CHAPTER II

THE HAM FUNERAL

_The Ham Funeral_ is an eye-opener for the adolescents, who are in the stage of reaching their adulthood. The assimilation of experience from all spheres of life facilitates development. The progress is not possible, if one continues to introspect about himself. On the other hand, he must be on a constant look out for multifaceted experience. At the same time, he should not become a victim to vices. He should rationalise things and try to transcend the evil forces. Besides, people who have become a victim to such forces must not be neglected as such. One should not forget the fact that they are also human beings and they must be approached with humanism and compassion. This is the guiding philosophy in the play _The Ham Funeral_ and this has been analysed in detail, in this chapter.

Australia is linked with the English literary tradition. The Australian writers have retained the language English for their expression. But, they have replaced the British tradition and have coloured their writings with theirs and their landscapes. One of the major concerns for the critics of Australia is to trademark their literature. Many of the Australian works are too Australian. Only local manners and customs are portrayed, instead of human life. The demand is to see the picture of universal human life in local colour. The story
of an Australian man or woman should be a microcosm of the humanity. The literature should be universal and local in its appeal. In the book Criticism the writer Brian Kiernan quotes the Australian critic Stephensen’s words that, “Art and literature are nationally created, but become internationally appreciated” (28). It is this quality that made Shakespeare popular even today. Age cannot wither nor custom stale his infinite varieties. He is for all ages and all people. The universality in appeal makes a work classical.

The much sought after quality in the Australian literature, the local colour and the universality of appeal, is brought forth by Patrick White in his works. The Ham Funeral is a play written by Patrick White in 1947. The play did not have a warm reception. It was published only in the year 1965. It was rejected in 1961 by the governors of the Adelaide Festivals and was considered too abstract to be presented for the general public. Later, it was produced by the Adelaide University Theatre Guild in the same year and in 1962 by the Australian Elizabethan Theatre.

The play revolves around the experiences and the exposure that the young man undergoes. The young man was residing in the house of Mrs. and Mr. Lusty. When the play began, the young man articulated the prologue. He advised the audience not to mind the time or his origin, whether he was born in United Kingdom (Birmingham) or United States of America (Brooklyn) or
Australia (Murwillumbah). He would like them to consider the point that he was alive in this cosmos. Patrick White was influenced by expressionistic playwrights like August Strindberg. Expressionist writers aim to convey their ideas through a new style. Their concern is with general truths rather than with particular situations. The young man’s words about his origin and time remind Swedish playwright August Strindberg’s *A Dream Play*. In the story of *A Dream Play*, time and space do not exist, events are disconnected and illogical, anything could happen, everything is possible and plausible. Strindberg is one of the first dramatists to explore the role of the subconscious. Obviously, the young man’s words hint that the present play would also fall in the same line.

White actually presented the day to day human experience in the play. It has relevance to all. Therefore, he feels that it is not necessary to give personal details like the name, place etc., about the hero. The world is a stage and we are all actors. He, who performs his role well by balancing without being a victim to the pitfalls, is the hero. This is the most difficult part. Hence, the young man felt it, a painful point to take part in the play. From the prologue, it was made known that the young man was a poet. He was affected by the artists’ paradoxical tragedy of knowing too much and not enough. Therefore, he cannot give the message now:
The message always gets torn up. It lies at the bottom of the basket, under the hair, and everything else. Don’t suggest we piece it together. I’ve found the answer is always different. So… the most I can do is give you the play, and plays, of course, are only plays. (H.F.1.1.16)

Besides being a commentator, the young man was also a character in the play. He handled the dual role effectively. As a commentator, he was judicious and very clever. When he took part in the play, he was full of doubts and caught up in dilemmas. After the prologue, he had to take part in the play. He considered it as the most painful point. He commented that the play was as usual a piece about eels. Patrick White used animal imagery quite a lot in his work. Here, the reference to “eels” does have significance. The hint was that the play was about the common man and his responses in common situations. The audience will feel it as their own play.

The play opens with the landlord and the landlady. Mr. Lusty, the landlord was a vast man. His face was pale, flushing to strawberry in the nose, and a wen on one cheek, with a drooping moustache. He was frequently found smoking a short, black pipe. He was uncommunicative and was leading a withdrawn life. Once upon a time, he had been full of energy and vigour, like Samson. His masculine energy was being imprisoned by Mrs. Lusty as Samson was by Delilah. He owned a sweet shop. As his wife was not satisfied with the
business, he turned to wrestling. He defeated many veterans in the wrestling field. Appreciation poured in. The first and the foremost in the line of the admirers was his wife, Alma Lusty. But, when his powers got weakened, the reaction from his wife was different. Mr. Lusty said that:

    The mob would let fly with their caps and their voices. An’ there was always one tart louder than the rest. She told me I’d won. She told me I was Gawd. Then, when I could no longer ’old their faces in the dust, an’ the stink of sweat’ ad begun to make me sicken, she let me know we’d reached’l by short cut. (H.F.1.4.26-27.)

Having drunken the life to the lees, he understood the reality. He garnered wisdom. As a result, now he was leading a withdrawn life. He always sat in his chair, with the pipe in his mouth and analyzed the happenings. He rarely opened his mouth. To express his disapproval, he simply stared at and grunted. His responses were usually monosyllabic. He was a symbolical representation of wisdom, contemplation and truth searching intellect.

    The landlady, Alma Lusty was a middle-aged large woman in the “dangerous forties”. In the words of Patrick White, “She is a large woman in the dangerous forties, ripe and bursting. Her hair, still black, is swept up untidily in a vaguely Edwardian coiffure” (H.F.1.2.17). As the play started, Mrs. Lusty was in the kitchen with a saucepan, peeling potatoes. But, she was
not interested in the routine, repeated domestic activities. She expressed her
disgust over the mechanical life. She felt that there were many sources of
pleasure left in life without her not tasting it. Her hair was still black. She
envied rich people’s romantic way of life:

Thursday I went to the theayter. It was lovely. A bunch of toffs in satin
… gassing’ about love and nothink. An’ when I come out, the rain ‘ad
stopped, an’ the blossom sticky on the chestnut trees. You could smell
it, that strong and funny. It nearly bust my ’ead open… (Angrily,
pushing the potato peelings father away from her) (H.F.1.2.17)

The landlady was fed up with her present state of life. For the past twenty
years, she had been living in the damp house, with the same old furniture,
hearing only her husband’s grunting sound. Whenever the landlady was
reminded of the adventurous, romantic life, she went to the dressing table to
look at herself in the mirror and combed her hair. This activity was repeated
time and again by the landlady. When Mr. Lusty was young and dynamic,
Alma enjoyed life. She had not reached the saturation point. She still expected
much of life. Mrs. and Mr. Lusty lived in the basement of a lodging house,
which was damp and not maintained properly. They had a son Jack, who died
in his childhood.
The young man resided in one of the two ground floor bedrooms. He was a poet and was not successful. Once he wrote a poem, a love poem. The landlady picked it up from the basket along the razor. He always remained in his room, lying in his bed with his hands under his head. He stared at the ceiling as if he was sick or crazy. He thought about his own self, his failure as a poet, and his inability to find out the essence of life. Later, his Anima pointed out that this weakness was the reason for his failure as a poet. His egocentric and the narcissistic nature were exposed to him by his Anima. His art was abortive because of his self-centeredness. As a boy, he mooned about in the garden. He tried to fit words to the sounds of nature and the shape of lilacs. The words and the pictures that he would like to describe in his poem must be different from what had already been done. He tried his best but, he could not come out successfully.

In life, the young man felt that he was not clever. The young man watched other people. They knew what to do to achieve maximum happiness or the required dream. But, he did not know which key to press to come out successfully in life. As a result, he became desperate. His ignorance and immaturity choked him. He would like to find a way to come out of them. May-Brit Akerholt in her book *Patrick White* has rightly observed that:
However, the embryonic poet’s inner retreat is a non-constructive rather than a non-communicative state of mind; he is full of his own importance and his own failure: … Like Will, he retreats, but unlike Will, he finds no meaning; like Alma, he searches, but unlike Alma, he only watches the faces in the street for the answer to “the required dream” (16)

To find a way out, he looked forward for external support. Phyllis Pither, a young lady boarded in the opposite bed room. She worked in the firm of gas-fitters in Kennington. She was a steady girl. She worked with the purpose to take care of her aged aunt, who was suffering from high blood pressure. She left for work early and came home late. She usually went to bed with an aspirin and a cold. In her image, the young man found his Anima. He frequently conversed with her and approached her for advice and counsel.

The young man felt that, if he communicated with the girl and if the separating wall vanished, he could sense the completeness. He could achieve maturity. The Landlady used to invite the young man for tea. Usually, she addressed the young man as Jack, the name of her dead son or Fred, the name of her erstwhile lover. She perceived the young man, at times, as her son and at times, as her lover. The landlady was in this eccentric or bizarre state of mind because of the situation in which she was. She was expecting more of life. On the other hand, her better half had realized the reality and was leading a
withdrawn life. In such a situation, one could foresee the young man becoming her victim. J.R. Dyce has rightly pointed out in *Patrick White as Playwright* that:

…Landlord is forced to listen to them, Mrs. Lusty indicates her passionate response to the joys of bed and board, the former now, unhappily, denied her. Her husband’s silence, except for his breathing, is an affront to the “ripe and bursting” energies that are hers to express. Her richly comical but touching plight is a sure threat to the virtue of the young man upstairs who, so far, has not emerged from his cloud of thought to recognize it. (13)

An understanding about Patrick White’s life and his parents’ attitude will facilitate us to have a very clear idea about the characters of Alma and Will Lusty. Patrick White was born with a silver spoon in his mouth. His parents were members of the wealthy Hunter Valley grazier society of New South Wales. His father was a polite gentleman. His mother Ruth was not so. She was greedy and ambitious. Patrick White had a kind of aversion towards her mother for those qualities. He had created many women characters on the model of his mother. In an introduction to Patrick White’s life in the online encyclopedia glbtq - gay, lesbian, bisexual transgender and queer culture - it is commented that:
Whereas his father was quiet and mild-mannered, his mother Ruth was socially ambitious, a determined woman whose predatory qualities both fascinated and horrified her son. He was to remark that a good many of the intimidating women characters of his novels were modeled from his mother, with whom he carried on a lifelong feud.

When the young man thought about completeness and maturity, the Landlady called the young man for tea from downstairs. He wondered, if that was the most he could expect, the figures in the basement the silent Landlord and his bursting wife. When he was thinking about the ideal, reality called him from the basement. Patrick White here symbolically indicated that the ideal state was possible, only if one traversed across the sea of life, facing the reality. The landlady had actually prepared tea and a slice of bread and dripping. The landlord’s ironical comment that the Landlady always felt hungry had a hint to her sensuality. To Will’s comment her pointblank response was that there was no end to pleasure. Throughout the play, the landlady was associated with the food images.

The young man came down to the basement for the tea. The landlady wanted to have some nice and bright talk. She asked the landlord to tell about his past. He had obtained wisdom through the experience of life in all its facets. He knew very well that a man could gain experience through mistakes.
He felt that he had nothing to boast about his past. But, Mrs. Lusty was all praise for the Landlord’s wrestling career and his youthful days. To Landlord, it only stunk.

Landlady: ... An’ you, Will Lusty .... (passing same to her husband) tell us a story of yer youth, when you threw the big buck nigger on the grass, and I kissed you on the mouth ’cause I was proud.

Landlord: (spitting out a mouthful, throwing the slice back on the plate) This stinks! It stinks! (H.F.1.4.25).

The landlord narrated his life in simple words. In the beginning, his life was very ordinary. He remembered his boyhood days. He grew up and met a woman, who became his wife. Then, he talked about his life as a wrestler. After an early materialistic life, now the landlord was leading a life of contentment. To him the house, where he had been living, was life. He was now in a position to exchange love even with inanimate objects like tables, chairs etc. He recalled his past life without interest, in a disgusting tone.

This kind of indifference from the side of Will Lusty, gave mental agony for Mrs. Lusty. Actually, she wanted to experience more adventures and romance in her life. For her, the past was still glittering like a star in her mind. She was all praise for the past. The landlady says: “But it’s life I’m after, Will.
(Vague gesture) That’s why I can’t stick all this. That’s why the old days are still glossy as a postcard.” (H.F.1.4.27)

The landlord did not lend a supporting hand to the lady’s expectation. In an attempt, to bring the landlord to normalcy or in other words to make the landlord realize her mental pain, she quoted the name of her erstwhile lover, Fred. This instigated the landlord’s anger and bitterness. His emotions were provoked. So far, the landlord had been presented as a man of wisdom and knowledge. Even in him, the call of the wild lied deep seated. He too had the destructive forces. When provoked, his pent up emotions came out. He poured out words of vituperations against the lady’s lover and the lover’s resemblance in the face of her dead child. This led to further mental agony for the landlady. It did not stop there. The landlord proceeded a step further. In addition to the mental blow, he even physically attacked the landlady. Having realized the truth, Will was leading a withdrawn life. In other words, he could not behave or respond to situations normally. He stifled up his emotions and feelings. This unnatural attempt to hide one’s own feeling and leading a life that was contrary to nature became destructive. It destroyed the happiness of Alma Lusty. May Brit Akerholt has rightly pointed that:

In the terms of the play Will’s ‘meaningful retreat’ is both creative and destructive, just as Alma’s sensuousness and physicality are life-giving
as well as life-denying forces in her character. In different ways the Lustys functions as a guide to fulfillment and a warning about the sterility which results from suppression of the life forces. (7-8)

The young man watched the battle between the Lustys at tea. It was a process of learning for him. He realized the reality. So far, the landlord appeared to be a man of wisdom. Now, the young man wondered where he had gone:

Young Man: Now, where’s the landlord, whose words for a moment brought the furniture to life? He’s about to eat his wisdom. He’s is only a man! (H.F.1.4.27)

The one lesson now the young man had learnt by being a witness to the happenings was that he could never help the Lustys to solve their problems and similarly, they could not do anything to solve his problem. He could come out with a solution for the problems that he had been experiencing in his mind by observing and understanding the Lustys’ conflict and its reason. The young man should really thank Mrs. Lusty, who had brought him down from his solitary room to witness the happenings. Actually, this was of great use in the development of the young man’s personality. May Brit Akerholt has very clearly pointed out that:

Observation of the Lusty conflict enables the Young Man to continue questioning his own mind, to develop and experience his own conflict,
something which leads to experiences of life’s phenomena. In this sense the Lustys are catalytic forces in that they open the door for the Young Man’s inner search for fulfillment through exposing their own life to him. (18)

After witnessing the battle, the young man had a conversation with his Anima. As the Lustys had recently recalled their past, the young man also recollected his past experience in the presence of his Anima. While the recollection of the Lustys’ past was full of commotion, the young man’s was touching and emotional. He recalled the time, he had spent in a country, where lilacs bloomed and wedges of black cockatoos abounded. The experience was really unforgettable for him. He was very much sensitive to the sweet smell of lilacs and the sounds of parrots and cockatoos. As he was physically weak, he sneezed all through the spring. Then he enquired his Anima, how he could discover. The Anima figure wondered after having witnessed the conflict between the Lustys, how the young man could make this enquiry. To go back and recollect his past experience was not the way to discover truth. The only way was to turn to the world of adult responsibility and witness the show of reality that was happening downstairs. She redirected the young man to analyse things happening in the basement carefully. It was like an oracle, if one could read between the lines about the happenings in the basement:
Girl: It is in the ar, it is in the wall ….

(She goes Back, feverishly, stands looking out of her window. Simultaneously, the Young Man goes to his)

Girl: ….the bough taps out the answer to the window. It is even in the basement … where the landlord’s teeth have left their bite in the stale crust, and potato peelings are oracles to those who learn how to read them. (H.F.1.5.32)

The Anima figure continued that one should not overlook the landlord. One should not ignore the fact that the landlord had experienced life in all its facets. The young man now tried to recollect what lesson, he had actually learnt from the landlord. What were all the words of wisdom spoken by him in the previous scene? He ransacked his brain. But, he could not find out the message, the landlord had conveyed. In the meantime, he was called back to the basement by the landlady’s scream.

All of a sudden, the landlord died. When asked landlady said “'E just died. Without a word, without even a fit” (H.F.1.6.35). The emotions expressed and the conversations exchanged between the young man and the landlady, at the death of Will Lusty, were really funny. The young man stared at the landlord and when questioned, he replied that he had not seen a dead body in his life. Hence, he was having a very close look. The words dead body
made landlady realize that the landlord was dead and she expressed her grief. The landlady and the young man then lifted the dead body and placed it on the bed. They made plans for a decent funeral. The landlady decided to arrange a Ham Funeral for the Lord and the reason that she gave was comical:

Landlady: ’Am, silly! Wot you eat. It never was seen in this street. Bill Piper got faggots. And Mrs. Ruddock a leg of mutton. But it’ll be ’am for Will Lusty, if ’is widow busts! (H.F.1.6.36)

In order to gain composure the Landlady took down her hair and brushed. Her action of brushing might be the symptom of shock. The young man got irritated over this and asked her to stop brushing. Her reply and the young man’s response were still more hilarious:

Landlady: (also shouting) I must do somthink, mustn’t I?

(She breaks into a stormy crying.)
Young Man : (holding his head, speaking rapidly) Yes, yes, I know! This is the first time anything has happened to me. It’s difficult to think.

(H.F.1.6.37)

Act I, scene (vi) actually served as a comic relief after a serious encounter between the Landlord and the Landlady in Act I, scene (iv). As in the words of J.R. Dyce
The playwright’s intention seems to be to make this scene as loosely organized as the former basement scene was tightly packed and purposively ordered. (15)

In the ordinary course of life, everyone had to face difficulty. One should not be dejected by this. We should keep our temperament balanced both in happiness and misery. Patrick White brought forth this idea in the death scene. This has been rightly pointed out by J.R. Dyce in Patrick White as Playwright as:

The balance of mood between tenderness and hilarity in the face of what difficulty is to be encountered in human life is also a fundamental human adjustment that is evoked by the play. (21)

On his way to bring the relatives of Alma Lusty, to mourn the death of the landlord, the young man encountered two ladies in a street, rummaging the garbage tin. The first lady fished a bloater out of the overflowing garbage tin with some of the flesh still on it. She judged the bin as an average one. But, the second lady said that there would always be surprises and encouraged her to find out more things. The first lady came across celluloid pearls. They searched for some discarded letters. They were very much interested in reading the letters. They found out one and their comments all through the scene were funny. Finally, they were shocked to come across a dead foetus.
The two ladies lived on the discarded materials by the society. Actually, they themselves were discarded by the society. The first lady, like Alma Lusty, was very much interested in eating. Whatever she had come across, whether it was a bloater, a celluloid pearl or a letter, she swallowed them up. Once, she and her husband had been circus performers. Her husband died by swallowing a sword handed to him by her. She was responsible for her husband’s death. Similarly, Will Lusty was a successful wrestler. When his wife’s cheers turned to contempt, he withdrew from wrestling. Soon, the relatives would find fault with Alma for killing her husband.

In fact, the young man’s vision of life expanded through the experience that he had undergone in his meeting with the scavenger ladies and the dead foetus. The dustbin in itself symbolically indicated life. And the two ladies without yielding, searched for surprises. It was a clue for the young man. Life too had its own surprises, provided we were on a search for it. Till then, the young man was inactively searching for completeness and had asked many questions to his Anima. In fact, he had overlooked the necessity of participation in life. The garbage bin had also a connotation with the darker side, sex and animal instinct, of the human being. Outwardly, people wear masks and were in disguise. The garbage bin was rummaged by the scavenger ladies to find out surprises. Similarly, if human mind was probed, darker
attitudes would become distinct. Finally, they came across a dead foetus, which might be the result of the animal instincts and illegal contacts.

Patrick White has included the scavenger ladies in the characters list. It has reference to the mad woman, whom he had come across, when he was young. This mad woman used to rummage through the garbage bin at White’s backyard. He felt that the mad woman had association with magic. The scavenger women appeared to be illusionary in the play. But actually, they were stemmed out of reality from White’s backyard. One could perceive an obvious change in the attitude of the young man after his encounter with the scavenger ladies and the dead foetus. In Act I, scene iii, Alma went to his bedroom to invite him for a tea. They talked about her dead child. The young man remarked that it was a sad event. And it might be even sadder, if it had grown like the landlady:

Young Man: Sad. But it might have been sadder. He might have sprouted from your area, all muscles and malignancy, and over run the world. Or they might have stoned him for a saint. Or he could have turned out so pale, nobody noticed him. (H.F.1.3.22)

Now the young man’s response was different. When he came across the dead foetus, he felt and expressed a sense of compassion towards it. He even pointed out that, it was really brutal. As May Brit Akerholt rightly pointed out:
“Staring at the discarded foetus, he considers the possibility that never to feel the blows of life is a loss in itself, as it means never to feel desire and love. Thus the budding poet achieves a different view of death as well as life during this scene.” (25)

J.R. Dyce also agrees with the same view:

“Here for the first time in the play his tender compassion is aroused, a pointer to his later capacity to come to an understanding of Mrs. Lusty.” (17)

The young man arrived at the residence of the relatives to announce the death of the landlord. The four relatives opened the windows and popped their heads. All the four relatives were exactly alike, soap coloured, lean, with drooping moustaches. They suggest what had already happened before the young man completed his message and they also foretold what was going to happen. At the sight of the young man, the relatives very correctly asked “Is it Will?” (H.F.1.8.44)

Young Man : We hadn’t ventured as far as that. But she’d like you to come. And to the funeral. It will be a …

First Relative: (nodding his head, ponderously) … a ham funeral.

(Young Man starts.) (H.F.1.8.45)
J.R. Dyce is of the opinion that the relatives were the instrument of darkness like the witches in Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*. They told things as it happened and as it was going to happen and won our confidence. But as a matter of fact, they were going to betray Alma Lusty in the near future.

They are exactly alike, “soap-coloured, lean, with drooping, straw moustaches”. With runic utterance, reminiscent of the witches in *Macbeth* in a setting of *Family Reunion*, they speak of the past and hint at the future. Their conventional references to the dead and the living achieve sinister overtones when accompanied by innuendo and lascivious laughter; such farce is corrosive. (17)

While he waited for the relatives to come, his mind was overwhelmed with the reflection about the landlord. Their evil utterances about Will and Alma were accompanied by insulting and coarse laughter. Still, the landlord appeared to be an obscure figure inspiring love and awe in the young man.

The second act began with the funeral wake. It was a ceremony associated with death. Traditionally, a wake will take place in the house of the deceased, with the body present. It is often a time for the deceased's friends and loved ones to gather and to console the immediate family prior to the funeral. In Australia, New Zealand, and northern England, the wake commonly happens after the funeral service, in the absence of the body. The wake often resembles
a party for the deceased as well as being of comfort for their family, in which alcohol and food are served. Here, for Will Lusty, a ham funeral had been arranged along with bottles of tout.

The four relatives were at the tables. Alma Lusty was “monumental in black”. An empty chair and an untouched bottle of stout were placed. One could imagine that it was placed out of respect for the dead Will Lusty. Actually, Alma had placed that for the young man. Her thoughts about Will had already been replaced by the young man. In the first act, the landlord was presented as a withdrawn personality. In the second act, he was not physically present. But, he was present everywhere. In J.R. Dyce’s words:

If he had been a withdrawn presence in Act I, in this act his spirit is unleashed to work in the consciousness of those who will receive it. (18)

Actually, Alma was guilty. She felt that the relatives would surely find fault with her and accuse her for Lusty’s death. Therefore, she had prepared for a grand feast. Right from the beginning Alma used food and serving of food as a substitute and tried to escape from facing reality. Actually, in the first act, Alma expressed her hatred towards the routine mechanical activity. She was also not happy with the landlord, who always remained silent except for his
grunting and breathing. In order to overcome the unpleasant fact, she had arranged for tea and invited the young man to the basement.

Now after the death of the landlord, the landlady had purposely arranged for a grand ham funeral to get rid of the reality. She very well knew that shortly she would be receiving severe criticism from the relatives.

First Relative: Perhaps on second thoughts, Alma, in these sad circumstances it would be more appropriate not to … stuff.

Landlady: (passionately) Eat, damn yers! Fill yer bellies! That’s wot it’s ’ere for!

First Relative: I was only suggesting’, of course. Out of propriety. (He starts to eat the Ham).

Landlady: There’s nothink like foode. ’specially now. If you stuff yer mouths, they can’t get inter mischief. (H.F.2.1.48)

In spite of the Landlady’s scheme, the relatives started their diggings. The first relative started by pointing out that Will was too gentle and that was his weakness. But, the person who lived along with him was indifferent towards him. Will got married. In the wrestling field, he came out victorious. But, in his married life, he was wrestled and was thrown away by his better half. He point blankly said that Will broke at last “infected by ’is missus’s life”
Will actually died many a time by the way he had been treated by his wife.

In their conversation the landlady said that Will was a very good judge. He understood things clearly. She said, “Will’s face saw more than any mirror. Sometimes ’e looked under the skin.” He was also a severe critic. People were not supposed to lose their balance. But if they do, Will laughed the loudest. Actually, they lost their balance. The relatives indirectly made a pun at the Landlady. They were, all praise for the landlord’s wisdom, philosophy and principles. At the same time, they were very severe and biting with regard to Alma Lusty. Alma replied to their remark and managed the situation. When she could not, she asked the relatives to “’Ave another slice of ’am.”

May Brit Akerholt has rightly pointed out:

In all instances the meals are surrogate activities and symbolize the idea of food as an escape from reality as well as food as a life-sustaining, life-renewing source. (23)

In fact, the relatives came to mourn the death and to pay tribute to Will Lusty. But, they played the role of a matador in bullfighting. They tormented the widow. They accused her in terms of whoring and destructive passion. The young man couldn’t stand this and indulged in a conversation with his Anima.
The girl rightly pointed out that the young man was disgusted by the Lustys’ life that was presented for him to witness.

The young man thought the world as “a lovely ball of coloured glass...” (H.F.2.2.54) Once the young man wrote a play and it was not successful because of his egocentric and narcissistic views. His world of coloured glass had been turned to a ball of mud, which stunk. It was because he rejected the stink of reality. He stayed comfortably in his bed room. The young man had to realize that the glasses are easily breakable. On the other hand, mud was a source of life. Clay is a material from which things could be created. Life in the basement was the source of creativity and inspiration. Hence, the Anima directed the young man to go down and participate in the action. Rejecting basement life was rejecting the source of inspiration in proceeding towards the right direction.

The landlady continued her act of being a host. She was very busy in offering pieces of slices to the relatives. This indirectly indicated the intensity with which the relatives were taunting her. In the process of entertaining the relatives, Alma was reminded of her wedding night. When she said that, wedding nights were usually short, the third relative attacked the sensuousness of Alma with the comment “I bet Alma’s was the shortest!” (H.F.2.5.58) Alma recalled how the landlord placed a piece of bleeding ham in his bed instead of
himself the next morning, when actually she went to make a cup of coffee. Therefore, the ham that was served on the funeral day had deeper significance. It indirectly indicated Will himself. Will became a part and parcel of every one gathered for his funeral.

The young man came down with the noble intention of releasing Alma from the clutches of the relatives. When the Young Man arrived, the first relative gave a sinister adjective for him “the Young Lord”. So far, the landlady addressed the young man as Jack, in the name of her dead son. But now, she called him Fred. They continued their remarks with regard to the young man. They guessed that the young man was going to get into the shoes of the landlord. One of the relatives commented that he was comparatively a young man. Another one said that he was quite a boy. And the next one said but, he was well developed. All their remarks had sexual implications. But, the landlady did not mind it and asked the young man to drink stout.

The young man told the relative that he wanted to pay respects to the widow. The landlady’s immediate response was “That’s over. Now we’ve begun again.” (H.F.2.5.59) Thus, the landlady was not worried about the dead landlord. Her immediate concern was to pacify and get rid of the relatives. She had overcome the death episode. Now, her concentration and attention had been directed towards the young man. The relatives were conscious of that.
The landlady did not act in a refined way before the relatives. This added fuel to the fire of the relatives’ speculations. The landlady advised the young man not to worry about the landlord’s death because “Everythink begins ….over and over again.” (H.F.2.5.60) The young man brought the lady to consciousness by commenting that she smelt of moth.

The young man now wanted to spare Alma Lusty from the shackles of the relatives. They departed with the sharp, piercing words. The fourth relative said that they were leaving the young man the empty house to rule. The first relative added that actually he said an empty house. But, it was not so. They were leaving the Landlady too. While departing, all the relatives together sang a song. In it, they referred to the Wreck of Hesperus. "The Wreck of the Hesperus" is a narrative poem written by the American poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. "The Wreck of the Hesperus" is a story that presents the tragic consequences of a sea captain's pride. Actually, the captain ignored the advice of one of his experienced crewmen. Here, the relatives made a hint that further tragedy was going to follow.

In the funeral celebration, the relatives like the dead landlord taunted and teased the landlady. The landlady very well knew that the relatives would have a dig at her. In this perspective, they appeared to be a mirror, which reflected the landlady’s own mind. May Brit Akerholt has rightly pointed out that:
“As replicas of each other, and in the final instance one figure, they become extensions of the dead landlord in their attitudes to the landlady, and they become the landlady’s inner mirror, to her what the Anima is to the Young Man. …By bringing certain feelings to the surface the relatives force Alma to confront her own self the way the Anima confronts the Young Man with his own self.” (26)

The young man who had brought in the relatives put a stop to the funeral celebration and asked them to leave. They had eaten the ham, celebrated and resurrected the landlord. The landlady now saw the young man from a different perspective. Actually, he had released the landlady from relatives’ bait. She considered him as a source of kindness and compassion.

The young man and the landlady were left in the basement hall. The young man brought to mind the last words of the landlord that were of great importance to him. He thought how the landlord had had a satisfactory view on life. For him, the house where he lived was life and the table where he sat was love. While he contemplated on the views of the landlord, the landlady felt exasperated. She expected from the young man what the landlord had not done for her. But, the young man was not interested in her.
The landlady’s face, that had the expression of sensuality, was horrible for the young man. His remark made the landlady to feel that she was going to lose the young man also very shortly. The young man was not going to play the music for her song. This enraged her and in a fit of anger, she asked the young man to get out. When he was ready to go, she pleaded him to stay back. She wished to possess the young man. But, the landlady felt that she would soon lose him. Hence, she almost became crazy. Her behavior became very eccentric. She asked the young man to stay back and was ready to offer him a box of pencils and apple toffees. She tried to retain him with her physical charm. She pressed his head against her breast and embraced him. She almost kissed him on his mouth. Young Man: (struggling) I’m damned if I’ll wear the landlord’s old glove! (H.F.2.6.67)

The young man wrenched himself free from the clutches of Alma and almost strangled her. The landlady gasped and cried: “You didn’t kill me, Jack, but couldn’t ’uv done a better job if you ’ad.” (H.F.2.6.67) He had a very clear view that flesh was not the final answer for the crisis. At the end of Act II, scene vi, Alma Lusty was left alone in a wretched condition.

The seduction scene proved to be an important element in the poet’s process of development from innocence to experience. When the landlady said
“You’ll soon learn where yer hinges are!” The young man’s reply is “I’m learning”. (H.F.2.6.67) May Brit Akerholt has rightly pointed out that:

The experience of the flesh serves as an initiation from adolescence to manhood, from inactivity to creativity. Moreover, in denying the kindness of his action, the Young Man realizes its significance: that it is part of his role to remove the visitors who have outplayed their usefulness. (31)

Yet, the young man did not achieve complete maturity. On the way to his room, the young man thought of what had happened. He uttered a few comments about the landlady with derision. He felt that, if he had packed her into a box along with the landlord, he would have made a better escape. At this point, he questioned himself, whether he was doing things correctly or acting rather priggishly.

Young Man: …. …. …. I … am free … aren’t I? Or has the prig simply taken over? I am a poet, I said. I shall possess the infinite. Or am I just an ineffectual prig, looking at the world through a telescope… (hesitating outside his own door) .. through the wrong end? (H.F.2.7.68)

The young man wanted to clarify his doubt with his Anima. The girl’s opinion was other way round. She found fault with the young man and commented that
the landlady had won the battle. The way, he treated the landlady was not good. In spite of her weakness, she must be viewed as an individual:

Young Man: (dismissing the possibility, with disgust) I held her sweaty body …

Girl: … in which the life beat and struggled. (H.F.2.8.69)

The girl made the young man realize that he was still looking at the world from the wrong end of the telescope. On many future occasions, the young man may have to fight with the figures in the basement. In them, passion and compassion may be locked together. The young man’s understanding must be as in the words of J.R. Dyce:

“However, at the end, Mrs. Lusty remains unredeemed. In answer to this, one counters that in the play’s symbolic framework, Mrs. Lusty has just this unredeemed role to play: the flesh is a source of disgust unless compassion is attendant, as the Young Man comes to find out.” (32)

The young man finally broke down the door, which separated him from the girl. He wanted to meet her. But, he found only sprays of lilac. His action killed Anima’s ephemeral existence and he took her up into him. Now, reality and life were left around him. He realized that the landlady had said something after the fashion of imperfect flesh.
The young man came down to bid good bye to the landlady. Now, he saw a kind of beauty in her face. In his new found compassion and understanding, the young man kissed her on the forehead. This signified his rebirth. In perceiving the world, he had attained a new dimension. The young man began from an end. He put out his hands to touch the night. He did not feel that he had attained completeness. He was departing not in a mood of rejecting, what he had experienced so far. But, he started his journey in search for life and art which, started from the house.

In the title of the play the word funeral brought in a kind of gloomy atmosphere. But, this was taken away by the word ham. Ham was the thigh and rump of pork from the haunch of a pig or boar. This indicated that the central situation was a happy funeral or one from which happiness resulted.

White has used Anima as a character in the play. The anima and animus in Carl Jung’s school of analytical psychology, are the two primary anthropomorphic archetypes of the unconscious mind. The anima and animus are described by Jung as elements of his theory of the collective unconscious, a domain of the unconscious that transcends the personal psyche. In the unconscious of the male, it finds expression as a feminine inner personality – anima, equivalently in the unconscious of the female, it is expressed as a masculine inner personality - animus.
White has used psychological terms in the play. Hence, it is essential to approach the play from the point of view of modern psychology. To begin with, White’s use of stage settings has a significant role to play in *The Ham Funeral*. The division between the floors is symbolic. It symbolizes aspects of human condition. The division in the house, the basement and the ground floor has association with psychological concepts. Dennis Douglas in his essay “Influence and Individuality: the Indebtedness of Patrick White’s *The Ham Funeral* and *The Season at Sarsaparilla* to Strindberg and the German Expressionist Movement” has rightly pointed out that

…… there is also a more confined and doctrinaire symbolic framework operative in the play, which accords to basement, hall and upper landing in the house a specific correspondence with the three levels of the personality in Freudian psycho-analysis or Jungian analytic psychology: the id, the level of naked instinctual craving; the ego, the level of social interaction and self-concept; and the super-ego the level of value-formation and moral awareness. (272)

Mrs. Lusty, who lived in the basement, is the representative of the personalities, whose traits are dominated by the qualities of ‘id’. The poet who lived in the ground floor exhibited some refined sensibilities that are due to ‘ego’. Many images and symbols in the play also substantiated the point. The
poet, while recalling his past referred to lilacs, but with the landlady it was
daises and buttercups. The young man wrote poem and plays. The landlady
read the sunday newspaper and visited theater. She often saw herself in the
mirror with admiration. The young man, to know about himself, conversed
with the Anima.

Carl Jung has divided human personalities into two categories as
introvert and extrovert. Introverts are interested in their own thoughts and
feelings. They often appear reserved, quiet and thoughtful. They like
concentration and quiet atmosphere. On the other hand, extroverts are
interested in what is happening around them. They are open and often
talkative. They say what they think. They are interested in new people. They
easily break unwanted relations. Will Lusty is an introvert, while Alma Lusty
proves to be an extrovert. Will was reserved, quiet and thoughtful. Alma was
talkative. She talked whatever had come to her mind. For Will, the house was
life and the furniture was love. But, for Alma she wanted to make new friends
and was interested in new people. After the death of Will, she readily overcame
the shock and looked forward to have an affair with the young man. Conflicts
arose between Will and Alma because they were the representatives of the two
opposite poles.
According to Jung, sex and the life instincts in general, are a part of an archetype called the shadow. It derives from our pre-human, animal past. We were a member of the animal community. In those days, our needs were limited. Human beings survived and reproduced like other animals. The shadow is the "dark side" of the ego, and the evil that we are capable of is often stored there. Actually, the shadow is amoral. It is either good or bad. It is just like an animal. An animal is capable of being brutal, when it is on search for its food. It can also exhibit tender care. Actually, it does not choose to do either. It just does what it does. But, from our human perspective, the animal world looks rather brutal and inhuman. This darker side actually rules Alma Lusty. At one point, Alma became a slave to the life instinct and sex. She was also capable of showing tender care and affection. She often addressed the young man by her dead son’s name. This proved that Alma actually did not plan anything and did a crime. She just did what she had done. Actually, she was “innocent” from this perspective. She was not aware of what she was doing. She was in a state of unconsciousness. Her instinct guided her to act. The point could be substantiated when the Young Man came to bid goodbye. Alma’s response was

Landlady: Did I dream a man called will Lusty died? And you…

(She looks at the YOUNG MAN, and quickly decides to say no more)
Young Man: Who’s to say where the dream begins ... ever ... whether it’s a dead landlord or a declaration of love. (H.F.2.9.72)

Jung further divides human personality into four categories as thinking, feeling, sensing and intuitive. The thinking type exposes everything to logical analysis. They are relatively cold and unemotional. They evaluate things by intellect and right or wrong. The feeling type is interested in people and their feelings. They pay great attention to love and passion. They evaluate things by ethics and good or bad. The sensing type people are practical and active. They are realistic and self-confident. The intuitive people worry about the future more than the present. They do not like routine. They are attracted more to the theory than the practice. They often have doubts.

Alma Lusty, as the meaning of her name implies, belongs to the feeling type. She was interested in people and their feelings. She paid attention to love and passion. Of course, she evaluated things by ethics and good or bad. Alma expected more of life. Her better half led a withdrawn life. She became eccentric and crazy because of her unfulfilled expectations. Will died normally without even a fit. Now, she could evaluate things from the common man perspective. She expected worst responses from the relatives. She was aware of her darker side and also the common ethics by which the people will judge.
First relative: It was our intention to pay a tribute to our relative ‘oo ’as just passed on.

Land Lady (unconvinced): Or to ’ave a dig at the living! (H.F.2.1.49)

In this categorization also, Will belonged to a different group. Another meaning for the word Lusty is healthy and vigorous. It also implies the meaning full of strength and vitality. As the other meaning of the word, Lusty implies ‘a thinking type’. He remained rather cold and unemotional all through the play. He was indifferent to his wife’s feeling. But, his characteristic traits had an overlapping with feeling type, with regard to passion. He became a victim to passion. He became emotional, when provoked by Alma with reference to her erstwhile lover, Fred and their past.

Another concept Jung included in his psychological theory is persona. The persona represents one’s public image. The word is related to the word person and personality, and comes from a Latin word for mask. So, the persona is the mask one puts on before one show himself to the outside world. It is just the good impression we wish to present before the world. But, the good impression we wish to make, need not be a true one. Often, it is a false impression. We normally manipulate people's opinions and behaviours. And, the worst part of it is, it can be mistaken by our own self. Sometimes, we
believe that it is our true nature. To put in nutshell, we begin to imagine we really are what we pretend to be.

The young man in the beginning of the play was an introvert. He felt happy to be alone. He wanted to be in his snug and quiet room. As a matter of fact, he was full of doubts and a failure as a poet. But, he did not want to project this to the outer world. When the landlady said she had discovered his poem in the dust bin, the young man was startled; but regained composure, when she said she did not read it and usually she did not understand educated hand. When he came down for tea, he changed his persona. He tried to be friendly with the landlord and the lady and spoke to them in their own tune. When he conversed with the Anima girl, he displayed a different persona.

The young man belonged to the ‘thinking type’ personality. He thought of his failure and the means to overcome it. He asked many questions to his Anima in this regard. In his character, there was an overlapping of the traits due to ‘feeling type’ too. After witnessing the discarded dead foetus, there was a change in the attitude of the young man. He felt for the ill fated dead child. He also sympathised with the landlady, who was tormented by the relatives.

The differences between the three main characters were obvious. Alma Lusty was completely trapped by her own nature. She did not have the capacity to dominate it. In fact, she did not even realize her own limitations. Instead,
she was angry with people outside, who had refused to fan her passion. The Man has his own free will, to decide his own fate and govern his own life. Alma would have governed her own life, if she had given importance to higher level of understanding. Like the young man, if she had the quest to discover, she would have reached higher altitude. Instead, she remained locked up by passion and became a victim to it.

The landlord, on the other hand, identified his own limitations. He was not completely trapped by his own nature. He tried his best to dominate it. Having realized his own limitations, he led a withdrawn life. He balanced very well and avoided the pitfalls. In spite of that, at a point of time, he yielded. When provoked by Alma, he lost his temper and became emotional. He even physically attacked the landlady. He lacked the quality of compassion towards his wife. This point was evident, when he placed a piece of ham in the bed instead of him on the wedding night. His passion too was bitter and destructive like that of Alma. But for this, he had a deeper understanding and realization of his own potentials. His silence was the symbol of self-realization and knowledge. Yet, it was also suffocating. It too had destructive qualities. The relatives in the funeral scene discussed Will dying many a time in his life because of his wife. She had many times murdered Will. But, the same criticism was applicable to the landlord also. His silent withdrawal suffocated her.
The young man searched for completeness and truth. He was not completely trapped by his own nature. He had the capacity to dominate it. At a point of time, like the Landlord, the young man too lost balance and almost fell in the pitfall. But, his constant search for truth, evaded him from the mistake. The one quality that was absent in the landlord was compassion. The young man also lacked it and made bitter comments about the lady’s dead child. He also failed to exhibit a sense of understanding, when the landlady was in a mentally distorted state, after the funeral scene. He was directed by his Anima to identify his weakness. He realized his abilities and limitations as well. He realized his own self. He had the free will to decide his own fate. He could have surrendered to the sensuousness of Alma Lusty. But, he realized flesh was not the answer for the crisis. He learnt that one must inter-relate the factors that were represented by the landlady and the landlord. That is physical sensuousness and truth searching intellect. In the words of May Brit Akerholt:

The Young Man survives the play by participating in its action without being immersed in, or identical with, its experiences. He listens to the landlord’s wisdom, eats the ham and is devoured by the landlady, but he does not become synonymous with the squalor of Alma or the non-communicative withdrawal of Will. Thereby he finds his own reality. (32)
In this play, White concentrated on the development and growth of an individual. He exhibited the limitations and the factors that could prevent an individual from progress. He had very clearly suggested the ways and means to overcome the problems. 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 was not the answer for the crisis and one must inter-relate the factors that were represented by the landlady and the landlord. That was physical sensuousness and truth searching intellect. In addition, the young man realized that people, who had become a victim to passion like Alma Lusty, must not be neglected completely. He was made to realize that they were also human beings and they must be approached with humanism and compassion. Further, he was also made to come out of his egocentric and the narcissistic nature. The progress is not possible unless one is exposed to the life’s multifaceted experience. The young man matured, as he exposed himself to the outside world of the Lustys, the scavenger women and the relatives.

The next 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. In fact, the people have not realized their own pitiable state. Patrick White actual aim is to make the Australian realize where they are.