duffield, since the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. As in his other novels White explains the hero's journey through the interior regions of his soul. It is concerned with the artist's quest for self-identity. As Robert S. Baker puts it: "The theme of *The Vivisector* most exclusively stated, is the intellectual and psychological maturation of an artist evoked in terms of the dialectic between self and world, mind and nature, imagination and reality of dialectic, moreover energised by Duffield's decisive experience at Sunningdale and dramatised in a series of crisis." (During 215)

The novel is entirely about the gradual development of Hurtle as a painter whose spiritual quest is almost satisfied and reaches near perfection towards the end. Born as a son of working class parents, Hurtle is sold to an affluent bourgeois family, whom he discourages by running away to the war fought in Europe during World War I. Returning to Australia, he establishes himself as a professional painter. Urged by an artistic instinct, he exploits his successive lovers for their forms, but fails to reciprocate their affection. In his old age, he finally finds his spiritual heir in a juvenile pianist, who makes use of his painting to nurture the artist in her. A second

stroke fatally attacks him while he is working on his last painting of unattainable indigo which he glimpsed during a first seizure. The Vivisector brings in the sufferings of the artist Hurtle Duffield from his childhood where he finds in last moments the “blesses blue” for which he has been searching (indi-ggoddd) - a wonderful combination of indigo and God.

The Eye of the Storm

The next novel *The Eye of the Storm* presents the dialectical struggle between the two sides of the self, in the protagonist's life, which forms the fundamental rhythm of existence where, White had striven to promote the creation of what human wholeness is. This novel embodies the fundamental urges and passions like vanity, love, courage, filial ingratitude, justice and inequity, hatred and kindness shared by people of all cultures and times. It deals with White's favorite theme of human relationship and gives a vivid picture of life within the family. Mrs. Elizabeth Hunter, the protagonist, dominates the novel. She is the centre and the spring of the novel and the novel opens by showing her as a bed-ridden and practically blind, dying in her magnificent house in Sydney. The novel progresses backward from there and her children Basil and Dorothy had no care or love for their mother. Instead, they were led by greed. Material gain is the essence and source that inspires their behavior. All the major human relationships in the novel appear to be governed by an obsession with material gains and sensual pleasures.

In the novel, Mrs. Hunter kills the very love and life of her husband Alfred and her children, Basil and Dorothy. Neither she was true to her husband, nor was she lovable to her children. Similarly, they too. She is an utter failure in the way she brought up her children. When she was bed-ridden there was none to care her and even when her children visited her, she knows the purpose of their visit. She is the embodiment of both vice and virtue and she is both, a torturer and a healer. Mrs. Hunter is the victim of her own valuating ambitions and White uses the storm, as suffering, to form the integral part of the novel's strength and meaning, its design and vision. The “self” and “pride” of Mrs. Hunter is shunned away when she was allowed to face the terrible storm in the ‘Warmings Island’. It is that physical/natural disaster which brings in her, the peace for her restless soul. By being hurled into the still centre of the storm that tore and hammered her, she realises universal parity of existence.

Suffering, either physically or mentally, helps her to surrender her ego and, she achieves the realisation of spiritual vision through the suffering that she had undergone. Her early defeat is transformed by a spiritual triumph, she became conscious of the changeless divine presence and her self is refreshed and redeemed by encountering the Other. That moment of oneness joins her to creation; in both thought and feeling, she identifies with the surrounding wreckage. Later, in her death bed she refers to that state of pure living bliss she was now and then allowed to enter. That consciousness relaxes her will and lets her blind woman's inner eye take charge. She could achieve that vision of the realisation of the Other not by intuition but by real suffering, which in the end helps to rest her soul in peace.

Surrendering ego, Mrs. Hunter has transcended judgment and division and has merged with the world spirit and achieved the exalted state. She no longer needs to impose herself. But by the silencing of the will, she strengthens and sharpens the will. As Voss realises his vision of reality through his sufferings in the desert, Mrs. Hunter achieves the realisation, through the suffering she had undergone in the storm.

A Fringe of Leaves

The novel *A Fringe of Leaves* is felt genuinely identified with the problematic that poses the central character Ellen's quest for self and the changes she faces along the way. It explores Ellen's life as the colonial child, one who has been enslaved, imprisoned, forced to use the oppressors' code and managed to twist it in order to express her identity. At first, Ellen anxiously lives with all of her personalities, but it takes her time and pain to attain a balance among them. She is finally able to understand she is all of them simultaneously and she reaches a sense of fulfillment when all her personalities have spoken and have defined themselves. The integration of all of them has as its result a new unique identity which sets Ellen free.

Ellen is fully conscious of the fact she will never belong as she identifies with all of them at the same time, and with none. And as she adopts yet another identity, it is evident that her eagerness to break with her previous personality proves obsolete, since essential parts of her original self invade her later acquired alter-egos and will not let her dispose of what she has experienced. Ellen is a combination of all those stages she went through, and all of them add up a new trait in her character, imprinting it with such bitterness and energy as time will not erode. Through this novel White shows how Ellen strives for discovering her identity and state and being admitting her membership of a community of human need, and despite the extremity of the event, felt she had received grace at last.

Conclusion

All the novels taken for study explore the sufferings of the central characters, not merely the sufferings but also the kind of vision or realisation achieved through that suffering. It depicts man in his struggle to escape that emptiness which surrounds and envelops him. To him suffering, salvation and atonement are leading concerns and, he argues throughout his works that, "the purer the suffering, the greater the progress". All the characters in the select novels traces the obvious necessity of realisation achieved through suffering and also points out equally discernible difficulties. The actions in the novels move primarily towards the formation of an ideal or redeemed society and states, the purer the consciousness the faster its progression through the tunnel, and the longer its vision of the divine. It makes clear that the ultimate ability to discover meaning and truth comes from the individual and from a realisation of that power and will gained through self-knowledge and acceptance of his capacities as well as limitations. Suffering produces endurance, endurance produces character and character produces hope, and White makes clear through all the select novels that pain leads to spiritual growth. It makes clear, that realisation through suffering is the only apt answer to the gimmicks life play on us. This study bears the title *Suffering as Realization* and it focuses on the evolution of White's thinking as a writer. The title is justified since the protagonists achieve the vision of realisation through suffering.

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