

CHAPTER II

MAJOR THEMES IN AUDREY THOMAS'S FICTION

II. i QUEST

The archetypal theme, quest, predominates Audrey Thomas' fiction. Many times, the quest defines the character of a narrator or the central figure, and on many occasions, the central character selects particular quest for itself to sustain its own resultant individuality.

Audrey Thomas's central characters (mostly female ones) are self searching, self analytical. They take pains to search themselves and in this effort, accept whatever the final judgment. 'Quest for Identity' occupies greater space in her fiction, at the same time quest of traveller's spirit, quest for parentage, quest for romantic utopia, quest for relative independence, quest for creative expression inherent in self , quest for the success of American dream etc. appear in many of her short stories.

Her stories are intermingled with more than one theme. The stories like 'Miss Foot', 'Local Customs', and 'Relics' in 'Goodbye Harold Good luck' and 'Albatross', 'Salon Des Refuses', 'A Monday Dream at Alameda Park', 'A More Little Mummy in the World', 'If one Green Bottle...' and 'Initram' in 'Ten Green Bottles' have quest as their dominant theme.

In 'Miss Foote' the central character Miss Foot bears an eternal traveler spirit. She enjoys her life after retirement in traveling.

Miss Foote linked to herself as a traveller, not a tourist.¹

This opening sentence from the story expresses directly its theme. She had some reminiscences of her dead father in her brave heart. Her father is the dominating influence on her life and a consoling force of faith. His walking stick she had been using is the symbolic protection for her.

She had hundreds of acquaintances but no friends, not even a dog or a cat or a budgie; a pet would tie her down.²

This remark summarizes her loneliness. Her spirit would never allow her to be tied with any region, man or animal. Like an inborn traveller, loneliness and solitude are her most intimates. A doctor advised her for some rest but she wouldn't give in.

The dream of a young man locking her way was the forewarning of the future danger. Audrey Thomas created here the effects of telepathy. Near the end the story goes to be thrilling and seems to be incoherent with the earlier part. The reader tries to link the young man with a murderer, a millionaire who killed her wife, cut off her head and kept rest of the body in a Sauna. But what will happen next is a secret, and a secret has infinite interpretations. Miss Foote was terrified to find the dream of the last night as the reality of the daylight. But we assume that she would never give in, the dream will not remain incomplete and she will make the man clear off her way.

The theme of this story, besides some negligible interests deals with the quest. This quest is the quest of traveller spirit. A notable difference between Miss Foot and other great travelers is that there is not a material aspiration behind her wanderings. The goals and aspirations are rather spiritual – to find solace in loneliness, to suck up the juice of the life up to death. She is not a penitent, remorseful like Coleridge's Ancient Mariner, a wanderer-preacher; Audrey Thomas didn't employ any gospel through her story.

'Local Customs' is the portrayal of Edward's **quest to find real parentage**. Edward is his father's only child. Since the divorce, his parents never spoke to one another except over the telephone. His father finds a real spouse in Anna for the second time but the relationship between Anna and Edward is undefined. He had a doubt whether he would place Anna at his mother's position. Edward is always in need of a companion and the hotel-owner on the beach Dmitri makes his stay on the foreign land bearable. On the other end, he is much impressed by the motherly care being taken by a German lady of her blind husband. In the last phase of their tour they decide to visit the nearby mountain village and watch the local customs prevailing there. Edward's father proposed Anna for marriage and she took it without seriousness. Mockingly, Anna asks Edward whether he would marry her. A strange emotion haunted him.

How to define the relationship between him and Anna? ³

While swimming, he came to know the presence of a baby octopus. He shouted that he got the octopus and saw it first. The man in Panama hat took the octopus from Edward with his permission and made it a plaything, a toy to be exhibited. Edward, shaken deep inside, became dumb-founded, remained a mere spectator of the sufferings of that tiny creature of the satanic species. Edward got frightened in mind because perhaps the mother octopus would avenge him. The octopus was carried away by the man in Panama hat. He slapped out it till it became dead. Those blows at octopus made Edward grief-stricken. At that night Edward had a strange dream. He saw octopus' eyes turned into a baby and when that baby opened her mouth, he saw a

huge siphon like hole at the back of the throat. Edward wakes up to the sound of Anna crying in the other room.

This baby octopus is the image of Edward himself who was thirsty for a real mother in the outside world. The title is suggestive: All the relations are customary, colourful like local customs. Everyone wants to have them for life long, but they are occasional, made by some contracts.

'Relics' presents the relics of memories of the central figure, Rose. The story deals with three sorry figures—the narrator herself, Nicky, narrator's last lover and Morag, the boarding house cook. Rose attempts to find herself amidst the dead or momentarily forgotten persons she had to face in her bygone days. At the beginning of the story Rose goes to a lady oracle of the same name. Rose agrees with the lady oracle's astrology.:

I want to reply, "That's the story of my life. Some married man or the other is always in love with me. I am that sort of woman."⁴

She frankly describes her love experiences during her college days and the strange beginning of her love affair with Nick, hardly forgets to give detailed description of sex.

The lady oracle makes another statement:

"You are a fool to yourself and a friend to many."⁵

This statement is the gist of her character traits.

Morag is the widow, tries to share her grief with the student tenants of her boarding house, but no student shows any sympathy to her. There was a lack of communication and understanding between Morag and the students. Rose was not an exception. Rose visits the Relics of the memories, the

university town again to seek the warmth of past love and care, returns disappointed at the end because Morag was killed in an accident; her brother was in lunatic asylum and Nick's whereabouts were unknown to her. She would have corrected her mistakes of not knowing Morag's pains and not being honest to Nick had they met her there. She has not been conscious of her purpose in visiting the town. She finds herself in the labyrinth of questions, bewildered:

"Why did I come back here? Like Thomas in the bible? Do I have to touch the wounds before I will believe? But whose wound? Mine?

Hers? His?"⁶

Rose wanted to repent for her past mistakes. But those mistakes were not consciously made. They were right moves taken at the proper time. She was unable to divide her among so many persons she met, loved, seen. In retrospect, however, she finds herself guilty for being indifferent to those persons who felt a dire need of her. An intricate pattern of human mind has been presented in this story. The quest of Rose remains unfulfilled. That was her destiny and she wins our sympathy for that.

In 'Albatross', Audrey deals with the quest of the realization of American dream. She presents hasty life of Hermann, a day-dreamer, trying to be successful in one night, ignored of the business ethics. Hermann tries to sell whatever commodity he has in stock. Margaret and her husband are the first customers of his trade. First of all, he wants to convey the literary importance of his own story. He wanted to publish his story in a book form. It was about his experiences as an Austrian soldier in Greece during the

Second World War. It was full of tedious details; but Martha took interest in that tale-tale. Once Hermann got the audience he baffles the couple with more and more episodes of the same story. Hermann's audiences are fed up with him and his story. They want to avoid him but are hardly successful in that attempt. After some months Hermann was turned into a laughing stock. The narrator comments upon Hermann:

In Hermann my wife has found the jewel for her collection.
 Heroic Hermann, sucking the past like barley sugar. Hermann
 with a future like a cancelled stamp.⁷

He tries his hands at many businesses like book writing, film production, and Morpheus Marker stone with the epitaph and at last the Olympia commissionaire. In spite of failure, he never loses his courage. He is a poor struggler. He is the victim of the great 'American dream.' He developed the habit of visiting Margaret's house and enjoys her coffee and breakfast, spoils their time and money. In Hermann, the couple found ever-green source of laughter.

The question of who's using whom is an interesting one.⁸

Initially fed up with Hermann's recurrent visits Margaret's husband allows Hermann to come whenever he wants. He could see the hidden pathos in Hermann's life and his zealous acrobatics for becoming successful businessman. Hermann has no fault of for his own his pathetic condition. The utter materialistic society is the cruel agent in whose hands many puppets like Hermann remain only dwarfs, mechanical. He is like an albatross in Coleridge's ballad. Simplicity and innocence are his virtues but they are non-

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rewarding in the present world. The quest of the realization of American dream is never fulfilled. Its victims bear the different names in different time and in different clime.

A quest for individuality and relative independence is best exemplified in 'A Monday Dream At Alameda Park'. This story spans about a single day in the life of an aged husband and his second wife, Laura. She wanted to celebrate her husband's discharge from the hospital. He was too pale to enjoy the moments in Mexico with enthusiastic Laura.

He was the one who had wanted marriage. He told her it gave him Some protection, some security; although he was not even sure what he meant by that.⁹

He was teaching 'Metaphysics' in college and he was surprised that the institution was paying him for his interests. He had not been satisfied in his fourteen years of first marriage. It resulted in an accidental divorce. Later he married Laura and she awakened all the dumb impulses of his body:

When Laura made love to him she made sounds. Very low at first and then louder, louder, never words, just a strange babble or tide of sounds, crossing to him and touching him all over with her long restless fingers, igniting him, giving him life.¹⁰

Those were the fantastic days of his life; however, he started to be jealous of Laura's energy and zest and her always unquenched physical thirst. Their new friends Inez and Rosario in Mexico made him the victim of their sensuous and violent love-making. He terrified to the core with the

sexual passions of those “sophisticated, cruel manipulators”¹¹. It was Laura who provided the comfort to come outside this sex-phobia.

They wandered like gay children the whole day with balloons in Laura’s hands. Laura wanted to see Rivera Murals. They went back, he was tired. She enthusiastically took the notes and gathered information about the Mexican Freedom Struggle. The mural was named ‘A Sunday Dream At Alameda Park’. He knows the might of time. In next ten years he would be 60 and Laura 32 and then no Sunday or Monday Dream, no Inez, no Rosario.

He needed sleep. She took bath under shower, took money and his keys and let herself out for lighted, smiling, dazzling Mexico City calling her, though he was sleeping. She is well-aware of his failing health, difference in their age and the resultant impotency in him. She had many years in her lot, many visions he was unable to share with. She is the representative woman of the modern times-self-conscious and yet adjustable.

The title is apt and suggestive. The Monday Dream was especially the dream of Laura’s future in absence of him. She would fulfill it definitely. She is preparing to enjoy life without any moral or social restrictions. She would use the life blood or material wealth of him like a parasite, and yet like a parasite orchid she will bear blossoms even after the death of its feeder tree.

A quest for romantic utopia is not a new theme for fiction and when Audrey creates the plot and characters in this direction, the reader becomes surprised to see its handling. ‘Salon Des Refuses’ is woven around a private nurse’s quest for such an utopia. Mother Brown, a middle aged nurse in the local lunatic asylum always imagines herself having waterfront residences in

Florida or California and the warmth of sunshine there. The brochures giving information about Florida is the secret of her own. She spends her days in the dreary routine of the lunatic asylum and the filthy, violent ,thirty-two lady patients break her dream every day. Although the day deceives her, denies the least possibility of going outside her chalked line-like life, her nightly solitude and her beloved pet bird makes her to wait eagerly for the next day.

You are wrong, you philosophers, we are not the sum of all our yesterday, but the product of all tomorrows which never come.

Wrapped in our dreams we only wake to yesterday and madness and damnation.¹²

One night, the mad women tied up Nurse Primrose and locked her in a closet, lost the key somewhere. This incident made Mother Brown sympathetic towards Primrose and she would reveal the plan of Florida to Primrose if she was ready to come with her. The visitors' day in hospital is the busiest day for the workers and great panorama of human hypocrisy and pretension for Mother Brown. The relatives, sons and daughters of the madwomen used to see their patients, the set speeches, the usual presents and gifts, a mere formality.

How does one converse with madness? For the sane it is impossible, and the insane do not care about each other.¹³

In the night of Visitor's day a mad woman named Eleanor commits suicide. Mother Brown is indifferent to this incident because she lives in the town having asylum only physically. The dreams of Florida changed her entire being. She endures the burden of hours in asylum only with energy provided

her by her romantic dreamland. She shuts her eyes in the hope of leaving the caged world behind and sailing towards Florida.

Audrey presents here two types of narrative, one of the deeds and feelings of Mother Brown and other is the fantastic and unrelated thinking of different mad women like Mrs. Marsden and Eleanor. The story looks like a mosaic of two different but colourful patterns.

Mother Brown's quest is handled like a foregrounded picture at the background of which lies the lunatic asylum and its abstract thirty-two inhabitants.

A quest of creative expression inherent in self is the theme of 'Initram'. This quest of creative expression is obstructed by many worldly cares. Various tensions and quarrels in personal as well as social life of the modern times are the chief causes to make this creative spirit contracted. But the true genius doesn't get tormented with these trivial obstacles and comes out, new born, phoenix-like. Lydia, the novelist and pivotal figure of the story represents such a genius.

The narrator is being acquainted with Lydia, the well-known novelist. Many facets of Lydia's personality are revealed to the narrator during her meetings. Lydia's life was like an abstract painting, coloured with many discordant experiences. Her husband brought his student to his bed during her absence and that incident gathered storm in her married life. She was about to get separation from him. Within last twenty years of her writing, her literary output was just two novels, and they were the best sellers. The

strained relations of this couple imposed some extra responsibilities on Lydia's shoulders and she could hardly concentrate on her craft.

The quality of man's life is as important as the quality of his art."

The old man said.¹⁴

Tony, Lydia's husband displayed some slides of their early European tour. One slide was showing title 'Initram' in reversed manner. Initram was a special drink enjoyed by Tony and Lydia while they were on European tour. The slide showing title 'Initram' made her to remember the golden days of conjugal bliss. The days would never return. 'Initram' was the symbol of their mutual affection. It was the perception, though, like a pain in the past.

A bee-keeper was also an audience of the slide show. Lydia was interested to listen about mating of the bees. The bee-keeper told about that game of 'fun, frolick and death': The bee-queen mates only once in the year. The drones are the laziest insects. Then one day queen just zooms up into the blue sky with hundreds of drones dashing after her. The strongest and the swiftest catches her. Sometimes she even zooms back towards them because she wants to be caught. And then he clasps her to him, face-to-face there's a little explosion as all his male organs pop out. After fertilizing her, the male drone dies. They fall to the ground together, and when she tries to pull away, he's stuck so fast to her she pulls most of his abdomen away.

From the human point of view the drone that wins is the loser really.¹⁵

In her stay at Lydia's house that same night, the narrator heard the noisy love-making upstairs. Lydia wanted her to hear it. This incident was

turned into the last line of the story Lydia had been writing that evening. The narrator wondered if she'd come down the next morning with Tony's abdomen irrevocably stuck to Lydia's front.

Lydia took divorce soon after that day. The narrator was planning to write a story based on Lydia's life. Lydia insisted that the central character must have the name Lydia.

In this story, Audrey uses the mating of the bees as an extended metaphor for the creative, dominant female supremacy in nature. Lydia's bafflement is the result of her obligation for her to keep both the fronts in her hold -- the proper housewifery and literary craftsmanship. Tony could have been neatly delineated character; but Audrey's interest lies mainly in making her female figure most focussed. It can be called a shortcoming on the writer's part; but it is in accordance with her unprofessed commitment as a feminist writer.

A quest to comment on one's own life, more than half already lived is the theme of 'If One Green Bottle...' The title is taken from a camp-fire song. In retrospect, the narrator recalls some incidents in various stages of her life. In between she makes comments, which turn into generalized truths of human life. The technique of narration used here is the interior monologue. The story passes through many flashbacks and flash forwards upto the optimistic ending. The incidents deal specifically with the narrator's own life, but bring forth the universal truths applicable to every human being. Symbolism and metaphor are the dominant literary devices used in this story.

We are all betrayed by the nursery rhymes like 'Jack and Jill', 'Humpty Dumpty' and 'Cock-a-doodle-Do'. This is a world of fantasy with which we get acquainted in the initial stages of our life, which proves itself totally useless in the forthcoming stark realities of our life. When the narrator was eleven years old, in the scout camp she climbed the fire tower with her friends. At the top they find six dead mice. They hurled the dead mice to 'Lilliputian world below.' First time in her life she came to know the littleness of the human world. She asked herself which world was to be considered as the Lilliputian.

She herself and her husband are like the chess mates 'trapped in net by time, stored pieces of chess teased by insects'¹⁶. She gives a new etymological formations of a word 'pain' as a combination of two roots 'pay' and 'Cain'. There is no exit from pain. Everyone has to suffer; not a nemesis or a poetical justice always. We are like swimmers crossing the flow of pain to get indulged in another region of pain. Pain is really 'bad and motionless'. One has only to let go himself with the stream. This act is more humane because we can't make any preparation beforehand to cross the stream of pain for we are 'unpreparing while preparing'. At the present phase of life the pain is more harder than ever. We are surrounded by the noises of tension and cares, obstacles and interruptions, trials and tribulations. Yet we can experience the orgasm of these sounds. Yet there is an oasis of pleasure between pains.

Suffering is good for souls...the effects on body are not considered, and some they'll let down the nets, we'll singing to keep our courage up.¹⁷

In her college days she has to dissect a guinea pig only to discover that she had been pregnant, tiny little pigs inside 'like Russian dolls, a free gift'. The little ones was to be bottled in the lab. She doubted if we put human offsprings in the bottle just for an experiment. It is very hard to distinguish while babies from the black. It is very interesting problem to search why the black babies are not black at their birth. Once in her childhood her father trapped a fish. On the insistence of his daughter he dropped that fish in. The child was curious:

"What did it matter when the danger is already done?"¹⁸

All our achievements in this world are like the clown's acrobatics. After suspense, the outcome is trivial like a carrot.

The soul is damaged every now and then, despair pursues us like a shadow, nevertheless there are some rarest moments of ecstasy. These moments pour into us the spirit of a phoenix:

"A phoenix...never refusing ...flying true and straight...into the fire and out. Sleep now...and rise again from the dying fire...the ashes."¹⁹

The monologue ends on an optimistic note. 'Ten Green Bottles' are the moments symbolized. We fail to collect all of these ecstatic moments. One green bottle may accidentally fall but there'd be nine green bottles standing on the wall.

II. ii MALE-FEMALE RELATIONSHIP

Depiction of male-female relationship is Audrey's one more serious theme. She puts forth a great panorama of human relationships through her stories. Every facet of man-woman relationship has its own colour, and texture in her writings. The stories published in these two collections having the same theme focus mainly on husband-wife relationship with its stretch and strain. Audrey is mostly interested in the conflicts and the crises in family life. The characters, male as well as female with their different outlooks, different mindsets, different aims and aspirations create a labyrinth for each other. Each one has one's own justification for one's behaviour and decision-making. Audrey's skill lies in this that she tries to dissect the enigma like a scientist and presents for the reader the real nucleus of the wound. The antithesis of behavioral traits is the chief factors that bring out the resultant repulsion of the members in the couple. Her females are always superiors to males, passionate, intelligent creative. Males are always feeble, lacking in their female counterparts' will power, god-fearing and law-abiding. The female characters in Audrey's fiction are always sexually dominant, ready to change their partners for their own wish-fulfillment. Males are jealous about their female partners' potency; spit venom, every now and then, for female frailty. The urge for creativity makes the woman-artist to forsake the so-called security of conjugal bliss. A seamy-side of the femaleness like pretentiousness and waywardness does not escape from the needle's eye of Audrey's observation. Major female characters in her stories play with their puppet-like males. But deep inside their hearts they know the value of

reconciliation, compromise and harmony. The eternal motherhood in them brings them back into family, saves them from utter despair and even from a big void.

The stories representing male-female relationship as their basic themes are: 'Degrees' and the title story 'Good Bye Harold, Good Luck' in Good Bye Harold Good Luck; and 'Aquarius', 'Kill Day on the Government Wharf', 'Green Stakes For The Garden' and 'A Monday Dream At Alameda Park' in the second collection Ten Green bottles.

'Degrees' presents the relationship of a couple, Roland and, Ruth, which is always on the tether until it breaks.

Ruth, a south Indian married Roland, a British professor during the war time. She was a nurse by profession. She was a victim of Anglo-Mania. The couple adopted a son, Trevor with blond curls and blue eyes like a complete Anglo-Saxon. They compete with each other in loving the boy. Ruth was rather a showy kind of woman. She was the laughing stock among the woman including the narrator. Ruth's 'Queen's Christmas Message' like voice, her purposeless hate for Africans, her concerns for the safety from heat were the topics of gossip among her friends. One of her British friend remarks:

"She wasn't one of us. No amount of silver tea services or lace tablecloths or children's teas could make her so."²⁰

The clashes in Ruth and Roland Garwood's family life were always apparent. In every party given by Ruth, the tension in the room by misunderstanding between herself and her husband was making the gulf wider.

In the birthday party of Trevor, he accidentally fell down on the floor and bumped his head. Ruth blamed Roland for the accident and started the quarrel. A week later the narrator heard the news of Trevor's death. She thought if the quarrels between Ruth and Roland were the cause of the child's death. Many type of doubts struck to the narrator's mind. Whether the angry servant of Ruth avenged in killing Trevor. The following day, she came to know the reason behind Trevor's death from her husband Jason. Trevor had inhaled a groundnut into his lung, the nut get festered, the lung collapsed, and the child died. They found out reason only during the autopsy. If they had got the child in the capital on the time, the bronchioscope would have saved its life, but they had failed. The narrator, as she was pregnant, could not attend Trevor's funeral. Roland had insisted that the little boy should be buried out in the small English cemetery beyond the town. Ruth had the plans to take the dead child to England. At the funeral, it was Roland who wept openly and at one point howled. It was Ruth who behaved in proper manner and gained a little admiration and respect. Ruth left Canada few days after and Roland changed the flat. The narrator had given a note to Ruth by Jason and replaced her to be in contact. Ruth didn't reply as was expected. Roland was still living there. Perhaps he wanted to be close to his dead son.

Ruth's failed married life and Trevor's death reflected in the narrator's mind. She was pregnant. The Mother in herself became terror-stricken and more caring for her family after Trevor's death and Ruth's departure. Ruth pretentiousness and artificiality were the chief causes behind the final break-

up. Roland also helped in it by mocking her openly and outwitting her whenever he got the chance.

Inter personal relationship in the contemporary Canadian society is the theme of Good Bye Harold, Good Luck. Audrey feels that most people live orderly, well regulated and punctilious existence, and they are governed by business like attitudes. Francine, the protagonist has to live on her own; her husband has a touring job. Their marriage could not last long because She feels emotional insecurity, listens to sad music because "... it dealt with the sad realities of cheating one another, hurting one another"²¹ Her husband is a perfectionist and this makes him enigmatic. It becomes difficult for her to share her inner feeling and finally she decides to leave him and live independently. She joins Yoga classes and takes her daughter for holidays, in search of experience and self exploration.

This titular tale can be analysed with the help of following critical comment:

"The labyrinth, aquarium metaphor of female destiny- the octopus kind of suffocation under the male dominance and the "ruins" that women are, the archaeological fossilization of female sensibilities try to expose the demonic designs of sophisticated man."²²

'Aquarius' depicts the sad tale of a poet, crushed in spirit with the indirect blows on his world of imagination by his dominant wife. He finds himself helpless in the presence of beguiling wife. A shark in an aquarium is a symbol used for the lady having an amalgam of beauty and killer instinct.

This story opens in an aquarium where people are gathered to see the whale and its exercises. A school mistress with her little students, some spectators and a couple are assembled there, the boy whistles and the whale appears on the surface, kisses the boy's chicks. A lean man engrossed half in this play and half in his own thoughts stood at one end:

...Terribly curious of his thin body and his pale scholar's hands, he felt abandoned, cast down from some unimaginable height of strength and brute beauty thrust. Wished, for a moment, to be one of the children who could close up, like delicate petals, around the tight bud of their teacher's serenity he felt his separation from the whale, "O Ile leap up to my God," he remembered, "who pulls me downe?"²³

His wife stood too much close to the trainer boy watching curiously the play. The man watches her wife contemptuously, remembers the background of the enmity growing in him towards her: He desired to be a poet a modern Eliot and not a wild, new apocalyptic one. Erica, superior to him in many ways, married him for his future prospects. She controlled him with her wild passions and dominating sexual powers.

...a love like waterfall and mountain torrents, a love that suggested terrible deeds to be done for love or hate or kinship, quite in contrast to his own, soft, dream like attitude.²⁴

But she had never able to rouse him to the heights of poetry. All his work was done before he met her.

After the publication of his first book, he was being neglected by the publishers. He was working as a part time lecturer for giving proper time for composing poems. They had not allowed child birth knowing about the bleak present.

It was all so transient: money and fame were not beneath them but just ahead of them and they accepted their poverty with style and good grace because they knew it was only temporarily accepted in the way the wise accept the bitter winter, knowing of the spring.²⁵

But as the bright prospects of him became distinct he has to take full time job and children appeared in their home. Erica involved herself in many love affairs and crushed his spirit day by day.

In the passage of time Erica became more dominant and he remained a silent and helpless audience to her carnal exploits.

Now she is asking many questions to the trainer boy. He doubted:

Where was Erica? Not making love to the young attendant even if he turned out to be a novice marine biologist. Oh, no. her task ran now to higher things: historians, art critics, young writers (especially poets) on fellowships. A boy in a T-shirt, whose hands smelled of herring, would no longer physically excite her.²⁶

The play ended and the spectators went silently out of the hall. Erica disappeared suddenly and the man could feel some relaxation. He searched Erica here and there and finally caught a glimpse of her back. He came near

the pool and whistled loudly in the manner of that boy. The pool remained static. He tried till his throat got parched but only circling of whale underwater was perceived. He made his way to his wife to continue the same show of life again.

'Green Stakes for the Garden' depicts the happening in one developing summer afternoon. An intrusion breaks off the love-affair developing towards its culmination. The acceptance of all that as a part of her luck is notable change in the woman's attitude. A different type of a pang of the grass-cutter makes her familiar with the poverty in the same world where the people like her live the romantic life.

A calm afternoon. She and her would be lover are experiencing each other by physical touch. An intruder voice is heard outside the window, "Lady, can I cut the grass?" The unreached orgasm ends into awkwardness. She tries to escape from the grey, city coloured, faded old man, the grass cutter. He repeatedly pleads. She becomes hypnotized with his strange appearance and insistence. The lover thinks that perhaps the man was accustomed to come barging into other people's garden uninvited. He becomes restless and irritated. The temperature outside seemed to have shot suddenly upward ten degrees and she finds the reflection of the increase in heat on the faces of these two men. She thought it was a part of her lot to have such a stranger with them when she is weaving the threads of the so called love.

Before this intrusion, she arranged two chairs underneath the apple tree, the plate of little cakes, the sprinkler moves slowly. It was for her 'aesthetic satisfaction'. The whole day was inspired; she did every little thing

beautifully. Even the green stake had a stroke of genius. She offered the stranger a cup of tea. She could smell his sweat from where she sat and it was animal-like. The lover asked him to go as there hadn't been any work for him. He hadn't moved, stood swaying back and forth and as if he had a pain. The children would be back soon; the afternoon was really over.

The stranger was not ready to move. She felt herself defenseless, asked him to tie the stakes to prop up the drooping snapdragons.

The snapdragons were bent over or laying flat. They appealed to her: strange little puffs of colour, lemon, and mauve, raspberry pink, like summer suits or summer dresses. Cool, reminiscent of childhood. And yet their paradoxical shape, labial, curiously exciting, swollen and stretched.²⁷

She mourned, caressing the tip of a blossom with her finger. He understood what to do. Had kept silent and snipped and tied looking quietly into her eyes. Finally, she asked him, he stood under the apple tree, waiting.

The would-be lover was watching all these spectacular happenings with half-shut eyes, crazy inside. Suddenly the stranger stared shouting and crying. Not looking at her, at the grass below; as if it were personally responsible for his fate. He blamed the lady for the treatment she had given. According to him, the hedge needed trimming and he was ready to do that free of charge, but the lady had bought her service for a couple of dollars. He abused the smart people like them, indifferent to the pangs of the poor. Then the silence became even worse.

And then the would-be lover's hand reached out and caught the stranger once, grasping his shoulders hard and pushed him out. She saw the back of his head as he went back out the way he bursts in, muttering and sobbing, out of the garden gate and up the outraged streets.

She gave a sign of relief and considered all that just her luck.

'A Monday dream at Alameda Park' depicts the supreme understanding between the husband and the wife, despite the wide differences in their learning as well as in their age. The shadows of death are haunting him and she is too young to deny the colourful future.

There is no regret about the lived life:

"I feel very close to you" she said, "I just want to know. It came over him that if he died right then, that instant, he would have known more happiness in his few months with this girl than he had in all the years of his former life".²⁸

They wandered, hand in hand, the whole day; experienced their childhood days again. They celebrated his discharge from hospital. It was Sunday and they visited Rivera Murals in Alameda Park. He needed sleep. They came back to their hotel room.

She took bath under shower, took money and his keys and let herself out because the lighted, smiling, dazzling Mexico City was for her, though he was sleeping.²⁹

This was not a revolt on her part, only an attempt to find out a substitute, a new skin of the snake. She was trying to see the Monday dream

of the future in absence of him, having enjoyed the Sunday dream in his company in the past.

Some primitive instincts lurk in human mind deceiving its sense of morality and civilization. If they are turned into action, something violent, something vicious comes out. If they are buried into mere thoughts, they spoil at least a day, create ripples in silent stream like contended family life. This is the theme of 'Kill Day on the Government Wharf'.

Tom and his wife, with their son Robert come to live at the shore. Tom is a fisherman, though not a skilled one. His wife is pregnant for her second child. She can perceive the changes in her behaviour as the foetus inside her belly goes on growing. She fills herself beautiful in her pregnancy and Tom feels so. She became more inquisitive about her looks in these days and Tom was embarrassed with her continual queries. When Tom goes on fishing, Robert was a nuisance to her at home. She could sense the movement of a child inside her. It would kick her, tickle her and she spoke with the unborn child. While Robert was busy in playthings or in sleep.

She liked the room in the cabin from where the wharf and the entire spectacle of the movement on the shore were visible. She became excited with the peaceful life there than in the noisy city. But Tom was thinking of a new house in the central part of the city. He felt the atmosphere on the shore dull and dreary. She was grown up in urban locality, was not fit to become fisherman's wife, who was expected to do many household chores. She was interested in reading and walking long distances to search the unknown region of her mind. At the night time they would share their childhood

experience s and try to analyze Robert's behavior. Her first child, Robert was conceived easily and, according to the doctors it would result in the rapid labour for the second child. Since they had found the cabin for their new home, she had been experiencing a certain degree of content and self respect.

Tom was out for fishing, he must return before rain. She took Robert down to watch the fishermen working on the Wharf.

All over on the deck were cut bodies of fishes. All over the dock was blood and the smell of fish and the cry of gulls hung thick in the heavy air. There were fishes in various stages of life or death. All the people were working in an unheard rhythm:

There was almost a rhythm to it, and although they did not sing, she felt the instinctual lift and draw and slice of the three who were actually responsible for the kill. If she had been a composer she could have written it down.³⁰

A year ago, she had felt that the whole scene would sicken her , now, in a strange way she understood it and was a part of it. She could feel the transformation within herself.

She returned to home. The first few drops of the rain fell. She was absorbed in thoughts and suddenly one of the young Indians on the boat came into the room. He wanted to phone his brother. She allowed him as no phone was there near the shore and his was an urgent need. She looked at his hands, all scored with shallow cuts and blood still wet. They were made during cutting the cod. Little drops of blood fell as he spoke, spattering on the

floor. The receiver is painted with blood and the letter she kept near it became stamped with his finger marks. She offered him a cloth; but soon it was colored with blood. She was attracted with his youth, his maleness, and his arrogance. Her own pale blood, drummed loudly in her ears. Slowly she reached out and dipped her fingers in the blood, then raised them and drew them across her forehead and down across each cheek. Surprised at her unexpected action, he wiped her face with the clean end of the rag spitting over it. She unconsciously leaned forward slightly so she would not brush against her belly. She thought what would have been their children like.

Then the spell broke. He made some casual remarks about room but she didn't reply. She had forgotten the world in the thoughts of his coarse black hair and red plaid lumber jacket. he thanked her, she nodded and he rushed out.

Tom hadn't caught anything on that day; but he brought a cod given by the same Italian young man especially for her. It was beautiful piece of cod. She took it in her hands, felt its cool, rasping texture "... and wondered for an alien moment if his tongue would feel like that-cool, rough as a cat's tongue, tasting of fish."³¹

Later that night on their couch before the fire she startled him by the violence of her love-making. He felt somehow she was trying to possess him. She didn't cook that cod for supper. Turned away from his wife and went into dreamy sleep. The rain fell and it wiped all the traces of last day's killings on the wharf.

The rain fell; the baby kicked. The woman moaned a little in her sleep and move closer to reassuring back of the puzzle who was her husband. And still the rain fell on, and Sunday night- eventually-turned into Monday morning.³²

II. iii MOTHER-DAUGHTER RELATIONSHIP

'Mother-daughter relationship' is one of the major themes in Audrey Thomas's fiction. Most of the mothers in her stories are divorcees, in search of a new consoling person for their loneliness. They are in full recognition of their individualities; however, they never deny their motherhood. They act two-roles always together-- mother and beloved, mother and the creative writer etc. They are eternal mothers and after getting the divorce, like to have their children with themselves. If there is any unshaken bond between them and their ex-husbands, it is mainly due to a child who is living with the latter. Even the mothers step are the most kind and loving to their step children. Their own quests are the obstacles for the compromise in their married life, though not in their responsibilities as the mother. They attempt to create harmony in the wide generation gap between themselves and their children. The journey of their children from baffled adolescence to the romantic youth is observed, analyzed and directed by their mothers. Not as the detached observers do the mothers behave, they become the fellow-travellers of their children on the same path. Many autobiographical elements can be viewed in her stories. The stories with this very theme have the first person narrative technique. They can rather be called undramatic monologues rather. The narrator sketches

her own portrait with the actual shade-light effects as well as the delineation of the other figures in an apt manner.

'The dance' deals with the creation of great bonds between a mother and her daughter on a foreign island and with some rare universal experiences which repeat themselves in any age, time and place.

The narrator and her daughter traveled from a small island in southern Aegean to the Bungalows Limenos, an island in Greece. She brought her daughter on that trip to make her learn about Greece and its culture. The days spent on the small island in the Aegean were "bee-laden scented days" for them both. And now their stay in Bungalows Limenos was a tiresome sojourn with low-paid, third-rate tavern food and overcrowding swimming pools and streets, mad with our clam. Her daughter was a specimen of "Pepsi generation" and doubtful about Greece full of natural beauty like in an ancient picture. This generation dreamed about Greece as full of hustle and bustle of traffic, the entire buzz in discos and of everything found in California. And there is nothing very Greek about Bungalows Limenos except the manager, the waiters and the chambermaids. It was not the Greece she had seen five and half years ago. She felt guilty for deceiving her daughter as she had promised to show her the real Greece in Limenos. The mother and her daughter were able to detect each other's disappointment. This same feeling of despair brought them very close than ever before.

"I thought she might get impatient, but I was wrong. She had decided that she likes the whole sense of "getting there" and is

willing to wait for "there" while she enjoys the voyage. It has created a great bond between us."³³

Language was a barrier on the island. Despite this obstacle her daughter made friends quickly and easily and had a wonderful time. They both had crossed the "Disco Romantica" many times in their stay, but hesitation had stopped them to go in and enjoy the dancing. Those crowded, clamorous discos were the hidden fascination for the narrator and her daughter. That would have been a possible comfort in their dreary routine. One night they gathered their courage and entered in Disco Romantica. On the dance floor they saw couples of every kind--husband-wife, mother-son, father-daughter ,dancing , far away from their material cares. Everyone had a partner. This lack of partner makes them detached from that live romance. The narrator felt the need of father for her daughter. Father is a must in the family, though; it is the mother who does every preparation for the trip, she felt. According to her, without a father, no group will be called as a family. A very famous song started "Last Night a D.J. Saved My Life" and her daughter said wistfully that she would like to dance but not without a partner. The next night her daughter went alone in disco with her permission, with an Italian waiter. She herself wanted to dance:

I like to dance but I have the most horrible feeling that my daughter would not like it, that it would embarrass her to see her mother out there alone on dance floor. There a few people over thirty here but they are parts of families.³⁴

The mother in herself didn't want to exhibit her loneliness that could have been exposed on the dance floor. She stayed in her room, she knows the power of music and how it makes friends in the strangers. She recalled an incident back in her memories, happened during her first visit to Greece in the wintry Athens: Her friend Beryl had arranged an annual dinner dance. All the group members arrived with their husbands. There was a band which played foxtrots, tangos and two-steps. Those well-to-do ladies and gents pushed each other around the room ball in a desultory fashion. And then towards midnight, the band suddenly played the first few notes of the national dance 'Syrtaki' and the room failed silent. The women got up first. A few joined hands and the dance began, then more and more women started to join. The women called the men "come! Come! Come!" At first the man resisted, looked away, drummed on the table their fingertips, and lit another cigarette. But their feet betrayed them, they jointed the women. The music whirled them faster and faster and that room ball became an enormous village square.

Now she imagines the same happening in the disco-romantica. The Italian waiter will shut off the tape loop and put on a record of old dances. He knows them; they will call her daughter "come! come!" And with her arms around the shoulders of strangers who have suddenly become friends, she, too, will join the dance.

Music is the bridge between two hearts, though they are strangers. A response to music doesn't matter the generation gap. She knew it from her past experience and her daughter will know it very soon.

'Mothering Sunday' presents somewhat intricate relationships between mothers and daughters on different planes. On the occasion of Mother's Day, the narrator opens her recollection of memories about suffering of mothers in general, and particularly in case of three female figures i.e. Anna M. Jarvis, her own mother, and her friend Lydia's mother. She pays heed to the common tendencies of mother in every generation. The daughters are would be mothers and they follow the path trodden by their mothers though slightly different in context.

The opening sentences:

Hail Mary. Wounded art Thou among Women

Hail Mary. Blessed art Thou among Women. All Mary's bleed.³⁵

connect the suffering of mother Mary with all mothers on earth. Only that Mary occupied an immortal place on alter. The other women bleed and suffer mutely.

The narrator is waiting for her friend Lydia in a French Restaurant in Toronto. There she observes all the mothers with their sons and daughters and daughters-in-law. She feels herself single, alone, forlorn without having her children with her. She wants to prove her motherhood by the stretch marks. She surprised to see the cock-tail named 'Anna M', concocted in honor of Anna M Jarvis, the mother's day in America. Blood has the same red colour of that cocktail. According to her every mother has to bleed, even in an immaculate conception. The 'Immaculate conception' is the cause of the entrance of the wise men in the universe. She remembers the Christmas pageant where every mother wishes her daughter to act as mother Mary. She

also remembers the young women he told her about how a woman can impregnate herself with a turkey baster. She hates the bird and hates the idea of getting pregnant with turkey baster.

She is quite impressed by the story of Anna M. Jarvis, the foundress of Mother's Day in America. Anna never had children, devoted her life for Mother's Day and for her blind sister Ellsinore, died penniless at the age of eighty-four. The cock-tail named after Anna was the mockery of her sacrifices, she felt.

The carnations kept in a crystal vase before her made her remember the days during the world war (II). The mother, who had lost their sons, would have silk flag in front door window having gold star on it. The mothers whose sons were fighting overseas would hang flags with blue star on it. Perhaps they were the rewards for their sacrifice. Those mothers could aptly be called 'Gold-star mothers' and so on. Those sacrifices were for the defense of democracy in the world. It had been proved a great myth or 'the old life' in due course of time.

She got tired of the pomp of mother's day in that restaurant:

I think I'm a little oppressed by all this Mother's Day stuff, special drink, and special flowers. Shall I stay or shall I go? ³⁶

In her childhood, the girl's having their mothers, stood on the church steps wearing red corsages made up of red carnations and the motherless girls in white corsages. Her mother never encouraged the children to wear the red one. She had the habit of telling them not to do this thing or that. Now the

narrator is aware that, that was the way she told them to do things, to give her presents, wishes and So on.

Lydia's mother was also a sorry figure like Anna M. Jarvis. She always wished to send flowers to England on Mothering Sunday; but never had the money. She died without ever seeing England or her mother again. Lydia ran the house for her father and young brothers. Lydia's mother liked the poems of Edna Jacques, the poet laureate of the kit hen. She cut out Edna's poems written on household matters and stuck them on the ice-box. The narrator didn't like Edna's poetry, but she would not laugh on it for Edna understood something about wonder of watching little children. The narrator herself saved locks of golden hair of her child, and her child's early drawings, even a Mother's Day card.

The narrator visited her mother last week in a sanitarium in Boston. She was 89. In every visit her mother used to give her one thing or other, the transfer of property from one generation to the next. There was a large oval frame in her drawer without any picture in it. When she asked about lost picture her mother told that, that picture was of her own mother. She tore off the picture and never handed the frame to her children. That incident made the narrator think about her mother's relation to her grandmother. There was perhaps something private or dark or blessed that was hidden by the old woman. Perhaps the unexpressed wounds. She remembers their last visit when her mother was looking like twenty years younger than she was. The old woman walked her daughter to the front door first time in her stay in that sanitarium.

Lydia came too late as it was expected, uttered the expected dialogues. One of the mothers was celebrating her birthday there. All the people in that restaurant started singing. The narrator and Lydia took up the tunes of birthday song.

They both conversed about saving the things of their children as the memories of their motherhood. Lydia, as usual, told her a fantastic story of a woman who had kept all her children's milk teeth in a glass jar on the kitchen counter. Lydia's story encouraged her to tell her mother's unfinished story. She poured another glass of wine and began.

'The more little mummy in the world' depicts the story of a budding poetess who denies the responsibility of her step sons; gets separated and after watching the child mummies in a museum decides to enjoy the burden of her step-sons. This story is the mosaic of the narrator's experiences of her past life and her present dilemma while lingering in a cemetery in another city. These two parts are linked to each other in such a manner that the reader has to keep in mind what has happened in the last patch before reading the next. It is the quest of an artist obsessed by 'art for art's sake' that makes him neglect all the human relations, condemning all of them as the restrictions in the ways of creation. The roots of the pathos are in such a quest of the central character.

She had undergone a therapeutic operation. Before that she was fed up of his Machiavellian attitude. Her husband always put her in her place. Even he hadn't accepted her gifts on her departure. She was wandering through the cemetery where she read various types of epitaphs on the

gravestones. The cemetery was full of flowers natural as well as plastic, glowing and dying. She felt very peaceful there than in the Church. The mass was a sheer disappointment. She remembered Yeats' poem:

That is no country for old men

The young in one another's arm³⁷

She had read in the guidebook about the functions in the cemetery. Near the cemetery there was a museum where the bodies had been kept mummified. She thought:

Death and disease were accepted here. Death was even made fun of, made into toffee to chew or a chocolate to lick or tiny plaster figures to decorate, alone with gilded pictures of miraculous virgins the windows and mirrors of buses and cars.³⁸

That was very strange town to walk around and easy to get lost. She had already been lost several times, in spite of her map. In the church she saw a show of crucifixion. The Christ was mummified body and the angels and the disciples were alive persons. She was terrified to see such a strange spectacle. She hid herself in the crowd.

In Chapultepec Park she sat on the grass and wept. She wanted to be six years old, riding on her father's shoulders. She wanted to be held and forgiven, she wanted a red balloon.

The mummy museum was really a long artificially lit corridor with the mummies displayed in glass case along one side. The corridor was hot and very crowded, so that for a moment she experienced a wave of claustrophobia and almost turned and ran. Most mummies were without

cloths, jaundice coloured and hideously wrinkled. A few had mould shoes on. A very few had hair and that surprised her. The mummies' faces were full of anger and terror. Shrinkage had pulled their mouths open and their hands were clutched across their empty bellies. The mummies were tall or short, male and female; some were with the abnormalities like tumors. The men's genitals and the women's wrinkled breasts were still visible.

She remembered how her step sons were watching her through the car windows when she was about to depart. She had many questions: why had he brought them to the hospital? What had he told them? What was he trying to say by bring his sons in the moments of her departure?

Almost at the end of corridor was a display case of child mummies- some in christening gowns and bonnets, some naked or wrapped in tiny shrouds. In front of the smallest of those a cardboard sign was propped. She pushed herself closer in order to read it, and then asked the guide the English translation of the written matter. In English it meant "the more little mummy in the world". It was no bigger than the rubber babies-she had played with in her childhood.

Where were the parents? Why had these children been removed to this terrible glass limbo? She looked at *la momia mas pequena* but it refused to answer.³⁹

She pushed her way to the tourists and came out of the exit door. She half-ran, half-walked towards the souvenir stands, rummaged quickly through the cards and found out the expected one. She went into her bedroom and

began to pack, tears running down her face. She could see her sons watching curiously. She wrote to him;

“Having a wonderful time. Wish you were here.”⁴⁰

II. iv LOVE

Love is as an eternal theme as that of life and death. In Thomas's stories love comes mainly in its sensuous form. Platonic or spiritual type hardly occupies any place in her love stories. These are the love affairs seen, experience and narrated through a female point of view. Nearly all her protagonists are females; and if, on some occasions they are male, she will not give proper The stories justice to them in their delineation.

The stories like 'Elevation', 'Breaking the Ice', 'The Princess and the Zucchini' and 'Relics' in 'Good Bye Harold, Good luck'; 'Omo' and 'The Winter's Tale' in 'Ten Green Bottles' may justly be called as the love-stories.

Love in 'Elevation' is not love at first sight type. The lovers are mature persons, not teenagers. Love is not a passion for them, but some kind of necessity. Its progress is too slow. Every step in this direction is taken with much caution because the lovers like her other major characters are divorcees, having endured the male or female company for a long time.

The she-narrator saw Clayton first in ice-cream social given by Robert, her friend. Clayton was considered as one of the best ice-cream maker in town. He was the 'Emperor of ice-cream'. He was a zoologist and was studying humming birds. In the following winter, in a real sense of the

term, their friendship began. She was much curious about knowing him, his lifestyle, and his past. He was obsessed for hummingbirds.

“She begins to realize that if he is studying hummingbirds, she is studying him”⁴¹

She knew about his unfathered childhood from Robert and Clayton himself told her about his daughters living in America with his ex-wife”.

Now it was May and he was on that island to catch the hummingbirds for his research project. She had seen him several times since March and they have exchanged telephone calls and letters. She was fascinated by the people with some obsessions, and he was that very man.

“He really is the man in moon”.⁴²

She had collected more information from Clayton of hummingbirds, net-trapping, their hesitation and decision-making though she was never interested in those birds. She read him Donne’s obscure love-poem in a sudden impulse. His diary was the great source of knowledge for her. The thoughts mentioned in the diary like:

“We live in two dimensions, not like a fish or a bird. It’s volume that makes the difference,”⁴³ were his own.

She knew that they were on expedition that night. With some invisible, untangible force she took some gingerbread and wine for him and started out. She meditated deep on his uncommon childhood that night for many hours.

She hugged him without knowing the kind of love behind this action and offered food-stuff and her personal note-book. He went out with his students. She stayed near his wood-store. He came in after a while with a hummingbird

in his hands. He wanted to make her feel the heart-beats of the hummingbird. He asked her to hold it. Instead of giving bird, he held her in his embrace. She was baffled, uninterested in kissing, was feeling the heart-beats of another hummingbird, Clayton.

The lovers, Like in most of her stories, are intellectual. They look at the incidents and persons with more than one viewpoint. Love is not an exception to that habit. A hummingbird is the symbol used for Clayton. While giving the bird he finds the first expression of his love for her in kisses. This is a revelation of love, long awaited, slowly progressing, to its pure expression.

'Breaking the Ice' presents another form of love: love regained of the past lover after the broken marriage with another man. Martha a divorcee, middle-aged lives alone on an island. She has a daughter, Anne, living with her ex-husband in the continent. The Christmas was to arrive soon and the atmosphere was full of mirth, pomp and haste. She had sent earlier the gift for her daughter and ex-husband as a formality. She was fed up with such formalities where he had to describe her self 'all right' though there was 'all wrong'. She was invited for Christmas party by Mrs. Blanding, very kind neighbor of her, living down the hill. She went out with lantern in her hands. All the road was painted white by the snow. That was the mating season of sea-lions. The hidden fear was in the heart of Martha for every bush on the way was looking like a sea-lion. On the way to Blanding's, her childhood memories of sleigh and of her father haunted her.

"I don't like the thought of going into that empty house," she

said, "that's just the trouble, it isn't empty; it's full of memories." ⁴⁴

On 27th her younger daughter Anne arrived. Her friend Richard made a call and expressed his wish to see them. She wasn't aware at first; she had never heard his voice over the telephone and he sounded young and boyish. She felt herself attached to Richard in one sense or the other. He was coming with his daughter Anne. Her daughter surprised to hear that her mother had a boyfriend in the past. He would have been an oasis in her deserted lonely life.

"A new friend. His name is Richard. I think you will like him.

("Please like him", said the mother's heart to the child's. I like him a lot.) ("Please', said the mother's heart to the child's, "what do you know about loneliness?")⁴⁵

Richard and his daughter Anne arrived. The children made one group immediately and the adults another. They both tried to find the hidden and unquenched thirst in each other while traveling around the island. The children got tired, went to sleep early. But Richard and Martha exchanged each other's memories. Each one entered in other's private dream. They talked a lot but Martha sensed something unexplained, by them both. She said to Richard

"There ought to be a special phrase book for the country of human heart."⁴⁶

In that year-end she recalled all her childhood memories. Richard and his daughter had brought a rainbow of pleasure in her divorced, secluded life.

All that island was awakened that night. Martha wished "Happy new year" for everyone, kissed everyone including Richard. The children went off to the Government Wharf to observe the sparklers. Richard and Martha waited for them attempting to know each other for a long time.

Martha was to sleep in another room but she changed her mind and decided to sleep in the moonlit and starry room where Richard was staying. She observed herself in the mirror before blowing out a candle. There was another Martha in the mirror, younger and charming than before. She asked the reflection:

"Haven't I seen you somewhere before?"⁴⁷

Martha was in a close embrace of Richard. Only whisperings and murmurings. Martha, meanwhile, told a story of "The Little Engine That Could" which was read by her in her childhood. In that story, a small engine pulls the heavy load after getting teased by the big engines. "I think / I can" were the encouraging words that made the small engine confident in itself. Martha was that small engine humanized in that last night of the year, their daughters were still awake and mockingly ordered them, "You guys, go to bed." Richard replies "shut up mum". Only giggle for some time. Richard held Martha tight and after some moments all slept.

Symbols come recurrently in this story. For example, Martha's staying in bed with Richard and the eagerness of their bodies to be dissolved in each other is symbolically presented through the flames of the stove. The sea lion have been used symbolically to mark the comparison between the way of loving of beasts and of men. In the well world of sea-lions there are only the

'old rituals of love' and no guilt, no feeling of doubt, of failure, no phone calls, no meeting in coffee shops. No children who ask questions.

'The Princess and the Zucchini' is written in a mode of a fable, having conventional King and Queen and the Prince and the Princess like 'fairy's child'. The atmosphere of the story is that of a fairy tale. Conversion of the Prince into Zucchini plant is also like the conventional supernatural element found everywhere in the fairy-world paralleled with the growth of love in her heart from racy-pride to a passionate longing.

Once in a long hot summer when the Royal Garden was full to overflowing, all the people including the Royal family members became hot and grumpy. Princess Zona hadn't been able to sleep till midnight, went out in the garden. In that starry night everything was bathed in silver. Zona didn't want to go back to her hot, stuffy little room, though it was pretty. Suddenly, she tripped and stubbed her toe on a large zucchini. Then she heard a soft voice beside her and below. She asked who the speaker was. She mumbled with fear. She remembered of the stories she heard about the dwarfs and elves and gnomes. She expressed her wish to see the speaker. With a deep groan the voice said that it was the zucchini she stubbed her toe against. It was ridiculous for Zona but the voice made her assured that it was true.

According to the voice, with her kiss it would be visible. Zona felt as if she was in a dream. She had heard about the princes turning into a bear, swan, even a frog in stories, but not a Zucchini. The voice further narrated his story: one night when the Prince was standing in the garden, singing a song he had composed about a beauty, felt very strange all of a sudden. He

got fainted and when awoke he had turned into Zucchini. The voice further told her that he had come from a distant land. He fell in headlong love of her name before seeing her beautiful face. He travelled for a year and a day to reach there. In his journey whenever he became weary and wind lashed, her name provided him the courage to go forward

The princess remained confused, she was not quite sure of the magical power of love.

"Love doesn't really conquer all and even if it did; I am not in love with you, it's other way around."⁴⁸

But the prince had the conviction that someone whose name begins with 'Z' would save him for he was chained in something which begins with a letter 'Z' and her name also begins with 'Z'. The Princess asked Zucchini if he would be saved by her kiss what would happen next. Zucchini told her that they would live 'happily ever after'. The Princess dislikes the idea of kissing the plant as it was bizarre. She was afraid of kissing the plant before the people; her pride of the royal blood was against that deed. Zona wanted to think over that matter; promised the Zucchini that she would come the next day. Zucchini became disappointed, regretted her cruelty.

The next morning she stuck a little hand lettered sign in front of the Zucchini; "please don't pick this new Zucchini. By order of H.R.H. Princess Zona." She went in the palace after promising the vine that she would visit it that night.

Every evening the Princess visited the Zucchini. She heard the stories of life in the distant land from which the prince had come. He had a

deep thrilling voice and she began to take interest in the adventure made by the Prince. But she would not kiss him, she absolutely refused.

“How can I be nice to you when ‘You’ is only a voice? I must, admit, however, that the voice is very beautiful.”⁴⁹

She liked his voice and could have liked the rest but something inside her stopped her to do so. The Zucchini feared of its death if Zona would be indifferent towards it. It pleaded again and again for a kiss and Zona lost more and more in the dream shown to her by the Zucchini of their marriage and ‘Happily ever after’. Everyone including the mirror had admired her beauty; but when the Zucchini told the same thing. She asked herself a question:

“But who is I Who is so beautiful?”⁵⁰

It had finally rained. Zona would have been fifteen the next month. First time in her life she asked her mother to let her prepare the evening meal. The dishes she made were absolutely delicious. The king remarked about Zona's marriageable age. The Queen commented about Zona's marriage because had she got some boyfriend, it would have been difficult for them. Zona became bashful. Perhaps she had found her dream boy in Zucchini.

The ending of this tale leaves the reader in an enigma. Most possibly, she had kissed the Zucchini after the first rain. The development of this story, from its beginning upto the end, suggests so. It remains however, the reader's guess as the story-teller didn't give the happening at the end directly. Yet, we can guess the sweet ending, taking help of our knowledge of conventional fairy-tales.

A story named 'Relics' is woven with three different coloured threads: the narrator's quest of searching herself, Morag's pathetic life and her failed love affair with Nick, an army man. Nick's want of physical love was fulfilled by Rose, but when it turned into spiritual one, Rose was unable to fulfill it. A very strange beginning of their love affair ends into very customary unfulfilled love.

Nick, a flight lieutenant and his wife Ursula used to spend their time among the students when they were in town. The students liked them because they brought drinks for the jolly groups of the students. Ursula had a bad time as a young girl in Germany during the war. She always felt lonely through her husband's company was dreamed by many girls. Rose was too much busy in her course then and occasionally took some interest in all the little intimacies of the couple. It was a strange beginning of the love affair between herself and Nick. One night in the Cross Key pub, the bleeding started accidentally, as Rose had her period. She was afraid to see blood not only on the back of her skirt but on the chair also. Ursula offered her Nick's greatcoat to wrap around. Nick drove her up to hostel room without any hesitation. Rose fainted in the car and Nick arrived on Morag's doorsteps with the unconscious girl in his arms. Nick had left right after he called the doctor.

They came very close to each other after this incident. Rose experienced the unforgotten organs with Nick: All the places in that town where Nick and she passed their leisure time in the arms of each other haunted her. Ursula eloped with one of Rose's friends. Before departure Nick and Ursula came to see Rose's performance in *Macbeth* in which she had acted the role of one of the witches.

The writer's frank way of speaking about sex experiences can be seen in this story. The title is suggestive because all that has been narrated by Rose are the Relics of past memories. They are not purely bitter or purely beautiful; they are bitterly beautiful.

In 'Omo' love doesn't play a substantial part in an actual development of the plot. It is a feeble element as compared to the scope of the story but not too trivial to deny. The story deals with Walter, the Afro-American, in the first half and the later with Omo and his hatred for the white race dominate the story. The atmosphere is gloomy, full of envy and hidden jealousy, demonic class-consciousness and other personal as well as social vices. But among these thorny realities the love triangle Walter-Miranda-E.K. provides a relief from the growing tensions caused by the prejudices against each other.

The class prejudices of white against black and vice-versa are depicted through the entries in Walter's diary and the same diary presents the details about start and finish of love affair between Miranda and E.K. as well as the unexpressed love of Walter for the same girl.

Miranda is the person who introduces these two roommates-Walter and E.K. to Omo. Herein lies the significance of this digression-like love story. Without the creation of Miranda the encounters between Walter and Omo could not have been possible. The love story, within the main plot, therefore, is not a coincidence employed artificially but is the need of the story. E.K. was the first among them both who was drawn towards Miranda. After Walter's birthday on which Miranda offered him a very precious gift he pushed himself in the way of E.K. Many ways of expression of his love for Miranda were

available naturally for E.K. Walter expressed his love for Miranda only once through his furious dance in the party. Besides this, his unexpressed love found its expression through his personal diary but it was allegorical. Because of these unintelligible ways of expression, his love for Miranda always remained a secret.

Miranda refuses the proposal of marriage made by E.K., and after that with the absence of Miranda in the story, love gets disappeared forever.

The clichéd pattern in ordinary love stories: love at first ^{sight} growing acquaintance, proposal of marriage, unexpressed love of the third person for the same lady, refusal by lady and distress on the lover's part is found in 'Omo'.

As compared to 'Omo', the other story in this collection 'The Winter's Tale' can be called the pure love story. This is an enlarged monologue of a young collage girl depicting how one of the winter nights made her conscious about her false pride of virginity, the restlessness after the perception, and the final devotion to somebody whom she called in her dreams.

In the opening of this story the memories have been compared with butterflies, the cathedral windows, the cold reflections, organ music, smell of grapes and communion in a positive sense. In a negative sense, they can be compared with unseen bats, Luna moths and maggots in rotting meat.

The nature description goes to its peak in this story. The atmosphere colours the character, though, not in a great measure. Nature provides a background for the character's specific mood.

“One silent night it was, when the snow fell in great flakes until the whole sky seems to be alive with wings-the ghost of a million butterflies or moths.”⁵⁴

She was proud of her virginity up to her twenty-four years of age, while many of her friends spoiled theirs. The reasons behind remaining consciously a virgin were not the deep, religious ones, not the awareness of sin.

During the rehearsal of Macbeth the brilliant boy asked about her virginity. The words “twenty-one and still a virgin!” made her aware of her maidenness the next morning. She wanted to devote her body to another, slightly different in structure.

“Suddenly I wanted to be something else than still a virgin”, wanted to give myself, that was it, to give myself, that is to say my body, to someone else.⁵⁵

Everyone admired the brilliant boy for his intelligence and his beauty.

“I thought, “if the Devil were to show himself on earth he would look like this man: intelligent, tall, lean, somehow sulphuric and dangerous.”⁵⁶

Although he mocked her about her virginity that made her restless, aware of her own self, an undirected longing, a sense of “a cup waiting to be filled.”⁵⁷

After that incident they saw each other in many places, but never met their eyes. Their meeting ended with the formal ‘hellos’.

She was American but not rich and hence used to stay in hostel room even during the vacations. Like a general American she was eager to experience romance in Europe.

The brilliant boy seemed to be lonely and her heart tried to fill the vacuum in his heart, but only imaginatively. He came, uninvited into her room during Christmas vacations, when the boarding was almost empty. She didn't guess the reason of his arrival, but felt that he had come there to mock her again. He argued with her about God's existence and the creation of the world and the importance of love in it. She was defenceless against her own self. His supremacy was not a strong opponent as her own self. The discussion was only the cat-mouse race, once a retreat then an advance.

There was in his speaking purposelessly, a stimulus in need of a response. She gave that response by accepting his request to go out. Loneliness was the bridge to connect these two lives at that crucial moment. After that moment, loneliness disappeared from both the lives, for both of them had given a vent for the real merging of their bodies and souls.

"It was nearly dawn when we returned, and the snow muffled our footsteps as though it, too, were a conspirator. At the corner, under the street lamp, where the great white flakes, like moths, hurdled themselves against the light, he kissed me, lightly, and was gone.

"No regrets," he had said and, "No regrets", I had achingly replied. Then I turned and walked slowly towards the house. I never saw him-alone-again."⁵⁸

II. v ARTISTIC CREATION

In one of her stories Audrey comments on writers:

“Writers are terrible liars. There are nicer names for it, of course, but liar will do.”⁵⁹

No doubt, she makes this statement mockingly, as she herself is a conscientious writer, takes her vocation seriously, having a sense of some commitments, social and personal. Like Shakespeare, she believes that writers are the creatures who give ‘an airy nothing, a local habitation and a name’.⁶⁰ Realism is one of the significant characteristics of her writing. She realistically handles her plots, characters and settings, whatever the themes may be. Every major character of her is well-delineated. In a limited space of a short story she opens before the reader an autobiography of her character. She is adept mainly in untying the intricacies in man-woman relationship. And when the protagonist is a creative writer, her mastery over the form is easily revealed. The artist feel himself/herself stifled among the responsibilities, family-cares and social customs. He/she is haunted by an inherent quest of creative expression. Some of them are budding-writers, unable to compromise with reality; they too seek their own utopias. When a woman-artist has to play two roles at the same time, her life becomes nearly a pathetic tale. Material world and world of imagination pull her with equal force; baffled as she is, she declares a war against the transitory material affluence and security. The personal lives of the protagonists provide seeds for their creative blossoming. Their styles, their subject-matters and their motives get coloured by their personal life. Sex has a dual impact on their creation. It is

revitalizing, intoxicating and like a catalyst on the one hand, and, on the other makes the flow of creation, a stagnant pool. Finally, Audrey believes one thing, the old man's saying: "the quality of man's life is as important as his art."

The representative stories with the theme of 'artistic creation' are namely 'Aquarius' and 'Initram' in Ten Green Bottles.

'Aquarius' revolves around a poet, whose dominant wife crushes brutally the spirits of creation within him. All his dreams get shattered with her illicit advances. He remains only a scare-crow of a poet.

Erica married him foreseeing his better prospects, but as they seemed to be unapproachable. She concentrated on her 'outdoor activities.' He was working as a part-time lecturer to give proper time for his hobby. He had not allowed childbirth as that was to make him more a man of home. Erica, his wife, made him to do many unwanted things. He took the full-time job and children appeared in his house. Erica made him sexually satisfied. He felt one time:

So deep was sensual delight, so wanton his happiness.⁶¹

But she had never been able to rouse him to the height of poetry. All his best work was done before he met her. He wanted to be a serious poet -- a new Eliot if not a wild, new, apocalyptic bard. After the publication of his first book, he was repeatedly neglected by the publishers. He was very sensitive. Once Erica admired his beard and he grew it with care only for her appreciation. And when, finally, she took a lover and the he -- narrator a full-time job, he shaved his beard off, that night, in a fury of bitterness:

-a mask for the wrong dance. Why had he ever let it grow
again? ⁶²

The poet, at the bottom of his heart teased him, mocked at him. He was reasonably a good teacher.

... but he was always tired; and the mountains just beyond the city, mountains which had always thrilled him, began to oppress and even frighten him. They seemed to be growing larger, hemming him in against the sea. ⁶³

The story of his sorry life runs fast toward the death of an author in him. His world is like an aquarium in which the whale, Erica, beautiful and killer, swallows up many small herrings, like himself without any remorse or a labor.

'Initram' deals with the disturbances in the married life of Lydia, a successful novelist but not a prolific one. The narrator herself a novelist is the witness of the growing tensions in Lydia's family life and Lydia's falling in the clutches of responsibilities as a mother on one side and her cravings as a creative writer on the other. 'Initram' is a special drink enjoyed by herself and her husband on their European tour. It is also a symbol for their well-understood conjugal life. Once, in her absence, her professor husband brings his student to his bed, before his adolescent children. This crack goes up to the final smash, a divorce. Lydia's orderly living made him sick and he searched out an escapade:

"Was that significant, the order/disorder? Was it an attempt to break through this orderly self that made him bring his student

to this bed? Or had he just been lonely?"⁶⁴

This blow hit harder on her poetic mind than on her practical self.

Commenting on the writers' attitude the narrator says:

But what do writers do with the big events in life -- births and broken hearts and deaths -- the great archetypal situations that need no real enhancement or "touching up"? Surely they simply tell these, acting as medium through which the great truths filter. Not at all -- or not usually or may be sometimes when they happen to other people.⁶⁵

On the slides display of their tour she met a bee-keeper. His story about mating of the bees inspired Lydia. That game of fun, frolick and death in which the bee-queen wins over all the drones could have been imitated in her case also.

"There is usually only one queen," said the bee-keeper, "she kills off all the others."

"Why not?" Lydia said, "it's natural."⁶⁶

Lydia saw in the Bee-queen, the muse incarnate. She wanted to be the Bee-queen in the world of humans. After making the violent, suffocating sexual intercourse with her husband, she "left him, that bastard" her husband. As the narrator and Lydia became more intimate, the later realized that what she had known about Lydia through her writings was a tip of the iceberg. Lydia's life was crowded with strange experiences. She could have used her failed marriage as a mere theme of any of her future stories and nothing else. Lydia was the gay and colourful butterfly having a scorpion's sting.

II. vi SEXUAL IDENTITY

Audrey's characters are individuals and not in the types. It is mostly true about her female characters. They never allow the patriarchy to make them overshadowed. Her major female characters are representatives of the modern woman, assaulting the male spheres. They always search their identities in the male-dominated world and having found themselves subdued there; stir the personal rebellion against class, culture and even an individual opponent. They are eternal mothers and occasionally creative artists; but while acting such different roles on different fronts, they make their individuality intact, retain them after continuous struggle. The artists among them are more conscious of their sexual identities, as well as their political and polemical attachments. The metamorphosis of the enduring and exploited into reigning one, is not a sudden revolutionary outburst in case of them; it is the gradual, evolutionary process like volcanic eruptions, deep, meditated and only then stirred up. Audrey's skill lies in pointing out even the minutest details about such emotional underground eruptions that may cause the most destructive quakes in the concerned lives.

The stories having sexual identity as their basic theme are: 'Degrees' and 'Good Bye Harold, Good Luck' in Good Bye Harold, Good Luck; and 'Initram' and 'A Monday Dream At Alameda Park' in Ten Green Bottles.

Ruth in 'Degrees' is rather showy and pretentious woman, victim of Anglo-mania. She was not anti-social like her husband, Roland. She was ever complaining of her husband's conduct. Her artificial way of living always

became a gossip among her neighbors and friends. She used to arrange parties on many occasions to expose herself among the university men and women. By doing all these tricks she got fame, rather unrewarding. The couple competed with each other in loving Trevor, their adopted son. Her identity was hollowed despite growing strains in her married life. Trevor's accidental death cast a final death-blow on her earlier wakened commitment. Even at the funeral she behaved properly, proved herself self-controlled, got little admiration and respect from the people gathered there. Once the last thread to tie themselves, Trevor, crumbled, she set off for England. She never felt any need of gratitude or favuor, never established any contact with her past after the departure. It is Roland whom we feel sorry for.

'Good Bye Harold, Good Luck' is the representative tale of a modern Canadian woman, aware of her place, significance and ways of satisfaction. Francine, the self dependent woman, is fed up with her husband's machine-like existence. He does a touring job. And hence Francine feels emotional insecurity. She had to make many compromises for living with him. He is a perfectionist and a puzzle for her. She can't share inner feeling with him, finally decides to separate. She wants to make self exploration about her own existence and her place on the map of human lives around her. This is her thoughtful decision by which she could have retained her identity.

Lydia, betrayed by her husband seeks to regain her lost identity in 'Iniram'. In her absence her professor husband brings his student to his bed. Lydia doesn't want to correct him or endure the burden to be discarded like a conventional woman. A creative writer suffered a lot in Lydia. She wanted to

keep both the sides of her personality -- the mother of growing-up-children and a novelist of high acclaim -- in her hold. The mating of bees reassured her female superiority in nature. Her fierce, last love-making with her husband was the way of taking revenge against a person who blocked the way of her separate identity as a woman-writer.

'A Monday Dream at Alameda Park' depicts the unconventional way of securing the identity of central female figure. There are not the seeds of revolt in the relationship of the couple . In spite of the wide differences in age and knowledge there was much understanding between the husband and the wife. He was contented in her company, and there were no regrets to have him as the husband on her part. They celebrated his discharge from the hospital, wandered the whole day in the streets of Mexico City like the wanton children. She was aware of his failing health and the growing impotency in him. She was aware of the many years with their secret hidings before her, even after his death. She doesn't want to be a secluded, a social recluse. Her last action in the story, to go out in the Alameda Park, while he was sleeping is the indication of the alternative chosen by her to secure her identity even in his permanent absence from her world.

A mere contesting of man is a failed attempt in asserting the separate identity of woman:

"Feminists noticed, I suspect, that the post - structural contesting of man had not necessarily led to a discovery of Woman."⁶⁷

In their continuous attempt to demolish the traditional image of woman, one fundamental question must be answered by the feminist writers:

“The moot question, however is whether the new endeavour by modern women writers had succeeded in demolishing the traditional image of woman as a mere sex object.”⁶⁸

II. vii LONELINESS

“The Man with Calm Eyes” exemplifies a sense of loneliness and liberation from it with the help of elements in Nature.

In this story, the narrator is a ‘temperamental loner’ who comes to live in a secluded place near the sea shore.

I came to the sea because my heart is broken ... I brought wine in green bottles ... I drink all of the wine ... I am like the glove.

Not much shapeless as empty waiting to be filled up ... How can I have slept my heart is broken? ... I have never felt so lonely in my life.⁶⁹

The story unveils deep sense of loneliness experienced – by a dejected lover. The author makes the narrator to confess everything including his life’s failures and frustrations. He could be sleep nor eat or drink, uneasy restlessness envelopes him. He even undertakes a journey by train from Geneva to Rome with a pistol in his pocket. The purpose of his journey is to kill his ex-wife; though the act should have tensed him but his eyes are calm. Sense of uneasiness prevails throughout the story. He goes for swimming and feels unlighted physically as well as emotionally. The story concludes with an optimistic note:

I take one glance backward and wave to the woman in the

window. She has lit the lamp. She is eating soup and drinking wine. Her heart is broken. She is thinking about a man on a train who is going to kill his wife. The lamp lights up her loneliness. I wish her well.⁷⁰

“The Man with Calm Eyes”, can be read at symbolic level too. The act of swimming pours hope in the narrator. The sea corresponds not only with the source of life but also as a goal. To return to the sea is to return to the mother, that is to die. Thus the narrator enlightened and liberated whereas his loneliness is transmitted to his heart broken wife.

II. viii ECCENTRICITY / OBSESSION / FANTASY

Man has been taking delight in telling and listening to the tales of mystic world. A substantial place in the folk-tales from every country has been occupied by the tales dealing with fairies, angels, ghosts, goblins and their bands of the magic world. Fantasy can be defined as ‘a pleasant situation that you enjoy thinking, but which is unlikely to happen, or the activity of thinking itself.’⁷¹ We can approximately include dreams, nightmares, hallucinations, obsessions, eccentricity etc. under the same title. Modern psychology has added some new ways (chiefly negative or self destructing) of fantasy like neurosis and schizophrenia in the above mentioned list. Telepathy can also have its place in various types of fantasies. When any committed artist like Audrey Thomas handles such a theme, it goes far away from the amateur’s frenzy. It becomes one of the other primitive instincts, on the writer’s part, to peep into unfathomed depths of human abnormalities and mad nesses, to

trace some apparent reasons behind it, if there are any. After dealing with the extreme intricacies of human relationship, Audrey Thomas, tries her hand at such themes for certain relief (not a comical one absolutely), pushing her readers into another area.

The stories related with these themes are: 'Miss Foot', 'Compulsory Figures', and 'One Size Fits All' in Goodbye Harold, Good Luck; and 'Salon Des Refuses' and 'Joseph and His Brother' in Ten Green Bottles respectively.

Miss Foote, an eternal traveler sees a dream, on a Saturday night in her hotel room: It is Sunday morning and she has started up the path which will lead on to the cliffs. It is about 9:45 a.m. and the recorded church bells are ringing. She hates the mechanical sound of the bells. Then, as she stops to rest a minute and take a picture of the little fishing boats in the harbor down, the bells stop and a recorded hymn begins. Miss Foote is puzzled. It was not Easter Sunday. She got baffled to hear the extra- ordinary hymn at an unusual hour. As she nears the top of the hill, she sees a young man, dressed all in black except for his white plimsolls, standing right in the middle of the path, reading a news paper. She finds the climb a bit difficult and doesn't want to stop until she is at the top. She requests him to let her go. He doesn't reply or move, only says, "Headless Corpse kept in Sauna five months", without looking up. Miss Foote concludes that he is not quite all there and perhaps a bit deaf. She raises her voice and takes a step forward. The boy lowers the newspaper and stares at her as though he has just become aware of her presence. He has painted his face white. The boy stares at her for a long time, Miss Foote stares back. He said that the pathway was closed by him

and he would not let her go. Miss Foote argues with him and pleads; but the boy is not ready to clear her way. Foote looked back, but no one was coming from behind. She was unknown to what he was speaking. She takes a step back and decides to go back, her Sunday morning is already ruined, will report to the police. She turns around to start back down the path but he blocks her way. Suddenly he is enraged. She will not tolerate the insolence. She raises her father's cane and brings it down the boy's head again and again, all the time screaming at him – "No, is it? I will give you no!" And then a loud knocking. It was the landlady who ran to her after listening her screaming. She is so frightened that she wets her bed.

Though the dream made her doubtful about her plan to climb the hill:

Courage comes back and warms her like a glass of whiskey.⁷²

Everything will be all right. As she starts walking every spectacle in her last night's dream appears before her -- the recorded church-bells, the recorded hymn and the small fishing boats.

With another part of her mind she encourages herself to turn and move bravely up the hills towards the dark figure she can see there, standing right in the middle of the path, reading the Sunday paper.

Her last nightmare is turned into reality. How she will face it, is a question.

'Compulsory figures' presents an obsession of a man, failed in conveying the importance of his strange actions.

The man is charged of an assault on a woman. His lawyer tried to prove that it was not an assault but was like grabbing a good-night kiss. The

whole courtroom was laughing while he stood there, staring at his shoes. When he was small his mother always brought him Thom Mc Cann shoes. Until he left school and got job, his shoes were the only new things he ever had. The first night he always slept with them under pillow. He was not interested in the feet of young girls, in their high heeled shoes with flimsy straps. He liked experienced feet, feet that had been intimate with hard work and pain. He had studied the foot. He knew everything there was to know about the foot. He had seen tired women at bus stops at the end of the day, shifting their weight from one foot to another, and he longed to kneel down in front of them, to massage their feet and worship them. This very action of him was misunderstood by many women like the present one who had pushed him in the court.

Obsession was his family heritage. The doctors had not allowed his father to drive because he (the father) was suffering from epilepsy. He had a strange conviction that the doctors in P.O.W. hospital replaced his own brain by the brain of a little girl.

"It's true," his father insisted. "I felt her mind coming, so I just took a deep breath and let it come. She came on like she'd been there forever. I even have her dreams-little girl dream."⁷³

Once a while they were all singing and stomping about the kitchen, his father got up from his chair by the window, took a jelly glass down off the shelf and flung it at the wall. The children always baffled with the strange behaviour of their father.

Now the judge is firm on calling his actions as an intention to assault the lady and declares his judgment – a fine of six hundred dollars for this crime. No one, even his lawyer knows the importance of foot in locomotion. Distressed as he is, asks himself:

What is the going to do now? What on earth is he going to do? ⁷⁴

'One Size Fits All' is a fantastic tale where a woman's life is directed by ghostly voices and secret messages from an unknown power.

The narrator, grief-stricken with someone's departure from her life sees some dreams. In those dreams, out of the fog appears face and speaks to her, one phrase, each night. The first two phrases were mechanical. They were-1) Expect changes, and 2) Avoid scandal; but the third was strange. It said, "Everything must go."

After that she gave up dreaming. The things began to appear on her kitchen table. The first thing was the straw. Attached to the straw by a piece of red thread was a tiny label. It said, "It is the last straw." Then she got a dirty piece of rope. A label was attached with a yellow thread - "You're at the End of Your Tether." The third was a measuring cup attached with a green thread, saying, "You've had Up To Here."

She decides to go to Kingston Antario:

So I decided to go to Kingston Antario. That is what people do when their lives fall apart in their hands like a badly bound book.⁷⁵

She travelled through the freezing Toronto. She was unable to find out the course of her life-journey. Her life was certainly full of "nasty little surprises."⁷⁶

She went straight to the Prince George Hotel which was surrounded by lots of old beautiful buildings made up of grey limestone blocks. The place was very noisy and she was afraid of becoming crazy. She was told by the manager that her friend was waiting outside. She couldn't guess who that friend was. Across the street the tourist train was about to take off. The tourists wore very strange, unusual clothes.

A man sat down beside her. Perhaps that was her friend. He informed her that the train was especially for the prisoners and it was a great fun to take a trip on it. A great truck load of soldiers in spotted uniforms went by. Then self proclaimed friend of her told that though they were whoring, their hymens would absolutely grow back. This reference of vagina made the narrator remember her ghost-child calling her always from the other shore. It always asked if she had loved it and she had answered always affirmatively.

Her friend was tired of that town because it was overcrowded with soldiers and criminals and crazy people. He could be happy then for he was in a company of an intelligent woman like her. He wanted her company for more days but she couldn't tell about her sojourn. She came to know that the so-called friend had his left eye made of glass. An armoured car with long guns went by. The friend sighed. According to him, there were many lunatics around, told about Smith's Fall where she would find a home for the retarded.

She was tired of the journey and heat and conversation. She went upstairs to sleep and before that arranged a dinner with her friend. But at the dinner there was another message for her. It was in the form of an advertisement of a rock group coming to the pub the next door; it said, "BOP TIL YOU DROP". She excused herself and went upstairs, started packing.

Mother Brown in 'Salon Des Refuses' works in a lunatic asylum. She had an utopia in imaginary Florida. That world of imagination makes her forget the torturous routine of her work in the lunatic asylum. There is a strange, imaginary world of every patient in that asylum in which they live mentally, having no sense of time, region or persons around them. The writer depicts the contrast between these two imaginary worlds through her story, uses separate patterns to portray the activities in them.

The story opens when a madwoman Eleanor is trying to catch the little squares of the sunlight. Fallen on the floor. She takes her shadow as another person, a small girl Toot-toot. The blocks of light are building blocks for her, made with gold. At the same time, she is speaking with the shadow Toot-toot.

Eleanor La Douce, her black eyes shooting around the room like hot coals and coming to rest on the small figure playing on the floor, jumped out and snatched the blocks of sunlight, ran screeching around the room. "You're a whore," she shrieked at Toot-toot. "you're like all the rest of them. Fiends, fiends, fiends," she muttered, staring at her empty hands. "They have

stolen from me my diamond brooch, my string of pearls, my son, my chateau on the Loire. Has it come to this, that the wife of General La Douce should be forced to steal from such as you?" Her skinny arm snaked out and slashed the air with a sound like wind in broken branches. Toot-toot cried quickly on the floor, "fuck you," said Eleanor La Douce.⁷⁷

Another mad-woman, Mrs. Marsden felt once as if she was a mouse trapped with temptation of the rotten cheese. Actually, Nurse Primrose had given her cheese in her breakfast and she was standing before her to know whether Mrs. Marsden likes the stuff or not. Mrs. Marsden supposed herself as a trapped mouse struggled feebly, felt the soft hairs sprout upon her body, felt the tooth grow long and pointed, felt her eyes grow small and sharp. She picked up the cheese in her small, sharp claws like a mouse. And stared through the holes of that tainted cheese.

Her tail twitched for the moment and then she was still. Instead of cheese, Marsden had taken the bite of the Nurse's hand.⁷⁸

The another lunatic, Rose, imagined as if she was chased by a drunkard; and he was going to rape her.

Round and round they ran and the room grew smaller and smaller until there was no room, no room to run, no room in the room less room. He jerked her to him, flung him upon her, pressed her against the wall. She could fill his hot metallic mouth upon her face, his tongue thrusting against her teeth. "Rape", she cried frantically but no sound came...⁷⁹

At the end of the story, the mad woman Eleanor hangs herself to die:

Swaying gracefully, as though an old and lovely melody,
Eleanor waltzed slowly toward the waiting arms of General La
Douce.⁸⁰

These shocks and these eccentricities would not make Mother Brown mentally collapsed because she is wrapped inside the warm dreams of Florida.

'Joseph and his brothers' has the African setting. The narrator, a novelist tells here about a man haunted by evil spirit, slowly going to his doom's day.

The narrator's husband accepts the offer of an African University and they set for Africa with their children. The old Africa is not a paradise on earth. The landscape is beautiful, more beautiful perhaps because it is dangerous. Its thick jungles, poisonous snakes, rabid dogs, dust and scorching heat and drums beating from the jungle made the narrator terrified at her heart. She had got an advice from her neighbour:

"Take it slowly at first," said a man on the boat, "Africa can eat
you."⁸¹

Yet she knows:

The white man is ashamed to be afraid of Africa and yet the
shame does not completely obliterate the fear.⁸²

It was her luck to have Joseph as her cook-steward. He became one of their family very soon. Her children liked him for his strange, fantastic tales and the delicious dishes made by him. Africa was an invisible terror where

one needs a protector who knows every inch of that landscape. She had got it in the form of Joseph and their stay in Africa became more comfortable than expected. After two months of their arrival, the narrator knew many details of Joseph's life, how he was forsaken and poisoned by his first wife and about his attempt to win the heart of the mother of a girl whom he wanted as his partner. Though he was disappointed by his would-be mother-in-law, he never lost his hope. He seemed to be cheerful every day and proved himself as a cause of pleasure for the narrator's family. His younger brother was a lorry-driver in the town. To Joseph his brother lived a life of adventure and thrill.

But as the days passed, he began to remain silent, meditative and lost himself in thoughts. He hardly smiled in those days. And one morning he asked for leave because he had to go to his village to see his younger brother who was suffering from certain fever. After his return he became totally mute. The novel the narrator was writing was about to complete within few weeks and then they would plan to leave Africa for Christmas vacations.

Joseph became more and more puzzled. On asking about his worry, he told the entire story: Once, when his brother was driving his lorry named 'God is Backin Me' from Cape Coast to Techiman at night, a woman begged for the seat, who was standing in twilight, wearing black mourning dress. His brother took her as a prostitute and gave a seat near him in the driver's cabin. He wished to spend that night with her. She initially hesitated and then gave a mute approval. Instead of going to the owner's house, he left the other men at the junction and went to Techiman where he spent that night with her in the rest house. In the morning, before parking the lorry he dropped the woman at

her destination. After some days, some people approached him for they were carrying the corpse to another town. It was night time and ill-omen to carry the corpse in. The distance between Techiman and the dead one's ancestral village was about 350 miles. At first he refused, but after continuous requests the funeral party set off. On the way he stopped the lorry and told his mate that he could see the woman in black velvet. No one would see her except him. Yet he was restrained and persuaded to drive on. The same thing happened the following Sunday on his usual run. Again he called her like before. After that he saw the woman everywhere he went, but she was invisible to the other people around him. He became crazy, shouted, wept. The doctors could find nothing wrong with him and he was taken home. This was when Joseph received the letter. His brother didn't recognize him.

Meanwhile Joseph and his step-brother had taken him shrine to shrine, to many fetish priests and medicine men, but in vain. Then Joseph returned to the narrator. Joseph was changed completely after that shock, always brooded on the cruel fate of his brother. He stopped his search for a new wife and the narrator dared not to tease him. Before her departure, she went with Joseph to see his brother. He was chained to the tree. The relatives surrounded her. They took her for the magic woman who would cure him. She asked him about his health; her speech was translated by Joseph. His brother answered that he felt someone was knocking his eyes, kicking his head, and then started the unrelated, strange muttering. When she asked him about the woman in black velvet, he answered that he couldn't recall her. He left Joseph

there for few days and returned alone, fearful of the memories of the dark jungles and beating drums.

One other thing Joseph told her:

His people believe that sexual intercourse with a ghost results in death.⁸³

II. ix POLITICAL / SOCIAL VICTIMISATION

In case of Audrey's characters the Nemesis comes out from within. But some of them are victimized socially and politically too. The external factors like social conventions and norms, political inclinations, race and class consciousness are as destructive as the character-flaws within themselves. A socially and politically aware writer like Audrey, is always very keen observer of these thuds and thumps and their impact on behavior of characters concerned. These victims of social or political phenomena are of two types in her stories; they are either poor, miserable, surrendering or antagonists, extreme haters and destructives. They are always after a mirage of social or political utopias and ideas, where at the end, they are deceived and cheated by these illusory things.

'Omo' is a representative story of this theme. The racial prejudice of an Afro-American man Walter against his roommate, the American, E. K. occupies half of the lines in this story. These are the hidden antagonism, revealed to E. K. only after reading Walter's diary. Walter was too careful to bring out this mire on the surface. But there was the jealousy and contempt

that makes Walter to pull himself between Miranda-E.K.relationship which ended in a sheer disappointment on E. K.'s part.

On the other side we have the most destructive form of colour discrimination in Omo, the albino. He was only a white child, whiter than white, among his brown brothers and sisters. He was nature's freak;

And one freak, Alastair, who killed his brother and broke his father's heart. When they took that white body out of that black, black womb, I think he considered it a judgment of God.⁸⁴

His missionary father sent him to Scotland for his education. No one visited him for years. His father used to send him letters at first. But he stopped writing him after Alastair took admission for his medical degree. Only signed cheques came, not a single line of formal inquiry. He was a freak with weak eyes, wore sunglasses even in Britain, never received a brown paper parcel of home made cakes or sweets during his school days or after. After taking the training as an anaesthetist, he went to Africa "to claim his "inheritance" as it were, to be one of his mother's people-an African." He could speak the native language in a very well manner; his work was superior to many of his mates in that professions. But his white skin prevents him from mingling into Africans as well as into Europeans. The superstitious Africans view him as something special, a natural freak, and therefore endowed with supernatural powers:

"He shuns me as a friend, not because he feels me as lower than he is, but because I am higher, more powerful, closer to the Gods-or devils."⁸⁵

The Europeans look at him only with curiosity and take pictures of him when he is not alert. He frightens them, avoids them because his father, "the God fearing man", "the apostle of brotherly love" developed the ties of the father-son relationship only upto signing cheques.

He was the extreme hater of the white people and attempted to tease, torture and even kill them whenever he had the opportunity. On the same day, he killed the white woman by making her fearful because she wanted to get rid of a child who was about to be born by the illicit relationship with a black man.

Omo considered Walter as his brother because Walter was the hater of whites. Walter pushed Omo outside the door and locked the door from inside. For many hours Omo stood outside the door crying

"Love me, then black boy. All I want is love. That's all." ⁸⁶

Walter was deeply hurt by Omo's story and sneaked secretly, leaving his job unfinished, among his "own" people, his home.

'The Albatross' is a pathetic tale of Hermann, the Austrian, who is a victim of 'American Dream'. His 'Jack-of-all-trade' character and his restless strivings to become a successful businessman are told by the protagonist in a mocking vein.

He seeks his fortune at many businesses and the narrator and his wife are the first audience-cum-customers of whatever commodity he sells. First of all, he wants to sell his experiences as a captive by the Germans during the Second World War by writing a novel based on that theme. The details of the

novel are so tedious and intricate that the couple starts to avoid him by doing many tricks. The novel remains unpublished and he takes the challenge of writing a film script for a Hollywood film-maker. It was a pure amusement for the couple to have such a day-dreamer as their guest. They have to devote their coffee, breakfast and some time for this amusement. Margaret, the narrator's wife was more sympathetic to Hermann:

"In Hermann my wife has found the jewel for her collection.

Heroic Hermann, sucking the past like barley sugar. Hermann with future like a cancelled stamp."⁸⁷

They use him for amusement and he uses them for selling his commodity, first and last of that type:

"The question of who's using whom is an interesting one."⁸⁸

He is allured by another business while the earlier is just started. After the unsuccessful book writing and film producing he gets enticed with the idea of becoming the seller of the Morpheus Marker Stone with the epitaph. And in the end of the story he appears in a new garb of the Olympia commissionaire, and the narrator knows, even this job is his temporary undertaking. To find out new job always after the earlier one is a need of Hermann who is bewitched by the 'American Dream' i.e. to be successful in the world of money making. He has no fault of his own but of the society's. He is an albatross like in Coleridge's ballad. Simplicity, innocence, etc. are his virtues; but they are non-rewarding in the present material world. The pathos is revealed in his character by the narrator, only after the latter one leaves the jest and mocking, thinks seriously of Hermann the man.

'Two in the Bush' presents the absence of law and order in some African nations like Ghana, Angola and in Ivory Coast. The Ivory Coast is nowadays in the focus because of the two consequent mutinies fought there under the leadership of Busia Nkrumah. Busia is the master-plotter of these mutinies and with his men he disturbed the political atmosphere of Ivory Coast. The narrator with her friend Mollie goes to visit the hero, Busia, just for the sake of attraction. She wants to visit Busia through his prominent man Joao Marques Kakumba, an Angolan freedom fighter. She is not very interested in politics, but she comes to know about our politically motivated life through Jimmie, Molly's husband:

"Not political! Nobody in this world is not political! When you are born you commit a political act, Changing' the census in your village, town or state. When you die you do the same. Two unavoidable political acts and many more in between. For some even curry lunch at the City Hotel is a political act."⁸⁹

They set for Ivory Coast and the narrator promises Jimmy that she would bring for him a bottle of good French wine, a pound of butter and "a miracle".

In the Ivory Coast they meet with three persons Arnie, the tuna fish-king, Mr. Alamoody, the banker and Joao Marques Kakumba, the gun seller. Every action of these three men is coloured with political motives. Their interest in these European women has some political intention behind it. The

narrator doesn't believe in the news she read in European news paper after she sees Kakumba, the 38 years old fugitive.

'The petty French boys, the fat politicians, the beautiful women
the rich Americans- all desert the luxurious hotel in West Africa.
The government falls and all because of a single insect".⁹⁰

The narrator wanted to take a bath at hotel Ivory. As she entered the powder room a cockroach jumped from her shoulder. That was disgusting and made her remember the incident when the dozens of cockroaches jumped from the coffee cup at her home. She thought perhaps the pregnant among them had laid eggs on her body. She imagine what would happen if the elites in that hotel saw it.

Arnie the Tuna-fish king was the 'God send' among the three people she had been familiar with there. Arnied provided them security and comfort, Kakumba tried to set the narrator for his carnal desires, and she was unable to read Mr. Alamoody's face. The story surveys, in its scope, the sad lives of Arnie and Joseph Goias, a captain of Arnie's boat 'Cape St. Vincent'. Perhaps Kakumba had the intention to use Arnie's boats for his gun trade and Mr. Alamoody have been the financier; but she had not to do anything with that. She warned Arnie against Kakumba for no real reasons but just for a feeling. The narrator became terror-stricken in this atmosphere of political bull fight deadly brutal. Not only the native Africans, but also the new Americans, the Lebanese and the Egyptians had jumped into the arena. She feels very insecure:

"Perhaps I would end up a headless corpse in the lagoon that

such thing didn't happen was nonsense. The veneer of civilization is never more than a few inches thick."⁹¹

Until the day of her departure from Ivory coast , she hadn't been able to define Africa, in any concrete terms:

"Just I went off I heard drums start up somewhere quite far away. Someone had been born or died; something was being celebrated or mourned. Was that Africa? I didn't dream".⁹²

On the way back they became familiar with the brutality of Busia's men. On the trip back they were stopped by a health van and made to line up one by one and have their necks felt. The man did all that without giving any explanation. There was a nasty looking syringe in alcohol and a thermometer and dirty cotton wool. They were again stopped across the border. Five young army officers got out and threw down all the luggage. One of them pressed a knife through thin fabric of narrator's blouse. He demanded bread and ordered to feed it to him. She fed him the rest of her bread. The driver paid some money and they were let go. There was a tiny hole in her blouse and a scratch just below the ribs. They were Busia's men.

The next day they come around the corner by Barclay's bank and ran to Jimmie. Jimmie asked what they had brought for him. All things promised, except a miracle was the answer. He asked whether they met Busia. They avoided the question. He asked further if they had committed any political act. The narrator answered that they had released a cockroach in the hotel Ivoire. According to Jimmie, that was not the political act useful to Africa; but that was the good beginning. He knew a saying in Africa:

“Once you have stepped in the river, there is no time to think of measuring it’s depth.”⁹³

Jimmie traced a line on her chick with his broad thumb like tribal mark.

The very title is symbolic. ‘The Bush’ is wild Africa with its natural and man-made fears. A cockroach is a symbol of a common man, threatened by chaotic rule, considered as a trivial creature by the despots.

‘Green Stakes for the Garden’ hints at the poverty-stricken grass-cutter who goes door to door begging for work. The narrator, a woman, when becomes familiar with the intruder, something deep in heart is touched. She becomes enraged to see the indifference of the elites for the lower stratas of society.

In one summer-afternoon, when her children were at school, she is trying to woo her would-be lover. An intruder’s voice breaks their oncoming orgasm. The man in ragged clothes wants to cut the grass in her garden. She asks him to go for there was no work for him. He stays there pleading at her repeatedly. She is haunted with the bitter smell and vulture eyes of the man; feels herself defenseless; asks him to tie the dropping snapdragons in her garden. She pays him a couple of dollars and offers him coffee.

The suppressed anger at the elites in the mind of the grass-cutter finds its expression in abuses and name callings against the “smart people” in general. The would-be lover not ready to endure this, pushes the man out of the garden gate.

The afternoon of these lovers will be ruined by the intruder. The narrator takes all these happenings as 'a part of her luck'. The romance was broken before its start.

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