CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Literature is broadly defined as anything that is written. There are a few characteristic features that differentiate literature from other writings. In a literary piece of writing, language is handled with utmost care to derive at the desired effect. It is written in any one literary genre like poetry, prose fiction or drama. It expresses ideas of permanent or universal interest. The main purpose of a literary work is to educate and entertain. In the fast moving and competitive world, having experience in all spheres and gaining firsthand knowledge is a Herculean task. And in this tedious process, one may avoid the pitfalls and wastage of precious time by learning the experiences of others. This valuable guidance and experiences are available in large number in literature.

One of the literary genres, the drama was originally introduced by the Greek. In Greek the word drama means action. The reader has to concentrate and involve himself in the process of reading and comprehending to get educated and entertained from the genres like prose fiction and poetry. On the other hand, in drama, it is enough on the part of the audience to come to the theatre. The characters are introduced and they take part in the action. In the course, the characters get themselves involved in the complications and there is
a rise in action, which reaches a climax, followed by a fall in the action and the unraveling of the plot takes place. Drama is more alluring because the audience need not actively take much effort to decipher the intention of the writer. It is this quality, in drama, that makes a striking contrast with that of other forms of literature. Drama is meant for a live performance, which is directed at a live audience. It communicates in the present. Even, an illiterate can watch a drama, get educated and entertained from it. The action in drama plays a crucial role. But, in other genres, words are more important. Even if an audience misses a word, he could make out the meaning from the gestures and the acting of the artists. In the other literary genres, one has to entirely depend upon the words to understand the work.

During the 12\textsuperscript{th} Century, such an effective medium was used by the clergy to spread religious ideas in England. These plays were called as Mystery plays and Miracle plays. The Biblical stories were enacted and presented to the people in Mystery plays. The Miracle play portrayed the lives and miracles carried out by the saints, with the aid of the divine power. As the clergy were well-versed in the Bible, they took part in the action. People evinced interest to watch these plays. As there was a lack of sufficient space, drama moved out of the church to city streets. Later, the language Latin was replaced by English and the common laymen became the performers. Slowly, there was also a shift in the subject dealt with.
In the later form, the Morality plays, the characters employed were symbolical, allegorical or abstract; mental and moral qualities like Good, Evil, Perseverance etc were personified. Moral qualities were highlighted and the struggle between good and evil was introduced. This theme was further intensified and used effectively in the Elizabethan Age. The dramatic form was still more perfected by the University wits. They mainly chose tragic themes. They raised the subject matter of drama to a higher level and changed the concept of tragedy, by introducing heroes from among the common people. Christopher Marlowe, who was generally accepted as the father of English tragedy, influenced Shakespeare profoundly. The Elizabethan Age was the golden period in all walks of life and the theatre was no exception. The period witnessed one of the world’s greatest dramatists of all time, William Shakespeare. Age cannot wither nor custom stale the infinite varieties of the characteristic traits that he displayed in his writings. His plays are popular, even today, because of their universality in appeal. In his writings, he demonstrated a great understanding of human nature. He handled the English language exceptionally well. He is the most often quoted writer in world literature, because of his ability to turn profound thoughts into concise expression. He is a master without competitors in characterization. None can forget Hamlet, Macbeth, Othello, Brutus and the infinite characters created by this illustrious writer.
After Shakespeare, there was a gradual decline in drama. The successors of Shakespeare also followed the Elizabethan tradition. They adopted the spirit of the renaissance in their own way. They concentrated on the revenge theme. They followed Seneca. They gave a political touch to the theme of revenge. Beaumont and Fletcher carried further, the theme of revenge to the highest peak. They portrayed the dark side of human life. Webster showed blood and violent actions on the stage. It was Ben Jonson, who was an exception to show the positive side of human nature. The Puritan had strict religious views. They were against social activities and decided to close the theatres, in the year 1642.

In 1660, Charles II returned to England from his exile in France, restoring the monarchy. This period was a time of renewal for the British theatre. During the restoration period, comedy plays were given primary importance. The prominent players of the period, Sir George Etherege, William Wycherley and William Congreve, portrayed elegant ladies and gentlemen of the day, in their conversation and their amorous intrigues. The restoration comedy is notorious for its sexual explicitness. In the history of English drama, it was during this period that a professional lady actress was introduced. During the eighteenth century, the literary form, novel was practiced widely. In the second half of the 18th Century, Oliver Goldsmith’s and Sheridan’s contributions to the stage were noteworthy. They devoted their attention on the conventions of the Restoration period. They focused in creating effective plot
for their plays and they succeeded in erasing the indecent expressions of the restoration plays.

During the early 19th Century, poetry and fiction became the medium of expression for the romantics. They tried dramas but, were not so successful. With the advent of Industrial Revolution and the advancement in science, there was a transformation in the people’s way of life and personality. As a result, a new approach towards the life became essential from the dramatist side. Norwegian dramatist Ibsen’s social and psychological dramas’ influence on the English stage was phenomenal. Pinero depicted a new sexual frankness in his plays following Ibsen. During this time, people led a monotonous, mechanical life. Oscar Wilde opined that a writer’s task was to make the people come out of the mechanical life style, by stimulating a more intense experience.

During the 20th Century, Bernard Shaw made a significant contribution to the English theatre. He had been called as the father of the theatre of ideas in England. He expressed his thoughts and ideas to overcome the problems that affected the people of England and humanity at large. His aim was to establish righteousness and decency in social relationships. John Galsworthy also concentrated on the social problems. He portrayed the present day men as powerless before the strength of the social system. J.M. Barrie played an important role, in providing a novel theme for the London theatre. He
satirically depicted the man’s common unwillingness to face change. J.M. Synge on the other hand presented his intimate understanding of Irish life and admired the vitality of peasants.

T.S. Eliot revived the poetic drama and fused contemporary themes in his plays like *The Family Reunion*. His *Murder in the Cathedral* is regarded as one of the best religious plays ever written. World War II and its horrors produced a widespread sense of meaninglessness and absurdity in human existence. This has been brilliantly expressed in the plays that had come to be known collectively as the absurd plays. During the post modern era, the absurdist playwrights conveyed the feelings of bewilderment, alienation, and despair in the lives of human beings. They abandoned the traditional devices of a drama like logical plot development, meaningful dialogue, and intelligible characters. Thus, the theatre of the absurd openly rebelled against the conventional theatre. Samuel Beckett is the greatest exponent of the Absurd Drama. His plays lack plots, action, logical and coherent dialogues. He became very popular, after the performance of *Waiting for Godot*. His theme is simple. It reveals the impossibility of discovering meaning in a world subject to change and leading nowhere. He recognized the absurdity in human existence.
In his plays, John Osborne expressed his disillusionment with the society. The tone of his plays was protest. He used provocation to bring home his ideas. This trait placed John Osborne among the ‘angry young men’ of the theatre of modern era. The Expressionist Playwrights conveyed the dehumanizing aspects of 20th-century technological society. They used minimal scenery and telegraphic dialogues. The characters portrayed were types rather than individuals. In the year 2005, Harold Pinter was awarded Nobel Prize for Literature. His plays are noted for their use of silence to increase tension, understatement, and puzzling small talks. The term Painteresque has been used to quote these characteristic features. Thus, from beginning to the present day, dramas reflected the life and also helped the audience to understand the meaning of life.

In the second half of the twentieth century, writers like V. S. Naipaul, Salman Rushdie, Derek Walcott, Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, and many others from the colonial countries, contributed a lot to English Literature. After the Second World War, the colonial countries played a significant role in the world affairs too. Non-European culture portrayed by these writers had become an important and interesting area of study. Australia is one of the commonwealth nations and is linked with the British literary tradition. The Americans fought against the British and got independence in the year 1776. The English needed an alternative land for their colony. They selected
Australia for settlement. There is a striking difference between Australia and other colonies. The difference is Australia had been used as a penal colony. The convicts were sent and used as labours in establishing the new colony. These people later became the founders of modern Australia. Since several thousand years before the English settlement, aboriginal Australians had been living in the country. But, these people were driven into the interior by the white men. Some of the convicts, thus sent to Australia had literary talents inherent in them. Their writings brought forth typical Australian qualities like aboriginality and mateship. They have added a new dimension to English Literature. They have introduced the characteristics of a new continent into literature. They depicted the life of the people living in the bizarre Australian landscapes, like bushes. Australian literature had been influenced by Aboriginal storytelling, convict tales and the desire by colonists to relate their experiences in a new country.

Like any other literature, Australian Literature also had its initiation from poetry. In the year 1788, the first fleet of convicts had been deported in Australia. Australian poetic voices came to limelight from 1830s. Henry Lawson was widely recognized as Australia’s poet of the people. Charles Harpur, one of the country’s leading poets, wrote on the solitude and grandeur of the Australian landscape. Henry Kendall was influenced by Harpur and wrote on the life, landscape and traditions of Australia. George Gordon
McCrae introduced Aboriginal themes in his writing. Adam Lindsay Gordon presented bush themes in his verse. A.D. Hope and Judith Wright were the most prominent poets of the twentieth century. A.D. Hope wrote on the themes of love, faith and spirituality. Judith Wright explored the experiences of the indigenous people.

The literary form novel also depicted the typical Australian themes like convicts, the bush, bushrangers, folklore, floods, droughts, bushfires, Aboriginal people and lost children. Though the early writers lacked patrons and publishers, they did not stop their composition. One of the most eminent novelists, who brought laurels to the Australian literature by winning the Nobel Prize, is Patrick White. The most coveted prize was awarded to him "for an epic and psychological narrative art which has introduced a new continent into literature". He is a pioneer in the move away from naturalism to the opening of an inner world, of the Australian consciousness and psyche. Patrick Victor Martindale White was born in the year 1912. He was born in London and was brought back to Australia, for his early education. It so happened that frequently, he had to move between Australia and England. He has written 12 novels, two short-story collections and eight plays. White’s works explore the nature of good and evil, love and hate, life and death, the material and the spiritual world, suffering and solitude. He had made use of religious themes and symbols. Often, he brooded over the relationship between the blundering
human being and God. His novel, *Happy Valley*, was published in the year 1939. During this early period, his main ambition was to write plays. The theatre was his first love. He started his career with the writing of revues. He himself considered his initial plays *Bread and Butter Woman* and *The School for Friends* as ‘inferior comedies’.

When White was on his visit to the USA, he wrote the novel *The Living and the Dead*, in the year 1941. In this novel, he raises deep questions about life, death and those in between. The novel is significant for its characterization than the complexity of its plot. Patrick White's third novel, *The Aunt’s Story* (1948), meditates on age and sanity. It is a story of a spinster's descent into loss of intellectual capacity. The plot of the novel, *The Tree of Man* (1955), revolves around the Parker family. He portrayed the typical Australian in the bush and its landscape. *Voss* (1957) vividly presents the experience of a nineteenth-century Prussian explorer and naturalist Ludwig Leichardt, who lost his way on the Australian outback, while he was on an expedition. *Riders in the Chariot* (1961) highlights the ignorance and prejudice of the common man in relation to the visionaries, who could predict catastrophic consequences. *The Solid Mandala* (1966) focuses on the inner turmoil of the main characters. *The Vivesector* (1970) concentrates on the theme of the need for truth and the meaning of existence. *The Eye of the Storm* (1973) guides us how the destructive aspects of pride could be overcome and transformed into a positive
aspect by bringing humility into the play. In *A Fringe of Leaves* (1976) the colonial mentality and subservient attitude towards Great Britain which is still present among some sectors of Australian society is criticized. *The Twyborn Affair* (1979) was shortlisted for the Booker Prize and later was removed at the request of the author. Patrick White did this with the noble motive of making way for the younger and more deserving writers.

The literary form, novel flourished in Australia, under the patron of great writers, like Patrick White. On the other hand, Australian theatre had struggled a lot to establish itself. There were many obstacles and hard times. Actually, the convicts were sent to Australia, the penal colony, for punishment. Theatres were considered a frivolous exercise and were designed for pleasure. Is it justifiable to provide pleasure for the convicts? This serious question made the deciding authorities to think twice before issuing license for running theatres. To add fuel to the fire, the audience was also so unruly and interrupted the performance, then and there. As a result, certification for running theatres was frequently cancelled. In the year 1789, the play *The Recruiting Officer* was performed to celebrate the birthday of King George of England. The English drama had its origin in religion. The early plays were performed by the clergy. On the other hand, in Australia, *The Recruiting Officer*, one of the first plays, was performed by a cast of convicts. The scenario was also quite contrasting. It was performed in a bleak surrounding, in a convict’s hut.
During the 1840s, the arrival of free settlers increased in Australia. They brought in morality and the culture of Victorian era with them. These people approached the theatre from a different perspective. They were very much interested in using the stage for educating and communicating moral ideas. Soon after the discovery of the goldfields in 1850, people, mostly young men, poured in. A few touring companies of this period catered to the taste of these people. In 1870 and 80, a wide variety of productions were performed. In 1929, the effect of the Great Depression was reflected in the Australian theatre in the form of heavy taxes. The Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust was founded in the year 1954. Summer Locke Elliott’s *Rusty Bugles* and Ray Lawler’s *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll* marked a turning point in Australian theatre. The latter play portrayed distinctly the Australian life and its characteristics. After the world wars, contribution to literature from Australia increased significantly. Alexander Porteous in his article “Some Recent Australian Plays, and Problems of their Criticism” said that:

For with the production of *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll* in 1955, the Australian theatre seemed to be breaking through hesitations of purpose and limitations of resources into a confident maturity and fruitfulness; a view which was shortly to seem confirmed and reinforced by a number of other plays in the realist tradition, and even more, perhaps, by Patrick
White’s extension of this burgeoning activity into areas well beyond the limitations of naturalism. (83,84)

Patrick White’s contribution to Australian theatre is noteworthy. It is rare to find a novelist of distinction who is also a successful dramatist. Patrick White is such a rare personality. He has brought to the modern stage a wide range of characters. He has written eight plays. His *The Ham Funeral* (1947) remains a milestone in the history of Australian drama. So far, the Australian drama reflected the ordinary life in a naturalistic way as in the plays like Ray Lawler’s *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll* and Alan Seymour’s *The One Day of the Year*. Patrick White employed modernist techniques like expressionism and symbolism. It was written in 1947, but, was produced only in the year 1961. The Australians considered it too odd. *The Season at Sarsaparilla* (1962) is a satire on Australian suburban life. Patrick White very keenly observed ordinary everyday life of the Australians. The play highlights people’s hidden desires that motivate everyday decisions. In *A Cheery Soul* (1963) the central character of the play Miss. Docker is a ferociously cheerful old woman, who destroys everything that she tries to nurture. It is a satire on the Australian attitude towards religion and religious practices. Patrick White attempted a tragedy in *Night on Bald Mountain* (1964). It is a satire on the Australian academia.
Big Toys (1977) deals with a manipulative game played with lifeless toys. It is also a game played with human pawns in a deadly conflict. The action goes deep to the essence of human relationships and their personal corruption and the pain the characters inflict on themselves and on others. In Signal Driver (1982) White introduced supernatural characters. They played the role of chorus and ironically commented on the actions of the other two characters. The play suggests that though the fact is that human suffer, they also endure their trials and survive them. Netherwood (1983) like most of his plays, deals with destructive forces activated by a complex relationship between human and their society. Human nature comes into conflict with itself as well as the social environment it has created. Shepherd on the Rocks (1987) is a play about a play. The characters are all actors in the game of life. White said that the play “is about the varieties of faith”. White was very much interested in drama. He felt extremely happy to see his writings come to life. In spite of this, he was of the opinion that even the best actor in the world could not bring to life, the play as visualised by the writer. He is dissatisfied with the condition of the Australian theatre.

Patrick White was a great patriot. He contributed generously to the Aboriginal schools. He established the Patrick White Literary Award with his 1973 Nobel Prize. He was not satisfied with his fellow Australians in their political and social approach. He considered the transportation of convicts, the
treatment of the Aborigines, and the allegiance to monarchy as Australian blemishes. In his plays, Patrick White satirically portrayed the Australian ways of life. The main intention behind his satire was to create self-realization in the Australians. He wanted the Australians to stop being lazy and develop the ability to create. The present study entitled “Self-Realization: a Recurring Motif in the Plays of Patrick White” is done on his *Four Plays: The Ham Funeral, The Season at Sarsaparilla, A Cherry Soul* and *Night on Bald Mountain*.

In a literary piece of writing, a writer records his thoughts. These thoughts are the resultant of author’s reaction to events that happened in and around him. Therefore, in a literary work, the writer would surely have traced the spirit of the society in which he lived and his response towards them. The artist’s society could be examined for a better understanding of the author’s literary works. The relationship between the artist and the society is a crucial factor. Hence, approaching a literary work in the cultural, economic and political context in which it is written is worth. A sociological critic examines the artist’s society, for a better understanding of the writer’s literary works. Wilfred Guerin in his essay “Criticism and Sociology” rightly observed that:

Studies of the social background of an author’s work, and of the influence of that background on that work, are of necessity of some
length, for they involve first the description of that background and then the investigation of individual work with that description in mind. (357)

It is natural for a writer to infuse certain traits of his own, while creating a character. It is also quite obvious that these characters reflect the attitudes towards life, men and matter, which resemble that of the writer. Real life experience can help in shaping either directly or indirectly an author's work. Hence, biographical approach began with the simple understanding that literature was written by actual people and that understanding an author’s life could help readers more thoroughly to comprehend the work. In the essay “Criticism and Psychology” Wilfred Guerin rightly pointed out that:

One could take the biography of a writer, as illustrated by the external events of his life and by such things as letters and other confessional documents, and construct out of these a theory of the writer’s personality – his conflicts, frustrations, traumatic experiences neuroses, or whatever they happened to be and use this theory in order to illuminate each one of his works. (334)

At the same time, it has its own limitation. A critic must not take things for granted. On the contrary, he must be careful in using the biographical facts of a writer. He must not equate the author’s life on the whole, to the work. It must be just an illuminating factor.
In *A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature*, Wilfred Guerin compared a literary work to a finely cut gemstone. It is impossible to view the entire piece from any one angle, that is, from any one perspective. Rather, it must be turned, ever so slowly, from one angle to another before the fine nuances of the whole stone can be more fully appreciated. Similarly, one critical approach to a piece of writing is like having an idea from one perspective. It is fruitful to approach Patrick White’s play from sociological, biographical and psychological point of view. In the beginning, the critics analyzed what had been written. The literary criticism was a set of normative rules. Critics like Aristotle were more concerned about the normative structure of writing. Now, the most important question before the critic is why the writer wrote a particular work. What made him to write on this theme? Hence, arrived the psychological criticism. Of course, it is said that the psychological criticism has started with Aristotle. He talked about “Catharsis”, purgation of the feelings, pity and fear on the part of audience. To an extent, he thought about the mindset of the audience and what should be the purpose of a play.

The psychological approach reflects the effect that modern psychology has had upon both literature and literary criticism. One of the important figures in psychological criticism is Sigmund Freud. His psychoanalytic theories changed our ideas about human behavior. He explores new or controversial areas like wish-fulfillment, sexuality, the unconscious, and repression. He
expanded our understanding about the operation of language and symbols, by demonstrating their ability to reflect unconscious fears or desires. Carl Jung’s theories about the unconscious are the foundation of Mythological Criticism. Psychological, sociological and biographical criticisms are interrelated. They overlap with each other. There is no such watertight compartment to separate the one from another. The society in which the writer lived and the kind of experience he had in the society, do have an effect on the writer’s mental makeup. The literature is the product of the writer’s mind. The answers for many unresolved questions like why a writer dwelled on a particular theme, why a character behaves eccentrically in a particular situation, why the writer has created a character of a type, have been arrived at after the advent of psychological criticism. In the essay “Criticism and Psychology” Wilfred Guerin said that:

No amount of psychological investigation, either of the creative process in general or of the problems of individual authors, can tell us whether a work is good or bad, though the psychological investigation of individual authors can sometimes help us to see why those authors displayed certain characteristic qualities in their work. (330)

One of the modernist literary theories, art for art’s sake emphasizes and gives importance to the autonomous value of the art. The artist must rise above
the ebb and tide of life. It also highlights the point that art needs no justification that it need not serve any political, didactic, or other end. The artists and writers of the Aesthetic movement asserted that there was no connection between art and morality. But, this point of view is opposite to that of Patrick White’s aim in writing his dramas. White is very much interested in the welfare of his fellowmen and the society. In his dramas, he deplored over their inefficiencies and suggested the pathway for their success. Hence, sociological, biographical and psychological approaches to his plays are worth attempting.

The present study is divided into six chapters including the present chapter on introduction. In the five chapters that follow the introduction, the second is entitled “The Ham Funeral”, the third, “The Season at Sarsaparilla”, the fourth, “A Cherry Soul” the fifth, “Night on Bald Mountain” and the sixth, is the concluding chapter”. The chapters are entitled with the title of the concerned play. In the second chapter, a detailed analysis of the play the Ham Funeral is made. In the play, White concentrated on the development and growth of an individual. He analyzed the limitations and the factors that prevented an individual from progress. He had also indirectly suggested the ways and means to overcome the problems. The main character, the young man, continued to think about his own self, his failure as a poet, and his inability to find out the essence of life. His egocentric and the narcissistic
natures were the reasons for his failure as a poet. The other two important characters of the play, Mr. Lusty stands for truth searching intellect and Mrs. Lusty stands for physical sensuousness. They exposed their own life to the young man. They opened the door for the young man’s inner search. They acted as a catalytic force. The young man searched for completeness and truth. He was not completely trapped by his own nature. He had the capacity to dominate it. He came to a realization that flesh is not the answer for the crisis and one must inter-relate the factors that were represented by the landlady and the landlord. That is physical sensuousness and truth searching intellect.

The third chapter deals with the play *The Season at Sarsaparilla*. In the play, Australian routine life style and their effortlessness to come out of the mediocrity are highlighted. Patrick White is more worried about the state of the middle class people in Australia. It was through the stereotypical characters of Australia that the writer portrayed the monotonous suburban lifestyle and its undercurrents of friction and despair. It is a scornful attack on the Australian ways of life. He satirically portrayed how people had become victims to the social norms and their own weaknesses. In fact, these people had not realized their own pitiable state. White attacks and at the same time, he is compassionate towards them. His actual aim is to make people realize where they are. Majority of the people had succumbed to the society’s conventional behaviour. As a result, there was no room for creativity and vitality. A few
others had become prisoners to sensuousness. If these people had directed their biological energies towards constructive purposes, tragedies could have been averted. Intellectuals like Roy became useless because of their pride. Once this weakness is realized, the Sarsaparillans will come out of the continuing cycle of fruitless seasons.

The fourth chapter deals with the play *A Cherry Soul*. In this play, Sarsaparillans attitude towards religion and their concept of spiritual and moral values are emphasized. Miss. Docker, the central character of the play is an orphan and is in her forties. Her weakness is her sense of goodness. She is very shrewd in finding out other’s weakness. She does not stop with that. She comments satirically on others’ weakness. The Custances provided shelter for Miss. Docker. They did this with no real interest but, considered it as their duty to help the homeless. Patrick White harshly attacks the Australians’ materialistic attitude and lack of spiritual sense in the prayer scene. The Sarsaparillans’ attitudes towards religion, the mindset of the do gooders, and the people’s lack of compassion have been explicitly portrayed.

The fifth chapter concentrates on the play, *Night on Bald Mountain*. White was not satisfied with the academicians and their attitude towards life. He wanted to highlight the point that Professors like Sword abound in the universities of Australia. As an academician, Professor Sword was zealous for
fame and name. He never allowed others to outsmart him. Whenever he was in his study table, he indulged himself in the act of finding fault with others’ work. Not only in his profession, but also in the society, he failed to keep up his obligations. He should have exhibited a striking contrast in fulfilling his family responsibilities. These characteristic traits were lacking in Professor Sword. To make matters worse, he was attracted physically to a girl, who was more or less the age of his daughter and her suicide at the end of the play was because of him. This is how the Australian academicians are. There are no noble qualities that ought to be in them. Patrick White deplores this state of affair and satirically makes an attack on them in Night on Bald Mountain.

The last and the concluding chapter summarises the arguments and findings as reported in the previous chapters in a nutshell. At the beginning of each chapter, the chosen aspect is explained. This is followed by a detailed analysis on the particular play that has been chosen. The author’s concern over the vices in the characters of the play is highlighted. The measures suggested symbolically by the writer to overcome the pitfalls have been underscored. At the end of each chapter a summary of the arguments of the particular chapter is given.

The plays are all set in the Australian atmosphere. The standard of life in the Australian suburbs, the dilemma faced by the people, the people’s
mechanical way of reacting to the problems, their attitude towards life, religion and flesh are considered not up to the mark. If the situation continues, the Australian society may have to face numerous problems. The precautionary measures that could be adopted to prevent them are readily presented by White in his plays. He has made people to scrutinize themselves and to see more deeply into the life around them. He makes them re-organize their thinking about themselves at their different levels – their childhood, adulthood and at old age. These conflicts faced by the characters confirm not only the experience of the Australians but also the human beings in general and the yardstick suggested to overcome, is universal in appeal. In this context, the present study highlights White’s humanitarian outlook in creating self-realisation among the Australians through his plays.

In the first play, *The Ham Funeral* the writer deals with the problems that a young man has to face in the process of reaching adulthood. He points out the possible trappings and the means to overcome them. A critical analysis on this play is made in the following chapter.