

LITERARY WRITING STYLE OF WILLIAM FAULKNER

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Abstract: William Faulkner is among the most challenging American writers of the twentieth century. He is known as a novelist of great importance. His novels are exclusively celebrated for the narrative technique he has employed in his works. Besides novelist, William Faulkner is also equally known as an American Historian.

Key words: writer, works, historian, abilities, themes, novels, literature, class, conflict.

William Faulkner is among the most challenging American writers of the twentieth century. He is known as a novelist of great importance. His novels are exclusively celebrated for the narrative technique he has employed in his works. The narrative techniques he employed have been welcomed as visionary par excellence. He uses the technique of stream of consciousness in his works.

Besides novelist, William Faulkner is also equally known as an American Historian. He has earned a distinction to be the first American novelist to win the Nobel Prize for Literature.

Being a modern novelist, William Faulkner records the history of the American South. His short stories and novels are filled with themes reflecting the significant issues of his time. The themes he talks about include slavery, civil war, and class conflict. The writing of William Faulkner is responsible for bringing the attention of the world to American doors.

The works and, more precisely, the novels of William Faulkner are characterized by the “loose” forms of the panoramic Victorian novels during its development; for example, the novels of Charles Dickens.

Faulkner’s novels and short stories feature the juxtaposition of attitudes, voices, narrative lines, emotional tone, and mode of representation. The Following are the detailed characteristics of William Faulkner’s writing style.

The works of William Faulkner is known for his experimentation with the narrative style of stream-of-consciousness. The stream-of-consciousness technique is characterized by the imitation of thoughts. While describing the inner thoughts of characters, the writer often eliminates the formal sentence structure and conventional rule of grammar. This helps to create a more organic and creative mode. The narrative technique becomes complex and based on complex and long sentences.

For example, the stream of consciousness narrative technique present in the novel Absalom, Absalom!: “Her voice would not cease; it would just vanish. There would be

the dim coffin-smelling gloom sweet and oversweet with the twice- bloomed wistaria against the outer wall by the savage quiet September sun impacted distilled and hyperdistilled, into which came now and then the loud cloudy flutter of the sparrows like a flat limber stick whipped by an idle boy...”

Besides *Absalom, Absalom!*, the novels *The Sound of Fury* and *As I Lay Dying* also exclusively employed the narrative technique of stream-of- consciousness. The novels are based on the narration of the first and third-person point of view.

Even though the narrative style of William Faulkner in his short stories is not the typical stream-of-consciousness, as found in his notable novels, his stories are based on the narrative style of his novels. For example, there are extended details and descriptions, action in a scene recalling a past of future action, and complex sentence structure.

The different narrative and stylistic techniques employed in his works at different points have a purpose. The psychological complexity of the characters of stories and settings is reflected through narrative devices.

For much of his works, William Faulkner used more conventional or naturalistic prose forms. His short stories and novels are a combination of stream- of-consciousness and naturalistic prose. For example, A novel *A Light in August* employed naturalistic prose and also combined the stream-of-consciousness narrative form.

The depth of his characters and scenes is established by using the effective way of employing long and lengthy descriptions. In the works of William Faulkner, the object’s description is followed by the character’s description. The result of this the object and character as described in a similar way takes on each other’s appearance. For example, at the beginning of a short story “*A Rose for Family*,” William Faulkner gives a description of Grierson house as “It was a big, squarish frame house that had once been white, decorated with cupolas and spires and scrolled balconies in the heavily lightsome style of the seventies, set on what had once been our most select street.”

Following the description house, Faulkner then gives the characteristic details of Miss Emily. The “heavily lightsome” description of the house parallels the description of the physical appearance of Miss Emily.

For example, the skeleton of Miss Emily is small and spare, like the lightsome of the house. Moreover, the house and the woman were entirely inseparable from each other. Now both are dead. The woman is literally dead, and the house is figurative. However, in their death states, the house and the woman are described in similar ways. Miss Emily died with her gray head placed in a yellow and moldy pillow with a lack of sunlight. Likewise, the house is full of dust and shadows.

The “yellow and moldy with age that lacks the sunlight” stylistically describes the house, Miss Emily, pillow, and all the ruins of the past.

Faulkner also used extended description in the short story “That Evening Sun.” the first two paragraphs of the short story describes Jefferson’s town in the present time and in the past. The short story’s first paragraph is one long sentence portraying the present condition of the town. For example:

“Monday is no different from any other weekday in Jefferson now. The streets are paved now, and the telephone and electric companies are cutting down more and more of the shade trees: the water oaks, the maples and locusts, and elms to make room for iron poles bearing clusters of bloated and ghostly and bloodless grapes...”

Like the first paragraph, the second paragraph is also one complete long sentence. The sentence portrays the past of Jefferson. For example:

“But fifteen years ago, on Monday morning the quiet, dusty, shady streets would be full of Negro women with, balanced on their steady, turbaned heads, bundles of clothes tied up in sheets, almost as large as cotton bales, carried so without the touch of the hand between the kitchen door of the white house and the blackened washpot beside a cabin door in Negro Hollow.”

With the lengthy description of Jefferson and town, William Faulkner juxtaposed these two paragraphs and established a recurrent theme in his short stories: the difference between the past and the present and how this difference affects people in various ways.

As many of the stories of Faulkner juxtaposed past conditions with that of the present and employed jumping between the two different time spheres, a unique narrative technique is needed that would apparently unite one scene with that of others. To solve this problem, Faulkner makes an action or object in one scene triggering another action in which the same action or object is present. For example: in the short story “A Rose for Emily,” the attempt of an alderman to collect the taxes of Miss Emily triggers the narrator to recollect a scene from the past – almost 30 years ago. In the scene, the neighbor of Miss Emily is complaining that her property smells and wants the fathers of the city to solve the problem.

The two scenes are linked simply by employing the verb “vanquished.” As the narrator says: “So she vanquished them, horse and foot, just as she had vanquished their fathers thirty years before about the smell.”

William Faulkner is well-known for his stylistically complex sentence structure. The complicity of sentence structures parallels the complexity of the thoughts of his characters. For example, in the short story “Barn Burning,” Sarty Snopes is uncertain between doing what he feels is right and being loyal to his father. In this conflict, Sarty culminates to warn Major de Spain that his father will burn the barn of major.

It is after the warning of Sarty and his run towards the barn of the major that the narrative complexity of Faulkner becomes evident. This short story is the best example of the complexity of narration and sentence structure. The third last paragraph of the

story is centered on the running of Sarty, and the last sentence of the paragraph appears to be sunning on and on. The sentence is read as;

“So he ran down the drive, blood, and breath roaring; presently, he was on the road again though he could not see.”

The blindness of Sarty is coupled with his loss of hearing. He appears to be caught up in the contradictory loyalties. He temporarily loses his senses for being guilty of disloyal to his father.

In addition to this, William Faulkner also focuses on the psychological instability of Sarty in this scene. He employed descriptive terms that suggest the increasing confusion of Sarty. As the horse of de Spain thunders by, Sarty is “wild” with grief even before he hears the gunshots. After hearing the gunshot, he starts crying automatically to his father and then starts running. By employing the verb, “run” William Faulkner intentionally intensifies the scene. He quickens the pace of the scene by using the words with an “ing” ending. For example, he writes:

“running again before he knew he had begun to run, stumbling, tripping over something and scrabbling up again without ceasing to run, looking backward over his shoulder at the glare as he got up, running on among the invisible trees, panting, sobbing, ‘Father! Father!’ “

The sentence is building faster and faster until it ends in a desperate cry of Sarty for his father. He fears that his father has been murdered. The increasing concern for the safety of his father is reflected through the increasing intensity of the sentence. William Faulkner is one of those great writers whose works are not easy to read. This requires great emotional investment, and “entering” his artistic world, comprehending the original form of his narrative. He has a special narrative technique: a long, sometimes complicated phrase; the same events and characters of the characters are revealed from different points of view. And this is not a formal deliberateness, but a way of searching for truth.

However, the efforts spent on perceiving his works are rewarded handsomely. They strengthen a person in his spiritual quest, in his “independence” in our time of crisis. William Faulkner himself said this well in his Nobel speech (the Nobel Prize was awarded to him in 1949): “The duty of the poet, the artist... is, by elevating human hearts, reviving in them courage, and honor, and hope, and pride, and compassion, and pity, and sacrifice - all that constituted the glory of humanity in the past - to help it survive. The poet must not simply create a chronicle of human life; his work can become a foundation, a pillar that supports a person, helping him to survive and win.”

The words of F. M. Dostoevsky: “Man is a great mystery, and all my life I will never tire of solving it,” William Faulkner could have repeated. He, like Dostoevsky, had an intense interest in the tragedy of human existence in the modern world, in the question of the meaning of human life in these tragic circumstances. He looks for

situations in which human nature is tested. He is close, in the words of Dostoevsky, “to the need to go over the edge, the need for a fading sensation, having reached the abyss, to hang halfway into it , to look into the very abyss...” It is no coincidence that Dostoevsky is among Faulkner’s circle of favorite writers. He, by his own admission, constantly reread Dostoevsky's novel *The Brothers Karamazov*. In one of his works, William Faulkner directly addresses the legend of the Grand Inquisitor from this novel. The influence of the Russian writer was reflected in Faulkner’s interest “in the human heart in conflict with itself.” The American writer recognized his spiritual kinship with the great Russian writers. “I hope,” said William Faulkner, “I have earned at least some right to spiritual kinship... with the Russia of Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Chekhov and others.”

You can fully understand the life and work of William Faulkner only by becoming acquainted with his genealogy, which reflects the fate of America, a country that “made itself” in just over two hundred years.

Faulkner's ancestors came from Scotland. In the middle of the 18th century, they moved to North America, where, like other pioneers, they began to explore new lands. These were young, brave, strong people, obsessed with one dream - to get rich. The great-grandfather of the future writer succeeded in this thanks to his adventurism and enterprise. He managed to do a lot - take part in the war between North and South, rise to the rank of colonel, build a railroad and even write two novels.

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