

The importance and poetic mean of fragmented structure

Profession, Poet



Juan Rulfo employs a fragmented structure in *Pedro Páramo* to provide information about the plot and characters from the point of view of different characters at different times. This allows stories to be echoed and reechoed throughout the novel. Often times, this structure creates a sense of ambiguity and confusion because Rulfo leaves interpretation up to the reader and because of the story's nonlinear aspect. In this fragmented storyline, Rulfo uses sound and silence to add suspense and to contribute to the setting and plot.

Juan Rulfo wrote *Pedro Páramo* with tense shifts and shifts in perspectives of different characters that add tension and reveal more and more about the plot. With seventy fragments differing in time and perspectives, the reader has to put the pieces of the puzzle together based on how they interpret it. For example, when the narrative switches from Juan to Pedro at fragment six, it confuses the reader because it does not initially indicate that the fragment is about Pedro. The reader only learns that fragments six through eight are about Pedro because Rulfo writes "' Pedro!'people called to him" at the end of fragment seven (Rulfo 14). These fragments, though confusing at first, are the first fragments directly involving Pedro. Rulfo uses them to introduce Pedro and let the reader learn a little about his past. This also adds tension because it acts as sort of a face reveal; prior to this, the reader cannot match a character to the " Pedro Páramo" that Juan sets out to find.

Rulfo utilizes both sound and silence to add suspense and truly embody the theme of the living and dead in the novel. For example, in fragment three, there are no " children" or doves," and only silence can be heard. However,

Juan still feels “ that the town [is] alive” (8). This reflects the theme of the novel because there is a middle ground where the reader is not sure how to differentiate between the living and the dead. The lack of sounds of “ children” and “ doves” characterizes the eeriness and phantasmal aspect of the novel. Rulfo implements another use of sound and silence in fragment twenty-eight. “ Sounds. Voices Murmurs. Distant singing... As if it were women singing” exemplifies the ambiguity that Rulfo once again displays (46). This fragment describes “ distant singing” that may or may not truly be heard at all. Rulfo writes “ as if” instead of illustrating with a more definite tone that women are actually singing. The scene leaves the reader to decide what exactly takes place. A third example of a fragment where sound and silence appear prominently is in fragment twenty-nine. The line “ Empty carts, churning the silence of the streets” again represents the ghastliness of the town (46). Rulfo uses lines like these to illustrate the silence that allows a sense of ambiguity to be present. The town is simply made to seem dead, and this is done in part by the presence of silence. Rulfo also writes that there is an “ echo of shadows” (46). The sound of shadows is quite ironic because shadows are merely an image cast from an object, having no ability to emit noise.

The fragmented structure of *Pedro Páramo* allows for some stories to echo and re-echo throughout the novel. For example, the story of Pedro Páramo himself is one that shows up time and time again. His story begins on page twelve when Pedro was just a little boy. He thinks about Susana and how they would fly kites. Pedro thinks about her fondly, and this establishes early

in the story that Susana and Pedro are two characters that seem to have gotten along at some point. Later, the reader learns just how much Pedro cared for Susana: He “waited thirty years for [Susana] to return” to Comala (82) and then when Susana dies and there are, coincidentally, festivities in Comala, Pedro intends to “cross [his] arms” so “Comala will die of hunger” (117). Different parts of the story illustrate Pedro’s deep love for Susana. Another example is what happens with Miguel. Miguel is introduced when Juan Preciado hears the sound of Miguel’s horse (21). The noise prompts doña Eduvigis to explain what happened with Miguel the night he died.

With Miguel’s tale, his ending is introduced first, adding suspense by introducing another character only to quickly learn that he has died. Through flashbacks and thoughts about the past and present, memories and stories can be recounted, revealing more about the story each time. Altogether, the fragmented narrative storyline that Rulfo utilizes induces a sense of ambiguity and confusion in the reader, with the employment of sound and silence and the repeated echoing of certain stories.

Work Cited

Rulfo, Juan. *Pedro Páramo*. Trans. Margaret Sayers Peden. New York, NY: Grove, 1994. Print.