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UNDERSTANDING HUMAN QUANDARY: A STUDY OF PATRIC WHITE'S *THE EYE OF THE STORM*

Dr. Dhananjay Sadashiv Raibole

Assistant professor & Head Department of English

Kala Varishta Mahavidyalaya, Harsul Sawangi,

Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar.

Abstract:

People have long faced a variety of challenges in their daily lives. Humans have experienced love, hatred, pity, fury, and other related emotions throughout history. Instead, it is a tragic aspect of human existence that he spends the majority of his time thinking, worrying, and finding emotional fulfilment. Human life is propelled by emotional fulfilment, which elevates mere survival to a purposeful existence. It offers a psychological framework for assessing our general quality of life, enabling us to create stronger bonds with others and promote long-term mental and physical well-being.

The Eye of the Storm, a masterwork by Patrick White, is a psychological and existential examination of mortality. It analyzes the human predicament of age, spiritual estrangement, and dysfunctional families. White highlights the frail beauty of the human soul while criticizing the destructive hold of materialism through the dying matriarch Elizabeth Hunter. The novel centers on Elizabeth Hunter's existence. Elizabeth Hunter is the focus of the entire narrative, which starts with her and concludes with her passing. A flurry of nurses and her kids surrounds her as she spends her final days in bed. Elizabeth's life is illuminated by the storm scene. It seems that the storm is a dynamic force that eliminates all forces of conflict and hostility.

Keywords: Dilemma, Human emotions, Dynamics of life, Tragedy, Domination

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The Eye of the Storm experiments with stream of consciousness, shifting narrative points of view, and fragmented linearity, while White's tremendous works presented visionary parables and psychological narratives that examined a harsh modern world of dust and lust. His distinctive characters, vulnerable isolates and tender idealists, strive to maintain dignity and moral purpose despite being betrayed by those they care about and abused by their own animal instincts. White, however, never surrenders to the loveless emptiness of this contemporary world.

This novel takes readers on a journey towards a happier world after a final departure from an unreal realm to the real one, as Mrs Hunter, the protagonist, overcomes obstacles. It's a beautifully crafted work rooted in nature, a mesmerizing showcase of White's wit, wisdom, and imagination. Considered an artistic masterpiece, it is a well-known example of structural storytelling. In the story, a wealthy, sensual, and materialistic woman named Elizabeth Hunter is portrayed as a clever socialite and the novel's heroine.

In her final days, she was confined to her bed, reminiscing about the shining glory of her youth. She was lovingly cared for by two nurses and staff who dutifully watched over her, and that place was cherished as a 'house shrine'. Death remains the central and most profound theme that White has explored in his extensive library of the real world. Mrs. Hunter's encounter marked a pivotal moment of harmony between her inner self and the noble 'eye'; throughout her life, especially in her final moments, she chose to have a conversation amid a storm with a distant island. White employs Storm and Eye as key symbols to highlight the novel's importance and connect it with themes of Time, Suffering, and Self-Discovery. The novel itself appears as a dark cloud, hinting at a difficult phase in the protagonist's life.

The author believes that suffering is a fundamental part of life that everyone experiences at some point. In the novel, the Eye is depicted biologically as part of the body, but it also carries deep religious symbolism of perception and emotion, often depicted as a storm in the mind. This storm represents the constant flow of thoughts passing through a person's mind, much like a natural storm. White thoughtfully uses these natural images to vividly illustrate life through his characters. Additionally, the title vividly reflects this theme, especially in the powerful scene where the protagonist is stranded alone on an island during a tropical cyclone. This moment symbolizes suffering and humiliation, ultimately leading to a profound realization about life's challenges.

Many masks concealed her and everyone else's true selves: the bedridden mistress, the alluringly disabled one, the commanding mother, the 'old witch,' the 'chrysalis,' the 'barbarous idol,' and another old witch. She might face the terror of the Eye of the Mistress or find herself sitting comfortably on her dresser in her cosy apartment in Centennial Park. The story unfolds and reaches its heartfelt, warm conclusion through these touching moments. Mrs. Hunter was genuinely devoted to her husband, making her role as a wife her deepest priority. When she received a note from her husband's doctor, Treweek, informing her of Alfred Hunter's illness, she hurriedly left 'Kudjeri' to be by his side. Though it was her husband's property and never truly hers, she lovingly managed their home and thoughtfully guided their children's education through daily routines. They probably looked like lovers sharing a tender, passionate moment.

Alienation is a relatable theme in this story, illustrating how people can feel out of control due to moral constraints, rational thought, and other forces. Many theories help us understand this common experience, highlighting deep psychological reasons and personal values. For example, Marxism explains that alienation stems from modern labor in industrial societies. When people work, their effort becomes a necessity for survival, making their labor and products feel separate from themselves. Sometimes, individuals give up their own power in what they create, only to find that these creations can end up controlling or even opposing them. Often, people use each other for profit, and genuine human happiness might only be achieved when we challenge these alienating forces. As shown in this story, Lady Hunt's relentless chase for worldly pleasures eventually overshadowed her love for her children. The intense desire for money, driven by those around her, is a harsh irony that ultimately turns against her.

Additionally, Fromm's Humanistic Ethics can offer a deeper understanding of this phenomenon by exploring the reasons, methods, and processes behind it. From a social psychology perspective, he highlights how personality theory and socialization shape the distortion and widespread sense of alienation in human nature within today's industrial society, affecting both individuals and communities. He reminds us that alienation isn't a new idea; it's been around since ancient times, but it has grown to extraordinary levels, infiltrating every part of our modern capitalist lives. Looking through a psychological lens, the way individuals' needs are transformed and distorted also plays a big role in this, and it's connected to the issues of fetishism. In this novel, the protagonist and other characters show their needs in a skewed,

misaligned way, like a spindle rather than a pyramid, which ultimately leads to their mental alienation. Everyone's most basic needs- physiological and safety needs- are twisted by an overwhelming focus on self-interest. Whether it's Mrs. Hunt or her children, their primary concern becomes financial stability, which clouds their needs for connection, love, and self-fulfilment. They live in a world that looks luxurious and flashy on the surface but is really cold, lonely, and disconnected- without genuine belonging. It's this imbalance that cuts them off from authentic life and strips away their humanity.

Dorothy's sense of belonging and love was overshadowed by her admiration for her husband's temperament, title, and status, rather than a full acceptance of marriage. Her younger brother Basil faced repeated marital disappointments due to mutual indifference and nonchalance. It was only when Mrs. Hunt was nearing the end of her life that they came together for common benefit, doing whatever they could to maximize their financial and material gains. In terms of their deeper emotional needs, they remained stuck on physical and safety levels, preventing them from reaching a higher, more spiritual level. Unfortunately, the incestuous relationship between the siblings was an empty attempt to fill the void of belonging and love, rather than a genuine connection—more like a distortion and a fall into unhealthy patterns of wandering and helplessness. For Mrs. Hunt, her intense obsession with wealth and superficial material pleasures distorted her true needs, becoming a source of her alienation. This ultimately led to her death and her transformation into a satirical, disturbed individual obsessed with material gains. As she faced death, it became a moment of self-reflection and spiritual release.

Flora Manhood's life was often turbulent due to her complicated relationship with someone close to her. Over time, she started to withdraw, feeling uncertain and insecure, which affected her health and led her to isolate herself socially. She felt a deep sense of emptiness, both worldly and spiritual, particularly in her connection with Colonel Pardoe. Her life experienced a creative upheaval; she decided to leave the Colonel and move in with her cousin, Snow Turks. During this period, she also began a romantic relationship with Alix. Throughout all these changes, Mrs. Hunter remained a guiding influence in her life. Although Mary felt a spiritual connection with Mrs. Hunter, she sometimes felt the need to protect herself at night, keeping a distance from her luminous presence when she felt threatened. She also struggled with feelings of vulnerability related to her unusual, ageing, animalistic body- particularly the absence of excretory organs. Doubts rarely intruded at night, but one morning Sister de Santis

was oddly haunted by faint smells of faces and urine, along with the sharpness of old iron and transparent fingernails that seemed to claw at her so viciously. After meeting Manhood, Santis recognized her own psychological flaws, especially when she compared her dull-colored clothes with Manhood's vibrant attire. This sparked her newfound interest in splendid colors. Secretly, she saw herself as less intellectual than Manhood, particularly in social settings.

The Eye of the Storm explores the final days of Elizabeth Hunter, a wealthy and once-beautiful socialite. Set in her luxurious Sidney mansion, she desperately seeks to reconnect with her past and find transcendent meaning in her life. The novel creates a rich tapestry of narrative, reminiscent of Patrick White's style, focusing on the nature of consciousness—an idea he explores through vivid impressions and inner experiences. Despite its length, the story feels intimately focused. Like many of White's works, it provides a broad backdrop with impressionistic descriptions that evoke a vast sense of space, blending seamlessly with carefully chosen words that highlight the boundaries of her domestic world. It is important for us to remain rational and develop a strong, balanced personality so we can keep a clear, calm mind even when faced with many material temptations. Modern people, who possess resilience, honesty, and ideals, should not be overwhelmed by feelings of alienation. Besides meeting our basic material needs for survival, we should look beyond narrow personal desires, aim to create universal social values, and nurture a healthy personality. By doing so, we can overcome the barriers of alienation and achieve overall growth.

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