

METAFICTIONAL NARRATIVE FORMS IN WILLIAM FAULKNER'S *ABSALOM, ABSALOM!*

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Abstract

Absalom, Absalom! (1936) is one of the greatest distinguished novels by American writer, William Faulkner that his narrative style has had a major influence all over the world. It is written influenced by Joseph Conrad more than any other Faulkner works. As a metafiction writer, his influence is so strong in this novel which has placed it on the top of the English fictions. Although many critics know his narration in this novel controversial, but it has influenced literature and literary movements strongly. As a celebration of storytelling, this novel contains different metafictional narrative forms which this paper surveys them. Moreover, this paper sheds light on repetition of words and events and also metafictional self-consciousness in this novel.

Key Words: Metafiction, Self-consciousness, Repetition, Memory, Time

1. Introduction

Metafiction is placed between the fiction and criticism. Simply, the format and structure of the metafiction is more like a story, interpretation and analysis that is put in the heart of the literary works which makes them similar to criticism as far as the story deals with its criticism. In fact, there is no necessity that metafiction knows itself as a story and maintains the identity of its full own story. If we look at these works from the design of analysis and criticism, we will understand that most of their criticisms are internal in metafictions and they actually have increased the level of knowledge and insight of its audiences.

However, in the presented criticisms in the works, it has noticed about the literary aspects of the same effect, and it has magnified prose and language which have used in metafictions. In fact, the author has deliberately intended to introduce language and proeses which have used in his/her own work to praise it. Therefore, we can say that in such literary texts, we can see a sensible figure of the narrator and critic who has a striking presence at the heart of the works. This causes that the story overall be supported comprehensively.

Some literature experts believe that metafiction structure is slightly similar to drama structure. They know the putting of metafiction on the border between fiction and criticism as a main factor in the emergence of such a genre. In other words, some also believe in weakly similarity between metafiction in putting on the border of fiction and criticism and on the border of art and life. This group believes that metafiction can put on the border of art and life because of its flexible and polyhedral structure. On the one hand, it reckons with art and has most artistic features in itself; and on the other hand, it engages in analyzing and criticizing of life and its events. Because life is an inseparable part of the story; and the story has always been that has depicted life with its all aspects of complex and no-ending. In metafiction, understanding of the universe is important, the question that for long years, it has been the main theme of discussions in various literary schools, such as realism, modernism, and post-structuralism.

2. Metafictional Self-consciousness

Metafiction is a type of narrative which is anti-illusionistic. It has an anti-illusionizing tendency to unveil its artifice. Metafiction is a principle of creativity in literature and art. It is an anti-illusionistic act of self-consciousness whereby narrative is not mistaken for natural. If you say that a novel is an intense of metafiction or it has got metafictional character, you mean that there are tendencies in that novel which foreground the artifice of the novel.

Every novelist who is writing metafiction would have these metafictional strategies. Metafiction is a very dominant in post-modernist fiction. All post-modernist novels are anti-realist. Whenever an illusion of naturalness is puncture, it is metafiction. Whenever an illusion of naturalness is deep-rated in any work of human experience, we called it metafiction. Metafiction is not applicable only to fiction. There are lots of passages in *Absalom, Absalom!* which are characterized by metafictional self-consciousness. Metafiction is that type of narrative that discloses the made-status of narrative. Metafiction dispels the realist illusion that narrative is natural. Narrative is not natural like a flower, and a tree. Narrative is man-made. But narrative and any form of art can part for natural. When any form of art poses for natural, it is being realist. In the broadest sense, realist art is that which wants to be mistaken for the actual. Realist art of any kind conceals its made-nature. Metafiction is anti-realist, and anti-illusion which dispels the realist illusion of the naturalness of art.

In *Absalom, Absalom!*, there are two present moments – September 1909 and mid-January 1910. This novel is a memory novel. It is dominated by prodigious and prolonged acts of memory, because that memory is not about flimsy things. It has been prolonged in the memory of the town. This town has been dominated and disturbed by memory of one man who lived 75 years ago. Faulkner during the text wants to say that memory like Judith Sutpen's letter speaks about age and fate. Time is the enemy of memory and when we read any twenty century fiction, we will find that they all talk about death of memory. Death of memory is forgetting which is natural to consciousness.

3.1 The Twelve-Mile Buggy Drive of Rosa and Quentin

Absalom, Absalom! is a Gothic journey – a twelve-mile Gothic journey at a midnight by a buggy when only stars are accompanying in September 1909. This novel is about a town's collective memory of a legend. Any town or village in any part of the world would have a collective memory of a legend pertaining to one family. It is a family in which notorious things happens. A family is embedded by an oddly destiny. The novel is a legendary tale about small town and a house.

Faulkner subjects the gothic twelve-mile buggy drive of Rosa and Quentin to distribute narration. He splices the event of Rosa and Quentin's twelve-mile buggy drive to Thomas Sutpen's Hundred, a large plantation, one undated night in September 1909 into several bits and scatters these bits across the entire length of the novel, such as achronological confetti. Therefore, it incurs an exceptionally imaginative distributed narration that spans the entire novel. He cuts the events into pieces and a chronologically scatteredness. The twelve-mile buggy drive is a narrative metaphor for a very perform truth. Faulkner has written novels about the grief and calamity that happen to men and women out of character and narration.

There is not eternal witness with *The Sound the Fury* and human affairs like Rosa Coldfield and Quentin Compson in twelve-mile buggy drive. The buggy drive is like an eternal witness that is the lusty achievement of the narrative imagination of story teller. The novel centers on the narrating of the events than the events themselves. It is narrated by three characters; first by Rosa, then by Mr. Compson, and lastly by Quentin and one of his friend, Shreve. Each of them shows the significances of the narrators.

3.2 The Wisteria: Faulkner's Perfume of Eternity

The wisteria is a climber with white and purple flowers of strong fragrance. Smells are very important in the novel, and they often bring the past to mind. Wisteria is a very southern creeping plant, and its smell is associated in the novel with Rosa, who is obsessed with the past. When the smell of wisteria floats through a scene, it's often along with thoughts of the past. The smell even pursues Quentin all the way to his room at Harvard. Like the past, the scent is immovable. Quentin seems to perceive the wisteria when he visits Rosa in the beginning of the book, and wisteria appears in Jason Compson's discussion of Sutpen.

In September 1909, Jefferson is filled with the fragrance of the wisteria. There is repeated reference most lovingly made to the simple, humble and inconsequential wisteria distributed all across the novel. In the novel, we read “there was a wisteria vine blooming for the second time that summer on a wooden trellis before one window, into which sparrows came now and then in random gusts, making a dry vivid dusty sound before going away...”(1).

The distributed narration of the wisteria in the novel from first page of the text to the end or penultimate page mirrors the movement of wisteria, like laterally, horizontally axis of the novel. But the reason of using wisteria is because the novel is about human motivation and sense-making. Faulkner cares for wisteria, the narrative affection, the descriptive love, supreme act of love in the description in American Fiction. If you want to read description of the greatest kind that nobody can come anywhere in the description, I suggest you to read Cormac McCarthy's novel *Blood Meridian*, which is the highest description in wall narrative.

The distributed narration of wisteria is a narrative metaphor for unifying wisdom in which boundaries are between black and white, past and present, this place and that place and all the opposite and human experience with the cause of calamity and grief. It is a narrative metaphor. It is simple and it is love for a flower. In love, there is no difference between the mystery of human motivation and the flower. It is a narrative metaphor for a unifying wisdom. Faulkner distributes narration of the beautiful wisteria. There is some hidden unifying wisdom which keeps the human process together in spite of human evil. In this novel, evil is in the heart of Thomas Sutpen. There is wisdom deep down that is keeping human process together in spite of the centrifugal of evil and human heart.

4. Repetition of Words and Events

It begins in the title of the novel, *Absalom, Absalom!* in which the word of Absalom is repeated. Every event narrates many times. It is a novel with a conspiring quality of repetition. *Absalom, Absalom!* has an acute fragmentation of narrative line. The narrative line gets fragmented in two cases: one is repetition of events with difference in duration and perspective of focalization. Another one is repetition of words which starts by the title. There is no boundary and division between earlier and later part of the novel. The duration is the number of words in terms of sentences paragraph and pages that a novelist devote to the representation of events. And in the novel, those events get repeated. Those repetitions always happen with difference and duration, and with difference and perspective.

In repetition of words, Faulkner writes sentences that intend repetition of words. Words are repeated in the same sentences. There is a repetition of words within the sentences. There is repetition of words in both earlier parts and later parts of the novel. When you read the novel, you feel struggle with it, because the subject of the novel is struggle.

What is the reason of these repetitions? The story of *Absalom, Absalom!* is a retelling of the life of Prophet David. It happened in 1500 BC. The story of Thomas Sutpen is a retelling of the story of the life of David and one of his sons, Absalom. The philosophy of the novel is drawn from the wisdom of another son of David, Solomon and his book which called *the Book of Ecclesiastes*. The story of *Absalom, Absalom!* replicates the story of David. Thomas Sutpen is David, and Henry Sutpen is Absalom. Charles Bon is Amnon who was killed by Henry. Amnon rapes his step-sister, Tamar; and Absalom avenges the rape of Tamar by killing Amnon.

The grammar of human is repetition of life. Human is also a mirror of repetition in life. There is no new life and everything is repeating in human life. There is nothing new under the sun. If even you do not remember the past, it does not matter, because your life is the past. *Absalom, Absalom!* is a novel about memory; and memory is a self-cancelling in this novel. There is no need for remembering this life, because everything in the past is repeating in life, and it is deep down in *Absalom, Absalom!*.

5. Conclusion

William Faulkner's narrative form emerges out of wisdom as a value of vision. *Absalom, Absalom!* is full of metafictional self-consciousness. There is a tragedy and sorrow about forgetting in which time mocks human's memory. This fiction focuses on the narration about the events, and Faulkner talks about one important event in this novel which one of the main narrative forms i.e. the twelve-mile buggy drive of Rosa and Quentin. Another main narrative form is the wisteria which is Faulkner's perfume of eternity in which there is wisdom that is keeping human process together. Faulkner in his narration shows the significance of events and words by repeating them in different parts of the novel. The reason is that reader will not forget the words and events by repetition. The structure of human life is repetition to keep the memory self-cancelling to contradict each other which is shown in this novel.

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