Chapter - II

Novels of the 40's
THE LIVING AND THE DEAD

The Living and the Dead, Patrick White's second novel, was set in England. The touch of English experience and the period in which the novel is set, are both dealt with extraordinary physical and mental adroitness. Many English critics, especially Walsh, have appreciated White for his acute sense and rich presence of mind in the handling of English life.

The Living and the Dead is pushed forward by a powerful leading idea, the distinction between the living and the dead. D.H. Lawrence had dramatized life and existence: "A thing is not life just because somebody does it... It is just existence... By life we mean something that gleams, that has fourth dimensional quality."¹ Geoffrey Duttan has commented on: "The structure of the book saying that it is taught enough, from the irony of the title to the picture of the Australian mountain town, enclosed by nature, burst open by human beings, to the deaths and destroyed loves which are too honestly unelevating to be called tragedy."²

The title of the novel suggests the preoccupation of the main character, Elyot. Throughout his earlier poetry he dealt, with those who feared the springs of spiritual nourishment, and were dead even while they lived.

They finally return to the "source" and "origin" i.e. the actual return to the personal mother is always in demand. This is not Freudian or Jungian philosophy but this is reality. In The Living and the Dead one can find that the confusion between symbolic and worldly desire is strongly pronounced. Elyot Standish, the hero of the novel, is strongly impelled towards the maternal matrix, and at the same time has developed a fascination for the personal mother. This is the real problem shared by White and his protagonist. "White is not writing about incest with psychological sophistication, but is simply writing, about his own
interest which happens to be preoccupied with incestuous fantasies. The fantasies are never brought before conscious scrutiny, nor are they intellectualized or formulated as such, but remain part of the unconscious structure of the narrative.

After publishing his first novel *Happy Valley* in the year 1939, he visited New England. Back in Britain he began the novel, *The Living and the Dead*. It is a bleak story based on the Pimlico area of London. He then returned to Sandwich in Massachusetts to complete the book and to visit haunts that he had known in the beautiful countryside of New England. The novel was published in 1941. The book was written in London in an upper middle-class environment. It is his only novel with a non-Australian and London setting. White himself has an opinion about this book; he thought it to be “premature” and “wretched”, although people compared his work with Joyce, Lawrence and Woolf.

There are the two main characters in the novel, Elyot Standish and his sister Eden. They are portrayed as sensitive products of that period, “a certain literary romanticizing of the workingman, as well as the poetic and spiritual symbolism attributed to the Spanish Civil War.... The novel has the silky, slightly, pedagogic and culturally superior tone of that particular milieu.” Eden represents the living, erratic unpredictable, easily hurt; she has the saving grace of not wailing herself off from experience. Her brother, on the other hand, consciously intelligent and sensitive, never really touches the world. In theory he longs to immerse himself, but in practice he always shrinks away. It is Eden who, in an era of professed socialist and egalitarian ideals, genuinely falls in love with a poor man, the brother of the family servant, and who suffers when he dies in the Spanish Civil War. The contrast between brother and sister, their involvement with
their mother, the sense of the time, and the city in which they live are some threads subtly interwoven with others in this novel.

In the opening paragraph of *The Living and the Dead*, Elyot Standish is seeing his sister off:

> Outside the station, people settled down again to being emotionally commonplace. There was very little to distinguish the individual feature in the flow of faces. Certainly it was right, it uncovered no particular secret, just the uniform white, square or oblong, tinged for a moment with the feverish tones of red or violet. In the same way his ears took sound, but selected no predominant note out of the confused stream, taxis unsticking their types from the wet surface of the street, the rumbling of the buses. All this was so much prevalent, and yet irrelevant sound. Like the drifting faces, a dim, surrounding presence, almost dependent on his train of thought for its existence they're in the darkness. It was better like this, he felt, escaped only a couple of minutes from the too intimate glimpses, the emotional sharps of the railway platform. It was better to swim in the confused sea that was anybody's London. The personal was eclipsed by Eden's face that last moment on the strip of receding train.5

These lines very clearly tell us many different things in a single moment: the place, which is London, the scene that is the limit, etc. Elyot Standish is saying good-bye to his sister Eden. It also portrays the less confident quality of Elyot's character, and above all, the paragraph throws light on the distinction, which Lawrence called “life-existence” and White called “living-dead.” There is a thread of differentiation running through they “grey-pattern” between the emotionally commonplace outside i.e. the station, and something else within; between the flow of faces and the individual feature; between the uniform white and the particular secret; between the predominant note and the confused stream; between the intimate glimpses and emotional stream; between the
two intimate glimpses and emotional sharps of the railway platform and the confused "anybody's London," between the individual and the crowd outside Victoria. It also expresses the flexible run of prose but more confident attitude of the author, because he had announced the theme of the novel with far greater assurance. Although this method shows the flexibility of prose, it has a greater merit of clarity and firmness.

The novel then takes on with a suppressed note as Elyot sees his sister off to Spain where her lover, the cabinetmaker, Joe Barnett, had been killed in the Spanish War. Eden had decided to go to Spain for idealistic though unspecified reasons. The Spanish Civil War began in July 1936. The Spanish army units stationed in Morocco had mutineed against the Spanish government. Most army units in Spain then rose in revolt, and they soon won control of about a third of the country. The rebels under General Franco hoped to overthrow the government quickly and restore order in Spain. In October, the revolt had developed into a full-scale civil war. The forces that fought to save the Republic were called Loyalists or Republicans. Both sides killed civilians and prisoners in a violent, bloody conflict that raged across Spain for nearly three years. The Civil War drew international attention. Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy supported Franco's forces, and Communist Soviet Union aided the Loyalists. In addition, Loyalist sympathizers from the United States and many other countries joined the International Brigades that the Communists had formed to fight in Spain. By the end of 1937, the Nationalists clearly had the upper hand in Spain. They had taken most of Western Spain in the summer of 1936 and were gradually pushing the Loyalist forces to the east and north. The Soviet Union ended large-scale aid to the Loyalists in 1938, and Franco launched a mighty offensive against Loyalist armies that same year. Several thousand
Spainiards died in the war, and much of Spain lay in ruins. A dictatorship under Franco had replaced the short-lived Republic. It ended with a modest salute to the future i.e. to D.H. Lawrence’s “life” and Patrick White’s “Living.” The latter tried in this novel, *The Living and the Dead*, to draw out the substance of the tale that was secretly present in those moments of valediction.

From the natural grounds of the family context from which White turned smoothly to Elyot Standish’s Norfolk ancestors, Mr. Goose, the grand-father, who was a fundamentalists, atheist, harness maker, a brooding, absorbed man. He had “square, cracked hands, stained perpetually in the cracks by the dye and polish that he used.” His wife Mrs Goose was the daughter of an Anglican parson who had married happily out of her caste. They both lived in a simple dream of love for each other. Kitty, their daughter, felt exhausted from the closed circle of these two unconscious beings. When she grew older she graduated from Swinburne, felt herself to be an intellectual, took part in Fabian meetings. Fabian is a group of British Socialists. The society was founded in 1884. It was named after Quintus Fabius Maximus, Roman general. The Fabians teach that socialism can be achieved gradually, through a series of reforms. They differ from the communists, who believe that the people can gain ownership of the means of production only through revolution. Noted Fabians have included George Bernard Shaw, H.G. Wells, and Sidney and Beatrice Webb. Fabian ideas became the basis of the British Labour Party. Today, the society sponsors and publishes research on political and social issues. As the novel progresses Kitty gets engaged to Willie Standish. The scene in which she meets Willie’s parents portrays the “dry-odour:” of the English class system of the period. Walsh opines that, “Patrick White catches it’s ineffable whiff perfectly.”

41
“This”, said Willie, “is Kitty”.

He offered it to the room, on to which the door gave, no more at first to the intruder than a suggestion of firelight, and firelight reflected in a silver kettle. There was much silver candles in silver candlesticks behind their glass shades.

“How do you do. Miss Goose”?

It had the high, harsh tone of an Englishman defending the formalities. They touched hands. Somewhere another voice, a man’s veering into welcome. She had ceased to exist for herself, for anybody, whether accepting a cup, or giving an answer when asked for one.

Mrs. Standish spoke about her sons, of which she had three. They were not so much personalities as her sons. These she had given to the Army, the Navy, and the Law. The Law, who was present, stood with the smile of an elder brother for a younger’s indiscretion, and she could feel his smile. It was indulgent, in-the-know.

“The educational system”, said the Colonel, “stands or falls by discipline. Don’t you agree, Miss Goose”? They were waiting, the face, the silence politely discouraging. And then she wanted, she had to throw the stone she had held so many hours in her muff, hidden in the clenched and anxious hand, the body, rigid in its isolation.

“I’m hardly in a position”, she said, and she was surprised the way her voice took possession of the room, the way her eye caught, she hoped, the flicker of an eyelid: “I can hardly say. The only experience I have comes from the elementary schools.”

“Oh,” said the colonel. “The elementary school.”

“Yes”, she said. “I teach, you know, in the school at Little Swaffham”.

“Oh”, said the colonel. “That’s interesting.”

In focus, the room seemed smaller. But his throat was dry.

Willie Standish neglected the feeling of his upper class family and married Kitty: “it happened very tastefully, quietly, with a minimum of Standishes.” After her marriage she became a
different woman, and a totally different personality. Her name even changed from Kitty Goose to Catherine Standish, and they set up house in Ebury Street. One cannot go forward without appreciating "White's registration of the tone of upper-class life before the first World War is particularly accurate, as is his ear for its working-class accomplishment." Catherine Standish that became the mother of two children. She also turned into a slightly desperate, pleasure loving, vaguely dissatisfied woman and motherhood took the second place to metropolitan acquaintances.

Every morning Elyot's mother used to stand of the landing of the first floor and call out to the top of the house:

"Elyot, are you working"? His mother called, exasperating him to a point where he ground his ears with his hands, because she knew from the experience of years that he closed his door after breakfast for one purpose....Often he refused to hear. He left the voice to ramble, a voice without purpose on the stairs. Once he had seen her standing vaguely, hand to chin, The sleeve drooping downward from an arm, as if she were listening for a lost voice, or wondering, trying to trace her own purpose on the stairs.10

The symbolic sequence can be viewed as Elyot's psychic situation. His conscious personality forced him to follow his chosen way so that he may achieve his goal. While his unconscious matrix, interrupts his activity because of the mother's voice coming from downward. Mother is actually an archetypal figure. The author tried to highlight the character of the mother but all in vain; she has a negative attitude and shows sign of stagnation and inertia. She is listening for a lost voice, or trying to trace her own purpose on the stairs. Mother here is an imagined source, actually weakens and loses direction, which has an adverse effect not only in the quality of Elyot's life but also in the quality of the novel itself.
During childhood Elyot's relationship with his mother was very complicated. On the one hand there was a binding attraction towards her, but she proved to be destructive due to her negative behaviour. At one moment she attracted the youths and bound them with her love but later she turned away becoming scathing and brutal. David J. Tacey points out that "it is difficult to determine whether Mrs Standish actually behaves in this manner, or whether the boy's fantasies convert her into a destructive figure." Psychic factors play an important role in the case of a child's perception of his parents. When the son is unusually close to the mother her negative aspect becomes a hurdle in the way of his "emerging ego" and he is unable to develop a separate identity. Here too "mother" becomes a hurdle in the way of her child's success, which negates and destroys life. When he surrenders his individuality and sinks in his mother's realm, then she appears as a vast ocean of ecstasy and support. She is still the identified figure but now she represents a pleasant character and plays the role of a "devouring maw", a "living matrix."

The father appears only once, at the time of Elyot's adolescence when his connection with his mother was more intense and Elyot played the role of Son-Lover. In mythology the Father plays the dominant role in developing the ego of the child; at this stage, there is no internal direction into adulthood and maturity.

Out of his bewilderment he had taken refuge behind what people told him was a scholarly mind...
Adopted as a defence, this becomes a habit. Like the intellectual puzzle as a substitute for living, which you chose deliberately.\(^1^2\)

The parties and the rough or loose life of a London set occupies some uneasy area between the territory of the upper-class and a vaguely seedy Bohemian. Catherine becomes friendly with many people in this surrounding e.g. Aubrey Silk, who "did not
exist except as a member of intellectual enthusiasms and to the hysterically fashionable Mandie Westomacott." In this section White primarily gave inward freedom to all his characters, “the liberty of the subject” as Henry James called it.

The marriage of Catherine and Willie Standish later failed and the war completed their separation. Now it is the turn of Mrs. Standish to enter into the life of pseudo-intellectualism and unsystematic sensuality, which would definitely end in her humiliation, at the hands of a particularly worthless saxophonist, Wally Collins. Mrs Standish is undoubtedly a technical failure in this novel because White had always focussed on the children. He devoted much labour into her construction which persuades the reader that he is to meet a “major character”, while she is a minor one. White had distributed the constituents of “existence” and “life”, of “the dead” and “the living”, among the characters in such a way as to appear in very different and differentiating proportions. But it is a very difficult task for the reader to locate the actual position of Mrs. Standish in this living-dead scale. When she was young she had promise of life, but her adulthood was very tragic, which was either a form of death or an “apprenticeship to it.”

Children on the other hand, play an important role in this novel. White communicates the condition of childhood exactly as Henry James had written to Dr. Louis Waldstein in a letter, “But eh the exposure indeed, the helpless plasticity of childhood that isn’t dear or sacred to somebody.” The terrors of the children have been expressed; every child has got a separate individuality, his experiences either exciting or solitary have been expressed with an extremely fine sense of actuality.

Connie leaves Elyot and Eden to join her mother in London where she is in reduced conditions and facts.
"Goodbye, Connie", Eden screamed. "Send me some postcards as well as the letters."

Because parting changes everything. At parting there is sometimes a conscience, there is sometimes none. Eden even felt a sense of loss, watching the receding face of Connie lose its features down the lane. As if some known possession had been taken from her, as if she would no longer be able to keep up a familiar custom. It was like that.

Yes, it was dull when Connie left. Something had been rubbed out of the familiar pattern. A new pattern had to be made.16

One after another-impressionistic glimpses and many more sustained pieces drag the reader to the middle age of Mrs. Standish, simultaneously the young adulthood of Elyot and Eden. She was found all the time busy in her ego-concentrated life.15 The character of Mrs. Standish is similar to Mrs. Goodman in Patrick White's The Aunt's Story. She was also a dominating lady, all the time busy in her own world, a very materialistic kind of person. Her daughter, Theodora Goodman, found herself free only when her mother died, and she felt almost relaxed.16 Julia is a beautiful domestic figure of the Dutch kind, "whether as the young girl, the Flemish primitive that held the baby in her lap, or as the older woman, a comfortable Vermeer."17 The other good characters in the novel, which produce a soothing effect, are Kensington Connie Tiarks who now lives with an old lady in Kensington. Connie was in love with Elyot, who has a passive relationship with a mentally disabled girl, Hildegard Fiesel, during his stay in Germany between school and Cambridge. Later in London, he kept himself busy in his thin life of scholarships.

He was making notes on the Dramatic Works of Buchner. On the whole people bothered him, the effort, the having to commit yourself, and most of all emotionally. He sometimes shuddered now over the episode of Hildegard. Because this was
something over which he had no control. His relationship with Hildegard presented a picture of himself jigging wildly on the end of an invisible rope.

Muriel Raphael introduced Hildegard to Elyot’s. He was a cool and hard ruler of a Band Street picture gallery. White portrayed him more as a victim of cruelty than a partner in love. Elyot had a brief affair with Hildegard Fiesel. Hildegrad, a tall, beautiful, dignified German, several years, his senior, seems to posses the image of a Great Goddess. He not only wanted to relate himself to her as an individual but actually he wanted to become absorbed into an archetypal image.

Elyot had met Hildegard Fiesel first time on the street, and it was just by chance; she was a secretary to a dentist. Hildegard made him feel inconsequential, that he had all the time on his hands, while she was a superior being, a breadwinner, of economic significance. He had discovered also that she was four years older than him. And this gave her a surplus of superiority. He was still young enough to stand in awe of age. She had the golden shining face of young German girls, sleek, shining hair; she was very firm, a golden brown.

She needed a friend and felt glad to talk with him, because she considers him to be a reliable person who she could trust. Elyot also developed an interest in her, and wanted to understand her though failed to say as much in words. Perhaps he was in love. He was overflowing with a sentimental devotion that he somehow wanted to, to express. He had a suspicion that this was probably a great love.

Hildegard felt that he was very sweet, kind, young. It was because of these qualities that she loved him. Suddenly he felt that his emotions had been enlisted in all illegitimate courses. He had felt a falseness in Hildegard that he thought he could not quite
bridge so, he held back continually. The physical encounter with
her in the forest even appeared as something false.

Drawing him into the world of her own,
Making him acknowledge this he began to doubt the
reality of trees, the stones their feet touched in
fording a stream, all these were unreal, undergoing
some form of reconstruction in Hildegard's voice...

All that late afternoon, wondering, sitting, in
the forest Hildegard made with her voice,..... he
knew that he was not himself. He was a strange
person, subscribing to arguments in which soberly,
he could not believe. But he watched, he listened to
her, he was observed himself, with the form of
Hildegard. He was becoming what she wanted him
to become.¹⁹

The lover Goddess is now becoming the devourer of
personality. The negative aspect of women is being highlighted
upon Elyot. And now his egoist structure and the ecstatic character
is lost.

Immediately after love making in the forest Elyot had bitter
feelings towards, Hildegard. Her presence “suffocates”²⁰ them, her
smile seems “bitter.”²¹ Each time Hildegard tried to communicate
with Elyot in vain, he cuts away brutally: “he resented even her
appearance now. The golden sealed surface of her face that would
blur in a gust of hysteria.”²² He can see the image of the
destroying matrix in her now. She appears as a “Destroying
Goddess” only. As a result Elyot becomes more regimented in his
behaviour.

Elyot is supreme among the many characters in the novel
enclosed in “solipsistic self-solitude.” Those who are outside the
world of reality are Julia, the maid, and the clumsy Connie Tiarks;
they had nourishing hopeless passion for Elyot. Mrs. Standish as
compared to the other characters is tough and selfish. She is
supposed to be suffocated by time. But when compared with Elyot
it can be said that these characters are sleeping or hardly conceived; only in Eden are they actively waiting to take place. So, it can be said that the author has made the character of Mrs. Standish as over prepared to play her part, and Elyot to be under prepared; he is an example of immaturity.

The important days of Eden's life were spent in the crisis of development, divided into two different love affairs. The first affair was with a married architect, who was from Putney, "bland, unseeing, expression..... Obsessed by his own emotion." He was a man who mixed sentimentality and sexuality in unequal proportions. Even his sexual life was dry and lifeless, "the chafing of the flesh..... She reached out through years, upon her back, through the leaves of trees, and the sound of still, basking water, to the state of physical perfection. Then her hands touched sheets. This then was sex, the rumpled bed, the sense of aching nausea, the dead weight." Tragedy is there in the first scene of this minor drama, which is unimpressive although unavoidable. Eden is abandoned by her married lover and she is pregnant. In the next scene she has an abortion at Mrs. Maya Angelotti's villa in Ealing. It's a kind of house "no different from those on either side, except that its blankness was arrested by the drooping of an eyelid over the right eye, the pale membrane of a half-drawn blind, either negligent or intentional." Each and every explanation of White is brilliantly successful.

Elyot fears his sister's sexual passion, her volatile nature, but there is also a "half-craving" for what she represents: "an intenser form of living." Witnessing the intensity of Eden's love for Joe Barnett, Elyot begins to wish for a similar passion in his own life: In his fury he wanted to posses something, make it answerable, because it was so far distant from the other, the faces of Eden and Joe Barnett discovering a reality finding a substance
for which the symbols stood." He became extremely self critical, dissatisfied with his isolation and anxious to break free from his emotional prison: "he wanted to press with his hands, rouse an element of fear or surprise, some sign of the spontaneous." 

Still, there is no reaction from Elyot's side: "He shut himself in his room and worked. Outside were the house sounds, the flap of the duster, the rumble of the cistern,... All round you there was pointed evidence of your own anarchonistic activity." He senses the change but there is no movement. There is a "call" from the mother, which suggests attachment to the personal mother, and continues to become a hurdle in Elyot's way.

Upon his return from Cambridge, Elyot saw his mother as repulsive figure:

She listened sympathetically to men, and gave them the impression she enjoyed it, the yawn caught somewhere in her handsome throat. It was a technique taught her by economic necessity. She could be very gracious at a supper table. And afterwards. She would accept a cheque, after protest, in which she never went too far.

He found that his mother had descended to the level of an archaic prostitute although a sophisticated one. She was a whore of Ebury Street. He now feels himself to be isolated, sad and abandoned because his mother was satisfying her needs with the help of different people.

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

Her affair with Wally Collins, the nightclub saxophonist, marks the beginning of her total disintegration. She is now known as Wally’s moll, his "Old Girl."
Looking at her in the restaurant his mouth drooped open. All the things he’d never had, and wanted, seemed to put themselves in reach in the body of Catherine Standish. He could not posses her too quickly, in case they removed themselves again.33

Wally’s desire for Mrs. Standish reminds the reader of Elyot’s childhood and his feeling towards his mother. He finds in Mrs. Standish all the things he’d never had, and wanted. He had a desire in his childhood to get close to his mother who he felt contained all he needed.

During her involvement with Collins, Mrs. Standish suffers from complete breakdown, and she never recovers from this episode, but dies in a state of exhaustion. Elyot’s last glimpse of her is like a wretched creature brought home by Collins after a wild party at Soho:

You remembered how the head lolled, she just wasn’t well, he said,... he remembered,... the eyes opened, watched the trailing of a red skirt the arm brushing the carpets, as it had no connexion, or at least saw -dust-filled.34

It was her tragic disintegrations. But one thing is noticeable that the death of Mrs. Standish brings Elyot considerable relief, Just as Theodora Goodman got relief after the death of her materialistic mother, Mrs. Goodman. And now he allows modification to take place in him:

...beyond the rotting and the death there was some suggestion of growth. He waited for this in a state of expectation. He waited for something that would happen to him, that would happen in time, there was no going to meet it.

In the morning there would be the funeral.35

Another psychic movement develops after the funeral: Elyot sees the image of his mother in his sister Eden. This leads to a prototypical attraction towards her. But this drama doesn’t go on for long since Eden decides to set off to Europe to take part in the
war, in service with the medical corps. This implies that she reflects her mother’s action of twenty-five years before.

As he stands at the railway station—bidding farewell to his sister, Elyot considers himself to be completely free and at last, again there is a desire to return to the maternal source.

Outside the sighing of an anxious piston, there was still the bay, smooth, almost circular, the glistening of red and periwinkle stones. You went down alone. This was a secret expedition. To lie on the back, the sun glistened on the teeth, a hot sinking of the bones.\(^3^6\)

Once more he is connected to the matrix. Soon after Eden’s, departure the maternal world opens before him and he becomes united with it. The novel ends, with Elyot, embracing this lost world of his childhood, only the context is different.

At last the human element dissolves and he becomes the eternal man, “he lay, on the shore, and the sound of water lapped across his chest, a blaze of sun shone between the bones.”\(^3^7\) The story ends with regeneration and rebirth. There is a tone of completion in the story in the final section i.e. “the end of a journey,”\(^3^8\) and the choir of anonymous voices which sings, “then we are here, we have slept, but we have really got here at last.”\(^3^9\) There is still more; “He yawned.”\(^4^0\) He felt like someone who had been asleep, and had only just woken. It marks the end of a mere egotistical existence and the beginning of the realization of an ultimate desire.

David J. Tacey points out “As White becomes more convinced that the dissolved state is ideal the “mothers” become more devouring until we meet the most terrible of all, the thin headed succulus of Mrs. Fack and Mrs Jolley. Mrs Standish has conveniently been put to rest. Mrs. Macarthy and Hildegard
dispensed with through time and circumstances yet the procession of negative mother can not be stopped."41

Besides tragedy, White is well known for his involvement with comic elements in the novel, especially in this novel, where he had discussed the snobbery of the Standish forebears, and in the cool dispatch of several of Mrs. Standish’s contemporaries. The context of Joe Barnet, his work in the old Crick’s worship, his home, neighbours and the presence of Julia. Elyot once proposed to Julia asking her to marry him.

"Julia,...will you marry me"? She sat in her stockings, on her flat feet. "It’ll be a bit of wait", said Julia. "I’m five, he said and two months."42

Joe really a positive character was a cabinetmaker of the traditional kind. He was employed in old Crick’s workshop. He was away from the rest of the neurotic figures in the book, busy in this own world of grain, wood and the cool steel of chisels. He was there to bring unity among the workers, and their goodness in a very intellectual and symbolic way.

*The Living and the Dead* is a work of mature fiction, creative and impressive. But the deficiency according to Walsh is that the idea does not breathe properly in the novel. “One is left recognizing a distance between the germ and the structure.”43

Another important quality of the novel is that each element has been given gorgeous shape and provided maximum detail. Every character of the novel has been portrayed with certain ability. But the author is not wholly successful in presenting them as he obviously intended. He had taken the help of interior monologue, irony, imagery, metaphors and symbols to have the desired effect. The narrative style is very much developed. The author has used irony;

*The soup was good and nourishing, .... She always said this when the soup got thin.*44
It was Frau Fiesel's way of pacifying her conscience in the face of material circumstances.

White has used metaphor to help his reader understand the love of a mother for her son Eddie.

As a mother she would cheerfully have given him anything he had asked, the whole Church if he had wanted it, holding it out on the palm of her hand. Symbols have been used by the author in many places. Solidity of Elyot's mother has been described with "yellow wedg..." The softness of Julia's hands and words are compared to yellow cheese. "Her words, her hands were as stolid as yellow cheese."

Events play an important part in the life of Julia. She can be easily elated or depressed with i... and in this regard Mrs. Standish once remarked. "Julia is a thermometer I wish I didn't feel."

Watercolours of the school days kept in the drawers were used as symbols to denote the past. The schoolroom water colours that she still kept in drawer in her writing-desk were, well, the quaint relics of a precocity that had pleased her at the time.

Julia's whole existence, past and present, was very real and fragile. She had an unconscious respect for the substance of things.

Wiping the dribble from the baby's mouth was a gesture of humility, and deep respect.

Eden was a calm and quiet girl. She was less communicative, and this nature of hers has been compared with the furniture, which is lifeless.

"She was less communicative than furniture."

In the following paragraph the author tries to show an image of the earth mother.
It was an almost enclosed, almost a circular bay. He spent many hours looking into pools.... He took up the smooth stones in his hand, the red and the mauve stones, that shone when you took them out of the water. And standing on the rim of the bay, holding the rounded stones in his hand, everything felt secure and solid, the gentle, enclosed basin of water, the sturdy trees that sprouted from the sides, his own legs planted in the moist sound.\(^{32}\)

The “gentle, enclosed basin of water” is a true symbol of the source, in which the youth feels “secure and solid” like an embryo affectionately placed within the womb. It is also a Christian symbol used for christening ceremonies. When a baby is dipped in holy water, it is considered to be a new life in Christ. The Circular bay, rounded stones, trees, earth, water these are all powerful mother symbols. Earth and water are ancient symbols of the Great Mother. Earth represents the foundation and waters the origin of life. Trees represent the creative aspect of Nature. When Elyot dissolves himself in the material embrace he feels alive.

The image of circle is repeated in the circular bay, and rounded stones. The rounded shape represents a state of wholeness, as well as the Great Round of Nature, which according to Elyot is the womb of his Great Mother into which he wanted to retreat it.

Elyot had discovered a cave at Ard’s Bay, which shows his longing for the maternal depth.

\(55\)
The cave is an ancient symbol of the Earth Mother. The Aborigines had a highly developed artistic tradition long before the first European settlers arrived in Australia. The Aborigines painted on bark and rock and produced elaborate designs of human and animal figures.

The first major White Australian painters worked during the late 1800's. These painters were strongly influenced by the French impressionists, who tried to catch the ever-changing effects of nature in their works. Australian artists adopted the impressionist style to capture the colourful atmosphere of Australian frontier life. It was that place where primitive man used to return for the sake of renewal or rebirth. Here it suggests that Elyot is desperate to return to the maternal world, that inspired him to sing and draw like a primitive artist in "matriarchal time." When he is unconscious, mother plays a positive role and Elyot wants to merge into that figure. He was attracted by the oceanic quality and he feels nurtured by it. It can also be considered a symbol of life because of his enthusiasm and his longing for living, which is Lawrence's "life" and White's "Living." When he is in his consciousness, his day world is ruled by the negative personal mother and her "devouring" associates and colleagues: Macarthy, the housekeeper, Julia, and also his sister Eden. The relationship between the negative and positive maternal images was never realized. It can be said that his life with the Oedipus complex is just a fantasy, whereas his day world with the devouring associates is the reality. There is a wide gulf between these two realms. When he returned after his excursion beside the sea he was asked by Mrs Macrathy where he had been. He refused to answer or to expose his secret life: "Nowhere, he said. No-where much. Because Mrs. Macarthy and Ard's Bay were quite separate. They had to stay like that."§4
Notes

2 Ibid, p 6
3 David J Tacey, “The Incestnons Return”, *Patrick White Fiction and the Unconscious*, Melbourne Oxford University, Press, 1953, p 2
4 William Walsh, *Patrick White’s Fiction*, op cit, p 8
6 William Walsh, *Patrick White’s Fiction*, op cit, p 10
7 Patrick White, *The Living and the Dead*, op cit, p 34
8 Ibid p 36
9 William Walsh, *Patrick White’s Fiction*, op cit, P 11
10 Patrick White, *The Living and the Dead*, op cit, p 17
11 David J Tacey, *Patrick White Fiction and the Unconscious*, op cit, p 3
12 Patrick White, *The Living and the Dead*, op cit, pp 168,170
13 William Walsh, *Patrick White’s Fiction*, op cit, p 11
14 Ibid p 11
15 Ibid p 12
16 Patrick White, *The Living and the Dead*, op cit, pp 103,104
17 Ibid p 231
18 Ibid p 141
19 Ibid p 119
20 Ibid p 121
21 Ibid p 124
22 Ibid p 124
23 Ibid p 145
24 Ibid p 147
25 Ibid p 159
26 Ibid p 331
27 Ibid p 204
28 Ibid p 276
29 Ibid p 284

57
30 Ibid p 131
31 Ibid p 132
32 Ibid p 295
33 Ibid p 266
34 Ibid p 307
35 Ibid p 322
36 Ibid p 332.
37 Ibid p. 108.
38 Ibid. p. 335
39 Ibid p 335.
40 Ibid p 335.
41 David J Tacey, Patrick White: Fiction and the Unconscious, op. cit., pp. 10,11
42 Patrick White, The Living and the Dead, op cit., p 73
43 William Walsh, Patrick White’s Fiction, op cit., p. 16
46 Ibid. p 16
47 Ibid. p 16.
48 Ibid. p 16.
49 Ibid p 32.
50 Ibid p 59.
51 Ibid. p. 113
52 Ibid. p. 98.
53 Ibid p 98
54 Ibid p 102
After the war of 1940 White decided to return to Australia. When he sailed for Australia in 1946 he had already written a small part of his third novel, *The Aunt's Story*, during his stay in London. He wrote the second part as he stepped off at Alexandaria to see his life-long friend, Manoly Lascaris. And the last part of the novel he wrote on the ship to Australia. He revised the novel in Sydney. In 1948 he bought a farm at Castle-Hill, northwest of Sydney. Manoly Lascaris also joined him there. At that time White was only twenty-six years of age. He was still not widely known as a writer. He was with his farming. Meanwhile, *The Aunt's Story*, White's favourite among his novels had appeared in 1948.

It is based on an independent Australian spinster, Theodora Goodman. It is a story of the transformation of the protagonist: "this thing a spinster which, at best, becomes that institution an aunt".¹

It is a story based on reality which is not cerebral, or traditional, or conventional, or even sensible. It shows the solitary spirit, enjoying life in loneliness. It is a journey based on the individual experience in a solitary land in which no "fellow footfall" is ever heard.

The story has been divided into three parts to coincide with three phases of the protagonist's life: the first phase begins and ends with the death of Theodora's mother and deals with the reconstruction of Theodora's life up to middle age:

*A woman of fifty, or not yet, whose eyes burned still, under the black hair, which she still frizzed above the forehead in little puffs.*²
In the second phase Theodora kept herself busy in finding out the distinction between "I" and "otherness". The third and the final phase are based on "contemplation" and "detachment".

The novel begins on a death note, the death of Mrs. Goodman, Theodora’s mother:

But old Mrs. Goodman did die at last. Theodora went into the room where the coffin lay. She moved one hairbrush on a little Empire prie-dieu that her mother had brought from Europe. She did all this with some surprise, as if divorced from her own hands, as if they were related to the objects beneath them only in the way that two flies, blowing and blundering in space, one related to a china and mahogany world. It was all very surprising, the accomplished as opposed to the contemplated fact. It had altered the silence of the house. It had altered the room. This was no longer the bedroom of her mother. It was a waiting room, which housed the shiny box that contained a waxwork.

Theodora had told them to close the box before the arrival of Fanny and Frank, who were not expected till the afternoon. So the box was closed, even at the expense of what Fanny would say. She would talk about last glimpses, and cry. She had not lived with Mrs. Goodman in her later years. From her own house she wrote and spoke of Dear Mother making her an idea, just as people will talk of Democracy or Religion, at a moral distance. But Theodora was the spinster.

In a nutshell this is what the novel is all about; these lines are the seed in which the structure of the novel is fully contained. The biased and unbalanced statement, "But old Mrs. Goodman did die at last" forces one to think about it twice. In death Mrs. Goodman is transformed from a domineering character to a passive one; she is now at the receiving end. She had been a model of this transformation throughout the novel. The opening line announces
the death of her tyrannical reign, and it also puts an end to the enslavement of Theodora. The room where the coffin lay was calm and quiet, where silence dominated. It can be observed that the author here gives importance to each and every “thing”; their physical substance, qualities and shapes are also significant. In this passage even the hairbrush the anti-macassor, the Empire prie-dieu, have their physical significance. These things suggest Theodora’s perception, and the “disturbing flies” suggest her tension. The death of her mother altered everything in her life; it even altered the silence of the house; the setting of the room was also affected: the bedroom was converted into a waiting room.

In the passage quoted above, the “shiny box”, suggests the coffin which was there waiting for Fanny and Frank to come and pay their last homage to their mother. Fanny, the younger sister had been living far away because she was married. There was only written communication left between them: But Theodora was at the back and call of her mother. So, it can be said that Theodora’s life was different, colliding with actuality painfully, immediately. The effect of this mixture can be seen from the oddly over careful rearrangement of the room’s furniture, and from Theodora’s nervous response:

So, that her mouth trembled, and her hand, rigid as protesting wood, on the coffin’s yellow lid.  

The family gathering at Mrs. Goodman’s funeral has been portrayed in a convincing manner, but then it misrepresents Theodora’s nature. She is filled with extreme pain but it does not reflect in her attitude. On the contrary, Fanny was red, fat, tearful, vain and anxious about possession. There is a lot of difference in the nature of the two sisters. Theodora is an extremely calm and
quiet lady, while Fanny always tries to attract the attention and sympathy of others:

_She could not mourn like Fanny, who would cry for the dead until she had appeased the world and exhausted what she understood to be sorrow. Fanny understood most things. The emotions were either black or white. For Theodora who was less certain, the white of love was sometimes smudged I hate. So, she could not mourn. Her feelings were knotted tight._

According to Theodora, the death of her mother was not very traumatic as she died in her sleep. Fanny cried for her mother, as it is the easiest way to express her affection for the dead and also to increase the importance of the deceased.

_In The Aunt's Story the mother is dramatically reduced in power. “There is a significant transference of sexuality to the father/daughter relationship.” A strong father-daughter bond is adopted in the beginning of the novel. “The relationship between Theodora Goodman and George Goodman functions as a marked re-enactment of the Oedipal pattern.” The “matriarchal resonance” is there below and behind the central plot. The character of the father is found to be different because of his nurturing character usually identified with the mother. For Theodora he represents a typical maternal figure. He is always supportive and receptive whereas Mrs. Goodman is harsh, and uncompromising. Father and daughter were good friends; they even shared stories at night, and by day they go for long walks across the Meroe plains in order to feel free from the “stifling atmosphere” of the house with Mrs. Goodman dominating. George Goodman, like his daughter, was also found at times trying to escape from the witch-mother. They both make constant, frivolous
attempts to free themselves from the murderous control of Mrs. Goodman.

Theodora Goodman was settled comfortably inside a totality ruled over by the father:

Altogether this was an epoch of rose-light. Morning was bigger than the afternoon, and round, and veined like the skin inside an unhatched egg in which she curled safe still, but smiling for them to wake her, to touch her cheek with a finger and say: I believe Theodora is asleep. Then she would scream: I am not, I am not, and throw open her eyes to see who. Usually it was father.8

Father was the guardian of Theodora’s sleep and attendant of her waking. He was there during Theodora’s childhood as a loving, nurturing father while the mother was a background figure only.

The undisputed heroine of The Aunt’s Story is Theodora Goodman born into a family long established on the land in New South Wales. Her earliest years are spent on the family estate of Meroe: Theodora writes a brief essay about Meroe. It is evident that it consists for her exclusively of herself and her father:

At our place... there is an old apricot tree which does not have fruit, and here the cows stand when it is hot, before they are milked, or underneath the pear trees in the old orchard where the cottage has tumbled down. I see all these things when I ride about Our Place, with my Father. Our Place is a decent size, not so big as Parrott’s or Trevelyans but my Father says big enough for peace of mind.9

Treeless yellow hills and occasional outcrops of black volcanic rock surround Meroe or the “honest square ness” of the old house.

Whether it was summer or winter, the landscape was more communicative than people talking. It
In this passage the writer has beautifully described the landscape with the help of symbols. The closeness of landscape has been compared with the "close thoughts of an individual"; and not only this, sometimes "heavy as a stone" while at others "lighter than a wagtail".

Theodora had only affection for her learned father. She was also interested in reading books, and he encouraged her saying:

"You must come in, Theodora... you must come in whenever you like, and take to books".

Her father can be called a bookworm, gentle and ineffective; he was a sort of humanist, influenced by the literature of Classical Greece. It can be said that he was attracted towards literature because it provided him knowledge regarding the nature of existence. His awareness of Meroe is all due to the "overtones" born of that literature. Patrick White has sketched the father thus:

*If you went inside, Father was sitting with his chin on his chest, looking at books. He would sit like this for many hours, only his breath lifting his beard, as steady as a tree. Really Father was not unlike a tree, thick and grayish-black, which you sat beside and which was there and not. Your thoughts drifted through the branches, or followed the up and down of the breathing that lifted Father’s beard. He had grey eyes. Above the heavy grey-black thicket of the beard the eyes were light and clear. But they did not always look.*
But soon she is forced to recognize that her father is not the secure figure she imagines him to be. She finds all is not well with him. He has an “ineffectual” quality, which “belie” her idealized image. It becomes more visible when she comes into close contact with and objective observer, Mr. Parrott who commented: “Meroe... Rack-un-Ruin Hollow.” Theodora heard it while she was waiting for Father, in town, under the long balcony of the Imperial Hotel. She hung around, waiting and the conversation of men reached her:

“All this gadding off to foreign places;” said Mr. Parrott. “Sell-in off a paddock here and a paddock there. George Goodman has no sense of responsibility to his own land.”

This was useful. It made your stomach sick, to hear of Father, this, that you could not quite understand, but it was bad enough. And while returning home she felt:

*Oppressed by a weight of sadness, that nobody would lift, because nobody would ever know that she was shouldering it. Least of all Father, who was thick and mysterious as a tree, but also hollow, by judgement of the men beneath the balcony.*

Theodora realized that her father was a failure as a farmer and as a practical man. After enquiring about the whole matter from him she came to the conclusion that it is her mother who was responsible for the psychological and material decline of Mr. Goodman.

“I refuse to vegetate”, said Mrs. Goodman. “Let us go somewhere. Before we die.”

*Her voice struck the dining room door... “It’s reckless, Julia”, father said.*
“Then let us be reckless”,.... she said. “And die. We can sell a paddock. Let us go to the Indies”.

Mother’s voice burned the quiet air. It was stifling as an afternoon of fire.

Father laughed. “I suppose we can sell Long Acre”, he said. “Old Trevelyans willing to buy”

Then they were both silent, as if consumed by Mother’s fire. “The Indies”, Mother breathed.13

Thus Mrs. Goodman is the agent behind her husband’s disintegration and disrepute. As landed gentry they are expected to hold on to what they have inherited, not to sell off only to enjoy foreign travel and change of scene.

Later, Theodora is terrified at the prospect of her father’s death, not only because of her personal connection with him, but because he reflects her own life-generating spirit.

She streamed out beside him on the carpet, kneeling, touching his knees. Her breath was hoarse. “No”, she said. “Not yet” Father. No;

“But there is no reason, my dear Theodora, why I should go an living. I have finished”....

“In the end”, his voice said, out of the pines, “I did not see it”.

Then Theodora, with her face upon his knees, realized that she was touching the body of George Goodman, grazier, who had died that morning.16

After her Father’s death Theodora goes through an acute emotional crisis. She felt that the rays of her “independence” and “individuality” were becoming dimmer day by day:
George Goodman was actually not equal to the Mother, but he was under the dominance of the female image. In ancient myths it is seen that a life-generating God in the form of Attis, Adonis or John Barley-Corn generally portrays by a male figure, or by a phallus or the spirit of Nature. The mother goddess killed these boy gods annually because, according to the myth, "she must withdraw her spirit each winter, descending to the dark underworld. The youthful spirit is said by nature since he does not achieve or separate life, but exists only to serve the Mother Goddess". On the basis of the counterparts of this mythology Goodman is coordinated with Nature, and when the autumnal decline sets in he can merely look out across the darkening landscape, "with a plaid across his shoulders for the cold that had not yet arrived", and await his early death. Like the boy-gods of antiquity he dies young, but the Great Mother lives on; throughout her life she maintains supreme power. However, for Theodora, a part of a had died with her father:

She walked out through the passages, through the sleep of other people. She was thin as grey light, as if she had just died. She would not wake the others. It was still too terrible to tell, too private an experience. As if she were to go into the room and say: Mother, I am dead, I am dead, Meroe has crumbled. So she went outside where the grey light was as thin as water and Meroe had in fact, dissolved. Cocks were crowing the legend of day, but only the legend. Meroe as grey water, grey ash. Then Theodora Goodman cried.

Adonis is dead. "[W]ith him is beauty slain, and beauty dead, black chaos comes again." With the death of Adonis the vital energies of the earth have been withdrawn, everything appeared to be solemn, dark and grey ash. Or one can say that
after the death of her father, “Meroe has been consumed by Abyssinia, and reduced to a counterpart of the ancient, charred black land”. About “Abyssinia” Tacey opines that “[it] could relate phonetically to abyss-in-ia”. I do not think it is an intended pun, but there is a world which consumes her Australian Meroe.

Regarding the mother-daughter relationship, Theodora appeared to be a dutiful daughter “She had lived with her mother, and helped her into her clothes. She came when the voice called”.

Human beings are social animals and the remarkable thing about them is that they cannot live all alone. After the death of her mother, Theodora was alone in the house at Meroe. People started asking about her future plans; where would she go now to spend the rest of her life and with whom? Theodora didn’t like to answer these questions; she hated people asking her about her future plans:

“And what are your future plans. Theodora?” asked Frank.
“Tshall probably go away”.
“Good heavens”, said Fanny, “where?”
Freedom was still a blunt weapon. Theodora did not answer, because she did not know.
“Anywhere, Or everywhere”, she said at last. “Except that the world is large”.
Theodora, blushed Fanny, is quite mad.
“It is very awkward for me”, she complained, “when people ask me your plans”.
“But that is nobody’s business”, Theodora said.

It astonishes that in this closed un-promising circle, there is someone close to Theodora, her cute little niece, Lou, “Lou
doesn't have intimacy with Fanny or Frank. She was like some "dark and secret place in one's own body." Theodora had a special kind of attraction for her; there is even some similarity between the two: "Lou was unpredictable as water." Theodora compared it with her own life, which like water had no fixed shape. "Between Lou and Theodora flowed a current of mysterious sympathy as subtle and significant as the fire which fills the Indian filigree ball Lou rolls across the carpet."

Lou asked her aunt to tell her about Meroe, the old family house that is the key to opening out the next phase of the novel's development. Meroe is a place where the protagonist, along with her family, spent an important part of her life; many unforgettable memories are associated with it. Although the story of Meroe is not very interesting because nothing remarkable had taken place there, however, the beautiful melody of music played there and the fragrance of roses in the atmosphere lingers on. Theodora started the story by saying: "But my darling there is very little to tell." Meroe is a flat place as flat as a biscuit or one can say it is a place constructed with the "child's constructions of block." People of the olden days called it "an honest house", because it was made with labour, purity and honesty. Meroe was the twisted aboriginal landscape with the black volcanic hills around it. Her childhood appeared to Theodora as a series of colours. Rose light in the morning, green light in her father's book-filled room, black rock and golden stones, green fences, pink and yellow cows, black frost and silver spears in winter. And Theodora herself was pale-yellow.

So that the mirrors began to throw up the sallow Theodora Goodman, which meant who was too yellow. Like her own sash. She went and stood in the mirror at the end of the passage, near the sewing room, which was full of threads, and the old mirror was like a green sea
in which she swam, patched and spotted with gold light. Light and the ghostly water in the old glass dissolved her bones. The big straw hat with the little yellow buds and the trailing ribbons floated. But the face was the long, thin, yellow face of Theodora Goodman, who they said was sallow, she turned and destroyed the reflection, more especially the reflection of the eyes, by walking away. They sank into the green water and were lost.

White's symbolic novels sometimes start with slow openings, and then there are moralizing passages. This style took sometime to gain acceptance among the readers. The Aunt's Story was little read and little understood by the readers of White. He was disappointed by the response of his readers, the effect of which was that he came close to drying up creatively. "Nothing seemed important, beyond living and eating, with a roof of one's own over one's head", White recalled. It was only in the 1970's that he became involved in public demonstrations and speeches on such matters as urban conservation and republicanism. He had changed the way of his novel from "outer reality" to the "disturbed and fragmented mind". Written at the end of the Second World War The Aunt's Story is a story whose central theme is based on Nietzschean philosophy, "one of the lonely atheist's agonized capacity for insight into the nature of existence". It is concerned with Theodora, who has a desire to lose her personal identity and thereby ironically to find it; she rejects even love because it seems a threat to this process. People sometimes called her mad; even her sister Fanny thinks her to be "quite mad":

"Anywhere. Or everywhere", she said at last. "Except that the world is large".

Theodora, blushed Fanny, is "quite, quite, mad". Again,
"Theo is coming home", announced Fanny Parrott. What is more, she appears to be quite mad.34

Even little Lou asks her mother,

"Mother", said Lou, "why is Aunt Theo mad"?35

Nobody seemed to realize that she was in search of peace. Along with good memories there were certain bitter memories attached with Meroe, which Theodora wants to forget: those times when she was scolded by her mother for performing poorly on the piano

"No, no, Theodora", crackled mother.
"Not that way. Where is your feeling"? she said "This horrible up and down. Can't you feel it flow? Here, give it to me".

...Mother sat down. She played the music as it should have been played. She took possession of the piano, she possessed Chopin, they were hers while she wanted them, until she was ready to put them down.36

Theodora's life is fractured by her Mother in countless other ways too. No matter what she does, or where she turns, the Mother is there to interfere with her activities and to draw everything towards her. "The maternal unconscious invades the field of the personality robs it of its direction and renders it ineffectual".37 From Theodora's point of view she lived life in a shell of loneliness. Her relationship with her self-centered, hard smooth-coating mother was not very good. Mrs. Goodman had a biased personality, always in favour of Fanny. "The piano is not for Theodora", Mother sighed. "Fanny is the musical one".38

Theodora was different which was sometimes even noticed by outsiders Mrs. Parrott once said, "She is a good, bright girl.
She is always very polite". There were moments when she felt free to talk with outsiders also. An old man once came and was hungry. He was an acquaintance of her father, but Mrs. Goodman was unable to acknowledge him and he was not allowed to enter the house, and was given dinner on the verandah. The man said to Theodora a little later: "You are more like your father". She had memories of faint gestures of this kind even with the children in her life, Lou at the beginning of the novel, and Zack at the end of it. But during childhood she was mostly attracted to things or activities like rose, music, shooting, and only slightly to human beings.

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

Their life at Spofforth was also an unforgettable part of her existence. Spofforth is a kind of residential school, where Theodora met many types of girls. But she never tried to mix with them. She always kept aloof. Awkwardness and distance continued to rule Theodora's life. She doesn't like to communicate with others. When the other girls were busy chatting and knitting, Theodora remained back stage. The person who attracted her most in Spofforth was a girl, Violet Adams, who became her best friend. She was interested in Tennyson's poetry. Miss Spofforth, the head mistress of the institution was an interesting lady. She also found Theodora a little different from the rest. She is said to be imaginative, a sort of romantic. "There will be moments of
passing affection through which the opaque world will become transparent”, 42 said the headmistress.

In the later part of the novel Theodora fails to believe even in Humanity; awkwardness and distance continue to rule her life. She felt she would “never overcome the distances” 43 . There is no natural flow of communication between her and others. She ignored her closest relations and friends, and the love of the urbane Huntley Clarkson. He was a solicitor who had been recommended to Mrs. Goodman by a family friend. Clarkson was forty years old, bald, with strong, clean hands. But he didn’t have the sense to hear the silences, the silences, which Theodora wanted, the silence of isolation.

“I came out here to get the air”, she said.

Her silence added that she hoped would be left. But Mr. Clarkson, who had the smooth texture and the smoky smell of rich, thick-set men of forty, did not hear silences. 44

This lonely lady was once called by Mr. Clarkson to see his house.

“You must come one day and see for yourself”.

“Thank you”, she said.

“I go out very little”....

“You will not find me very good company, Mr. Clarkson”, said Theodora Goodman’s mouth. 45

Mrs. Goodman disliked this attitude of Theodora.

“But Theodora is a fool. She is a stick with men”....

“Theo, where are you? Going off like that. Everyone wondered if you were ill. You are a strange girl”. 46

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What does not fail and survives with her is her attitude towards things and objects. The little girl Lou is able to perceive this:

"I wish..." said Lou.
"What do you wish"?
"I wish I was you", "Aunt Theo".
And now Theodora asked why.
"Because you know things", said Lou.
"Such as"?
"Oh", she said, "Things".47

Ultimately, "what becomes increasingly the supporting, consistency of her life, is things, objects. Things have a peculiar, sometimes overwhelming, presence for Theodora who feels simultaneously how intimate she is with them and how powerfully charged they are with energy towards her".48 Things do not, like persons create a "moral distance" between the two. They live there without any motion. Human beings have the disgusting quality to crave, to know, to include and ingest. For Theodora, self is the "great monster". It is her belief that ultimately it will be destroyed and one would imagine, nothing more than air or water. "People for Theodora were statues who assumed distant, arbitrary and inimicable positions. Only with things was there a possibility of otherness and liberty form self".49 For these reasons people considered Theodora to be the most difficult person to be understood. "You are the most difficult woman, Theodora".50 Huntley Clarkson once said. But Theodora's opinion about herself was different "to myself I am fatally simple".51

Theodora is a case for psychological study. The author portrayed the destructive character of Mother, undermining Theodora's every activity and situation. But there is another side to this process of destruction. Not only does she reject social
reality in the forms of Spofforth’s school, city life, career and marriage, but she wishes to destroy the very structure of her identity as mentioned earlier. She considers her selfhood as a burden, which she would like to shrug off in order to return to a Natural state, another identity. “Her nihilism” is evident in her shooting of the little hawk with which she had been associated:

*Once the hawk flew down, straight and sure, out of the skeleton forest. He was a little hawk, with a reddish-golden eye, that looked at her as he stood on the sheep’s carcass, and coldly tore through the dead wool. The little hawk tore and paused, tore and paused. Soon he would tear through the wool and the maggots and reach the offal in the belly of the sheep. Theodora looked at the hawk. She could not judge his act, because her eye had contracted, it was reddish gold, and her curved face cut the wind. Death, said father, lasts for a long time. Like the bones of the sheep that would lie, and dry, and whiten and clatter under horses. But the act of the hawk, which she watched, hawk like, was a moment of shrill beauty that rose above the endlessness of bones. The red eye spoke of worlds that were brief and fierce.*

“She took one, and it was like aiming at her own red eye”. 53 As the hawk fall shuddering to the ground she felt exhausted, but there was no longer any pain. She was as negative as air.

The Aunt’s Story is different from the earlier two novels of White on account of the experience of war, which left him at demobilization with the single alternative of remaining in England, “in what I then felt to be an actual and spiritual graveyard”, or of “returning home to the stimulus of time remembered”. 54 The latter option is felt especially in Part I of the novel.
Theodora Goodman's life was summed up even when she was a child by the unspoken thoughts of her headmistress:

*Theodora, I shall tell you the truth. Probably you will never marry. We are not the kind. You will not say the things they want to hear, flattering their vanity and their strength, because you will not know how, instinctively, and because it would not flatter you. But there is much that you will experience. You will see clearly, beyond the bone. You will grow up probably ugly, and walk through fire in sensible shoes. Because you are honest, and because you are barren, you will be both honored and despised. You will never make a statue, nor write a poem. Although you will be torn by all the agonies of music, you are not creative. You have not the artist's vanity, which is moved finally to express itself in its objects. But there will be moments of passing affection, through which the opaque world will become transparent, and of such a moment you will be able to say—my dear child.*

This middle-aged woman is found engaged in a quest for self-knowledge. She experiences the isolation and failure of human contact. She shares moments of insight with her father, and with few others whom she met quite casually in her life. e.g. the man who was given his dinner, the cellist Moraitis and others. But the minor characters like General Sokolinikov, Mrs. Rapallo and others, are never found engaged in a search for self-identity; they live pragmatic lives dealing with matters from a practical point of view only. Theodora lived a life of fantasy.

In the first part of the novel it is seen that the writer has given importance to “things” and “objects”. But in the next part light has been thrown on the peculiar nature of Theodora. Her remoteness is the cause of her personal collapse. Theodora's rejection of the world was not forced on her, nor was it due to any
inadequacy in her nature. It was there only because of her own choice. Because she wanted to keep herself away from the selfishness, greediness, uncreativity of the world. Everyone she found in this world was materialistic. The only thing, which was endless in her life, was the coincidence between “objects” and “subjects”. She was ready to become a stick drifting in water and even associated herself with the cello, piano and hawk. She was very interested in watching the activities of the hawk, which she later killed.

Sometimes there is a reflection of Indian philosophy in White’s fiction. In *The Aunt’s Story* the process of Self Realization, brings to mind Raja Rao’s *The Serpent and the Rope*. In both novels there is the quest for self-knowledge and Self Transcendence, which becomes the central theme of both.

There are two ways of Self-Realisation, one is through “nivritti marga” or renunciation, and the other through “pravritti marga” or life of activity. Both ways lead to the same destination, each prescribing its own obligations. The way of renunciation or the denial of life was followed by the heroine of *The Serpent and the Rope*, Madeleine. The other way of Self-Realisation i.e. the way of active involvement or “Pravritti marga” was followed by Ramaswamy, the hero of the same novel. “The concept of Self Realisation can stir up divine visions and a highly balanced outlook of life, a sober approach to every event and factor in life, a policy of impersonality in regard to any kind of encounter in the world”. In the end Ramaswamy finds most of his worldly ties cut off. He had to take a divorce from his wife who has now renounced the world. In *The Aunt’s Story* after the death of Theodora’s father; Theo lived in Sydney as a companion to her cold, precise, self-gratifying, socially correct mother. Theodora’s
long adventurous journey is to take her out of the company of those who take notice of social distinctions. After her mother's death, she travels the orthodox tourist routes, but without direction or interest; she is merely moving around.

Another similarity, which is there between Raja Rao and White, is that both of them consider woman to be an important part of society. White in his novel *The Aunt's Story* portrays the character of Mrs. Goodman as strong and dominant. Raja Rao accepts woman as "Shakti", as Mother-Earth, and the theme of *Shakti* worship runs through *The Serpent and the Rope*. There are a number of female characters and each one of them expresses one aspect or the other of *Shakti*. Rama addresses the woman in each of them; all of them are one and the same, the incarnation of the feminine principle. Madeleine and the Little Mother are at different times, different facets of *Shakti*.

Theodora Goodman is not attracted by anyone in the novel; she think that the world is merely "Maya" unreal, or an illusion; in Raja Rao's novel it is merely the rope, but people in their ignorance take it to be the serpent. Rope here means reality or truth, which is there in Brahmin, because Hinduism considered Brahmin to be the most sacred of all castes, and it is absolute. The identity, which is Ramaswamy's goal is a paradigm, a fixed logical series constrained in the opening sentence of the novel, "I was born a Brahmin—that is devoted to truth." From this illusion or ignorance one can be saved only by the "Guru". It is the Guru alone who can dispel all illusions, clear away the darkness of ignorance, and make people realize the truth. It is only with the help of the Guru that one can see the rope, where they earlier saw the serpent.

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The second part of the novel, *Jardin Exotique* is a continuation of the first. It begins with Theodora sitting in the reception room at the Hotel Du Midi waited on by Monsieur Durand. Her suffering action suggests her attention towards things. Again there is coincidence between "object" and "subject".

She touched the old dark ugly furniture that had a dark and lingering smell of olives, the same sombre glare. There is perhaps no more complete a reality than a chair and a table......

Smells came in at the door, petrol and oil, fish, sea, and the white negative smell of dust. A clock ticked, prim and slow, a clock with a fat, yellow, familiar face, removed brutally from some-body's house and exposed to the public hall of a hotel.58

Whenever she came to the Hotel Du Midi she found evidence of the Teeth Mother, her own activated archetype: in the "yawning mouths of roses"59 "in the spiky cactus which pricks her flesh and draws blood",60 "in the snapping jaws of the hotel guests sucking the last shreds from a chicken bone".61 The world was full of crushing and devouring shapes, all reflecting her own near-extinction in the matrix. This was most perceivable in connection with the *Jardin Exotique*, which appeared as a monstrous force meant for her destruction:

Somewhere at the back, unsuspected, without the assistance of the management's brochure, fantastic forms were aping the gestures of tree and flower. Theodora listened to the silence, to hear it sawn at by the teeth of the Jardin Exotique.....

Now she saw it was, in fact, the garden that prevailed, its forms had swelled and multiplied, its dry, paper hands were pressed against the windows of the salle a manger, perhaps it had already started to digest the body of the somnolent hotel.62
Theodora had selected this hotel above any other because she had hoped that the Jardin, portrayed as the most alluring paradise in the whole list, fulfilled "the goal of the journey". Theodora's activated unconscious reached into the perceived world and converted everything into an archetypal drama. The people she encountered were dream-like, acting more as fantasy figures than as real persons. All of them had the same unattached existence, the same status. They were like characters coming and going. None of them left an impression on Theodora's mind. The function of objects in this phase of the novel is like the actions in a dream, Theodora's state being like one asleep, unconscious of daylight.

Her experience of an earthquake with Katina in the Jardin Exotique was also among her fantasies. Theodora's imagination was excited when the Greek girl ran into the garden and announced that she must "get away... from all this", and "go home". Her life in the world and her emergence into the adolescence, was "suffocating" her. She was dying "to recover the lost reality of childhood". Katina asks her about her guardian, if she recalled "a black island that shook" during their experience of an earthquake in the Greek Islands. Theodora entered another world:

_Theodora trembled for the black island._
She looked across at the opposite shore, which was just there, in the sea glaze. The earth was a capsule waiting for some gigantic event to swallow it down. Theodora looked at the island and waited for it to move.

The islands appeared as an image of her own personality "tiny" and "vulnerable", surrounded on every side by threatening waters.
There was a strange sense of anticipation throughout, also an erotic delight in what was about to take place, “nakedness” and “their hearts beating openly and together” upon the body of the earth:

*The morning light saw the drawers fly out of the chest. Its tongues lolled. The whole cardboard house rejected reason. Then there was a running. They were calling on the stairs, Yanni the Moustache, and his daughter Science.*

“Come”, they called “Run. It is the will of God. The earth is going to split open and swallow the house of the poor”.

.....They were thrown out, all of them, out of the functionless houses on to the little strip of sand. Their bodies lay on the live earth. They could feel its heart move against their own.

At the end of the fantasy Theodora was satisfied. Just as the Mother couldn’t harm her after that earlier dissolution, so here also the *Jardin Exotique* had lost its destructive character.

*To Theodora, who continued to sit in the garden... The air was no longer altogether dry and hostile. It stroked her.*

In the *Jardin Exotique* section the “devouring roses” have different significance in different places. That Theodora was about to be absorbed into the matrix is emphasized by the “devouring roses”. The roses in the Jardin, the plastic roses in the hallway, wall paper roses in the bedroom, all became aggressively activated and appear to “wet their lips”. The roses connect with Old Mrs. Goodman, whose first act of sovereignty at Meroe was to establish a rose garden: “She said from her sofa, let there be roses, and there were...” Mrs. Goodman was almost God-like, And God said, “Let there be light, and there was light”. She had the feeling
that she was god, who could manipulate people. And Theodora in her childhood can be imagined to be an ovary at the centre of a rose.

The climax of the first part of the novel occurs in the *Jardin Exotique* section. It is seen that the state of madness in Theodora follows naturally. William Walsh describes the substance of *Jardin Exotique*, “as a Kaleidoscope of Fantastic images. The pieces combine, divide and spin away in brilliant splinters”. All the characters have their own roles, and fantastic images. But at every point the agitation is an essential one, and each throws some light on Theodora’s suffering and loneliness or “the section offers to the reader the incomprehensible opaqueness, that the irrational mind presents of the rational”.

The following passage from the *Jardin Exotique* section etches out each detail with extraordinary sharpness of the suppression of logical connection, Theodora’s strange sense of externality her feelings of misery to mention but a few:

> It was perhaps “plus modeste”, but recognizable, from the objects she had put there in the morning as a safeguard, the darning egg, the dictionary, and the superfluous leather writing case. Hearing the fainter slippers of Henriette, listening to her sponge. There are moments, she admitted, when it is necessary to return to the boxes for which we were made. And now the small room was a box with paper roses pasted on the sides. Theodora walked across the carpet, frayed by similar feet in modest circumstances, with arches that have a tendency to fall, in shoes that soon must be mended. She took off a garnet ring which had been her mother’s but which had changed its expression, like most inherited things. She put it on the dressing table, inside the handkerchief sachet, which was the garnet’s place. I am preparing for bed, she saw. But in performing
this act for the first time, she knew she did not really control her bones, and that the curtain of her flesh must blow, like walls which are no longer walls. She took off one shoe, with its steel buckle and its rather long vamp. Standing with it in her land, her hand, her identity became uncertain. She locked with sadness at the little hither-to safe microcosm of the darning egg and waited for the rose wall to fall.\textsuperscript{75}

One is reminded of Miss. Havisham (Great Expectations) who had been duped by Compeysan. Theodora has been duped by the world.

Miss. Havisham had two motives for attempting to freeze time. She wanted to make certain that her betrayal would be the whole meaning of her life that nothing more would happen to change her destiny. She did not want it to be possible for her to stop suffering, to forget, to turn her attention to other things and other people. “In shutting out the light of day, she had shut out infinitely more;... in seclusion, she had secluded herself from a thousand natural and healing influences;... her mind brooding solitary hand grown diseased, as all minds do and must and will that reverse the appointed order of their Maker...”\textsuperscript{76} Her second motive for attempting to freeze time revenge. Her love for Compeyson was a love she herself defined as “blind devotion”.\textsuperscript{77} She had set her whole heart on Compeyson, and had been reduced to spiritual nothingness when he betrayed her. However, she still wanted a perfect relationship with another person, a relationship that would fill the void left in her heart by the tragedy of her youth. But she wanted to achieve that relationship without risk.

In the final section of Patrick White’s novel “Holstius”, which began in Australia and continued in Europe, Theodora is found drifting across the Mid West of the United States. From
America people had traveled to Europe as Henry James', among others, has portrayed in *A Portrait of a Lady*. They traveled in search of tradition, heritage aristocracy. The Riviera in France was a popular resort. But after the War things erumbled, and for the seekers there was nothing but disillusionment. The romantic heroine Isabel Archer of *A Portrait of a Lady* who had lived much in her imagination, shaping her image of the world; she longed for escape, for change, for burning all bridges behind and beginning afresh Mrs. Touchett’s offer of a new life in Europe, prompted her to see too many things at once, and encourage her faculty of seeing without judging. She was in pursuit of on abstraction called “freedom”. Her idea of freedom was very ambiguous. Passion or sex was not freedom. Social position in a world was also not freedom. Moreover, social position in a hierarchical society represented a strong threat to a woman powerful enough and egotistical enough to believe that she had “an orbit of her own... very fond of my liberty”. Besides that, she also wished “to choose my fate”.

In White’s novel the return of Theodora to Australia, the “country of the bones” is made via the Atlantic and the United States. As she traveled by train through Mid-west America she was elated by the cornfields and Nature’s beauty or the forces of nature sensed all around her:

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All through the middle of America there
was a trumpeting of corn. Its full, yellow,
tremendous notes pressed close to the swelling
sky. There were whole acres of time in which
the yellow corn blared as in for a judgement. It
had taken up and swallowed all other themes,
whether melting iron, or subtler, insinuating
steel or the frail human reed.78
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Theodora had enjoyed the “trumpeting of red hibiscus notes... across the bay”. It hardly mattered whether she was in Kansas or New South Wales, for Nature was the ultimate attraction wherever she happened to be.

She had found her Abyssinia at an unnamed station in the southwest of America. She abandoned her train, deciding to return to Australia, and walked off onto the chest of Mother Nature.

The emptiness of this landscape was a fullness, of pink earth, and chalk blue for sky. And the rim of the world was white. It burned.....

Theodora could smell the dust. She could smell the expanding odour of her own body, which was no longer the sour, mean smell of the human body in enclosed spaces, but the unashamed flesh on which dust and sun have lain, she walked. She smiled for this discovery of freedom.

In her hand she still held, she realized, the practical handbag, that last link with the external Theodora Goodman. Out of the undergrowth a small furred animal raised its head to examine her surprise. She stood, tall and black, making a shadow, at the bend in the road. She rummaged in the handbag, amongst the starling objects that people carry in such receptacles, and found aspirin and Eau-de-Cologne, the snapshot of children in a row, nickels and bills and a sticky lozenge. There were also, she saw, the strips and sheaves of tickets, railroad and steamship, which Theodora Goodman had bought in New York for the purpose of prolonging herself through many fresh phases of what was accepted as Theodora Goodman. Now she took these and tore them into small pieces which fell frivolously at the side of the road.

The psychologist Carl Jung is of the opinion that in this kind of situation when ego dissolves in the unconscious, one of the most common results, is “physical inflation”, an expansion of...
personality into the cosmos, a swelling to super human proportions, a "feeling of godlikeness". In the third part of the novel i.e. "Holstius" the sadness was over; the bringer of "glad tidings was Holstius," an illusion of Theodora's imagination. It was his ability only to smooth away doubts and make Theodora feel comfortable in her madness. Like all other matriarchal gods and deities of western antiquity Holstius arrived victoriously in the spring. Theodora discovered him in a forest setting; looking into the distance, she noticed him like a walking tree. His German name was Holz, which suggests wood or tree. Holstius was an earth-spirit, and White's intention behind introducing this character was to lead Theodora into complete identification with maternal Nature. Theodora regarded him as a messiah, and when she knelt down before him his healing hands appeared to "soothe the wounds". And in the end he was successful in soothing the wounds, making her once and for all a creature of the elements.

The feeling of oneness arose in her as he drew her into the matrix.

In the peace that Holstius spread throughout her body and the speckled shade of surrounding trees, there was no end to the lives of Theodora Goodman. These met and parted, met and parted, movingly. They entered into each other, so that the impulse for music in Katina Pavlov's hands, and the steamy exasperation of Sokolnikor, and Mrs. Rapallo's baroque and narcotized despair were the same and understandable. And in the same way that the created lives of Theodora Goodman were interchangeable, the lives into which she had entered, making them momently dependent for love or hate,... whether George or Julia Goodman, only apparently deceased, or Huntley Clarkson, or Moraitis, or Lou, or Zac, these were the lives of Theodora Goodman, these too.
Holstius was an earth-spirit whose task was to lead Theodora into complete identification with Maternal Nature. He can be called the "Guru", one who brought the lantern and illuminated the road, the long white road, going with the statutory stars. It is only he that can dispel illusion or ignorance:

If the heart is absolutely united with the soul of the "Guru" he will respond, and he will guide, and he may even mitigate certain adverse consequences of the impact of past "Karmas", but he cannot remove... God or Guru, whoever it is, may act as an anesthesia when same unpleasant experiences have to be passed through, but they cannot stop the experience. These will have to be experienced. You'll have to pay for whatever you have done.85

Patrick White introduced the character of Holstius to help Theodora to come out of her childhood world and realize that there is an objective reality outside the self, and to build an increased respect for the created world and for the uniqueness of people and things.

Holstius uses words and phrases, which create an impression that he belongs to a higher unity. He speaks in a quasi-Jungian way about "the two irreconcilable halves" ("joy and sorrow", "flesh and marble", "illusion and reality"), and urges Theodora to "accept" both "halves".

"You cannot reconcile joy and sorrow": Holstius said. "Or flesh and marble, or illusion and reality, or life and death. For this reason, Theodora Goodman, you must accept. And you have already found that one constantly deludes the other into taking fresh shapes. So that there is sometimes little to choose between the reality of illusion and the illusion of reality. Each of your several lives is evidence of this".86
Again "several lives" here suggests the impression of Hindu Philosophy in Patrick White's mind: the concept of "Punar Janam" or reincarnation. After communicating a few esoteric truths about the nature of reality the Master of Illusion, Holstius, asked. "So you understand?"... "Yes" said Theodora Goodman "I understand". She had worked it out, "mathematically, in stones, spread on the ground at the toes of her long shoes". 87 Holstius told her that society itself is not perfect. "If we know better", Holstius said, "we must keep it under our hats". 88 In this way he had tried his best to make her psychosis totally protected by a superiority feeling. The important thing Holstius said in the last section of the novel, had to do with the nature of the human spirit, of the soul. Theodora was very kind to other people. She took upon herself the weight of the longings of others. She bore their burdens in the manner commanded by Christ to his followers. On the basis of these points we can say that The Aunt's Story is "almost" a religious novel. It is totally concerned with the relationship of man to God or God to man.

In the end, the gauze rose was first brought to the reader's attention by the mystical youth Zack, who had "sensed [its] significances"; 89 this has been dramatically highlighted in the last sentence of the novel, "the hat sat straight, but the doubtful rose trembled and glittered, leading a life of its own". 90 Roses had a long association with Mrs. Goodman, and the blackness in this case symbolized archaism and death, but here it represents more a liveliness into the "uroboric world" into which she had fallen. "The dark rose is an appropriate symbol for a life which has sought, and now finally attained, self-extinction in the matrix". 91

White's work is a mixture of symbols, "natural" and "algebraic". Natural symbols are spontaneous products of the
imagination, whereas Algebraic symbols are imposed by the author to support his own point of view and moral philosophy. White's concentration in his novel is mainly on the natural symbols: the rose, the hawk, the garden, the nautilus shell etc. Rose is used as symbols of home, homeliness purity.

_Theodora lying on her bed, could sense the roses, there was a reflection on the wall that was a rose-red sun coming out of the earth flushing her face and her arms as she stretched. She stretched with her feet to touch, the depths of the bed, which she did not yet fill. She felt very close to the roses the other side of the walls._

They also suggest artificiality, falseness and power:

_For a moment it gave Mrs. Goodman a feeling of power to put the roses there._

Carved wood in the beginning of the novel is used to suggest the solidity and soundness of Theodora in both her physical appearance and her personality:

_This was no longer the bedroom of her mother. It was a waiting room, which housed the shiny box that contained a waxwork._

_... So, that her mouth trembled, and her hand, rigid as protesting wood, on the coffin's yellow lid._

Water is used to denote the unpredictable lives of Lou and Theodora, which are as shapeless.

_But Lou was as unpredictable as water. Theodora sensed this. The shape of her own life had not been fixed._

_Yellow colour symbolizes the lifeless being of Theodora Goodman._
So, that the mirrors began to throw up the sallow Theodora Goodman, which meant who was too yellow... with gold light.\textsuperscript{96}

In a mythological way “thread”, signifies life. And the mirror in the passage acts like a guardian or friend full of life into which Theodora wanted to penetrate with pleasure. Gold light again is the signifier of happiness.

Hotel also suggests the Australian landscape or one can say that it suggests civilization or urbanization. Huntley Clarkson, the solicitor of Mrs. Goodman once said to Theodora, “Theodora,... let us go to the races, let us lunch at a hotel”.\textsuperscript{97} It shows another facet of Australia i.e. the metropolitan cities.

Nietzsche once said that if one wanted to create a heaven, he should do so out of the hell that was within him. In fact A.D. Hope had created a heaven out of the wilderness that was around him. In his poem “Australia” he criticized almost unsparingly and quite pungently, the emptiness of the land corresponding to a similar emptiness of her people—without songs, architecture, history; the second-hand Europeans simply survive and do not live there. But in the last two stanzas of the same poem, the poet’s critical tone changed to a sense of hope that just as the Prophets of Judaism, Christianity and Islam had come from desert the poet’s country, which is to him the Arabian desert of the human mind, may produce prophets, saviours of mankind who would bring salvation to the wide waste that is Australia at the micro level and the whole world at the macro level. The poem reminds one of Yeats’ “Second Coming”. But contrasted with the rough Beast of Yeats, here we have got prophets. All poets and writers have touched on nationhood. Even Judith Wright recast local subjects, plumbing
them for timeless truths, and stressing the need for in combination with the land.

Monuments suggest continuity of life:

Moraitis said, "their memorials do not reflect this fatality. All the Greek monuments suggest a continuity of life. The theatre at Epidaurus, you have seen it, and Sanian? Pure life". 98

Bones symbolize "Naked" and "Bareness" of a country. But it represents an ancient civilization, natives, pioneers, immigrants and all:

"Bare", smiled Moraitis, for a fresh discovery. "Greece, you see, is a bare country. It is all bones".

"Like Meroe", said Theodora. 99

According to Mr. Goodman, the place is "big enough for peace of mind".100 The author has beautifully used irony here. There was enough peace. The author tries to portray it from the fences and even from the clothesline; straight lines themselves suggest something in rest position.

There was peace of mind enough on Meroe. You could feel it, whatever it was, and you were not certain, but in your bones. It was in the clothesline on which the sheets drooped in the big pink and yellow cows cooling their heels in creek mud, in magpie's speckled egg, and the disappearing snake. It was even in the fences, grey with age and yellow with lichen, that tumbled down and lay round Meroe. The fences were the last word in peace of mind.101

White "peace of mind", can be compared to Robert Frost's "Mending Wall". Which deals with man's willful separation from man. In less definite form, this suspicion of the unnatural appears
in a great many poems. In "Mending wall" one may not be sure just what it is that doesn’t love a wall:

...I could say "Elves" to "him".
But it's not elves exactly....

Robert Frost in this poem keeps reminding his readers that "Good fences make good neighbours".

Imagery is an important component of White’s novels

Imagery...is indispensable for the expression of religious ideas: it is the natural language of religion. For religion must convey in human speech to human understandings its message from the unseen and supernatural world.... It is then, to be expected that the literature of revelation should abound in imagery....

Among the many other images are black volcanic hills, fire, bones and knives. The author very beautifully used the image of black volcanic hills in the first part of the novel describing Meroe.

The hills were Meroe, and Meroe was the black volcanic hills....

Even in sunlight the hills surrounding Meroe were black. Her own shadow was rather a suspicious rag. So that from that she saw and sensed, the legendary landscape became a fact, and she could not break loose from an expanding terror.

The images of bones have been used by the writer for the inner feelings and perception and one’s mind.

There was peace of mind enough on Meroe. You could feel it, whatever it was, and you were not certain, but in your bones.

Again,

She went and stood in the mirror at the end of the passage, near the sewing room, which was
full of threads, and the old mirror was like a
green sea in which she swam, patched and
spotted with gold light. Light and the ghostly
water in the old glass dissolved her bones.\textsuperscript{108}

The image of fire suggests the ray of light, ray of happiness
and passion in the darkness of Theodora's life.

*The little fire possessed the room of the house.*
It recreated the faces of Theodora Goodman and
the man. She sensed her own, but she saw the
face of the man, whose skin was ruddy fire.\textsuperscript{109}

The image of knives is used to denote the cruelties or the
sufferings Theodora had bought for herself, by choosing to live
the life of a solitary spirit.

"Poor Theo!" she laughed. "How cruel!" Then
Fanny took a knife and slashed the butter. She
owed this for something that continued to
rankle, under her laughter, unexplained, for
Abyssinia perhaps.\textsuperscript{110}

The author has used knife as a personal image. Knife is also
an erotic image in A.D. Hope and Judith Wright's poetry. Here in
this novel it shows the virginity of Theodora. Her strong-ness and
boldness which she showed throughout his life by living a solitary
life.

Lastly, in the words of R.D. Burns one can say, *The Aunt's
Story* is a work of great beauty, of rich beauty. The texture of
music and the season-ness of paint are discovered on every page
which make it really a master piece of Patrick White as well as a
master piece of English fiction".

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Notes

2 Ibid p 12
3 Ibid pp 9-11
4 Ibid p 11
5 Ibid p 12
7 Ibid p 19
8 Patrick white, *The Aunt's Story*, op cit, p 22
9 Ibid p 24
10 Ibid p 32
11 Ibid p 23
12 Ibid p 23
13 Ibid p 25
14 Ibid pp 25,26
15 Ibid p 26
16 Ibid p 85
17 David J Tacey, *Patrick white: Fiction and the Unconscious*, op cit, p 19
18 Patrick white, *The Aunt's Story*, op cit, p 84
19 Ibid p 85
21 David J Tacey, *Patrick white Fiction and The Unconscious*, op cit, p 26
22 Ibid p 242
23 Patrick white, *The Aunt's Story*, op cit, p 10
24 Ibid p 17
25 Ibid p 13
26 Ibid p 13
28 Patrick White, *The Aunt's Story*, op cit, p 19
29. Ibid. p. 20.
30. Ibid. p. 27.
34. Ibid. p. 256.
35. Ibid. p. 258.
36. Ibid. p. 28.
39. Ibid. p. 31.
40. Ibid. p. 43.
41. Ibid. p. 31.
42. Ibid. p. 64.
43. Ibid. p. 51.
44. Ibid. p. 98.
45. Ibid. p. 99.
46. Ibid. p. 100.
47. Ibid. p. 136.
49. Ibid. p. 24.
51. Ibid. p. 116.
52. Ibid. p. 33.
53. Ibid. p. 71.
59. Ibid. p. 139.
60. Ibid. p. 140.
61. Ibid. p. 137.
63. Ibid. p. 139.
64. David J. Tacey, *Patrick White: Fiction and the Unconscious*, op. cit., p.34.
66. Ibid. p. 144.
67. Ibid. p. 251.
68. Ibid. p. 142.
69. Ibid. p. 144.
70. Ibid. p. 145.
71. Ibid. p. 196.
72. Ibid. p. 21.
73. William Walsh, *Patrick White’s Fiction*, op. cit., p. 27.
74. Ibid. p. 27.
77. Ibid. p. 29.
78. Ibid. p. 255.
79. Ibid. p. 112.
80. Ibid. pp. 262,263.
83. Ibid. p. 278.
84. Ibid. p. 284.
86. Ibid. p. 278.
87. Ibid. p. 284.
90. Ibid. p. 287.
93. Ibid. p. 21.
94. Ibid. p. 11.
95. Ibid. p. 16.
96. Ibid. p. 13.
97. Ibid. p. 104.
98. Ibid. p. 108.
99. Ibid. p. 108.
100. Ibid. p. 24.
101. Ibid. Line 45, p. 287.
102. Ibid. p. 24.
105. Patrick White, *The Aunt's Story*, op. cit., p.20
108. Ibid. p. 27.
109. Ibid. p. 276.
110. Ibid. pp. 258,259.