CHAPTER VII

Concluding Remarks

The foregoing study of the various stylistic elements of five of Patrick White’s novels, covering his entire career, shows him as a conscious stylist. But as one moves from one novel to another one does not fail to perceive a slow but sure deepening of the awareness of reality which is always the substratum upon which the edifice of White’s style is laid. From Happy Valley onwards, White has tried to set his novels against an established code or ‘code’ always endeavouring to penetrate into the core of reality, its very structure, as it were, as opposed to a mere superficial delineation. This end of the writer has resulted in a style that is more or less common to all the novels, in so far as the technique is concerned. There is, however, a steady expansion of stylistic details to cope with the basic design which has grown more ample and complex in each successive novel. An unobtrusive yet firm relationship of certain elements (for example, the narrative pattern, the narrative technique, the poetic quality, and the peculiar use of the lexis) is always present in them. A careful reading of the text shows the inevitable ripening of White’s style from his early works to those of his later career. One element in particular that does not fail to draw the reader’s attention is the significant development of the structure of imagery, aptly framed to reveal the peculiar pattern of
relationship among the characters of any particular novel. There is always seen to be an element of irresistible and compulsive force within the framework of the relationship itself that gives the work its peculiar onward thrust and its ultimate design. This leads us to reject an opinion in certain quarters that White's intuitive and emotional bent of mind, apparent in his novels, is devoid of much planning or rationality. No matter how fluid and mystical the texture of White's writing is, it is all meticulously organized to bring about a particular effect. Thus, his style is deliberate.

Some critics have found fault with White for what they prefer to call a preponderant ambiguity of style. But White's ambiguity, even if it is a fact, is the result, more of the conscious duality of his thought and expression pertaining to his presentation of a vision, than any natural clumsiness of execution on his part.

As is already shown in Chapter II, there is a marked design within each of the novels. In addition, the progression of the works (particularly, from The Aunt's Story to The Eye of the Storm) presents a cyclical design or a mandalic pattern which forms the ideal motif of life or existence in White's creative perception. White's style is also designed to reflect an awareness of pure being which the protagonists try to achieve in their different ways. In The Eye of the Storm, the unconscious search for (or, rather, floundering into) the 'eye' of the storm (the ideal state of being) completes the cyclic design which begins in the earlier novels; and the end is assuredly
marked in the beginning. This design is inclusive of *A Fringe of Leaves*, too, for here, not only is the protagonist's journey sudden and enforced, but the very fact that she is virtually bared of all her physical and psychological dressings and leanings, epitomizes the early broodings of Theodora when she 'took off her clothes' and lay in the water, wishing to become one with the unpretentious world of nature. This points to the cyclical pattern that is inherent in the organization of the series of White's novels which some see as very close to those of Henry James.

A confident narrative technique qualifies the fictional style of White from the days of his early career. After having completed *Happy Valley* and *The Living and the Dead*, the author shows a marked proficiency in the narrative art in *The Aunt's Story* where he displays profound skill in the dramatization of Theodora Goodman's lonely quest. What impresses the reader is the use of the stream of consciousness technique giving breath to what is nearly inexpressible. In the other novels also, as explained in detail in Chapter III, the writer has put the narrative skill to the best advantage of presenting the peculiar predicaments of his characters at all levels.

White's growth as a stylist can be seen well in the use of poetic qualities (i.e. the imagery, symbolism and the like) in his writings. The images as they develop from one novel to another together form a set of references which can be seen as a static background shared by all his fictional works. As noted in Chapter IV, the study of the images and symbols helps the
evaluation and appreciation of each of the novels individually
and as forming a part of a complex whole. Also, the prepon-
derence of certain words helps modulate the thematic develop-
ment of the novels, as has been elaborately noted in Chapter V
of the present work.

It should be amply clear from the preceding chapters
that White's style is subtle and complex, and deeply sugges-
tive, but not ponderous, a style that is abstract, but never
abstruse. Naturally, White is always slow reading, and is
appreciated best by a select readership. The critical temper
of this style is more inherent than obvious in its texture.
It is a style that is most eminently suited to present the
mystery of myriad passions opening and perplexing our being.
The totality of all these stylistic nuances presents almost a
sense of perfection. It is an engrossing style so much so that
the reader, unknowingly to himself, gets lost in the charac-
ters and their situations. To be able to achieve this is an
index of unusual power for a creative writer, White has
attained it in full measure. To move in the world of Patrick
White is to move, as in the case of all the great masters of
literature, in a world of men and women who are guided by the
compulsions of their own thought and passion. For a writer to
be able to reflect this is primarily, thanks to his mastery of
the appropriate style, the mastery of the written word, and
its wondrous capacity to comprehend the several layers of our
conscious self. No wonder, then, that Patrick White will
continue to be read by the avid reader for his sheer style, if not anything else. The mystery of being, as well as its skilful presentation to the reader, are thus inherent in the basic structure of White's style, where one discovers a grand epitomizing of his poetic vision.