

Early Twentieth-Century Fiction
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October 16, 2017. Faulkner (3).

review: language and the river

- ▶ “It talks up to us in a murmur become ceaseless and myriad” (141)
- ▶ “let the current take you” (148)
- ▶ “‘Log, fiddlesticks,’ Cora said. ‘It was the hand of God.’” (153)

plot!!!

[Moseley:] “We’re doing the best we can,” the father said. Then he told a long tale about how they had to wait for the wagon to come back and how the bridge was washed away and how they went eight miles to another bridge and it was gone too so they came back and swum the ford and the mules got drowned and how they got another team and found that the road was washed out and they had to come clean around by Mottson, and then the one with the cement came back and told him to shut up. (204)

“tour de force”

Sometimes technique charges in and takes command of the dream before the writer himself can get his hands on it. That is *tour de force* and the finished work is simply a matter of fitting bricks neatly together, since the writer knows probably every single word right to the end before he puts the first one down. This happened with *As I Lay Dying*....

I simply imagined a group of people and subjected them to the simple universal natural catastrophes which are flood and fire with a simple natural motive to give direction to their progress.

Faulkner, interviewed by Jean Stein, *Paris Review* 12 (Spring 1956).

“I simply imagined”

“If ever was such a misfortunate man,” pa says. He looms tall above us as we squat; he looks like a figure carved clumsily from tough wood by a drunken caricaturist. (163)

disenchanted or enchanted?

[Whitfield:] It was His hand that bore me safely above the flood, that fended from me the dangers of the waters. My horse was frightened, and my own heart failed me as the logs and the uprooted trees bore down upon my littleness. (178)

“He is my cross and he will be my salvation. He will save me from the water and from the fire. Even though I have laid down my life, he will save me.”.... Then I [Cora] realised that she [Addie] did not mean God. (168)

Faulkner: magic realist?

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Darl had a little spy-glass he got in France at the war. (254)

“natural”

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Addie: “words”

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He [Anse] had a word, too. Love, he called it. But I had been used to words for a long time. I knew that that word was like the others: just a shape to fill a lack. (172)

And so when Cora Tull would tell me I was not a true mother, I would think how words go straight up in a thin line, quick and harmless, and how terribly doing goes along the earth, clinging to it (173)

With Jewel...the wild blood boiled away and the sound of it ceased. Then there was only the milk, warm and calm, and I lying calm in the slow silence, getting ready to clean my house. (175)

discussion

Consider MacGowan's chapter. How does this episode see the relation between the city and the country? Think about descriptions and behaviors, but also about perspectives. What is the significance of seeing through MacGowan's eyes? Use the language of the text.

The comfort of being “naturally better than,” of not having to struggle or demand civil treatment, is hard to give up.... William Faulkner understood this better than almost any other American writer.

Toni Morrison, “Mourning for Whiteness,” *New Yorker*, November 21, 2016 (accessed [online](#), November 14, 2016).

[Addie:] I believed that the reason was the duty to the alive, to the terrible blood, the red bitter flood boiling through the land. (174)

what we don't see

When we pass the negroes their heads turn suddenly with that expression of shock and instinctive outrage. "Great God," one says; "what they got in that wagon?"

Jewel whirls. "Son of a bitches," he says...It is as though Jewel had gone blind for the moment, for it is the white man toward whom he whirls. (229)

"Thinks because he's a goddamn town fellow," Jewel says. (229)

We mount again while the heads turn with that expression which we know; save Jewel. (231)

next: something completely different

- ▶ back in time: Conan Doyle stories
- ▶ bring in draft essay introduction for a micro-workshop