CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Style in Fiction with Special Reference to Patrick White

The question of style in fiction is not easily expounded; basically an individual mode of setting forth a vision or an idea, it is a matter of wide ramifications which critics have studied in detail, but they have done so mostly in relation to a particular writer or tradition or school of fiction. The wide variations of practice make it difficult to reduce the notion of fictional style to a precise formula. Its intricacies are best seen in the pages of individual works. That, however, presupposes a wide survey of authors and traditions, which is beyond the purview of the present work. The purpose here is to make a precise statement about the basic function of style in fiction and its various elements, keeping in view the detailed study of some of the aspects of style in two novels of Patrick White to be done in this work.

The primary purpose of style in fiction is to render an exact picture of the work in all its details as conceived in the mind of the writer: the reality, the inward truthfulness, and the comprehensiveness of vision, style being the projection of the writer's vision or
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through this technique or form alone that the writer has
the means of discovering, exploring, and developing his
subject, thus adding to its meaning. It may be a highly
descriptive account, a direct telling of a tale in a
language that is chaste and plain, or it may be a highly
complex narrative design, and the language may also be
depictively suggestive and evocative. Style may be rapid or slow,
depending upon the effect the writer wants to achieve. Its
primary aim is to engage the reader's mind to the work in
such a way as to ensure that he sees it after the writer.
Carole Huxley has succinctly summed up the whole argument
thus: 'The style of a story is the vehicle that carries
the reader on his imaginative journey.'

Style in fiction is primarily an agreement between
form and content, and its success is measured by the degree
of perfection achieved in integrating the two. Here in
a work of fiction is dependent upon its having a well-defined
subject which may be a single event or an elaborate concatenation
of events. It may centre round a solitary figure or
a wide network of relationships. For as John Halperin has
rightly observed, the two are (in the works of such writers
like Flaubert and Henry James) 'synbiotic, ever identical.'

This is one of the innumerable pointers to the importance
attached to style in fiction in modern times by writers and
critics. Thus conceived, it is a matter of organic relation-
ship, far beyond what was conceived by earlier fiction.
In the final analysis, the notion of 'style' narrows down to the overall manner of expression of the author's experience and vision. Critics have sometimes stressed the subjective elements in style even to the extent of equating it with the author's personality, giving rise to the oft-repeated dictum, 'style is the man'. So a critic like Bloch has pointed out that often a writer's style indicates his 'attitude to his subject and his attitude to the reader...'. It therefore follows that a style also emerges from a writer's ability to move his reader. The divergent views on style thus point to the fact that style is basically a matter of overt expression of experiences and thoughts of the individual writer within or without the accepted literary format. This has led Graham Bough to comment that 'if language is the dress of thought then style ... is the particular cut of that dress.' The critic's opinion here only affirms the idiosyncratic and peculiar use of language by the author in evoking not just his experience alone, but his artistic vision as well, often, as Bloch has aptly observed, 'It is possible to be a good novelist with an undistinguished or even mediocre style provided that it is adequate to convey the sequence of events and
to delineate the characters who take part in it!° o, one may readily concur that style is the subject. For, the style grows from the vision and in return illuminates it. Thus, style may be summed up as the typical manipulation of normal language to embody the author's thought. In fact, it is just what Jean Paul has most poetically conceived as the 'incarnation of thought'°.

It will be rather unrealistic to attempt to make a complete list of stylistic elements and devices adopted by various writers, for they are as many as the writer's inventive genius is unlimited. Some of the most common and recurrent among them include the narrative structure, the narrative voice, the technique of the stream of consciousness, direct interior monologue, indirect interior monologue, points of view, flashbacks, the story within the story, methods of 'nuage' and 'panorama', the setting, character, pattern of repetitions, internal analysis (or a pattern of sensory impressions), reverie, the techniques of contrast and simultaneity, verbal gestures, ritual speech patterns, collage, juxtaposition of contraries, rhetoric, symbols, image pattern, image clusters, and the like. There are innumerable ways in which these elements are made to combine in any particular text, depending upon the effect that the writer wants to achieve. Some of these elements, as pertinent to the present study, are examined in some detail in the following paragraphs. They are : The
narrative design, the narrative technique (the narrative voice and points of view), the poetic qualities of White's fiction, and the recurrence of some particular words and expressions in it.

The various functions of the narrative as a fictional mode have drawn close attention of the critic and many thoughtful studies have been made on it in recent times. Its two constituent elements - the (narrative) design and the (narrative) voice have been viewed from various perspectives. Thus, the structure of a text has been seen as consisting of the major units into which the work is largely divided. The incidents, the episodes, and the manner in which they are arranged are also seen as significant structural units. In this connection, flashbacks and montages have their own importance. Along with these, mention may be made of the Freytag's triangle (including exposition, peripety, falling action and so on), which form significant structural units. Moreover, other elements like inciting force, juxtaposition, suspense, and transposition are also constituents of what is called a narrative pattern.

The fictional narrative is the method used by the author to impart growth to his story. In the words of Pelham Edgar, when reduced to its stringest forms, the narrative is 'the recounting of an episode, or a series of episodes in temporal and casual sequence.' Herbert
unad has pointed out that the object of the narrative is, "to transmit to the reader an exact visual account of the object or action represented." Thus, it must be noted that a narrative is not a mere story-telling. For, to narrate is not exactly the same as 'to tell.' Critics have minutely differentiated, 'The chief pattern of narrative is its inclusiveness; it is the narrative that intersperses scenes in dialogue... with summary accounts of what is happening.' In short, the narrative is the narration of a succession of fictional events which make up the story in the novel. It is, therefore, important that the selection and control of the events narrate a given primary importance. It is this selection and organisation of the incidents that make up the pattern of the narrative.

The pattern of the narrative thus implies the design or the overall structuring, and the relation of the parts to the whole. The narrative structure of a play, a tale, or a novel, has traditionally been called the 'plot'. For the structure of a novel is not a 'plotting' of events and incidents on the canvas of a fictional text so that they converge to tell or describe or present the author's tale. However, in relation to some of the distinguished modern writers of fiction like Henry James, James Joyce, T.H. Lawrence, and Virginia Woolf, one discovers that the narrative in the sense of a plot is rather too general a term of use to refer to the framework of their writings.
A narrative pattern effectively includes every episode, incident, mention, or even thought (for psychology has an important part in modern fiction) that forms the links or units which build up the framework of the story. The pattern of a text is not merely a mechanical device as it may seem to imply; it is the objectification of an idea, and its excellence depends upon its appropriateness to the idea. The range within which different elements of style can combine to operate and form what may be called the narrative pattern of a fictional work is indeed wide.

Elizabeth Bishop has rightly observed a very important aspect of the narrative pattern in the modern novel. According to her, the plot or pattern is 'shaped not by literary theories but by an unremitting philosophical quest'. In modern fiction, the patterns are as diverse as the thoughts and ideas it presents. The works of Patrick White are remarkable for their imaginative use of various narrative patterns as may be seen in the next chapter.

In what is called the narrative technique of a fictional work, a highly sensitive and intuitively flexible process is always at work. This is more so in the novels of the twentieth century. The central problem here is the relation of the author to his work. It is best evolved in what Winstonkruger terms as a 'literary ectoplasma': a process by which a writer and objective world is projected from the very being of the writer. The writer's perceptive
emerges from the narrative technique, i.e., narrative voice and points of view which are the parts of the texture of the narrative structure and, therefore, it is essentially a subjective process. The use of the third person narration, the fringe narration, the first person narration, soliloquy, the stream of consciousness narration with direct interior monologue, indirect interior monologue, the use of various narrative voices through cinematic devices like the flashback and the montage are the different devices through which the author presents the detached (uninvolved) narrator, the implied narrator, the intrusive narrator, and so on. 

Seymour Chatman has discovered three important presences in the narrative, namely, 'that of the character, that of the narrator, and that of the implied author'. Thus, incorporated in the narrative voice is the added element of the point of view which brings to the fore significant nuances and suggestions. The third person omniscience in narration has been the most popular form of novel writing and is used extensively by writers like Twain and Thackeray. However, its importance seems to have declined in modern fiction. 

Marjorie Boulton has observed: 'Henry James was uncomfortable about what he called the rare suffled majesty of irresponsible authorship.' Boulton maintains that James brought about what was a more or less detached, more dramatic presentation of events. Its main focus was on the presence of a controlled 'point of view'. James as well as Ruback show that the best way is a combination of 'picture' and 'drama'. This allows
for change of point of view, and admits the author's use of a character (much like the author) within a novel called the 'persona', like the character of 'arlow in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. Besides, the point of view projected through a consciousness, as that of stretcher's in *The ambassadress*, is also an innovative use. The use of the narrative voice thus brings in interesting ways of presenting the story.

A fictional style gains in poetic nuances mainly on the basis of symbolic and metaphorical uses, numerous suggestive images and symbols, along with a host of elaborate rhetorical devices like irony, paradox, and the like. These help project a sensitive rendering of the author's experience. Besides, moments of heightened emotions, deeply felt realizations, intense feelings, and a poetic presentation of the inner vision of the author are best caught in the web of the poetic fabric of the text. Modern novels in particular demonstrate an effective fusion of 'poetry' and 'prose' in their style. It is not too surprising either, for, in the comparatively shorter novels of the present day and in their increasingly elliptical narration, the use of symbolic and metaphorical expressions serves as the very quintessence of style. Thus, the use of the poetic quality in fiction involves the capacity, as in James, to blend the music of thought and sentiment, of person and place, or in the appropriate subordination, as in Woolf, of the realities
of an observable world and of everyday experience to an imaginative flow and recreation. In the case of Patrick White, intensity is the hallmark of his style. This is coupled with deep suggestive undertones revealing rare sensitivity and insight. The flux of highly imaginative use of images, metaphors, symbols and other poetic subtleties forms White's characteristic style. As Karin Hansson has rightly observed: 'The recurrence of significant elements like symbols, image clusters and key abstractions brings about a characteristic cumulative effect when their contents are carried over, as it were, from one novel to another.' As White himself admitted to Ian Poffit, 'music seems to help me with the structure of a novel. It helps me shape a book.' This points to the intense poetic propensities with which the novels under the present study are all suffused.

Karl Kraus has discovered fictional style in the relation between the 'macroscopic' and the 'microscopic' elements in a novel. 'Microscopic elements mean nothing but words, and their suggestive sense bears a much deeper significance than what the merely literal one does. Therefore, the choice of the right word to bring in the desired suggestions is no slight matter.' Burns has rightly observed that 'a word is not merely a signpost but a repository of associations' and that it can have 'more than one meaning.... may even have several, as well as many half-meanings.'
fact, in modern fiction, the highly symbolic writings give
an added importance to the recurrent words. Often, modern
writers are seen to use a word in such a way as to bring
it alive with its associated meaning and suggestivity.
Joseph Conrad has rightly acknowledged the power of the
written word, by virtue of which it can make 'you hear...'
feel... before all to make you see.' Thus, the choice of
words is not arbitrary, it follows the writer's artistic
articulation in the truest and most sincere sense. For, often,
quite unwittingly and unconsciously, each 'word' takes 'form'
on the page justifying each peculiar choice of the writer.
What a word means, according to I. A. Richards, 'is the
missing parts of the context from which it draws its dele-
gated efficacy.' Very often, no second word truly marks
the writer's need in a singular situation. The repetitive
use of some particular word or words, the rearrangements
of the pattern of some certain words used, the use of
synonyms and contrasting words—all these form a basic
pattern to suit the author's need and purpose. The study
of 'words' that go into the making of a writer's fictional
style proves to be quite absorbing. A writer generally begins
with an attempt to create completely fresh forms out of the
'rocks and sticks of words.' This reveals his style, for
he chooses the words scrutinizingly and judiciously—words
packed with meaning for the reader who is aware that under
the accidental event and the surface object, lie many levels
of deep significances. And yet A. N. White has declared that he
finds words 'recalcitrant', 'hostile', and even 'frustrating'. These reactions, far from minimizing the importance of White's style, only put it to focus. For, in quite a few cases, the exuberance of the great writers is found to be curbed by the conventional usages of language, which do not always conform to the writer's own turn of thoughts or ideas. Shakespeare, too, was found taking utmost liberty in his use of the language, stressing it and twisting it to his own advantage, in numerous ways dealing with words as his bond slaves. White, too, has shown his propensity for using language in like manner, abrogating in a way its conventional use, and attributing to it subtitles and nuances that convey the inner core of his subjective world in a special context. He has admitted that he tends to 'break up language trying to get past what is stubborn and unyielding to convey the essence of meaning.' The present work aims at exploring this aspect also of White's style on the basis of an analysis of some select terms from his works.

II

Patrick White uses a highly individualistic and personal style. John Holloway speaks of it as 'a free, indirect style which tersely kaleidoscopes the author's awareness.' William Salan finds in it 'a self-excavating and rock-moving force so characteristic of White's full powers.' Others have admired White for his 'chameleonic skill', and
what has been called his 'ectoplasmic' style. There is a large mass of critical opinions in praise of White's impressive style. Gifted with a rare sensibility and insight, White has evolved a well-developed style which is not only flexible and innovative, but also rich, powerful and suggestive in nature. The grace, finesse, and sobriety that accompany the 'rock-moving' force in his style leaves him without a peer. Bursts of jocularity and healthy witticism form an essential ingredient of his expressiveness, so profound and overpowering is the creative energy of White that the normal language often falls short of his needs. White, therefore, is seen to evolve a new style which combines the 'concrete' with the 'abstract', the 'charming' with the 'bizarre', the 'static' with the 'dynamic', the 'illusion' with the 'reality' and the 'immediate' with the 'universal', as Ransan has rightly suggested, 'the complexities of White's style and the ambiguities and uncertainties that underlie his vision demand analytical tools which are concerned with relatives rather than absolutes.' Also, in his new-found medium is an - prolific use of suggestive names and numbers, of dream psychology, various anagogic effects of words along with innovative connotations. All this, and his artistic adumbration bring before the reader a powerful multidimensional medium through which the author expresses himself. Arthur Korine has remarked that the writer has expounded a style which is 'uniquely his own as any of the commonly called experi-
Thus, the author has succeeded in 'composing the dynamic tension between inner and outer world ... in an apparently meaningless universe.' In the development of his style, white is much influenced by literary, religious, and psychological attributes of several European writers. Elements from music, drama, painting, poetry, folksong, rhymes, and various other arts and pursuits have their own place in his style. As Haseltine has aptly remarked, 'Gifted with an unusually rich sensibility ... (white) has explicated his materials stage by stage ..... into a powerful set of images, a vocabulary of judging metaphors, a range of articulations articulating belief.' All this, combined with his insight, his eye for cumulative details, and his artistic dexterity, has enabled him to evolve a style, which, 'is the very linchpin of what he has to say.'

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