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## Multiculturalism Tapestry: Navigating Anita Desai and Patrick White's Psychic Literary Landscape

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### Abstract:

In the universal literary landscapes crafted by Anita Desai and Patrick White, we encounter a tapestry of human experience woven with intricate detail and profound insight. *Cry, the Peacock* by Desai exposes the turbulent inner world of Maya, who is trapped in a stifling marriage. At the same time, in White's *The Tree of Man*, characters confront profound complexities akin to Maya's struggles. Through meticulous character studies, both authors delve into the essence of existence, shedding light on the enigmatic depths of the human psyche. Within the enigmatic study of human consciousness depicted in Anita Desai's *Cry, the Peacock*, and Patrick White's *The Tree of Man*, we are transported into a dominion where the boundaries of realism blur, and the psyche becomes a labyrinth of existential mysteries. Through the mysterious symbolism of Maya's visions and the intricate portrayal of characters in White's narrative, the works serve as windows into the enigmatic depths of the human psyche, inviting contemplation on the universal themes of identity, perception, and the elusive nature of truth.

**Key words:** Multiculturalism, Psychoanalytical, Nature, Identity, Displacement

### Introduction:

Literature, as a piece of individual kind, amends and reworks values in harmony with the changing occasions of society. Hanging unsteadily on the coveted edge, loaded with the weight of societal challenges and the complexities of unsafe relationships, the literary works of Anita Desai, an Indian author (born 1937), and Patrick White, a British-born Australian author (1912-1990) offer a compelling narrative that chronicles the harsh truths endured by marginalized individuals, those affected by these issues, and those subjected to unfair treatment. The authors appear to have contrasted and comparative fiction, which enthusiastically investigates the themes of eagerness, distance, anxiety, domestic disharmony, relationships, and male-centric predominance in multicultural Indian and Australian families.

Anita Desai and Patrick White, with their profound understanding of human nature, have carved a unique space in literature. They have shifted their focus from

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the external to the internal psychic reality, delving deep into the protagonists' psychological battles and their resulting behaviors. Their works convey the plight of individuals engaged not only in a battle with their circumstances but also with their restraint, disillusionment, and selves. These novelists demonstrate a profound understanding of human nature and reveal life's revelations in their work. They perceive existence with sharp discernment, razor-sharp reasonableness, an intense sense of perception, and a fine, apparent presence in India, Australia, and beyond.

In a psychoanalytical interpretation, Patrick White's novels, including *The Tree of Man*, can be seen as intricate examinations of the human psyche through the lens of Freudian theory. White's protagonists, such as Stan Parker, serve as vessels for exploring deep-seated psychological dynamics and inner conflicts. Freudian theory emphasizes the role of the unconscious mind, where repressed desires and unresolved conflicts reside. In *The Tree of Man*, Stan's journey towards self-realization can be viewed as a manifestation of Freud's concept of the unconscious striving for fulfillment and integration. Stan's return to Australia after the war symbolizes a return to the origins of his psyche, where he must confront and reconcile with the traumas and conflicts that have shaped him. Moreover, Freudian theory posits the existence of defense mechanisms, such as repression and denial, which individuals employ to protect themselves from painful truths. Stan's struggles with his past, his relationship with his parents, and the challenges of married life reflect a constant battle between his conscious desires and the unconscious forces that drive him.

The Australian landscape, depicted as a dynamic character in White's novel, can be interpreted through Freud's concept of the 'id,' which represents primal instincts and drives. The harsh and unforgiving environment mirrors Stan's internal struggles and serves as a backdrop against which his psychological journey unfolds. The 'id' in Freud's theory refers to the part of the psyche responsible for our basic, instinctual drives. It operates on the pleasure principle, demanding immediate gratification. This concept helps us understand how the Australian landscape, with its harsh conditions and survival challenges, reflects Stan's primal instincts and drives. Additionally, White's exploration of suffering, identity, and the human condition resonates with Freud's theories on the nature of human experience. Through Stan's trials and tribulations, White suggests that suffering is an inherent aspect of the human condition, necessary for personal growth and self-awareness, fostering a sense of empathy and emotional connection with the audience.

Overall, *The Tree of Man* and White's other works offer rich material for psychoanalytical analysis, inviting readers to delve into the depths of the human

psyche and uncover the unconscious forces that shape our thoughts, emotions, and behaviors'. In a psychoanalytical interpretation, Stan's union with Amy represents a fusion of conflicting desires and perspectives, typical of the human psyche's complexity. Stan's deep connection with nature symbolizes his inner quest for meaning and self-discovery, while Amy's focus on practicalities reflects her more grounded approach to life. Their discordant relationship serves as a reflection of the inherent tensions within the human psyche. Throughout the narrative, nature acts as a potent metaphor for Stan's internal journey, symbolizing his search for understanding and purpose. His decision to pioneer the land reflects a complex interplay of emotions, including a yearning for permanence and a restless desire for change.

The narrative unfolds in three sections, each marked by significant symbols reflecting the emotional evolution of the characters. Floods, fires, and droughts serve as both climatic events and reflections of the Parkers' internal states, illustrating White's exploration of humanity's essential progress. The rose bush, initially a symbol of emotional significance planted by Amy, undergoes decay, mirroring the decline of importance in the face of rejection by the next generation. This motif underscores the broader themes of mortality and existential questioning that pervade the novel. Ultimately, the novel aims to trace the morphology of human life and society, questioning the meaning of existence and confronting the existential void. The image of the sensitive grandson amidst the trees at the conclusion suggests a cyclical rebirth and renewal, emphasizing the interconnectedness of life and the enduring nature of human virtue. The 'sensitive grandson' is a symbol of hope and renewal, representing the cyclical nature of life and the enduring resilience of the human spirit. His presence amidst the trees at the novel's conclusion serves as a powerful reminder of the interconnectedness of life and the potential for renewal, even in the face of existential questioning, keeping the audience intrigued and intellectually engaged.

*The Tree of Man* reveals the intricate interplay between the characters' inner worlds and the external landscape, mirroring Freudian concepts of the unconscious and the superego. The novel's structure, divided into four parts, aligns with Freud's idea of the psyche's division into conscious and unconscious realms. The seasonal changes symbolize the emotional journey of the protagonists, reflecting Freud's notion of psychic development and the cyclical nature of human experience. Stan's acceptance of time's destructive forces echoes Freud's concept of the death drive, while his yearning for higher truth represents the ego's pursuit of transcendence over primal instincts.

Stan's upbringing, with conflicting beliefs embodied by his parents, illustrates Freud's theory of the Oedipus complex and the struggle between parental influences on the developing psyche. His rejection of his mother's aspirations suggests a subconscious rebellion against authority, typical of Freudian psychosexual stages. The tension between permanence and motion, central to the narrative, resonates with Freud's concept of the pleasure principle versus the reality principle, as Stan grapples with the desire for stability amidst life's inevitable changes. Amy's reliance on possessions and sensual pleasures reflects Freud's theory of libido and the unconscious pursuit of gratification.

*The Tree of Man* can be seen as a Freudian exploration of human consciousness, presenting characters who navigate the complexities of desire, repression, and existentialism against the backdrop of the Australian landscape. From an environmental perspective, *The Tree of Man* portrays natural disasters as catalysts for introspection and transformation in the characters' lives. Floods and bushfires serve as reminders of humanity's vulnerability in the face of nature's power, prompting moments of intimacy and reflection for the Parkers. The destruction wrought by these disasters symbolizes the impermanence of human existence and the ever-changing landscape of life. Stan's acceptance of nature's destructive forces reflects recognition of the cyclical nature of life. At the same time, Amy's fear and anxiety highlight the human tendency to resist change and cling to stability.

On the psychoanalytical front, the contrasting responses of Stan and Amy to the environmental challenges mirror their inner psychological states. Stan's embrace of nature's flux and his romantic inclinations towards the sublime and grotesque reflect his openness to confronting the darker aspects of existence. In contrast, Amy's struggle to comprehend Stan's inner experiences and her yearning for fleeting moments of timeless beauty suggest a reluctance to confront the complexities of human emotion and mortality. The novel's exploration of war, despair, and redemption delves further into the characters' psychological depths, highlighting the universal human quest for meaning and transcendence amidst life's trials.

Anita Desai, an Indian author, is notable for her thought-provoking work, *Cry, the Peacock*. The book, released in 1963, delves deeply into human emotion by focusing on topics such as existential depression, psychological discontent, and the fragility of sanity. An eco-critical perspective sheds light on the intricate interplay between the environment and theme within her works. The nature imagery interwoven throughout her fiction serves as a gateway into uncharted realms of the feminine psyche. The protagonist of the story is Maya, a young woman trapped in a loveless union with the emotionally distant and heartless Gautama, her husband.

Maya is troubled by a sense of impending doom and has a deep fear of death. She is incredibly observant and frequently finds solace in the beauty of nature. *Cry, the Peacock* confirms that she uses Maya as a philosophical hypothesis in engraving the character of Maya. She attains this accomplishment by casting Maya in the likeness of Maya. She lurks deeper into the human psyche's unconscious layer and reveals man's existential trauma. This novel is primarily the story of Maya, the heroine, but it also features many other female characters that represent different aspects of women. The significance of the title of the novel *Cry, the Peacock*, refers to the cry and dance of the bird. The Peacock's cry implies intense lovemaking and its tryst with life and death. Peacocks are believed to have been involved in the dance of life, at the end of which they die. Maya lingers on the astrologer's prediction and is obsessed with thoughts of death. The death cry of the Peacock triggers thoughts of death and intensifies her passion for life. It is believed that, like bees, peahens kill peacocks after sexual intercourse. The novel narrates the complex relationship between Maya and Gautama, culminating in Maya's eventual killing of Gautama.

In *Cry, the Peacock*, nature imagery serves as a vehicle for exploring the emotional landscape of Maya, the protagonist, as it delves deep into her psyche to unravel its complexities. These images serve as poignant expressions of her highly sensitive personality, teetering on the brink between neurosis and insanity. Maya's pet dog Toto acts not only as a structural device but also as a thematic anchor, symbolizing alienation and the motif of death that permeates Maya's psychic instability. Maya's fixation on the death of her pet dog highlights her inability to come to terms with the inevitability of death, a natural phenomenon she struggles to accept. Her subsequent remark about childless women forming intense attachments to their pets further underscores her sense of isolation and loneliness. Her relationship with Gautama, her spouse, exacerbates her feelings of disconnection, as evidenced by her poignant observation about his lack of attention to her inner turmoil.

Philosophers such as Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and Foucault, as well as psychologists like Freud, Jung, Havelock Ellis, and Kraft-Ebbing, have variously dealt with the concept of 'desire.' It is only in the writings of Freud that the subject of "desire" has received serious attention, particularly in his Three Essays on Sexuality and Meta-psychological Essays. Human action, Freud believed, is conducted by sexuality, "Desire" as a manifest sexual impulse, and its gratification is the most crucial aspect of living beings. Theoretically, "desire" has broader implications. It is commonly interpreted at two levels: high, moving towards sublimation, and low, representing entirely physical properties. However, the physical is essential for generating the chance of moving towards sublimation—any disruption of the

ordinary course of gratification results in neurotic manifestations. During the narrative of the novel, Maya undergoes a situation of sexual deprivation and emotional insecurity.

Fantasy has become an integral part of the novel's overall shape, and it is constantly projected alongside and about the realm of reality. Maya often clings to fantasy as she struggles to relate to reality. Her relationship with reality passes through three stages: childhood, marital life, and the final stage, when she surrenders herself to the world of insanity. As time passes, she becomes increasingly restless and empty in her heart, brooding over her feelings. Allusions from astrology and scriptures have bolstered the narrative, and features have expanded the scope of life and death. Friedrich Nietzsche, the German Philosopher, contemplates the meaning of values and their significance to human existence and the pursuit of growth by discarding old value systems; according to him, the highest value is "to dissolve themselves" when the absolute value exists. Maya is a compassionate character, an introvert, and a pampered daughter of a wealthy aristocratic father. She is given in marriage to Gautama, a man much older than herself. It portrays a woman who has failed to accept domination and patriarchal order. Maya thinks of her married lifestyle with Gautama as a lethal battle wherein one is destined to kill the other.

Gautama remains resistant to any such moment of intimacy. Indeed, no one spoke of 'love' except in terms of political scandal and intellectual descent (48) or even spoke to her except when it had to do with "babies, meals, shopping, and marriage" (49). Living with her inner reality, she feels the need to establish a communication channel with the outer human world. Living rebuffed by her husband, Maya is torn between her 'love of life' and her 'fear of death'. She is deeply stricken with a sense of loneliness and insecurity, as tension escalates; Maya's erratic moods conjure hallucinatory beings that seem to assault her senses, reflecting her deep-seated fears of rejection and isolation. Amidst this turmoil, she seeks solace in likening her mundane existence to the ever-changing landscape of nature, momentarily easing her inner unrest. However, even the smallest facets of nature serve as reminders of her physical and emotional barrenness, intensifying her restlessness and dissatisfaction.

In conclusion, we can identify Anita Desai's *Cry, the Peacock* as the protagonist, in which Maya grapples with deep-seated psychological turmoil, mirroring the inner conflicts and suppressed desires of individuals in a multicultural context. Similarly, in Patrick White's *The Tree of Man*, the characters navigate the complexities of identity and belonging in a multicultural Australian landscape. Stan and Amy Parker's struggles with conformity and alienation reflect the

psychoanalytical notion of the ego grappling with societal expectations. Both novels delve into the intricacies of the human psyche within multicultural settings, exploring universal themes of longing, displacement, and the quest for self-understanding amidst cultural clashes.

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