CHAPTER VI
CONCLUSION

The present study, which is a critical analysis on the selected four plays of Patrick White, is divided into six chapters. The first chapter starts with an introduction to literature in general. Patrick White is an Australian dramatist. Australian literature is linked with that of the British. Therefore, the origin and development of the English drama has been briefly discussed. Modern trends in the field of drama, the phenomenal playwrights and their trademarks in writing plays have been discussed. This is followed by a short introduction of Australia, Australian literature and Australian theatre. Further, the place of Patrick White in Australian literature has been highlighted. His contribution to Australian literature has been analysed in detail. The introductory chapter also outlines the methodology adopted for the study. It is stated that for an interpretation of Patrick White’s plays, sociological, historical-biographical and mainly psychological approaches have been adopted.

The second chapter deals with Patrick White’s *The Ham Funeral*. The main character in the play, a young artist, undergoes a series of experience. As he exposes himself to reality, he develops. It is brought to light that mature wisdom is impossible for an introvert, unless he comes out of his shell and faces the bare reality. In this process, he realizes that erring is human nature.
Weaknesses and flaws are inherent in human nature. A few like Mr. Lusty realizes their weakness and tries to lead a withdrawn life. On the other side, people like Mrs. Lusty become a victim to their own weakness and drown themselves in it. Patrick White wants his countrymen to lead neither a withdrawn life like Mr. Lusty nor a life of sensuality like his wife, Mrs. Lusty. He wants them to strike a balance between the both. At the same time, he wants the people to realize the fact that those who are unaware of their weaknesses and who lead a mean life are also human being. People should treat them with humanism and try to understand their feelings too.

The third chapter critically analyses White’s next play, *The Season at Sarsaparilla*. In this play, the Australian life style has been satirically portrayed. The people perform their routine activities. They move in and out like machines. White regrets that they seldom come out of their dull, drab, routine and mechanical life style. There is no room for intellectual development. They simply adhere to the norms of the society and remain satisfied as good citizens just because they conform to the convention of the society. A few others, like Nola Boyle waste their energy by becoming a victim to sensuality. Patrick White wishes the Australians to direct all their vitality and biological energies for constructive purposes. He expects their countrymen to come out of the mediocrity and involve themselves in the process of creativity, development and progress.
The fourth chapter deals with *A Cherry Soul*. In this play Patrick White satirizes the Australian lifestyle and their attitude towards religion and do-gooders. Miss. Docker thinks herself as a do-gooder and wants everyone to be prim and proper. She is very shrewd in identifying the weaknesses of the people and bluntly pointed at them without worrying about others' feelings and state of mind. This proved to be the root cause for the death of Mr. Wakeman. On the other hand, the Australians never worried about church, ethical and moral values. They very cleverly schemed plots to get rid of Miss. Docker's pestering. They even made her to cover a couple of miles by walk without any consideration. The Custances were not ready to sacrifice. They gave prior most importance to their personal comfort and satisfaction. In general, people were very indifferent towards church practices. They never worried about Sunday classes. The reasons given by the Sarsaparillans for their absence during the church services were very childish. Thus, Patrick White very harshly satirizes these attitudes of the Australians and earnestly appeals to them to realize their mistakes and come out of their vices.

In the fifth chapter, a detail analyses on *Night on Bald Mountain* is made. In this play White portrays the state of the Australian academia. Mr. Sword, the professor of the English department, was jealous not only as a husband but also as a writer. As a professor, he could not motivate and encourage his students and juniors. On the contrary, he always indulged in the
act of finding fault with the works of the young writers. In fact, his harsh criticism made his wife to abandon her literary talents. As a husband, he could not express his natural feelings of love towards his wife. He considered it as a sin and made his wife to restrain her feelings too. He was of the opinion that sensual feelings must be eradicated. He suppressed his feelings. But, all his pent up emotions and feelings betrayed him and he was attracted towards Stella, the nurse. If he had responded and fulfilled his natural instincts towards his wife, he would not have indulged himself in the act of seducing the young girl. As a matter of fact, this proved to be the very reason for Stella committing suicide. Thus, as a professor, he could not inspire and make others grow. But, he proved to be a very poor role model and was the reason for the tragedy and destruction. Patrick White appeals the academia to realize their role and responsibilities in taking their nation to great heights.

In this concluding chapter, a brief survey of Patrick White’s novels dealing with theme of the self-realisation is also made. Further other themes employed by the writer in his works are analysed in detail. Patrick White became internationally famous with his two novels, *The Tree of Man* and *Voss*. These novels are compared with that of Tolstoy’s and Dostoyevsky’s. *The Tree of Man* deals with the life of a farmer and his wife, who struggled to build a future against the hazards of flood, fire and drought. They shared the daily burdens of life. But, they could not communicate with each other. In this
novel, the theme of self-realisation is dealt with from a different perspective. It is the loneliness of the human soul that unsuccessfully aspires for self-realisation. Man has the potentiality to create new life. The tree of man has many branches each growing towards the light. But, suffering and loneliness come from his inability to communicate with others. The central characters, Stan Parker and his wife Amy lead a simple life. The novel is set in Australia.

In *The Tree of Man*, Patrick White uses a universal theme. Stan and Amy are inarticulate. They strive for some kind of realization that always eludes them. On the other hand, in the novel *The Aunt’s Story*, Theodora Goodman partially achieves the realization. But, it was done at the cost of her sanity. Amy’s efforts made her ill-tempered and possessive. *The Tree of Man* shows that fulfillment lies in liberation from the condition, in transcendence.

White’s psychological study of the urge to self-realisation is carried further in *Voss*. It is a story of a man who set out in 1845 with a small group to cross the Australian continent for the first time. White analyses brilliantly the compulsive drive of Voss. He is a figure of almost megalomaniac proportions. He wanted to win fame as an explorer and to identify himself with God. The theme was suggested to White from the true record of the explorer, Ludwig Lichardt who died in the Australian desert in 1848.
White’s works have been looked upon from different perspectives, apart from the theme of self-realisation. From the sociological point of view, White has portrayed the conflict between man’s sensibility and social sensibility. He has very clearly pointed out that they could not strike a balance and lead a happy, peaceful and satisfactory life. Man struggles and is torn between his senses and the social sensibilities. The society demands certain code of conduct from him. The norms set forth by the society prove to be the checking point of man’s nature. The problem with Mrs. Lusty in *The Ham Funeral* is she could not lead a life as she wished. She could not behave naturally and for that she received harsh criticism from the society and in turn was tormented mentally. She was very bitterly satirized by her relatives for the kind of relationship she had with her husband and the attachment she showed towards the young man. The society tormented her. They accused her in terms of whoring and destructive passion.

In *The Season at Sarsaparilla*, Pippy is the representative character of this trait. She could not understand the world of elders. She wanted to be natural. She expected a very clear explanation from her elders for the doubts, she had in her mind. But, her mother Girlie Pogson in the name of civilization admonished her and asked her to follow the norm and ethical code of conduct prescribed for a girl. Pippy felt choked by the so called conventions. She found no room to develop her inquisitive intellect. She could not find a teacher, who
could explain rationally to all her queries and allow her intellect to grow naturally. Instead, she was told about the traditional norms a girl should follow:

Mavis: (sighing) Well, that’s the way it is. (Sententious) Girls’ve got to learn to be nice. Then they marry some nice man. And have a lot of little babies. (S.A.S.1.1.124)

Another major character who involves in the conflict between her sensibilities and social sensibility is Nola Boyle. Nola Boyle enjoyed a walk in her garden. She enjoyed the beauty and fragrance of roses. She would like to lie naked among the falling roses. She was very much interested in enjoying the touches of falling roses on her body. But, one thing that prevented her from having that experience was the “prissy operated” neighbouring women. She could not behave naturally in a conventional society. She slept with her husband’s mate Rowley Masson. At that point of time, she could not keep her glands under control. After that experience, she could not be normal. She felt deeply hurt and wounded. Nola though shattered inside, appeared to be serene and self controlled. She recalled what had happened to her. She felt that when man was weak his conscience moved away from him and let him commit mistakes. She could identify her weakness. But, she could not overcome that. She felt that her act was a sin. Now, there was a possibility for her to come out of the sin. She condemned her body, to which she had become a prisoner.
During her conversation with Pippy, Pippy told her that she loved Nola. Nola felt greatly relieved at the words. Thus a great mental agony had been inflicted upon her by her own self. This was because she felt that she had not adhered to the convention of the society. In other words, the society did not allow her to behave as she wished.

In the next play, *A Cherry Soul*, Miss. Docker proves to be successful in this perspective. She behaves very naturally and never minded about the so-called society or the conventions. She never worried about the evil effect of her nature that shattered the happiness of others. The Sarsaparillans did not want to be judged. They did not want their weakness to be exposed. They avoided reality and existed in a state of delusion. They very cleverly schemed and avoided Miss. Docker, who pinpointed their weakness. They did not have the heart to take care of the poor, unfortunate Miss. Docker. Her state of isolation did not rouse compassion and kindness in the heart of Sarsaparillans.

The conflict is very well explained in *Night on Bald Mountain*. Miss. Quodling, like Miss Docker, did not worry about anybody else and led a life that pleased her. She moved away from the humanity and lived all alone in the bald mountain. Mrs. and Mr. Sword are the two very important and the representative characters of the conflict between their sensibility and social sensibility. Mr. Sword exhibited a very sophisticated and civilized personality,
refrained himself from the call of his physique. His behaviour forced his wife also to lead a withdrawn life. Mr. Sword did not behave naturally and he controlled his natural feelings for his wife. He considered it as a sin and he controlled it. He wanted to ignore the flesh and made his wife also to do so. As a result, his wife was affected psychologically. Since, he laid many restrictions to his natural feelings, it got perverted. In the end, he was attracted towards a girl, Stella, who was of his daughter’s age. Later, this proved to be the reason for her committing suicide. If he had responded to his feelings quite naturally, tragedy would have been averted. In an essay “Patrick White’s Australian Literary Context”, in Part One: A Sydney Literary Tradition, in a discussion with reference to Patrick White’s novels, it is stated very correctly and it proves to be appropriate with regard to his plays also:

In terms of characters, the ruling distinction in the novel is between a concept of sensibility, which is natural and organic, and a concept of personality which is formed by cultural training, and by socialization, particularly in the ways daughters are moulded by their mothers. Throughout the novel, sensibility is strategically opposed to personality. (60)

Another important characteristic features in the works of Patrick White is the eccentricity in the man-woman relationship and the treatment of sex. In
The Ham Funeral, after the funeral of the Mr. Lusty, Mrs. Lusty was in mourning. During the funeral, the relatives baited the landlady for her sensuality and the way she had treated her husband. The young man could not withstand this and relieved the landlady from the clutches of the relatives. Mrs. Lusty was in her forties and had lived with her husband for many years; shortly after the funeral, when the relatives had departed, the landlady seduced the young man. She wanted the young man to slip into the shoes of the landlord. One could not have expected her to misbehave at this juncture. It was quite odd and abnormal.

In The Season at Sarsaparilla, Ernie Boyle had confidence in his mate Rowley Masson and in his wife Nola Boyle and allowed his mate to stay in his house, when he was away for his work. Nola was not happy with her husband’s decision. She wished that her husband had not made his mate to stay at their home. She was very blunt in her perception to sex. She never minded about the so called sophisticated and refrained manners and called a bitch a bitch. She kept her glands under control on the first day. But, on the next day Rowley Masson having understood the nature of Nola, trapped and seduced her and made his friend a cuckold.

In Night on Bald Mountain, Mr. Sword considered sexual urge and feelings as sins. He restrained his feelings for his wife and also made his wife
to think so. Unfortunately, he was attracted towards Stella, the nurse, who was of his daughter’s age. He prayed and tried his best to control his feelings towards Stella. But he could not, and finally yielded to his passion and seduced Stella. *Big Toys* is another play by Patrick White. It is a sharp, dark little play. In this play, people’s morality is very bitterly satirized. Ritchie Bosanquet is a successful lawyer. Mag is his spoiled wife. To relieve boredom and to shock her friends, Mag joined the Labor party. Another reason was Terry Legge, with whom she was attracted. Terry allowed himself to be seduced by Mag. Ritchie also approved this and allowed her to entertain Terry, because he needed the help of Terry in court. He, in fact presented his wife with an emerald necklace, in order to make Terry cooperate with him in the case. The characters engage themselves in the games of power, sex and money, and exploit each other’s weaknesses with consummate skill and ruthless application.

Not only in Patrick White’s plays, but in his novels also the theme of eccentricity in man-woman relationship and abnormality in sex is portrayed. In *Night, The Prowler*, Felicity Bannister is the only child of Doris and Humphrey Bannister. She was in her mid twenties. They lived together in a large, beautiful home in a middle class suburb of Sydney. Late one night, Doris and Humphrey were awakened by the frightful screams of their daughter. As they both arrived downstairs, they were confronted by a distraught Felicity who told them she had been molested by a prowler.
A Fringe of Leaves is a historical novel. The story is based on that of Eliza Fraser, who in 1836 was shipwrecked on a reef, off the Queensland coast. Ellen Roxburgh is the heroine of the novel. She was the only survivor and had spent six months, totally naked, with the aboriginal tribe that saved her. Patrick White’s another novel, Happy Valley explores a married doctor’s love affair with a music teacher. In other novels the themes of homosexuality and transvestism are only touched upon. But, in The Twyborn Affair, they come into focus for the first time. The novel is divided into three parts. In each of the three parts of the novel the main character appeared in different guises. In the first, he was Eudoxia, 'wife' of a Greek. In the last, he was Eadith Trist, the keeper of a fashionable London brothel. Only in the middle section, he appeared vaguely as himself, as Eddie Twyborn. The central character, Eddie/Eudoxia/Eadith Twyborn, had a male body but a female consciousness. He was in his search for identity. He used various external disguises, which confused the reader. In one section, he appeared as a young wartime hero, in another, he assumed the part of a brothel keeper. He failed to find fulfillment and true sexual identity, either as a man or as a woman. But, he learnt to value friendship and the importance of recognizing the woman in man and the man in woman. The novel can be read as an enquiry into bisexuality.

The eccentricity and abnormality in the treatment of sex and man-woman relationship in Patrick White’s work and the main reason for that could
be traced in the biography of Patrick White. White himself personally had abnormal sexual relationship. He was not married. He proved to be a homosexual. White spent much of his life time in England and Europe until he was thirty-three. He had his schooling in Cheltenham, an English public school. He experienced humiliation there, as a colonial and a homosexual. After leaving university, he lived for some years in London, mixing with artists and actors and experienced a number of homosexual liaisons. It was in North Africa and in Greece that, his mature life started. He was part of a British Army Intelligence Unit, when he met the soldier Manoly Lascaris. Lascaris became his lover and lifelong companion. They set up household in New South Wales at the end of World War II and were together when White died.

White’s another important play is *Signal Driver*. So far, all White’s play had dealt with real people. He, for the first time, introduced supernatural beings in his plays. *Signal Driver* opens with two timeless, supernatural beings or “Avatars”. These two supernatural beings are human in their shape and language. But, they are supernatural in their spirit and function. They are out of nowhere and found everywhere. These two characters are seen waiting on the road side like tramps. They remind us of Vladimir and Estragon in Samuel Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot*. The other two characters in the play are Theo and Ivy Vokes. The life, Theo and Ivy were experiencing was unique to them. But,
the supernatural beings had seen it all before. The cycle of the individual and the human race continue and the beings watch them.

*Signal Driver* is a play in three acts. The setting of the play is a bus shelter. In the first act, dreams and ideals clash with reality. The Vokes experienced their first stage of marital life. They quarreled and made up again. In the second act, the ideals were lost to the reality of money, success and children. Ivy had achieved her dreams of money, husband and children. But, she felt she had lost her ideals. In the process of achieving the worldly acclaim, she broke Theo’s spirit as well as her own. A sense of loss, fear and despair prevailed, instead of gain and success. She proved to be a very good mother and carried out her responsibilities. But, the children grew up into different personalities, which were not expected of them. In the final act, the Vokes had a vast experience. This experience had led them to acceptance. They developed the quality of endurance. Patrick White pointed out that the physical and spiritual creativity are inherent in human beings. They were equally fruitful and barren.

In a review of “The Burnt Ones” in *The Australian Quarterly* Vol. VII, No. 4 (December 1965):120-23, critic Hameeda Hossain says:
In describing the pathos of a slow crumbling of suburban souls, his stories evoke a sense of tragedy—a tragedy not so much of an individual, but of a civilization, of a whole way of life.

This is one of the dominant themes in the majority of Patrick White’s works. In *The Ham Funeral* Alma Lusty had lost her husband. When Mr. Lusty was alive, he led a withdrawn life. He never bothered about Mrs. Lusty, who still expected more of life. Mrs. Lusty was disappointed with her husband. It would not be civilized on her part to express her wishes. But somehow or other, she gratified her wishes by recollecting her past. At that time, her husband was very young and daring. She relished and enjoyed those moments. She wanted to overcome the present, dull, laborious and lethargic atmosphere. Hence, she invited the young man for tea. She was very much afraid of the society. People very well knew about her nature and her wishes. Therefore, after the death of her husband, they could rightly guess her next move. Hence, she was very much worried about her relatives’ criticism. She wished to evade them. So, she arranged for a ham funeral to divert their attention. But, the way the relatives criticized the life of Alma Lusty was very brutal. They never cared about Mrs. Lusty, who was also a human being. She was an individual, who had her own whims and wishes. The relatives were very much worried about the code of conduct and the nature of Alma that was not in accordance with the civilization. Their torment and the way in which the young man treated her
almost made Alma Lusty to be mentally deranged. The society and civilization are set up for the welfare of the common man. But, in the present context the so called civilized people were responsible for the tragedy of Alma Lusty. The society represented by the relatives made her fall, from the frying pan into the fire. No one was there to look at Mrs. Lusty on humanitarian grounds and counsel her to divert her energies into constructive purposes and to look forward to the future.

In *The Season at Sarsaparilla* also the representatives of the civilized society, the Pogson and the Knotts moved away from the Boyles. They never worried about Nola. On the other hand, they wanted themselves and their wards to be on the safer side. The civilization had taught and encouraged only selfishness among the people. Mr. Erbage was a councilor and was in public service. He had an affair with a model girl, Julia. As a result, Julia became pregnant. In a state of confusion, she committed suicide. When Mr. Erbage informed the death of Julia to Roy, one could perceive only anxiety and not compassion for her. He was anxious about his prospects as a councilor. He did not lament over the death of Julia. Mr. Erbage was a councilor and he should lead the people in the right direction. But, forgetting his duty, he indulged in an affair with a girl.
Nola was tormented by her conscience that she had committed a sin. One could perceive the sense of relief and happiness in Nola Boyle when Pippy said that she loved her. This very well proves that if the people are considerate towards people like Nola Boyle or Alma Lusty, there is a chance for them to get redeemed from their sins. But, the civilization has produced only critics, complainers, belittlers and doubters. These personalities contributed only to the destruction and tragedy.

The destructive nature of the civilization is very clearly brought out in *A Cherry Soul*. The civilization stems from religion. The way the Sarsaparillans considered the church practice is very awful and pathetic. They were ready to buy even God with money. They sent their children as a proxy for them to attend the church services. The children came to church not because they were very religious. They would be receiving money for attending the church. The members of the congregation were between 5 and 10 years of age. The first boy told that his father did not come because he had to attend to the carburetor problem. The second boy mentioned that his father was absent because the church was too small. Their mother was busy in cooking. Today’s youngsters are the backbone of tomorrow’s nation. The people, who were considered to be members of the civilized society, misdirected the youngsters and developed in them the habit of bribing.
In *Night on Bald Mountain* the obvious representative of the civilized society is Mr. Sword. With the aim of exhibiting refined manners and etiquette, he suppressed his natural sensibilities. As an individual, he has every right to decide and act according to his wishes. He has rights to enjoy his sense of freedom. He could feast on his rights without interfering or affecting others’ happiness. But, he should have considered the fact that he was a married man. And the decision taken by him would affect his wife also. But, he did not consider his wife as an individual. He never minded about the feelings, wishes and her personal opinion. On the other hand, he forcefully thrust his opinion on his wife and made her also to refrain from her natural sensibilities. This had an adverse effect on Mrs. Sword. She was psychologically affected and became an addict to drinks. Further, Mr. Sword could not keep up and abide by his decision firmly. In the name of civilization and refinement, he not only killed the feelings of his wife but also was the reason for the death of the innocent Stella Summerhayes.

In all the four plays, people used civilization to hide behind or used it as a tool to conceal their personal weaknesses. Actually, the meaning for the word ‘civilized’ has been misconceived by the Sarsaparillans. In the name of civilization mental wreckage has been brought on the characters like Alma Lusty, Nola Boyle, Julia, Mrs. Sword and Stella. The tragic plight experienced by those personalities was caused in the name of civilization. Civilization has
been established to nourish and nurture mankind. But, the life of the people like the above mentioned characters became tragic, as they are smothered in the name of civilization. Hence, the ultimate aim of civilization proved to be futile. Therefore, the tragedy experienced by those characters was not because of their vices, but of the modern civilization.

Patrick White thus satirically portrayed the ways, means and attitude of the Australians in his plays. If proper review or self analysis is not done, there is no path for progress and development. The criticisms are worth to be taken in the right sense, that too if they are done by great personalities like Patrick White. He highlighted the ways to overcome the pitfalls in the process of adulthood from adolescence. He made it very clear that conformity to social norms is secondary to creativity and development. He had also made them realize that the people’s obligations towards religion and charity must be done with real spirit and not as a duty. He stressed the responsibility of academicians in leading the nation in the right path and emphasized the evil effects, if they fail from their sense of responsibilities.

The four plays that have been selected for the present study are set in the Australian atmosphere. The standard of life in the Australian suburbs, the dilemma faced by the people, 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 see more deeply into the life around them. He made them re-organize the thoughts about themselves in their childhood, adulthood and at old age. In other words, Patrick White has earnestly made an appeal to his fellow Australians to have a self-realization about themselves. The conflicts faced by the characters conform, not only to the experience of the Australians but also to the human beings in general and the yardstick suggested to overcome, is universal in appeal. White’s plays widen the boundary of setting, to the entire universe. It is this combination of the particular and universal that makes Patrick White’s work commendable.