CHAPTER V

Shades of Meaning: Select Terms

Patrick White has presented in his novels a unique approach to single words as the medium of his writings. As already seen in 'The Rodigal Son', he has told us of his struggle with 'the rocks and sticks of words', in trying to recreate his vision. An interview in 1973 reveals how he is 'hobbled by words',\textsuperscript{1} in Flaws in the Glass, White is vociferous in his complaint of the 'grey bronchial prose ...'\textsuperscript{2} staking claim, on 'the property of silence', through which alone truth may be reached. In occasions, the author has even declared words 'to be frustrating', such an attitude to 'words' is manifest in the five novels under discussion. In The Aunt's Story, music is said to be more 'tactile'\textsuperscript{112} than words. In The Tree of Man, words are often 'lumps'\textsuperscript{178} to Stan Parker, and to Amy, 'words meant nothing'\textsuperscript{401}. Voss presents a more forceful rejection of words by the German explorer. To Voss, 'all words became great round weights'\textsuperscript{63} and 'continued to writhe'\textsuperscript{73}. 'Words' are seen as 'masks'\textsuperscript{140} in Hiders in the Chariot, and 'each [of the illuminati] knew it was improbable they would ever communicate in words'\textsuperscript{63}. The Eye of the Storm shows words to be superficial and pretentious. Here words are seen as 'pitiful threads to dangle above those whom actions had failed, and God was swallowing up'\textsuperscript{259}. This clearly points to the supposedly 'recalcitrant or even hostile' nature of words in the eyes of the writer.
White like Jung is seen to accept life as real only through its full 'knowledge' which, according to him, is 'wordless'. The charge of possible 'ambiguity' and 'obscurity' in rhetorical repetition of key words is raised by Thelma Heseltine and a few others of her way of thought notwithstanding, most critics are impressed by White's treatment of some select words in his works. H. H. Heseltine has rightly remarked that 'whoever ... come(s) to grips with the themes of White's fiction can do so only through the words in which they are embodied'. In the revelation of his themes in his novels, White is seen to have had recourse to all the resources of the conscious world which, as Peter Heston has justly observed, have been projected with the use of different select 'vocabularies'. Critics like W. J. Burns and Ian Kinder have pointed to the highly suggestive use of some select words in White's fiction. Adrian Mitchell has even observed that in highly mystical moments, the experience is created to 'exist between the words'. No, too, seems to have a similar attitude to the significance of words when he says that,

the meaning does not lie in them but in the horizon of words, in the contexts in which they are used.

So, one has to agree with Ingmar Bjorksten that in White's words are used,

scrutinizingly and judiciously, packed with meaning for the reader who is aware that under the accidental event and the surface object lie many levels of deep significance.
It is for the same reason that William Salen has aptly observed the author using words like paint, in thick layers and swirling forms which communicate ... [his] concepts, his failures, his glimpses of reality and his few moments of illumination.\(^{12}\)

So, despite White's apparent diffidence to the application of particular words, his works show remarkable skill in the handling of his diction. It would, then, be now clear that a systematic study of some select terms of White's novels will show the extensive possibilities of their significance in the exploration of their themes. An illustrative reading of this stylistic practice of the author has been done in the following pages.

*The Aunt's Story* pulsates with a scattering of words chosen, patterned, arranged, and presented to suit the writer's creative need. Often, White's eye for the single word or words in different situations is sufficient to evoke varied suggestions which are not lost upon a sensitive reader. In addition, the writer's repeated use of a word, its synonyms or the particular wordings, creates a pattern of thematic relevance that has its own place in his style. Apart from the deep and suggestive imagery and symbolism, in *The Aunt's Story*, it is the presence of such a chosen diction that lends the novel its density and finesse. It is easy to see that here simple, ordinary words in varying forms and patterns are made to stand as units of deep suggestiveness, and significance.
The tale of the silent, distances, loneliness, and deprived Theodora comes to life before the reader through the author's skillful application of words. Each word in the narration rings with meaning and power. Among them, the few that stand heavy with thematic significance draw the reader's close attention. It is through this that a thematic harmony is achieved, adding to the coherence of the whole.

The words in point are 'distance', 'silence', 'error', 'free', 'dissolve', 'split', 'crush', 'hollow', 'blur', 'circle', ' coil', 'smooth', 'no', and 'know'. All of them have unmistakable hidden patterns which greatly add to the fuller realization of the predicament of Theodora. White uses these apparently colourless words of everyday use with such sensitiveness that each of them comes alive with a new energy.

'distance' is the first significant word that strikes the reader with its recurrence. It brings to mind Thea's acute alienation and loneliness. Her intuitive perception and spiritual awareness made her remote from all around her, including her own self. This is presented in the early stages of the novel when Miss Spofforth unwittingly reminds Theo of the matter of 'distance' that is to loom large over her life. It is for this that she has often fretted in isolation amidst the clamour of chattering schoolgirls saying: 'I shall never overcome the distances ...' (53). But she, however, reconciles herself to her fate and accepts ... the distance' (54). Theo finds a friend in Violet Dams, but soon she knows only too well that
their shared moments and similar activities can never truly 'cluster the distance' (66) between them. In this way, the word gaining in thematic significance and begin to form a particular pattern of repeating in the narrative, so, when Theo looks at her enchanting hawk which Rank aims at shooting, it is seen to 'stream out in long and lovely distances' (73). The question of distance is again brought in with regard to Huntley Clarkson, 'An enormous distance ... stretched between himself and Theodore' (122). Once again, White uses the same significant word to project Theo's private disposition. Thus the problem of distance is the perpetual bee in Theo's bonnet in the first part of the novel.

The second part has little to deal with 'distance', the dominant issue in it being that of the fragmentation of the self. Here, we find Katina, one of the spiritual offspring of Theo, following her footsteps as she follows the 'flat figures', 'at a distance' (239). Like her predecessor, she, too, is obsessed with distance and asks her, 'How far is Africa, do you suppose?' and gets her due answer, 'Far enough' (239). So, the life of Theo is fragmented, a part of which is Katina, echoing the former's preoccupation with 'distance'. With the final section in the novel, the word 'distance' comes to the fore again. Here the author speaks of the distance that Trumpet-for, 'The train complained of the frustration of distance, that resists' (265). To Theodore this means nothing and she retreats into her own 'distance' (265) holding it close to her core. It is interesting to note that the Old Lord that Mr. Johnson driven, steals with distance (275). This possibly strikes a familiar ring in Theo's
world of alienation and 'distance'. In fact, when she is seen to create 'a distance' (290) in which she waits for relations, the reader appreciates the implications of the word 'distance', spread out, almost at random, but forming a significant pattern of thematic suggestiveness. The most poignant use of the word 'distance' is grasped as one reads: 'Twitched from a distance by a cord, the stick would fall, and the lid imprison one unsuspecting victim' (24). Indeed, this aggravates Theo's alienation, her fear, her suffering in the midst of the menacing society of Sydney.

In the anti-story, the destruction of the giant monster 'Self' is the dominant urge in Theodore. Suggestions of breaking away, tearing off, dissolving, etc., and imaginative form important aspects of the work's total import. In this case, the suggestion of wearing away gains in significance. The idea of 'dissolving' brings to focus the question of release from all kinds of shackles and ties. The monogamy temple, the edifice of material solidity, is shown to loosen itself before the compelling situation which announces Theo's freedom. The word 'dissolve' is used by Ulile with the purpose of removing in the interchangeable lives of Theo (elaborately delineated in 'Jardin Exotique') whereby she opens up to embrace her spiritual companions. 'The man who was given his dinner' is one with whom Theo has a special tie, like 'his words made the walls dissolve' (43) and 'he walked on the dissolved walls'. This is significant. Here the walls prove too transient, too vulnerable before the spiritual power and force of the man. The same word is used imaginatively in the character portrayal of Mrs. Goodner.
"other had not dissolved" (37). She is one untried challenge to Theo and her like. She is too hard, too crude to bear to the call of the spirit. She has not 'dissolved', at the death of H. Soudan, a part of Theo died with him and her partial extension, Heroë, 'dissolved' (89), and 'crumpled' (32). Long with 'dissolved', the word 'crumpled' is used with similar suggestions. In fact, these words are used in union with the word 'destroy'. Destruction, the key issue of Theo's life, is revealed when she says: "... I shall continue to destroy myself, right down to the last of my several lives" (74). The protagonist is so obsessed with the idea that she tends to destroy even her image reflected on a mirror.

She turned and 'destroyed' the reflection, more accurately the reflection of the eyes, by walking away (27). 'Shattered' and 'smashed', are similar words which sustain the meaning of destruction that lies in the heart of the novel. So, at every given opportunity, a secret life (of Theo) was 'shattered'.-simultaneously, a fragment of Theo's self, therefore, is seen to have 'smashed the glass pagoda with its flapping bird' (75), from which her soul seemed to be looking out. In this manner, words like 'dissolve', 'destroy', 'crumble', 'smash', 'shatter', 'crush' (indicative of thanatos or death-instinct) do not merely describe a single action but reveal a situation, thus imparting to it with a deep thematic suggestiveness.

Having destroyed and negated her entire being, Theodore wishes to be devoid of all kinds of emotions, feelings, commotions, and so on, here, the word 'hollow' proves handy in
achieving the desired effect. Indeed, it is her pregnancy that makes Theodore respond to heartily so the hollow objects that one comes across. As the neighbour's objects, herd is a 'thick and mysterious as a tree, but also hollow' (27), but Theo cannot deny the special meaning it has for her, often the 'earth too hollow with black earth'. She probably in sympathy with the person 'wife of littlefire'.

Mrs. Goodman's perpetual cruelty towards her makes her miserable and deprived, almost a hollow entity. Thus she lives in a hollow place, sharing moments with her hollow partners. Here the apocalyptic and demoniac meanings of the term are suggested. The fact that Mrs. Goodman was 'thick and mysterious as a tree, but also hollow' (27), warmed Theodore to share her hollow world with all.

What is important to recollect is that the apparently 'hollow' objects are all embodiments of a fiery spirit ality, an Inca which white tries to establish with a reference to the Inca filigree ball. For, although it was a 'hollow sphere, now distorted ... the filigree ball still filled with a little fire' (16). Thus it can be easily seen that the subtlety in white's use of words cannot be overemphasized.

The meanings of words like 'barren', 'bare', 'black', 'bark' have a close relationship with the suggestive root of 'hollow'. Here, 'barren' does not so much suggest infertility, as emptiness in Theo and hence the incapacity to give because you are honest, and because you are barren, you will be both unloved and despised (53). In the discussion of the country of woods which both Terreis and Theodore were spiritually (112), the thematic significance of such words is heightened. It is in this vein that the 'black' house (27).
becomes significant, for, in the final stage of self-ummilation
Theodora discovers the broken clock, here or 'clown', hence, her
sense of perfection.

In the story of the solitary spinster is inherent the
idea of a journey, or a quest, in search of self-knowledge. In
the circumstances, the word 'on' and its variations have a signifi-
cant role to play. The pattern is set quite early when Thea
answers Fanny's enquiries about her plans at her mother's death
thus: 'I shall probably go away'(18). The consistency of the
pattern formed by this word is as unerring as it is near in (9).
The first part of the novel ends with the idea that Theodora,
reconciled to her loneliness, commences her spiritual and soli-
itary journey, reiterating its necessity: 'I shall go, est.
Theodora. I have already gone'(137). Katina takes up Theodora's
longing for a journey or movement, a desire to be done: 'I
shall write and tell them I must go away'(147). Katina continues in
the same vein, 'I must go home', and as the hotel cleanser
one hears her say: 'I shall go away ... I shall go to my own
country. Now I know, I shall go'(65). The repetition of the
word emphasizes the importance of Katina's movement toward the
desired goal. This, in fact, prepares the reader for Theodora's state-
ment: 'I shall go now ... I shall go too'(251). The pattern
that the word 'go' forms in the narrative develops into a signif-
nificant phase as Theodora says: 'I may even return to Abyssinia'.
Here, 'go' is replaced by 'return', tracing the circularity, or
where the end will prove to be the beginning, having traversed
the distance and having arrived (for America becomes her home
and also her Abyssinia), she remarks with a sigh of content,
'I do not particularly want to go anywhere' (72), and thus the pattern of this particular lexis comes full circle.

The words 'see' and 'know' too, have forceful thematic significances. The use of 'see' is sought to show Theodore's uncanny power to see through things. Often her perception enables her to see much that is apparently invisible. So the 'man who was given his inner predicates to her: 'You'll see a lot of funny things ... You'll see them because you have eyes to see' (47). This concert is carried deeper into the narrative as Theodore confesses to Kukovnikov, 'I have seen extraordinary things' (12), or just before the final destruction of their lives, with the symbolic full of the nautilus, the protagonist clearly admits: 'I have never seen more clearly ... but what I see remains involved' (12). This is significant, for Theodore sees through the eyes of various fragmented beings and so everything appears involved. The hidden meaning behind 'see' is apparent in 'in woodmen's use of it. Aspirin to similar spiritual heights as his daughter, he does not, however, have the will to power in order to enter a state like that, so he confesses to Theo: 'I never saw Greece' (87). This term forms an important pattern as, just before his death, the woodmen admits his spiritual shortcoming and tells Theo, 'In the end ... I did not see it' (9).

'Know' is a word closely related to 'see' in the novel, bearing a sizeable load of the theme. Theo's quest is for knowledge, and the narrative is likewise patterned and armed with the use of the lexis 'know' interwoven throughout the novel.
At the beginning of the work one finds while introducing, "it is her heroine is made to say: 'I would like to know ... I would like to know everything' (41). The reader cannot fail to note how this word is consciously taken up in 'unison' meeting with Theodore. He tells her, 'It is not necessary to see things ... if you know' (113). Theo loses no time in connecting this to the incident when the man who left his dinner talks to her, recalling that for the pure contrast pleasure of knowing (114) there is a price paid, which is nothing but her life. The thematic significance of the word 'know' which penetrates deep into the inner character of Theodore is marked when she meets with Pearl on the streets of Sydney one day, as Pearl relates to her, her child's obsession with the 'alarm clock', Theo promptly answers that she 'knows' of such experiences:

'Yes', cried Theodore, I know, I know. 'You' said Pearl. 'Do you know: warn you' ... 'you are right ... I know very little, till' (132)

(underlined for focus).

The above passage clearly reveals Theo's sense of perception and knowledge which often link others and cuts her off from them. Again, paradoxically, it is this knowledge that makes her humble and modest against the tirades of those around her. This idea of 'knowing' is seen to percolate into the consciousness of Katrina, too, as one is heard to say, 'Why should I understand? ... I know' (237). Again it is the fragment of Katrina that reassures Theo that it is not wrong to live to the experience of the impossible tower, for, 'It is better to know' (249).
'Now I know, I shall go' (264). The experience of 'Jardin
extinct' is brought to an end, and a circular movement of
return to the beginning is initiated. It is thus suggestive
that at the end of the final section, Holstius tells Theo:
"You will go back to the house,' he said, 'did you know?'
'Yes', she said, or mumbled. 'I suppose I knew" (294).
Here
knowledge is a merging of intuition and imagination and expe-
rience. In this way the use of the word 'know' finds an impor-
tant place in the writer's scheme of things in the novel.

words relating to and signifying a kind of circular
perfection or the mandala are strewn profusely over the work.
The sensitive reader cannot turn his eye away from those ordi-
nary and simple words which glow with this kind of suggestivity.
So, when Theo is enthused with love for her hero,

she rubbed her cheek against the golden stone,
picked by the familiar fans and spirals of the
embedded shells (25).

The spiral or circular phenomenon is a marked quality which
increasingly gains in importance in the novels after The untitla-
story. Here, the writer seems to be allowing the reader to
savour it in small degrees. In another instance, Theo imagines
herself as a stick which made the 'water circles widen' (47).
This idea of circular perfection is better comprehended in the
incident when Theodora's spiritual friend, the her who was
Given his dinner', shares some moments with her. To this extent,
'They sat beneath the shaggy tree in the night of snow, and
the snow as it fell melted, on entering the circle of their
The report between the two and their knowledge of this circular truth is effectively realized in this passage. This scene augurs the one in *Liders in the Chariot*, when Mary and Hermelafroth sit together under the spreading tree. Theodore's quest is a movement from a beginning which is also the end, from she finds soon enough and says so as she walks into the words that 'she had returned to where she had begun ...' (11) traversing a circular path, as it were. The rounded thematic design that lies beneath the formal three-tiered structure of the narrative is once again caught in an utterance like, 'It was difficult to say when one (life or death) began and the other ended' (151). Thus White evolves words and wordings which have a much deeper meaning than that which meets the eye. Brian Attehman makes a succinct rounding up in this context when he says: 'the diction ... is patterned in terms of internal significance, so that repetitions are more clearly thematic rather than ornamental.'

In *The Tree of Pain*, the story of *tan*, the uncommunicative pioneer of the Australian highlands, is steadily developed by White's suggestive choice of diction. The words 'silence', 'humility', 'simplicity', 'strength', 'distance', 'dissolve', 'destroy', 'darkness', 'hollow', 'access', 'myster', 'perfection', 'circle' and the like form the major notes in the symphonic orchestration of the novel. Indeed, it is on the single word 'silence' that the dominant theme of the work rests. White takes care to introduce it at the very beginning of his narration. In the land on to which the silent man came to take it his name, 'The silence appeared to be immense'. ...
Initially, an attempt is made to oppose 'silence, rock and tree' (15). However, very soon a rapport is established, and in time the whole place begins to throb in harmony with the inner silence of the man. So, 'in time the silence grew' (17). A time comes when Stan is seen to be completely steeped in the mystery of the silence of his home: "He was harried observing birds in the silence of his garden" (125). Stan's spiritual affinity with his neighbour, John Cupley, is shown with the key word, 'silence'. They both believe that 'infinite love and peace will spill from candles and dissolve the flesh into a silence' (452). It is 'silence' that comforts Stan in peace and in anxiety, it is 'silence' again that soothes. So, at the time he learns of his wife's infidelity, he rushes off to the silent tree under which 'consolated' (123).

In contrast to Stan's deep love of peace, a strange restiveness is marked in Amy. This is projected by a skilful use of the term: 'All day long she had listened to ... the presence of her silent house' (35). All she can do to recall him is to listen to the 'explosive silence' (418). Again, 'silence' for Amy proves an excuse for indulging herself in frivolous escapades: 'silence and reckless thoughts excited her incongruity into rightness' (359). Often, although resentful of her husband's silence, its ennobling quality is not totally lost on her, especially in her fleeting moments of understanding. So, one finds expressions like, 'this silence towards which she now quickened ... fitted her like a skin' (106). It was for this sanctifying quality of silence that Amy experiences a sudden twinge of remorse as she writes the name, Leo, on the
mirror, one day, 'or the fact that here, in silence, it is

Edwardian, i.e. silent,' (312). White uses the various connotations of silence to suit his purpose in the story. Careful handling of the laxis is seen in the utterance, 'now they sat down to eat in separate silences' (93). This is about an incident after the return from the floods when the Parkers sat with the child whom they had found quite alone and lost. Here, each character is isolated and has a secret world of his or her own. Although they do share a meal, that is all that their efforts at unity can ever amount to. So, the use of the word 'silences' at this juncture helps establish the alienation of Stan and Amy although living under the same roof. As for the child, his caged silences leave no opportunity for Amy, even for the pretence of a temporary motherhood. Thelma is aware of the acute loneliness and lack of expression of her father, so that at his death, 'she remembered his silences, which she had failed to penetrate ...' (471). It is worth noticing that after Stan and Amy, Ray and Thelma, too, suffer from their inability to articulate. As reads: 'They sat together on the Bourkes' furniture, feeling its pressure during the silences ...' (277). But their silences do not spring from any deep well of mystic realization. It is, at best, an altogether selfish urge to refrain from saying or committing anything to each other which may prove either a loss or may tend to be distasteful. It is only little Ray who breaks through these categories of silences to reveal all in his little poem.

'Simplicity' is the next word that implies a hidden pattern in the narrative. In the very second sentence of the
work the reader meets with its use. 'There were two different
trees in that part of the bank, rising above the level' and
with the simplicity of true grandeur' (1). This description in
fact foregrounds the character of Stan Parker, the simple and
ordinary man whom White chooses to be the hero of his story of
nearly epic proportions. As depicted in the extract, tan's life
has a hidden grandeur in its simplicity. But my is quite blind
to his inner self. To her, 'simplicity' is something terrible
which she is destined to bear in her husband, and a neighbor,
Bob Holguy (117). However, tan's very personality, his dispo-
sition, and his entire achievement have been a result of his
'simplicity' : 'His only guide in all this had been his simp-
city' (269).

'Simplicity' is another word that is frequently used in
the novels of White. The search for the country of the bones
beginning, markedly, in The aunt's story, is extended to The
true of man. Here, as Veronica Brady has rightly pointed out,
the essentials of the country i.e., 'silence, simplicity and
humility'14 are seen to be explored by the protagonist. Often,
as Stan Parker moves in his new-built home, material complacency
does seem to rub itself onto him, but soon he is made to change.
Stan's humility is most refreshingly described after the storm
where he becomes quite insignificant: 'But as the storm increased,
his flesh had doubts, and he began to experience humility' (151).
A curious peace and subservience passes onto him. on the
reader finds that in his new humility, weakness and subservience
had become virtues' (151). The other kind of humility was again
felt by him on a day when he was sick at the Seabodys' (385).
That was the first time that Ben was aware of his physical weakness, which would add to his mental diffidence. In contrast to this 'humility' in Ben, a completely different disposition is noted in Ray, the son. Passive and rebellious, he cannot understand a iota of this state of being to which his father aspires. In fact, he is seen to be suspicious of all that is humble. It is for this reason, perhaps, that when his father accesoled him in one short day, he is touched to the quick. The [Ray] could have kicked the wall down, and with them the face of the humble man his father, whom he would have loved if disgust had allowed' (247). This is an apt precursor to Joe, who, supposedly kicks upon the face of his trusting father before he embarks on his journey to Australia. Here, 'humble', the term which symbolizes Stan, helps to highlight the young boy's revolting sentiments, his hatred and his frustration.

In the case of Inelia, too, it is the parents' humility and not their 'humiliation' that irks her (263). Thus, in the repeated use of the term is exposed the crudity of the lower children, perhaps to be expanded to include the vicious concept of Basil and Dorothy in The Eye of the Storm. Humility, in connection with Ray, takes on a new meaning. It means repentance and regret. So, when Stan comes home after the act of infidelity of Ray, one finds that 'he bent her head and received all this information with gratitude, even humility' (305). However, this is not the kind of humility which Stan has. Humility, as he understands it, is a state of purity and simplicity beyond definition. So, he feels on the day he goes for the union that 'peace is desirable in itself ... and ... he accepted this with humility and gratitude' (416).
The suggestive implications of the lexia 'distance' here are grave and significant. In The Tree of Man, 'distance' does not actually mean just a measure of space. It has a close association with the lexical intricacies of 'silence', 'loneliness', 'solitude' and, finally, a spiritual height. The deep-seated solitude that characterized Stan is realized at the beginning when we read:

And once some woman, some where, neither young nor pretty, had pressed her face against a window-pane and stared out, and Stan Parker had remembered her face because he shared the distance from which her eyes had looked (12).

Stan thus maintains a distance, an aloofness, a disposition he cannot dispense with as it is a part of his very existence. This 'distance' implies his unconscious, lonely quest. The initial solitude of Stan in the Bushlands is stressed time and again by a repetition of this word. 'Only sometimes, if you listened on stiller days, you might hear the sound of an axe, like the throb of your own heart, in the blue distance. Only very distant. Or more distantly, a cock. Or imagination. It was too far' (17). In all these, the reader gets an idea of Stan's physical isolation as well as a sense of his spiritual alienation. Stan is seen to be resigned to 'distance' for 'he recognized and accepted the omnipotence of distance' (27). But it is not so in the case of Amy. Her intolerance of distance is easily seen. For, on their way home as a wedded couple, 'the distance proved adamant' (26), but Stan was 'content' (26). However, for Amy, 'Life was perhaps a distance or stones and sun and wind, sand-
coloured and monotonous' (26). And, again, as White describes the union of the two, his sting is not missed as he writes, 'Then the souls are wrapped around each other across a distance' (53). The use of this lexis as an after thought is an ironic ploy by which White tells the reader that despite their physical union they are far apart in spirit.

'Distance' has the connotations of a dream, a fancy, or a thought removed from reality. So when Amy looks with amazement at the glamorous Madeline, White is seen making a suggestive use of this word: 'Already the bronzy sheen of her hair was breaking in a distance light' (132). Here, 'distance' suggests a world removed from the reality of the Parkers' lives. 'Distance' is brought in for yet another meaning, that being the distant realms of spirituality into which Stan has stepped, leaving Amy far behind. So, she is found to be always keeping away from distances. For example, in the text one reads, 'Now that Amy was lost in the halter - skelter darkness she longed for some knowledge of which others were apparently possessors, ... after straying some distance she returned to her own kitchenful of light ...' (355). The wide gap that lay between Amy and Stan cannot be over-emphasized. Even in their most private moments when she could feel the very bones of his skull with her fingers he 'lay there breathing from a distance' (366). Till the end, the distance for Amy is her suppressed desire for glamour and fancy. So, even as an old woman she laments for the woman 'in the distance [who] rode, violets in her breast ... (for) she has found the distance' (402) which Amy
herself could never reach. But, for Stan, the distance is his alienation, his spirituality which is yet more heightened after the play ... 'he had withdrawn to a distance at the end of the play' (405). Even when he reaches home this mood does not leave him and we see him 'cutting his seat at a great distance' (408). So he spent his last days 'remaining at a distance in the arrangement of objects and sequence of events' (417). 'He moved about ... smiling from out of that queer distance and planes ...' (417). Although the grandchild did pick up the threads of life from Stan, he could not obviate his deep isolation. To the child he was "An old man, whom he loved, but at a distance, amongst 'wood shavings'". Thus 'distance' is one word that holds the mystery of silence and the lonesome identity of Stan Parker.

The words like 'mystery', 'permanence', 'circle', all help to recreate Stan's vision. In The Tree of Man, the notion of a mystery is inherent in the story. In the recurrent use of this word can be seen the manner in which it weaves the theme. Stan, the protagonist, is seen with a mystery in him which he cannot disclose. He is constantly faced with the problem of self-apprehension. So, the new life that is started in Amy makes him aware of what he calls 'a whole tangled ball of mystery in his wife's womb' (54). This deep knowledge of the mystery in life makes him accept individual secrets with ease unlike his wife Amy: 'But he respected and accepted her [Amy's] mysteries, as she could never respect and accept his' (147). The use of the word 'mystery' is used after Theo's idea of shedding off of the layers of the self in search of the core of being.
After Ray's scandal, Stan grows quite depressed, and a deep isolation overcomes him. It is at that time that he looks 'at the scrolls of fallen bark, which is a perpetual mystery' (277). Here, the word 'mystery' focuses the essence of perpetual becoming which, in fact, is the core of one's being. So, often when Stan sits in solitude, communicating with his inner consciousness, he becomes doubly aware of the mystery in man. Amy feels this in Stan, and so fertile that he should wrap himself in the 'mystery' (410). Soon, despite herself, she notices that 'Each person was absorbed in his own mysteries' (412). This theme of isolation is shown by a similar use of the term, much later in the novel. In this case it is Leo who escapes Amy and she painfully realizes that 'Each one was wrapped in his mystery that he could not solve' (320). However, it must be noted that Amy cannot grasp the true essence of this mystery. The spiritual implication is lost to her, she being bogged in her crude materialism. For her, 'mystery' is often a physical curiosity. This is even quite early in the text when Stan and Amy communicate with each other on the physical plane. So that as

... they were melting together in the night, [they]
were led by the hand, mysteriously, glidingly, into
darker rooms, in which the flesh of the bed was
opening to receive (112).

with this approach to the element of mystery in man, it is not surprising that Amy feels completely dejected and sunken without the presence of her mate. As is noted on the incident of their fruit gathering, when Stan goes inside, 'She was without mystery
new' (149). After years of antipathy, Amy realizes towards the end that she cannot share Stan's deep secret, and one has to be alone. So one finds that 'In time the man and woman came to accept each other's mystery' (333). Amy's frustrated being is, however, brought to light with the use of the word 'miraculous'. She had expected something to happen, 'some fact of miraculous revelation ...' (370). But it did not, so that an elderly Amy tried to resign herself to her lot, 'As a grandmother to Ray, she knew her place and did not try to penetrate the mystery in him' (384). She restricted herself to queries on the material plane and would share with him the 'mysticisms of objects' (384). Or else, Amy's concept of a mystery limited itself to a fantasy. In an ironical way, White tells the reader that it is Amy's lack of sufficient insight (or sight) that makes her accept mere fantasy as the mystical experience: 'She could not see well, which made it more aggravating, or else mystical' (400). The word 'mystery' catches the final plea of Amy to Stan, to descend from his level of incomprehension and isolation and single wholly with her: 'The mysteries are not for us, Stan. Stan?' (447).

The word 'permanence' also implies a pattern of much significance in the text. From the very beginning of the work, one is conscious of the repeated use of the term. It is very early in life that Stan is filled with a longing for permanence: 'In the streets of towns the open windows, on the dusty roads the rooted trees, filled him with the melancholy longing for permanence' (13). Nature does often give him 'the peace of permanence' (14). But an inner dilemma of 'the nostalgia of
permanence and the fiend or motion' (14) in the boy makes him seek something afresh. So, one morning he packs up and leaves his hometown in search of 'permanence' (14). As he reaches the Bush, the quiet stillness satisfies him and he apparently reaches a state when 'he did not doubt permanence' (22). This complacency, however, does not last, and in his years of anxious marital life he realizes that his 'own impermanence was in conflict with the permanence of all scene, of bees and grass murmuring and bending' (187). It is this that makes him decide to enlist himself in the war. But returning home his insurgency is quelled, and he begins to accept Amy as 'She sat opposite his smelling of scones and permanence' (210). Amy, too, desires a permanence, though in vain. 'She longed to be pervaded by a permanence' (94). She succeeded in reaching this state at best in the time of her early motherhood when 'she was at last continuous. She flowed' (117). The illusion of this continuity or permanence is shattered as her cherished child, Ray, decides to leave them. At this time Amy ironically ruminates over those 'days of summer she herself did believe that permanence had arrived in all its stillness' (354). But 'permanence' is a state not for her and it is Stan alone who can truly apprehend its being. Thus Thelas comments that he was unlike a strong green tree: '... he would still be standing there, his hard and surprising trunk, rooted' (346).

'Circle' is a word which has its own special importance in the novels of White. The mendelian perfection which Stan aspires for is already achieved by the physically deformed Doll Quigley and her mentally retarded brother, Bub. The word 'circle'
effectively yet unobtrusively highlights this. In an instance White writes that the elder Quigley brothers with their strong bodies remained outside this perfection which enfolded Dell:

Just as the fates of the boye could not have been fitted into the family circle the unfinished Dell was born to live inside (51).

The word gains in depth as White continues to write: If she [Dell] was not herself the circle that enfolded (51). Similarly, in the case of Bub the circular lines and patterns of his leaf and his deep attachment to them show the manner in which he has become the chosen one to understand the mystery of perfection. So, 'circles of mystery, beauty, and injustice expanded inside him, distorting' (118). If Amy tries to appropriate this mystery at all, it is in the 'act of fecundity when she [felt] ... she was the centre of the universe' (114). Stan realizes it all and so wishes to establish its truth with an undiminished vehemence. This he does when he states that perfection is in the gob of spittle:

He pointed with his stick at the gob of spittle
'That is God [or the ultimate Truth] he said (476).

Thus, in The Tree of Man, White, following his own pattern in The Aunt's Story, has built up a similar design of semantic significance with the use of simple but choice diction which reveals the theme.

In Voss also, White's deployment of a group of select words for singular emphasis catches the reader's attention. It is the recurrence of these words in the text that enables the
reader to grasp the spirit of White's creativity in this work. The words that engage the reader's special attention are 'silence', 'distance', 'possess', 'know', 'wrestle', 'destroy', 'will', 'perfection', 'pride', 'strength', 'weakness', 'endure', 'purpose', 'humility', and 'sacrifice'. Of these, the words 'silence', 'pride', 'will' and 'purpose' have been used to reveal the initial state of Voss' mind. The terms 'distance', 'endure', 'wrestle', 'destroy', and 'sacrifice' deal mostly with the second stage of the novel, i.e. the journey of Voss. The final stage of illumination and reconciliation is projected with the recurrent use of 'know', 'humility' and 'strength'.

This categorisation of White's use of words in *Voss* is, however, broad, and only a detailed analysis can bring to the fore the manner of their application in the novel.

If a single word qualifies the megalomaniac protagonist in the novel, it is the word 'pride'. The Antiochian hero once again comes alive in the world of White's creation and we have the German, Johann Ulrich Voss. In this novel, the importance of the word 'pride' can hardly be ignored. On various occasions, synonymous terms and expressions are brought in, adding much to the semantic intensity of the lexie.

It is significant that *Voss* begins with the presentation of Laura, who is in fact the German explorer's alter ego. Laura, too, shares Voss' nonchalance. It is impossible for her to survive otherwise in the arid materialism of the Sydney society. For, 'if she had been less proud, she might have been more afraid' (9). The reader notes that 'there was no evidence of intellectual
kinship in any of her small circle of acquaintance ...' (9) (underlined for focus). In the second extract, although the word pride is not directly used, the utterance exposes the deep-set arrogance that characterizes her. Soon enough, elements of pride that bear the character of Voss are revealed. One reads: 'A pity that you huddle, said the German. Your country is of great subtlety' (11). The cold sneer emitted by the word 'huddle' and the intellectual arrogance when he comments on the so-called subtlety of the country are not easily missed. It is of interest to observe that the semantic variations rest on the weight of different words in different contexts. Although 'confident' is a stronger lexie than the use 'I am of every assurance ...', we find both the expressions used differently in the following lines. Enquiring of Voss about his confidence in carrying out his plans and choosing his mates, Bonner says: 'And are you confident that he [Turner] is a suitable associate?' 'I am of every assurance that I can lead an expedition, across this continent' (21), Voss replied. Here, the word 'confident' pales beside the expression 'I am of every assurance' coupled with 'I can lead an [or any] expedition...'. One does not fail to note the proud tone of confidence and challenge that marks the second line. Thus this word tends to become more forceful in its meaning when used in connection with other suggestive expressions. White, with his deep suggestiveness of select diction, gives the reader ample insight into the unbending pride of the little German. This is seen when Voss declares his purpose of the expedition to Le Mesurier: 'I will cross the continent from one end to the other. I have
every intention to know it with my heart' (33). The same pride
is here carried by the expressions 'I will cross ...' and 'inten-
tion to know it'. Here a single idea is maintained through
different sets of expressions. In proud complacency, Voss is
seen waiting patiently in Sydney for the time when he would
lead them all. 'But I shall lead them eventually ...' (38). So
sure is he of his power and his confidence that most ironically
he feels that, 'He was complete' (41). Here, the associations
of pride in the lexis 'complete' are clearly seen. Voss' over-
bearing nature and his habit of categorical self-assertion can
be clearly seen in expressions like the above. Voss' pride and
self-esteem are quite pronounced in what he says to the Moravian
Brother: 'I begin to receive proof of existence, Brother Muller.
I can feel the shape of the earth' (49). One cannot overlook the
tone of challenge in the utterance. The Brother fully realizes
the arrogance of the German and attempts to douse his pride
thus: 'Mr Voss', he said ... 'you have a contempt for God,
because He is not in your own image' (50). In a private repartee
between Laura and Voss, the elements of pride inherent in the
latter again come to the surface. The excerpt reads:

'Is it so difficult then for a man, to imagine the
lives of poor domesticated men? How very extra-
ordinary. Or is it that you are an extra-ordinary
man?'... But he would keep his private convic-
tion (86).

Laura, though herself suffering from pride, albeit, in a lesser
degree, is the first to reprimand Voss for it and bring it to his
notice. 'It is for our pride that each of us is probably damned',,
Laura said (89). Voss' pride is the salient feature of the novel's theme, and the author takes care to present it through various synonyms and associations.

'Distance' is also a significant word in this novel. Apparently it points to the great length of the journey across the Australian wilds. A semantic study of the lexia, however, brings to focus a multitude of meanings, all of which cohere to evoke the dominant theme in the work. 'Distance' has the connotation of 'dream', 'fancy', or 'remembrances'. This is seen as Voss recollects his childhood thus: 'His throat suddenly [swelled] with wine and distance ...' (13). Here, 'distance' is used to evoke a fanciful feeling of dreamy nostalgia. A similar idea of a dream or a fantasy is, once again, caught in the expression, 'At intervals he [Voss] might lift a hand, ... but out of that great distance to which he was so often drawn' (31). Here, Voss' obsession with his dream is easily seen. The notion of the intensity of the call of his quest or his dream emerges as one reads: '... and there was Voss, looking not at him [Harry], but forward into the distance from a crag' (246). Here 'distance' means the summit of Voss' dream. The fantasy to which the word points is clear as one reads, 'As for the men, obsessed by their dream of distance and the future ...' (241). This, incidentally, is the echo of Voss' dreams. Again, one reads, 'It was as if the whole landscape had been thrown up into great earthworks defending the distance' (336). Apart from Voss' dream or goal, the word 'distance' now has a lurking suggestion of the unattainability of that dream. The major portion of the text deals, however,
with the pains and the struggles of the explorer's heart, and
the idea of inaccessibility into the heart of the continent.
'Distance' is an expression used widely to convey this theme.
So we find Bonner cautioning Voss with the possible difficulties thus: 'Great distances will tax physical strength' (22).
Here the hint is about the apparent impossibility of Voss'
target. The formidable nature of the man's quest is suggested
in an expression like: 'Jackie was always killing things, or
scenting a water hole, or seeing smoke in the distance...'
(241). Here, the word gives an idea of the rough existence on
the wilds which, though so easy for the natives, is practically
impossible for the town-bred explorers to bear. A critical turn
in the use of the word is noted in one of Le Fœsurier's poems:
'He continued to eat distance' (296). Man, in contemplation of
the godhead, has wished to penetrate the inaccessible, which is
what is meant here by the word, distance.

The very notion of Voss' dream and his dogged determination to realise it makes him an exceptional man. This distinction is seen to evolve in the novel with the word 'distance'.
'Watching from his distance, Voss remembered the picnic by the
sea, at which he had spoken with Laura Trevelyan, ...' (198).
In these lines one cannot fail to hear the echo of the remote
aloofness of the explorer. The word 'distance' also conveys
the idea of separateness, not only with regard to Voss' life,
but also that of the other characters. So one finds Rose, the
squat woman convict, who observes the flow of life from a
'dull distance' (3). The lonesome life into which Bella is
suddenly plunged, as her beloved cousin Laura becomes engrossed
with Rosa's child, is seen in the remark, 'Balls smiled sadly, but did not consent to come, at a distance' (232). It is interesting to note that the word 'distance' suggests closeness by contrast. In Laura's letter to Voss, the reader finds her emphasizing the 'exonerating distances' that separate them (185). One is seen to repeat the use of the word thus: 'My dearest, at this distance, what can I do to soften your sufferings, but love you truly' (239). In Voss, similar feelings are detected when he says: '... distance has united us thus closely' (217). It is evident from these instances that the lexia 'distance', here only helps express the deep bond of closeness of the two which a physical separation cannot negate. In fact, their single identity is projected as if by contrast with the use of 'distance'.

'Distance', is also used to mean the place of total understanding and peace aspired for. This is discovered as we hear Voss talking of Harry thus: 'Harry Roberts must tell all, while growing simpler ... with distance. His simplicity is such, he could arrive at that place where the great mysteries are revealed' (217). Here, it is Roberts who has scaled and reached the distant dream which had been aspired by Voss. The explorer's realization of his goal is shown only after he humbles himself before his death. He then enters a realm where he becomes all modest and forgiving. So, Laura is convinced that, 'He will forgive, for at that distance I believe, failures are accepted in the light of intentions' (396).

'Destroy' is a word with which Voss armourises himself throughout his journey. He convinces himself and others of the
action implied even before he embarks upon his expedition.
'To make yourself, it is also necessary to destroy yourself' (34). This is what he is found to be sermonizing to Le Mesurier. The same idea of dissolution is found as Laura pleads with him to give up his absurd notion. She says, 'You are not going to allow your will to destroy you'. The pattern that is set with the word 'destroy' becomes more distinct as Laura and Voss become engrossed in an argument in the garden. Voss scoffs at Laura for denying the existence of the God who can be so easily destroyed (89) or rejected. He feels that this denial is a negative stand and speaks nothing for the 'destroyer's power' (89). Such an approach to Voss appears a self-denial, a self-murder, as it negates, but does not break, the self. Here, the proud explorer feels that one is being shorn of the glory of being 'destroyed'. This short exchange is a clue to Voss' intense pride and outrageous ambition. All these instances show how White infuses this particular word with deep suggestiveness. The play of the word clearly shows the reader that White acknowledges the existence of God and wishes to challenge his power and greatness by his own gradual and painful destruction. Laura, although sharing his intellectual aggrandisement does not, however, share his absurd idea of self-annihilation even if she admits that she has destroyed herself. In his mad insistence on self-destruction, Voss stands alone. The use of this word in this context has brought out the predicament of the protagonist. The sheer comicality of the intended attempt is voiced by Kalfreymen who warns Voss that he cannot be subjected to his plans of self-demolition.
So he insists, 'Your cannot destroy me, Mr. Voss' (264). The deep faith which this simple ornithologist demonstrates is echoed most curiously in the ideas of Belle. She does not beseech anybody to give up the path of destruction like Laura, but is happily resigned to the thought that she would destroy nothing. So, as she walked about in her garden, she would step, 'holding up her skirts as she climbed the steep and clammy steps, and, above all on approaching the snails that it pained her so very much to destroy' (430). Complimented by Voss for the hospitality of his family Mr. Sanderson loses no time to dilate upon his philosophy of simplicity and humility: 'That is why ... it is disturbing ... Honest people can destroy most effectually such foundations, as some of us have' (131). Here, the word 'destroy' is used wryly in protest against the ideas of Voss, and also as a pointer to the shaky and sandy foundation on which Voss has erected his shrine. The use of the word is all the more poignant in the co-ordination with the word honest, thus projecting the folly of Voss' intent.

'Destroy' connotes an end or extermination, too. This, although having no direct connection with the thematic growth of the story, deserves attention for the study of the semantic variety of the lexis. For instance, in the description of the children that frolicked at Rhine Towers, the author writes, 'An aura of timelessness enveloped their rooted bodies. They would not speak, of course, to destroy any such illusion' (125). Here, the suggestion of an 'end' evoked by the word 'destroy' is evident. The same meaning is there in the expression where Laura voices
her apprehension about Rose's child: 'I am so happy for it.
And frightened that something may destroy this proof of life'
(224). In a conversation between Ralph and Turner, the latter
expresses his suspicion of the intellectual members of the
group thus: 'People of that kind will destroy what you and
I know' (255). Here, too, the implication of an 'end' is clear
in the use of the word 'destroy'.

'Destroy' also suggests the penetration of Voss into
the cold hauteur of Laura. Ordinarily a cold and austere person,
we find her thawing with love for him. So one reads, '... I am
called upon to consider my destroyer as my saviour' (185). On
another occasion, we find Laura writing to her lover about her
grief on the death of the maid, Rose, 'I was destroyed, yet
living more intensely than actual sunlight ...' (239). This
breaking up is more akin to the fragmentation of Theodore in
The Aunt's Story and does not contain the strains of perversion
and megalomania that Voss professes to exhibit by frequent
use of the word 'destroy'. In fact, in the pattern that the use
of this word forms, these variations sharpen the idiosyncrasies,
implied by the term 'destroy' when brought into project Voss'
whim.

'Wrestle', 'writhe', and 'struggle' are three terms used
to give a tacit impression of the element of 'destruction' that
permeates the text. The reader observes with interest instances
like, 'knowing what it was to wrestle with his own daemon' (34).
'... it was she who had wrestled with him in the garden ...
(144), '... I [Laura], personally to assume a most unseemingly
candour, would be prepared to wrestle with our mutual hateful-
ness ...' (186). In all these, an idea of muscular force or
struggle is inherent. However, it must be recorded that the
whole issue is of the mind, thus adding depth and intensity
to the unmistakable process of struggle in the consciousness
of man. On the occasion of Mercy's birth, the reader finds
White narrating: 'she [the midwife] was a very tough small
woman, it seemed, who proceeded to wrestle with life itself
for the remainder of the night' (229). Here, although the
subject is the midwife, the author's focus is not so much on
her as on the waiting Laura. For, the midwife's physical struggle
has a close parallel in the bated breath of the quiet witness,
who is going through the physical, mental and emotional agonies,
all at once with the birth of her spiritual child.

The word 'strength', indicative of a tone of tough
masculinity, has been used in the novel a number of times. Also,
in the various ways in which the lexis is used with different
characters, one finds the wealth of semantic suggestions that
is ingrained in it. To begin with, we find the author exploring
the 'strength' of Voss: 'He was very sincere, a man of obvious
strength when observed in the open ...' (26). As implied in the
remark, there is an insistent, inner force in Voss which is the
essence of his character. One reads: 'This weakness in the
young woman gave the man back his strength' (12). The reader
here is left with no illusion about the egocentric nature of
the protagonist. This is noticed in the line which describes
his thoughts thus: 'None ... as conscious of his strength' (1).
The German's self-esteem is also revealed in a line which reads: 'But he never allowed himself the luxury of other people's strength, preferring the illusion of his own.' (69). So far as Laura is concerned, it is seen that her strength is used as a defensive armour against the cloying materialism of the Sydney society. In her isolation we find her brooding thus: '... in the absence of a rescue party she had to be strong.' (10). The same word is used, this time with a suggestion of a protection over Voss' vulnerable spiritual stance. She knew that Voss was out to sheer ruin and felt she had to be strong for him. So she musters enough confidence in her to feel that '... she was very strong.' (69). This strength of here is what she would demurely like to define as 'will.' (75). This is in sharp contrast with the arrogant assertion by Voss of what he believed to be indestructible in his own strength and power of will. Her awareness of her shortcomings is seen in her letter to her lover: 'I am all weaknesses, when I would like you to admire me for my strength ...' (237). This admission is just the human touch that Voss needs to help him recant the illusion of the wodhead. It is these thoughts that paradoxically give him strength at his hour of death. Laura is found to raise her strength similarly in another instance, when she makes the supreme sacrifice of giving up Mercy to the Rebolds. This coincides with the moment of illumination that descends upon Voss, making him realize the folly of his ambitions. Laura is heard to say, 'Tomorrow at the latest ... I shall make a point of gathering all my strength ...' (371). Here, strength denotes her will to power, to make her endure her pain until Voss attains salvation.
The word 'strength' takes on a noticeably different shade of meaning when used in the context of Judd, the convict. It first of all indicates his brute strength, and the tremendous physical power of his gigantic physique. But behind it all is a quiet, smouldering strength which is hard to reckon. This Voss has discovered himself and so he muses: 'He is strong ... considering not so much the thick body as some strength of silence of which the man was possessed' (148).

The nature of Judd's strength could not have been more artistically explicated by the author than in these lines:

He was, in fact, a union of strength and delicacy, like some gnarled trees that have been tortured and twisted by time and weather into exaggerated shapes, but of which the leaves still quiver at each change, and constantly, shed, shy subtle scents (133).

These various uses make it clear to the reader the subtle, contextual variations of sense of White's use of the word 'strength.' Some of the implications of the word represent the traits of the Sandersons, and also, very curiously, of Palfreyman. For an instance, in the observation, 'Sanderson, who had jumped down, touched his wife very briefly, and this woman, of indeterminate age, was obviously strengthened' (129); the word thus conveys the meaning of marital bliss and peace. It also means a strength of goodness of purpose which has been found in Judd. Palfreyman's strength (264) as discovered in his defiance of Voss' plans of destruction, and his acceptance of a more sacrificing path to eternal peace in humble submission, is found in Sanderson and in Judd also. Thus, the use of the word 'strength' has important thematic implications in the novel.
'Perfection' is a key word in all of White's novels. It is to this end that every book moves. Thus, this word along with words like 'complete', 'circle', 'coil', 'elliptical', and 'whirl' are used to indicate the goal of fullness which it is the aim of the protagonists to reach. Voss, too, at the end of his arduous trials, realizes the true goal of his existence, and humbly submits to its greatness. It is for this purpose that the above words are used, all weaving a pattern. This is indicated at the very beginning when we read: 'He [Voss] had no more need for sentimental admiration than he had, for love. He was complete' (41). The very statement arouses the suspicion of a sensitive reader for it is a queer idea to suggest that an explorer is 'complete' even before the start of his exploration. Hence the lurking note of sarcasm is not missed in White's use of this particular word. The reader becomes aware of Voss' self-esteem as he broods over the mediocrity of the Sydney populace. But at the end of the passage one reads: 'Mediocre, animal men never do guess at the power of rock or fire, until the last moment before those elements reduce them to — nothing. This, the palest, the most transparent of words, yet comes closest to being complete' (61). Here, White intervenes into the thoughts of Voss, when he foresees the sense of complete fulfilment of the latter, as he reduces himself to nothingness before the Almighty at the end of the story.

The word 'circle' is also used to bring out the meaning of completeness. The author lays out the pattern of the word in a seemingly innocent stance. He writes: 'Girls blew on hot tea, and dreamily watched circles widen' (70). This is a part of the
description of the Pringle’s picnic. Apart from depicting the
ideal past time of the girls, the use of ‘circle’, at this
point, is suggestive, for, in its widening ambit, as the reader
will guess, more secret happenings are taking shape. The German
and Laura are forming a tryet quite unknown to the gregarious
picnickers. Perfection, in White’s novels, has often been indi­
cated by the word ‘circle’. In *Voss*, too, we read: ‘... perfe­
tion is always circular, enclosed’ (198). So, the perfect
meeting of the two like souls, Voss and Laura, is best repre­
sented by the word, ‘circle’. The intrinsic design that is
formed with the word ‘circle’, interspersed through the text,
comes to view as the reader goes deeper into the narration. For
instance, in the pristine comforts of Judd’s home, Voss is
heard to observe: ‘Circles expanding on the precious water
made it seem possible that this was the centre of the earth’
(149). Again, in the improvised Christmas celebrations, the
explorer quietly observes Judd being at the centre of the
greasy ‘circumference’ (198). Watching him, Voss feels that
his ‘circle (or state of perfect being) was enviable’ (198).
The sight makes him recall his early meeting with Laura when
they had made ‘a circle of their own’ (198). This longing for
a circular wholeness augurs a perfection in Voss’ life
which is found to be synchronizing with his Machiavellian
existence. Judd’s state of perfection is indicated with a
carefully chosen diction having the connotations of a circle.
For instance, we find the author narrating thus: ‘Sometimes
he (Judd) would breathe upon the glass of those instruments,
and rub it with the cushiony part of his hand, of which the
hard whorls of skin and fat were, by comparison indelicate:’
Here the indelicate, hard 'whorls' present a composite whole which it is often difficult to contemplate. Judd's fulfilled being has in it a charm that attracts men. This can be seen when Ralph Angus is mesmerized by the convict and he crosses 'right over, from the outside, into the circle of sleep, [watching] the hands [of Judd] take the rope and lasso the chestnut horse' (257). Here 'circle of sleep' suggests 'complete bliss' which emanates from Judd and intoxicates his associates. The use of the word 'circle' on the occasion of the supreme sacrifice of the Christlike, Palfreyman, gives the reader a clear idea of its connotation. Palfreyman is killed by the Blacks before the silent spectators. White narrates the scene thus:

'Ahhhh', Palfreyman was laughing, because still he did not know what to do, with his toes turned in. But clutching the pieces of his life. The circles were whirling already, the white circles in the blue, quicker and quicker (343).

Here, the reader gets an unmistakable idea of the circle used as the very symbol of perfection, whereby the modest sacrifice of Palfreyman makes him attain salvation with circles of blue, looming over his new found Christ-like identity. This idea of completeness is also experienced by Bella. Being true to her intuitions, she has deciphered the meaning of the 'circle of light' (429) and of the 'miraculous spire' (429) that could be seen in the cabbage tree in her garden. Like Stan in The Tree of Man, Bella has intuitively found what Laura was long fumbling for intellectually. The idea of perfection which is
to be attained by Voss and which has been repeatedly hinted at by the author comes closest to him at his modest submission before the Blacks. The comet makes Voss realize his littleness against the greatness of the Almighty. So the expression, 'coils of the Golden snake' (379) has become an object of reverence, smiting permanence and perfection before the erring soul. The circular shape is often taken over by the word 'elliptical'. An instance is found in this extract:

a species of soul, elliptical in shape, of a substance similar to human flesh, from which fresh knives were continually growing in place of those that were wrenched out (393) (underlined for focus).

The writer here visualises the souls of Voss and Laura ambling in unison over the desert. What is suggestively presented here is a merging of two souls in an everlasting striving on earth. This leaves no place for any kind of pride, leave alone aspirations for the Godhead. Absolute selflessness and humility alone can lead to perfection symbolized by the 'ellipses'. This is what Voss attains at the fag end of his life. The theme of 'perfection' is thus deeply ingrained in the novel and one finds it again at the concluding lines of the book. In a debate with one Mr. Ludlow, Laura observed with a note of resignation: 'For those who anticipate perfection and I would not suspect you of wishing for less eternity is not too long' (448). In fact, this utterance is not actually an answer to the gentlemen, but a silent suasion over the long years of trial that she has undergone in Voss' trail. Laura's idea of perfection implies total submission of the soul of her other self, Voss, to the Creator.
With that goal of perfection, she has gladly spent the best years of her life. It is perhaps this predicament that the author wishes to suggest by the early depiction of the pensive mood of Laura Belle and Rose after the Deprey sails away with Voss in it:

As they rocked together on the balcony, in the shaggy arms of the honest trees ... they were soothed to some extent, and the light, touching the cumquats on the little bamboo table, turned these into precious stones, the perfection of which gave further cause for hope (122-123).

Here is an assurance for Laura that her goal of perfection will be attained. At the same time, however, it is a warning to her that she will have to struggle hard to realise this end.

Riders in the Chariot is another of White's novels with a complex structure. John Douglas Pringle has rightly observed:

Patrick White has deliberately chosen a style which forces us to read every sentence slowly ... nothing is said simply. No statement is left to speak for itself.15

The reader may go a step further and say that in the text, no word is left to speak for itself. Every significant word is deliberately chosen to achieve a particular end of the writer. As in White's other novels, here, too, there are quite a few such words which not only project the theme with sharp clarity, but also form a part of the inevitable pattern that lies behind the entire oeuvre of White's narrative art.
The novel opens on the four long-suffering elite: Miss Hare, Mrs. Gadbold, Himmelfarb, and Alf Dubbo. The life of each of them is a tale of agony and pain. The word 'torn' has been used very relevantly to depict the stress of their struggles. Its synonyms, and words with similar overtones, like 'scratch', 'slap', 'whip', 'strip', 'splitter', 'dissolve', 'crawl', 'whirl', 'drop', 'suckdown', 'crumble', 'destroy', 'burn', 'crash', 'wrestle', and 'torment' have been put to effective use in the work to convey an idea of the suffering and humility of the chosen four. It is of further interest to know that these words project the strife-torn lives of the four illuminati. The words have been used, however, not generally but specifically, as appropriate, to suit a particular character, and his peculiar suffering. For instance, words like 'torn', 'scratch', 'whip' have been used to depict the physical as well as mental pain of the impulsive and animal-like Mary Hare. While has shown her at the very beginning. While walking along a narrow strip in the country side, Mary slips into a thorny bush where her skirt gets stuck. Seeing her situation, Mrs. Gadbold, who was accompanying her, warns her thus:

"You could get torn," Mrs. Gadbold warned. "Oh, I could get torn", "But what is a little tear?"(7)

Here, Miss Hare's nonchalance is almost animal-like, and she appears as innocent as vulnerable. This feature is very aptly presented in the following passage: "So Miss Hare was pushing and struggling now, because it was what she liked and chose. Scratched a little ... Slapped by a staggy elder bush ..."
Whipped by the little Sarsaparilla vine ...'(12). These the words 'scratched', 'slapped' and 'whipped' depict her naivety as well as her inner suffering. In her state, Mary finds that the word 'LOVE' (16) was 'breakable' (16), and as 'brittle' (16) as glass. Here, 'brittle' and 'breakable' are used to project her vulnerability, as she romps about with her infinite love for the world of nature. Like Theodora, Mary, too, banks in the opulence of nature. But her close relationship with nature is not known to the world. This has been seen in the case of Thee, too, who was forbidden to touch the roses by her domineering mother. It is for this same reason that when Mary goes out after her cousin Eustace, the other dancers at the party see her 'dropping wilted flowers' (31), which stand for Mary's pathetic and deprived existence. But the word 'wilted' has yet another connotation. In consonance with White's depiction of spiritual suffering as the path of progress also, the word 'wilted' conveys a much deeper meaning of life. In Mary's obsession with the decomposed nature is seen her lust for life, for the cycle of birth and growth. Thus the word 'wilt' projects Mary's lonely and sad existence, and along with it brings in the strains of birth and fecundity which Mary's obsessions with the rotting world of nature celebrate. The use of the word 'torn' reaches its climax in the use of 'rip'. This is seen when just before his suicide, Norbert, being unable to bear the sight as well as the insight of his daughter, admonishes her thus: 'Ugly as a foetus. Ripped out too soon' (56). 'Rip' implies cruelty enforced upon the child Mary. More than that, however, the
statement shows her purity, her innocence, as she is a 'fetus', and is thus a pure being, yet to be born. So, it is only a grudging tribute to the spiritual instincts of Mary that Norbert renders his daughter while trying to condemn her as 'ugly' (56).

Himmelfarb's life of suffering is projected through a different set of words. As Pringle has rightly commented, his 'life-history' is not of a single man, but of 'a people'. Hence, the words depicting his path of deprivation and agony have grave undertones. Words like 'bite', 'wrestle', 'ragged', 'suffering', 'splinters', 'destroy', 'strip', 'trial', 'dust', 'crumble', and the like have been put to effective use for this purpose.

The predicament of Himmelfarb is foreshadowed at the beginning of the story with the word 'bite'. In an instance when the young Jew vainly demonstrated his knowledge, his tutor Cantor Katzmann is found to chide him thus:

If a Jew is proud, Mordacai, it is all the harder when he bites the dust. As he certainly will (101).

Here the word 'bite' brings to focus the humiliated and tattered soul of Himmelfarb. A little further in the text is found the utterance, 'They could not wrestle enough on the bed of leaves' (104). Here the author describes the playful wrestling between Himmelfarb and his German friend, Jurgen Stuffer. But the very word, 'wrestling', has a deeper significance, as it is used to suggest the constant struggle that the former has to wage in order to keep himself on the right path. Himmelfarb begins his
life of suffering early enough, as when he was exposed to the 'trial' of charity at his home. The humble, ragged, and unwashed individuals whom he had to meet often caused him to revolt. But as his mother had foretold him, that was not even 'the hundredth part' (109) of his suffering. 'Suffering', with its Jewish connotation of humility and acceptance, is brought before the reader in an instance when Himmelfarb comes home from England and receives the news of his mother's death:

'Or, Ehrenzwing assuring me', he (Hoshe Himmelfarb) insisted, that she did not suffer. 'No pain, Mordecai, ... 'Did not suffer? Did not suffer!' The Aunt's voice blew and flapped. 'There are different ways of suffering' (118).

Here one does get an idea of the vindictive aunt; but along with it, there is the suggestion of the zeal of the Jewish lady Malke Himmelfarb, with the word 'suffering'. But whatever it be, it is Mordecai Himmelfarb alone who is shown to bear the brunt of the deep pain ordained for the Jews. This he suffers on the night he visits the Staafffers when they disclose to him the attack of the Germans on the Jews. He becomes 'the crumbled Jew' (150), the word 'crumbled' fully presenting the man's helplessness. For Mordecai, after having failed his wife and his race, becomes an ineffectual and helpless person. Following the death of his wife, Reha, his entire world grows infected with 'bumping silences' (151), hurting him and tormenting him as he went whispering directionless, totally 'crumpled'. His wife's is the first death that Himmelfarb faces and after that he resigns himself to a life which to him acquired a meaning
only in extreme suffering. Later, much wiser, he recalls
without emotion how Hausi Stauffer had almost 'destroyed' (162)
him in the eyes of the world. When it is time for him, he wit-
nesses the sordidness of the burning town, attempting to
'grapple' (182) with a situation under the Germans which has
ever been the lot of a suffering Jew. The author then describes
the elite lady's voice as being 'stripped' (184) from behind the
gas chambers. But what it emphatically suggests is the tearing
soul of Himmelfarb standing helpless, unable to save his trus-
ting people. So 'All of him was tearing—flesh, breath, the stuff
of his clothes ... ' (185) as he escapes the Germans. The word
'tearing' focuses the ragged existence and struggles of the
responsible Jew who, preparing for a new life in Australia, finds
himself nearly akin to the crawling, stooping little Fery. Thus,
the words 'trite', 'grapple', 'crumble', 'destroy', 'wrestle',
'strip' etc. reveal the deep sufferings of Himmelfarb, the Jew,
in different ways.

In the case of Mrs. Godbold also, the writer has put
to use a number of select terms to reflect the sufferings of
her mind and body. She declared that she was, herself 'only
on sufferance' (223) and this state of her being has been aptly
projected by means of the chosen terms. The word 'sufferance'
plainly projects her plight. The woeful life of Mrs. Godbold
is further depicted by the use of the word 'desperate'. This
is brought into use to project the days of her youth when she
was seen as a 'desperate, wooden girl' (255). And then the
reader finds that she was 'hit' (273) by the sudden death of
her brother. The word 'hit' not only suggests the severity of her sorrow, but also suggests the sad plight of the healthy young girl taken unaware by the suddenness of the tragedy. Besides, the word implies a tone of finality, crushing out any hope of relief. In this context, the utterance, 'She was holding in her hands the crushed melon that had been her brother's head' (238) draws the reader's attention. The word 'crushed' reveals the gruesome manner of Rob's death, and also accentuates the pain and the markedly resigned state of suffering that form the stuff of Ruth's life. Thus, it is no surprise that she is ever willing to sacrifice herself in any way to her mistress (Mrs. Chalmers - Robinson) (245). This sacrifice is at its utmost albeit in a different form, when she begins to embrace Tom Godbold with all his vices, 'to assist in her destruction' (262). But this kind of 'destruction' cannot break her in any way for 'she would have endured all this, and more ...' (273).

However, as she spread her loving kindness, she knew quite well that 'Soon ... it would be her turn to bleed' (285). But there seemed to be hardly any opportunity to give vent to her feelings until the death of Tom when she shed soft, steady tears, which epitomized 'the pure abstraction of [her] gentle grief' (288). The words 'soft', 'steady', and 'gentle' most effectively give a concrete idea of the abstraction of what is Mrs. Godbold's feeling. In this way, a long list of words including 'suffer', 'desperate', 'hit', 'crush', 'sacrifice', 'destruction', 'endure', and 'bleed' helps build up the quiet suffering of this gentle woman.
The pain and suffering of Alf Dubbo is given a very different presentation altogether. The words 'burn', 'bleed', 'sickness', 'disease', 'crook', 'twinge', and 'agony' are used to depict the smouldering agony making a waste of the life of the half-gaste. The struggle of Alf, for the most part, is shown as an echoing urge for creative release. We are told of his 'fiery breath threatening to burn him up' at Mrs. Khalil's (279). His suffering is caught in words like 'cracking' and 'twinge' used with rare sensitivity. Even before he has any knowledge of his stolen pictures of 'The Chariot' and 'The Fiery Furnace', he is shown 'aching in the chest, now that all goodness was to break' (364). Here, the word 'ache' is more for the impending loss, resulting from the sense of betrayal which he commits upon his own self. The word 'cracking', and the compound expression, 'twinge and waves' reflect the overwhelming impact of his loss upon him. So we read, 'The room was cracking' (365) and '... his own life was restored by little twinges and great waves' (365). In the use of the lexia 'cracking', the reader senses Dubbo's deep yet gentle fury and desperation. The phrase, 'little twinges and great waves' points to the excruciating pain and the sense of void experienced by the young painter at the sudden disappearance of his paintings which form, in fact, an indispensable part of his life and existence.

It is his spiritual agony that wrecks the painter. His remorse for his indifference to Himmelfarb never quite leaves him. It is this deep regret and his persistent suffering that finally inspires him to recreate his vision through paint.
To reflect this situation, the author has used words and expressions like 'pain', 'hollow crying', 'agony', and 'jewellery of wounds' all of which reveal his insight into verbal implications. Apart from reflecting Dubbo's painful situation, the words help crystallize the thematic implications of the work. Alf Dubbo's physical suffering is portrayed thus:

Then he began to cry as he stood propped against the basin, a sick hollow crying above the basinful of water ... The pain was opening again in his side... (433).

This physical agony is immediately followed by a depiction that pinpoint his spiritual suffering: 'In his agony, on his knees, Dubbo saw that he was remembering his Lord Jesus ... he would touch the tree of life with blue ... no one would have suspected such a jewellery of wounds' (433-434). There are words chosen to depict also the very quality of Dubbo's deprived, frustrated and sensitive youth. The suspicious mind of this young half-caste is revealed in words like 'privation', and 'fear'. Unlike in the case of Mary Mare, Mrs. Godbold, and Himmelfarb, Dubbo's life is overcast with the cloud of 'fear' as can be seen in expressions like, 'you are not frightened, are you, Jack?' (347), 'something seemed to have frightened the daylights out of him' (361), and 'privation and the fear of capture had made him thinner' (334). After the discovery of the element of fear that underlines Dubbo's life, it is not surprising to find words like 'crook', 'savage', 'diseased body', 'sore', 'suffer' etc. being put to use in the narration about the poor painter, so one reads Alf saying to Mrs. Spice, 'I feel crook'. In reply, the latter
retaliates, 'you are crook' (340). Here, the former refers to his sickness, but the woman points to his oddity besides affirming his illness. Such being the attitude of people towards him, it is not unnatural for him to seek refuge and be lost in the crowded city, 'that most savage and impenetrable terrain' (340). The word 'savage' indirectly accentuates Dubbo's alienation.

Words like 'light', 'gold', 'blue', 'circle', 'wheel', 'sea', 'illumination' etc., have been put to use for projecting the ideas of divine perfection, the attainment of which is the ultimate goal of the four Illuminati. With the introduction of Mary Here to the reader, White reveals her inner identity where 'she was herself a fearful beam of the 'ruddy champing light' (24). This is seen on an occasion when both Mr. Here and Mary experience the 'hour the light was gold. Or red' (23). However, the former cannot fully apprehend the divine significance of the situation in the way his daughter can. So, Mary is transformed by the light, while her father remains behind 'silly' and 'uncertain'. Each of the four, in his or her own peculiar and unassuming way, moves towards the goal of redemption. Often they themselves do not realize the grace of enlightenment that falls upon them, as in that 'last light, illumination is synonymous with blinding' (24). Apart from the four, there are others, too, who are not quite unaware of the heavenly illumination. Custace, for instance, is one. But he does not have the full confidence and courage to enter into it. So, on the night of the dance, Mary finds him spiritually exposed under the lights with a
certain, tarnished glow (32). An insipid reaction to the light is noticed in the case of Mrs. Hare. Similarly, Norbert Hare can only partially realize the significance of the divine illumination. This adds to his frustration and ill humour, and it can be seen that in his presence the lights turn a 'dark brown' (34). The fact that his ugly daughter has grasped the idea which eludes him makes him hate her and he could never forgive her for the crime 'of seeing' (36) behind the lights. But Mary is born to merge with the bright lights. Her instinctive affinity and trust for the lighted world is indisputable. So, the reader finds that on the morning when Mrs. Jolley arrives at Xanadu, the apprehensive Miss Hare does 'not draw [the] curtains until she saw a well-established sunlight lying on the floor' (38), such was her trust in its sanctity. The 'light' was her solace, her support, so that in the dilapidated Xanadu where her spiritual growth flowered, the same 'light' helped to intensify the destruction of her environment. One reads, 'where time had not slashed, the light was finishing the job, Cabinets and little frivolous tables seemed to splinter at a blow' (42). It is the element of light that enthuses Mary. Xanadu holds no charm for her but for the work of the lights upon it which catches her. So, we find: 'As the stair wound upward by slow convolutions, through the well of light, its loveliness tortured the throat of the owner' (43).

The word 'light' is significantly used in the projection of Mrs. Godbold's life, too. The shared spiritual experience of the so-called mad woman of Xanadu and Ruth Godbold is clearly indicated. This is seen in these lines:
Then she (Rise Hare) drifted off, and Mrs. Godbold continued to sit beside her for a while. Evening was a perfect silence. The tranquil light intercepting with the darkness held for a moment a thread of cobweb in its balance (67).

Here, 'tranquil light' clearly suggests the state of spiritual awakening and bliss that the two women secretly enjoy in their being. In contrast to this inner glow, there are the 'fireworks of light, brocade and crystal' (270) that had cascaded upon Ruth for the last time in the employment of Mrs. Chalmers Robinson, before she left her to be married to Tom Godbold. In fact, it is at sarsaparilla and in their shed that Ruth accepts and finally acknowledges the 'light of Him' (270) amidst her 'glistening sheets' (285) of washings. Along with the celestial light that burns is her undaunted love for her husband. So, in spite of all his failings, his death causes her pain turning the light of her life quite 'acid' (287) for the time being.

The same word 'light' reveals significant meanings in the narration of Himmelfarb's life. White slowly arouses the reader's interest in the word 'light' at the start of his story. As a child Himmelfarb was seen to be drawn to his deeply spiritual Jewish mother. Then his mother [would grow] quite luminous. He would have liked to continue watching the lamp that had been lit in her' (97). This is the beginning of Himmelfarb's longing for the celestial lights, and the author spreads his network of words with significant thematic overtones. So when Himmelfarb webs Reha and slips the 'Gold circlet' (127) the
reader cannot overlook the fact that 'It was unbearably perfect'(127). For, it is with her co-operation that Mordecai is able to keep his spiritual leanings intact. Thus the form of the 'Chariot' impresses upon him as he begins scribbling at his desk one night. He feels that he has discovered the Throne of God which is "all gold and chrysoprase, and jasper" (135), and then the 'Chariot of Redemption'(136). But often Himmelfarb is unaware of his chosen being. It is for this reason that he cannot take the final plunge regarding the Revelation of Truth (142). For, 'Imperfection in himself' had enabled him to recognize the fragmentary nature of things, but at the same time restrained him from undertaking 'the immense labour of reconstruction' (141). Still he cannot ward off the call of the Chariot and the possibility of redemption. So he asks Mary:

'And the Chariot', he asked, 'that you wished to discuss at one stage? Will you not admit the possibility of redemption? (155).

In this way the words 'light', 'chariot', 'perfection', and 'redemption' form a pattern spread over the work. As the words recur, the reader becomes aware of a growing intensification of the theme in its layout. It is interesting to note that as Himmelfarb leaves Europe for Australia to begin there a life of humility and suffering, the scene around him is thus projected: 'The light was winding them [the two Jews] in saffron'(194). Here the saffron light is a clear indicator of Himmelfarb's life of sacrifice. Just a little later, as he is shown to arrive at Sydney, the author writes: 'As the heat
emote the tarmac, there appeared to rise up before him a very
definite pillar of fire' (194). This 'pillar of fire' or light
(with Biblical echoes) is the source of enlightenment which
sustains Himmelfarb during his suffering. So that when he
finally gets a job at the bicycle factory, contrary to
the employer's warning that it would kill him, the Jew is seen
glowing in his humble capacity where he sees the 'benedictions
of light and water' (205). It is in the same state of humble
suffering that he meets with Mrs. Godbold. Their meeting is
marked by the fact that she was forced to look up, exposing
her face to his, and 'to the evening light' (215). Here, the
evening light may be seen as an extension of the peaceful and
quiet being of Himmelfarb. It is, therefore, not strange that
the bond between the two 'hung [like] the golden sphere' (215)
radiating celestial light and a quiet perfection, which is
cought in 'the light splintered against their teeth' (216).
The unmistakable tie between the two is again brought to the
fore at Easter when 'Distance, shadows, light itself finally
made way, and Himmelfarb recognized the figure of Mrs. Godbold...
'(393), who had come to offer the shankbone of the lamb
which was almost the twin of the one he had laid that after-
noon on his own Seder table. Here the impact of the hovering
celestial 'light' upon the two cannot be overlooked. The reader
must note that although 'light' and 'fire' have heavenly
connotations when used in relation to Himmelfarb, the same
words assume very different meanings in the sphere surrounding
Flack and Jolley. So we find that the light takes on an 'acid'
effect, being 'greenish' in colour (418). These adjectives add
a tainted colour to the word 'light'. But as her own cunning allowed Mrs. Flack to admit, their fiery passion of hatred cannot burn Himmelfarb 'as he was born of fire' (419). And, in the case of Mary, her 'tears ran out of her eyes to burn fire' (423), as she broke into the blazing house to rescue the Jew. At the deathbed of Himmelfarb, the impact of the word 'light' is clear. The author brings in an element of tranquillity with the use of the expressions 'evening light', being inside the humble house awaiting final redemption. At that moment he has a vision where he was Nan Kadman, descending from the Tree of Light to take the Bride. In this way his Jewish beliefs are seen to merge with the Christian beliefs of Mrs. Godbold and the instinctive beliefs in goodness of Mary. The word light thus finely weaves a pattern of spiritual relationships amongst them.

In the case of Dubbo, too, the words 'light', 'fire', 'blue', and 'gold' have much significance. This is clear from the manner in which the author introduces the story of the Black boy. While shows him in the company of the Jew and on that day,

He stood for a moment squinting at the sun, the light from which splintered on his broad teeth. He could have been smiling, but that was more probably the light, concentrated on the planes of his excellent teeth (312).

Here, too, the words 'sun', and 'light' assume importance in indicating the life of the elite painter. So we find him ferreting through the books of Mrs. Flack and discovering the
Chariot. 'In the picture the Chariot rose, behind the wooden horses, along the pathway of the sun' (320). This is Alf's first encounter with the divine object of their search. Later, he realizes the godliness of the vision and, in his attempt to recreate it, adds the colours blue and gold (the heavenly hues). This is seen at the very start of his furtive attempts: 'Alf squeezed a tube, and there shot out, from beneath the crust of ages, a blue so glistening, so blue ...' (322). The spiritual tendencies in Alf make him time and again express them through his paints, marked in the picture of the 'altar lights' which he paints inside 'the old, broken-down clock' (336). When Alf finally sketches the picture of 'The Chariot', he cannot finish it as his final redemption is yet to come, and 'the light still had to pour in' (353). This 'light' he finds in the humble shed of Mrs. Godbold into which he stumbles to find that 'There in the bosom of her [Mrs. Godbold's] light ... [Himmelsfarb] lay ...' (436). Immediately, the reflection of this light seems to throw colour onto his canvas. 'So, in his mind he is loaded with [the divine] panegyrick blue the tree from which the women, and the young man His disciple, were lowering their Lord' (436). Inspired by this light he goes into his room to finish his picture of the Chariot and the four riders in blue and gold. Strangely, he finds that 'The light was pouring into his room, and might have blinded if the will to see had continued in it' (459). Finally, spent by his own creation, he realizes that he has gilded his paintings with his own blood, his own gold. Thus he seeks redemption through his gilded creation and it is in 'the heavy yellow
sunlight' (460) that his landlady finally discovers his and. In this way the words 'light', 'fire', 'blue', and 'gold', help, by their numerous associations and varied semantic uses, unravel hidden layers of significance in the text. The words 'circle', 'chain', 'perfection', 'canopy', 'whorl', 'round', and 'wheel' also merit a close look. In White's use, these have a much deeper and wider significance than most of the other recurrent words used in the text. All these words point to the idea of circular perfection, the essence of the mandalic significance.

The word 'chain' is also brought in to imply continuity of the movement which leads to perfection. The continuous form of this particular chain is obvious and the fact that its beginning is finally its end is only too clear. This is realized as soon as one finds Himmelfarb entranced in watching the Godbold children begin 'a kind of ritual dance, forging chains of girls round the rotten veranda posts ...' (221). A little later, one reads : 'So the golden chains continued to unwind, the golden circles to revolve ...' (222). The divine state of perfection that these golden chains and circles symbolize may be easily understood. It is because of the hidden significance of the word 'circle' that one finds a deep meaning at the behaviour of Mary at Himmelfarb's death: 'Miss Hare would only moan, not from pain, it seemed, but because she had succeeded in closing the circle of happiness' (432). Thus the mandalic significance in this novel is highlighted successfully by White's use of a group of words. There are critics who feel
that in *Riders in the Chariot* 'the connection between the four characters is too slight and too mystical to be wholly convincing.' However, the recurrent and highly suggestive words combine to form a deep inter-relationship amongst the four. It will not be an over-simplification to say that in the true interpretation of White's use of some select words lies the key to unravel the mystery of *Riders in the Chariot*.

In the development of *The Eye of the Storm*, words like 'see', 'love', 'know', 'centre', 'silence', 'light', 'purpose', 'possess', 'die', 'betray', 'simplicity' and 'humility' play a key role. As has been noted in the context of the earlier novels, these select words help form a distinctive pattern in the work out of which there gradually emerges its deeper significance.

The work opens on the plight of a purblind octogenarian, Mrs. Hunter, at her deathbed. This rich, vain, sensual, and materialistic woman yet possesses a rare inner perception which makes her 'see' much more than what the other characters around her would be willing to admit. The word 'see' has been used to build up this particular trait in her most effectively. The author prepares to acquaint the reader with Elizabeth's insight at the very beginning. So one reads: 'At least I can see you this morning ... I can see the window too ... And ... the looking glass ... I shall see them' (10). Here the word 'see' does not merely refer to Mrs. Hunter's visual power but, more importantly, to her ability to penetrate into the soul of her nurse, Mary. It also serves as a word of caution that she is
set to frustrate the murderous design of her scheming children. So she clearly tells Dorothy on her arrival: "In any case you flew — to make sure you'd see me die — ..." (82). Here, the word 'see' is ironically used as it points more to the insight of Mrs. Hunter than the wishful thought of Dorothy. Soon after, it becomes obvious from her confessions at the Cheeseeman's party, that Dorothy has little illusion left about her mother's incapacity. In spite of her pretence of filial devotion, she cannot hide her hatred for her mother so much so that even the coarse Cheery Cheeseeman sees through her and asks her, 'why do you hate your mother, Dorothy?' (287). In a situation as this, it is all too clear that there remains very little for her own mother to see. So, laying aside the last bid at deception, Dorothy admits, '... but Elizabeth Hunter always saw. She saw the worst in everyone' (287). Thus, the word 'see' has been adroitly handled to work out the story at the very start of the narrative. A little later, the author once more brings in this word thus: 'She [Mrs. Hunter] had always seen too clearly'(14). The repeated use of this word, in contextual juxtaposition with the situation of the bed-ridden woman, helps focus the irony of the mother's involvement in her daughter's thought. Another instance of this peculiar use of the word is found in the argument between the housekeeper, Lippmann, and the night nurse, Sister de Santis over the placing of the flowers:

'I have put flowers as she wishes.' 'Your needn't have put the flowers ... she wouldn't see,' 'Mrs. Hunter will see through a wall if she is determined to' (21).
with her rare intuition and keen perception, this old woman is aware of much that takes place around her. For, as Caroline Bliss has rightly stated, 'In several senses she [Elizabeth Hunter] is the eye of the novel's storm.' D.R. Burns, too, has an important observation to make in this regard. According to him, Elizabeth Hunter is granted the clearest perception of 'pure being.' This, by implication, is to suggest that her deficiency of physical perception is amply made up by her inner light. In fact, it accentuates the depth of her perception and clarity of insight. It is thanks to this faculty that she could instantly grasp the story of the birds that the Russian had narrated to the confused Dorothy on her flight home. With a quiet understanding, Elizabeth tells her daughter: 'I can see the birds, just as your Russian said'. It is for the same reason that in a solemn moment Mrs. Hunter admits that she shares the knowledge of a superior love with de Santis as she has been 'shown' in the island. So she says, 'Haven't I been shown?' The same word is suggestively used in the context of Basil and Dorothy, too. But here one notes a striking difference in the use of the word. The author shows Basil stranded at Bangkok and the text reads:

Some of them he knew by sight, one or two by name, so he ducked his head, 'Hi, Gemma-Hamish?' Under his bonhommie he was shy of the young. Never let them see it, though (129).

The reader finds here that apart from being able to 'see' anything himself like his mother, Basil shies away from the sight of others. Immediately, one is aware of the cowardly, frustrated,
and fallible features of this 'non-starter', Basil Hunter. Whereas, in the case of Mrs. Hunter, the word is actively used, Basil uses it in passive reference alone. This clearly rules out any possibility of his entering the 'eye', which is assuredly Mrs. Hunter's prerogative. In the case of Dorothy, too, the word has much to reveal. Referring to the text in the section about the Cheeseman's party, one reads about Dorothy thus:

If only the lid could be lifted from her head to let out the bursting rockets of thought alternating with evil smog, she might see more clearly, but clear vision, she suspected, is something you shed with childhood ... (268).

Dorothy is aware of the evil in her designs, but being selfish she cannot extricate herself from her plans. Thus, she would remain unseeing and murderous, never having the courage to enter the 'eye' in spite of the best of opportunities at the beginning. All that she could do, however, is to enter without a qualm into the peep hole of her brother's eye, which is in fact, her own. In this way the word 'see' and its associations have successfully built up a widespread layer of deep suggestiveness that claims close attention for a proper understanding of the text.

In The Eye of the Storm, unlike in the other novels, the word 'love' has been used extensively. Mrs. Hunter is an alienated woman - alienated from the world around her, and her
near and dear ones. Her incapacity for true love explains her basic problem. Naturally, the question of love is central to an understanding of her case. Quite expectedly then, the author has made use of the word 'love' with extensive contextual variations to bring out the situation of the protagonist and some of the characters by way of appropriate contrast or comparison. The story is made to expand around the bedside of an old and ailing woman. But in so doing, White delves into her past, showing her sampling 'love', in its variegated forms at the different stages of her colourful life. The reader gets an idea of the highly suggestive quality of this word in moulding the story at the very beginning when the author slowly introduces Elizabeth. One cannot fail to take note of 'the ivory brushes with true-lover's knots'(11) that adorn the ailing woman's bedroom. This elderly woman whose brushes are decorated with 'true-lover's knots' has been quite flippant in the matter of love. Her callous attitude drove her husband away from her, and so far as the children are concerned, they did not even know the word 'love', witness her confession in her sleep (12). In like manner, Mrs. Hunter frequently journeys into her past and comments upon her own life in particular, or her relation with her children. She is caught brooding thus over the matter: 'I loved my husband. My children wouldn't allow me to love them'(157). Echoes of the same feeling are voiced as she says: 'People try to catch you out - accuse you - of not - not loving them enough' (15). Her own stand in the matter is quite clear. We hear her brooding upon the subject thus:
What were their names? Dor — O — thy? And
Bel — Bas — Il. Words of love at the time, ugly
and pretentious in the end (15).

On one occasion the reader finds Mrs. Hunter exclaiming:

I could hear them calling from inside me — blaming
me because I prevented them loving each other (511).

Immediately, however, she draws her own conclusion about the
concept of love and consoles herself: 'People who aren't
capable of loving often blame someone else' (511). This con­
clusive remark is a perceptive comment by the woman upon her
own situation.

According to Dorothy Green, 'The unifying theme, the
sheer perversity of human love, is announced firmly enough by
Elizabeth Hunter,' at the beginning of the novel. This is
particularly true in the travesty of love displayed by her in
relation to several persons. Starting with mild flirtations
with Mr. Keenie, she ventured boldly with Arnold Jyburd, Athol
Strove, and others one after another. Her relation with her
husband did not stand in the way of her casual affairs with
others. Here, the word 'love' can be easily replaced by what
can be regarded, by implication, as its synonym — the word
'possession'. For, at this juncture her only aim was to possess.
Apart from that, there was little to such relationships, as she
herself admits:

this was neither love, nor the more satisfactory
affection. On her part it was only desire ... But
we don't love each other Arnold and I am the one
to blame I don't love you but I loved it it is something which had to which you will forget and I shall remember with pleasure (37).

Here the use of the word love reveals the hard and possessive nature of the ravishing beauty that was Elizabeth Hunter.

Elizabeth Hunter's love as possession contrasts sharply with what Sister de Santis reveals it to be to the old woman. To the latter, love is a kind of supernatural state to which 'I must give myself entirely, and be used up, particularly my imperfections - till I am nothing'(157). Her attitude indicates, in the words of O. R. Burns, 'a religion of perpetual becoming of a generalised love for life.' As her situation shows, Elizabeth Hunter is incapable of realizing love as self-sacrifice. Towards the end of the novel in her plaintive pleading 'Love me '(518) one hears a desperate cry for atonement. Thus, Caroline Bliss has rightly observed in the novel, that 'love', like 'vision' has been sought perpetually .... by the protagonist. The word 'love' with its various shades of meanings has much to add to the understanding of the characters of Basil, Dorothy, Sister de Santis, Sister Manhood, Sister Badgezy, Lipmann, the Wyburds and the Mackorys.

The use of the word 'light' in this novel may not be as frequent as in the Riders in the Chariot, but its significance is no less striking. In fact, it is with the help of this term that White depicts the final meaning of Elizabeth's experience. Apart from representing Mrs. Hunter's ultimate realization in life, the word brings to the surface suggestive meanings
embedded in the work. The reader's attention is first drawn to the use of the lexia in this line: 'According to the light it was neither night nor day' (11). Here, 'light' holds up a divine state of being when the souls of the two women (Mrs. Hunter and the night nurse) unite in subservience to the Almighty. It is in such moments that one reads into the secret soul of the apparently brusque Mrs. Hunter. Then it becomes 'as redemptive as water, as clear as morning light' (12). In contrast to this secret light, the external light is 'abrasive' (15) and disturbing. The words like 'glitter' with connotations of light also help reveal much meaning in this context. There is, for instance, this expression: 'the former mineral glitter of her mother's almost extinct stare' (70). Here, 'the mineral glitter', on the one hand, means Mrs. Hunter's unrelenting nature, and on the other holds the promise of a future realization of the Eternal Light (or glitter). The word 'light' takes on a significant role as it is used to prepare Elizabeth for her ultimate experience in the storm. White uses the word thus:

The fractured light in the shuttered room gave back to Mother's hair the aureola it must have worn in youth, of what again appeared as palest, purest gold (363).

Here, the echo of the goal of the illuminati in Riders in the Chariot, is once more heard. One cannot overlook, also, the use of 'light' in Elizabeth's dream which she narrates to Fehl, at that time Dorothy notes that she was extra-ordinarily radiant. 'She [Mrs. Hunter] had grown so luminous even Dorothy, perched
on her barrel, was precariously spellbound' (389). The luminosity of Elizabeth seems to project her final state of illumination. Her narration of the dream runs thus:

What I remember in particular from each of these dreams is that light I found below - sometimes flowing around me like water - then, on other occasions, as though emanating from myself: I was playing a single beam on objects I thought might be of interest (389).

The same lexie is suggestively used with regard to the other characters too. In a sense, its deep and varied implications permeate the entire narrative and much of the inner life of the characters can be seen only by concentrating one's attention on the word in relation to each of them.

Veronica Brady has pointed out the meaning of 'death' in The Eye of the Storm. According to her,

White] ... succeeds quite remarkably in ... offering insight into the meaning of death, or rather life which affirms itself and its absolute value precisely at the point of death.23

So, the reader finds death ringing loud from the beginning of the novel. Apart from the outline of the story which is about an old woman at her deathbed, the weaving of the narration itself shows a marked preoccupation with 'death'. This is seen in the use of words like 'die', 'death', 'destroy', 'devour' that abound in the text. White's protagonist, obsessed with death from the very beginning, is thus presented: 'But I
shan't die - or anyway, not till I feel like it. I don't believe anybody dies who doesn't want to ...' (61). The word is used also to reveal the attitude of Mrs. Hunter to her two grown up children, as well as their evil design against her. Basil, for instance, gives vent to his exasperation against his mother when he says: 'Nothing will persuade Elizabeth Hunter to die' (240). However, Elizabeth dies at long last. To her, death was but a reawakening into a world of light. As noted in the instance of the storm at Brumby.

She lay and submitted to someone to whom she had never been introduced. Someone is always tinkering with something. It is the lineman testing for the highest pitch of usefulness the human spirit can endure. Not death. For yourself there is no question of dying (408-409).

The same situation was experienced once more at the fag-end of her life when she knew nothing but that grace would redeem her finally. 'Death' is something she couldn't believe in unless it was another side of 'Life'. As the writer unambiguously presents it, Mrs. Hunter feels that

Death is only something to believe when it has happened in the DEATHS to people you don't know it has to happen to some to parents who again you hardly you never knew (542).

The word 'death' is seen to penetrate into the thoughts of the different characters at different stages of the work. Once, as Flore Manhood is busy making up her face, the word 'death' is used to reveal her attitude towards Mrs. Hunter significantly.
Her thought reads thus: 'Momentarily at least this fright of an idol became the goddess hidden inside of life ... of beauty ... and finally of death' (115). Thus, in a variety of ways, the writer has made use of the word to indicate different attitudes of the characters to the thought of death which inhibits the protagonist. As a matter of fact, all her past is unfolded under the shadow of her impending death, and it is but natural that no one coming in contact with her can remain indifferent to this fact of life. As in the case of the novel already discussed here, in *The Eye of the Storm* also, the story is made to unfold with the help of words like 'circle', 'perfection', 'grace', 'wheel', 'whorl', 'calm', 'centre', 'performance', 'stillness'. In addition, the author has introduced some new words like 'eye', 'funnel', 'pyramid' etc. in this work. Veronica Brady has rightly observed that in *The Eye of the Storm* White has finally said 'a definite word about life ....' The newly added words act as points of emphasis on the final realization of the desirable state of human existence that White has tried to present in this novel.

The word 'circle' and other words sharing with it a close proximity of sense signify the mandalic perfection which is the typical configuration of White's vision. The novel opens with Sister de Santis hovering around her patient, almost 'a chrysalis' (9). Here, the word 'chrysalis' directly points to the feeble condition of her charge. But there is also a subtler significance. For the encircling covering of the chrysalis points to the circular perfection which Elizabeth is ordained to receive later in life. Similar is the meaning derived from the word
'emblased'. The reader is drawn to the word as he reads 'The old head lay looking almost emblased against the perfect structure of pillows' (10). The idea of being encircled is casually presented with the word 'emblased'. Besides, the word 'perfect' that follows soon after seems to direct the reader's eye to this kind of a reading of the word. This interpretation holds ground, for, a little later, one finds White bringing in a straight reference to this state of perfection. This is found in the expression, 'the nurse might have wished to remain clinging to their state of perfection ...' (11). This state of perfection is like the one attained in the calm of the storm at sea. This is what was implied when the strange Dutchman told Dorothy on their shared flight, 'God had willed us to enter the eye ... the still centre of the storm' (69). The 'eye' is the calm or 'stillness' in the centre or core of the tumult of the world. It is this state of 'perfect stillness' (61) that is necessary for attaining the state of mandalic perfection. But as Elizabeth is seen to reflect, it is 'too subtle to enter except by special grace' (15).

Redemption, however, is possible only after one undergoes the stress and strain of this existence. Elizabeth succeeds in attaining it as she lets the 'myth of womanhood in her be ... exploded by the storm' (409). So, one finds that after she had been 'reduced to shards ... the birds on the island accepted to eat out of her hands while ... they were encircled' (395). Thus it is as a 'flaw' or broken down fragment that she remains at the 'centre of this jewel of light' (409). For, to be visible
in the eye of the storm, it is necessary for Elizabeth to ... become part of the shambles she saw on looking behind her ...' (410). It is interesting to note that unlike the characters of the former novels, Elizabeth admits her limitations only at a moment of crisis, which in her case is the moment of the storm. So the eye is therefore not apocalypse, still less apotheosis, but a paradigm a precious jewel of a moment crystalized out of her life. Thus, the word 'storm', 'eye', 'flaw', and 'centre' help White realize his vision of Elizabeth's experience in a distinctive manner.

It is the religion of 'perpetual becoming' (11) advocated by de Santia, that is an important matter for consideration in the story. Mrs. Hunter, too, realizes this, and it is brought into focus in the text with words like 'whorl', 'funnel', 'pyramid' and 'cyclone'. The continuous process of becoming is caught by the word 'cyclone'. Elizabeth Hunter does experience the highest moment of her being in the calm of the storm. But the very motion of the storm or the cyclone, the repeated circular gyrations, seem to signify that is not the true goal of her quest. Rather, it is the unending movement itself, the 'perpetual becoming'. This is subtly indicated by the word 'cyclone' as one finds her saying, 'Dorothy, didn't I tell you of my experience in a cyclone?' (70). Again, White brings in a repeated use of the word thus, 'Anyway, it was while I was on the island that this cyclone struck ... (70-71) ... And the cyclone: why was it given to Elizabeth Hunter to experience the eye of the storm?' (71). The frequent use of the lexia, no doubt, indicates the
significance of Mrs. Hunter's condition. The words, 'cyclone' and 'storm' synonymously used, indicate a continuity of whirling motion in relation to the protagonist. The same idea is suggestively conveyed by the word 'funnel'. Even before Elizabeth could observe the cyclonic gyration, she had refuse in a bunker which took the form of a funnel. 'It was dry inside her funnel' (407). The author seems obsessed with the presentation of the motions of rediscovery, that he places his protagonist in a mould of a 'funnel' as if to prepare her for the momentous event. The word 'tunnel' also has been put to use for the same purpose. Much earlier in the narration, the reader comes across this lexia as the author describes Elizabeth's afternoon nightmares, when the 'flannel tunnel daunted her' (92). The vein woman is disturbed by the possibility of 'perpetual becoming', the essence of which she realizes is the 'eye' of the storm. So, in her bedridden state, she is often obsessed with this search, often going into a trance. The word 'pyramid' also points to the same idea of 'reliving'. As has been already explained in Chapter IV (on poetic qualities) the term points to the height, and then the slow decline of Elizabeth's enthusiasm and experience. The ideas of rediscovery, and the essence of 'perpetual becoming' are thereby established. So, Mrs. Hunter is tossed by the thoughts of 'the waves shaped like small pyramids' between which lies her repeated resurrection.

Mrs. Hunter is possessed of a will to power which belies her crippled state and constitutes what may be called her strength. Words like 'will', 'purpose', 'possess', 'strength', 'weakness' and their suggestive senses work together to reveal the inner
quality of this woman who stands out amongst White's visionaries. The word 'will' is used with much sensitivity. Elizabeth's superior will is indicated at the outset by her contempt for the pliant character of others, like her daughter's mother-in-law, 'she hadn't the will to live' (60). It is this 'will' that makes her strong enough to nurse her ailing husband all alone, as she says, 'I managed. By will' (101). Given her inner strength, it is not at all surprising that Mrs. Hunter could will her death. The moment of her death is thus described:

Now the real business in hand was not to withdraw her will, as she had once foreseen, but to will enough strength into her body to put her feet on the ground and walk steadily towards the water (532).

Then, the final submission to the Almighty is most poetically expressed by a repeated use of the word 'will', for example, 'The seven swans are perhaps massed after all to destroy a human will ...' (532).

It should now be obvious from the above discussion that Patrick White's capacity for effecting a wide range of imaginative modulations in the application of some select terms is unparalleled. The inherent potentialities of single terms have not been explored so deeply by any other writer so far. A sensitive rendering of the subjective states of the characters which is a main feature of White's fiction, owes primarily to this rare gift which is as much a matter of skill as imagination. It also implies at the same time an uncommon insight into the suggestive force of language as such on the part of the
writer, and a spontaneous creative turn of mind capable of
giving various sensuous shapes of form and colour to thought
in the abstract. It is in recognition of this faculty that
Peter Beaton observed: 'Patrick White has taken the language
of the familiar and injected into it a sense of the arcane and
the esoteric that has transformed words into the hieroglyphs
of a vision that may be disquieting ....' A perceptive
judgment like this is hard to refute.

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