

- the real subject;
- the use of synonyms or deliberate repetition of words for emphatic purposes;
  - a symbolic extension of the meaning of the words, a somewhat poetic meaning brought about by an unexpected expression;
  - the piling up of qualifying adjectives which induce the achieving of a dream-like quality to produce that hypnotical effect on the reader.

All of these language devices turn *Light in August* into one of the best creations of American literature, a microcosm of the world, the world of Faulkner, the world of the South, the world of Man.

#### NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE IN *Light in August*

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I am going to start with a quotation by Edmond L. Volpe in his studies about Faulkner: "Faulkner's greatness as an artist is due to a great extent, to his ability to deal with the specific and the universal simultaneously. Everything that particularizes the American South and its inhabitants is rendered realistically in his writing. But he is far more than a regional writer, and his achievement is due, in large measure, to his narrative structure, narrative techniques, and his style."<sup>1</sup>

Escaping the limitation of naturalistic prose, Faulkner reveals he is a man of his time, in tune with the devices used in the *new novel* (le nouveau roman), therefore mirroring in his structure the main themes projected by his texts. He violates natural

rhythms, breaks the straightforward chronology of time sequence, his narrative jumps back and forth. But such a violation is a skillful and vigorous deviation from ordinary narrative procedures used to convey the author's worldview and to enforce his assertions. The complexity of Faulkner's prose is at the service of his subjects: "His techniques, although sometimes exasperating, are effective in compelling the reader to participate in the writer's search for truth."<sup>2</sup>

*Light in August* has a circular structure. The story of Lena Grove, which is a minor one on the level of events, opens and closes the novel. It begins with Lena walking wearily and heavily one Friday afternoon towards Jefferson, in the quest for the father of her baby. She is the primitive character who, completely keeping pace with the natural flux of life, believes that a child must have a father. So, she naturally goes for him. With Lena, the novel starts quietly and it ends in the same calm modulation: she is last seen travelling on a dusty road, now with Byron Bunch, still continuing on her quest. Lena's story is included for a thematic purpose: besides bearing the strength and peace attained by those who are not alienated from the natural flux of life, she is also a promise that mankind might have a second chance. To put it in another way, such a circular structure carries the theme of the cycle of life; the novel is ultimately about life and its renewal, a process which has to be accepted, if peace and reconciliation with mankind are to be attained.

However, the focus of the narrative remains the longest on the wanderings of Joe Christmas as he searches to discover who he is. Though what happens in Jefferson during that August covers only a period of a week or so, Joe's quest extends over a timespan of more than 30 years. The author shifts the focus towards the center

of the circle where, in spite of the calmness of the beginning and ending, violence, murder, castration, lynching, and guilt are explored to provide a deeper understanding of human nature.

The material upon which Faulkner builds his story is not so complicated: Joanna Burden has been murdered and her house set on fire. The murderer escapes, is hunted down and lynched, when he is declared to have negro blood. Parallel to the action taking place in the present, subsidiary stories are erected exploring the reasons for the murder, the psychological and social forces culminating in this set of violence and producing the lynching. The story unfolds with references backward and forward. There is a deliberate disarrangement of the straightforward chronology. Faulkner is never concerned with the time sequence. By fragmenting chronological time, and juxtaposing stories of the past to stories of the present, he reveals the effect of the past on the present. By breaking up the narrative he enforces his assumption that time is a complex of human tensions and it is fully absorbed in and integrated with rhetoric, style, narrative pace, and rhythm. What is felt is the pressure of the past upon the present. Beyond that lies the recognition that the human mind does not function within the barriers imposed on the body, but it fuses past, present, and future. In other words, time exists as an absolute entity.

Such a movement in the consciousness of the characters is reflected through flash-backs. The use of this technique serves different purposes: while it describes the relationship of the individual to his past, it slowly and gradually reconstructs the past, and it also heightens dramatic effects.

In conclusion, we may say that although taking the South as a frame, Faulkner's narrative carries a broader and more universal theme: it is a novel about life and its renewal. The complexity of

the prose used, with its splits and fragmentation, becomes a metaphor for the fragmentation of human beings isolated in their suffering, loneliness, and lack of identity.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Edmond L. Volpe, *A Reader's Guide to William Faulkner* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1956), p. 28.

<sup>2</sup> Volpe, p. 32.

#### CHARACTERIZATION AS CARRIER OF THEMES IN *Light in August*

Thais Flores Nogueira Diniz

All the characters in *Light in August* are carriers of the themes Faulkner presents and almost all of their names contain symbols related to these themes.

The first woman who appears in the novel, at the very beginning, is Lena Grove, a pregnant young woman searching for her sweetheart. She is a simple and patient incarnation of the indestructible earth itself. She inspires a calm confidence as an agrarian answer to the guilty and violent city life. Being able to assume the joys and sufferings of life, she represents cyclical life and death of all creatures of earth, opposed to Joe Christmas, who is an embodiment of the bewildered New South and whose image represents the conflict of modern man, like almost all of the other characters. While she represents tranquility, peace, self-assurance, the everlasting moment, Joe Christmas is a restless spirit and represents aimlessness, rootlessness, and the inability to deal with his own past. Lena accepts life as it is and doesn't blame anybody, not even her flighting lover, but Joe does not forgive the whites and