Cloudstreet Essay, Research Paper

The complexity of the narrative voice in Tim Winton s Cloudstreet adds to the intrigue of this unusual novel. The omniscient narrative voice by Fish Lamb, along with other aspects of the narrative structure contribute to the understanding of the text. It in turn gives the reader insight into the characters inner thoughts and feelings, the unique setting is given a sense of mystery to it through its personification, and the relevance of each of the events depicted in the novel are made clear through Fish s narration.

Fish is a peculiar character, as he is separated into two parts – the spiritual Fish and the physical Fish. It is through the spiritual Fish that enables the reader to see what is happening to all the characters and what their thoughts and feelings are, hence revealing all there is to know about each of the characters. The reasons behind a lot of what the characters say and do are unknown to the other characters. However, due to the omniscient, all knowing and seeing point of view, the reader is able to understand the anger that Rose Pickles feels towards her alcoholic mother Dolly, the guilt that Quick Lamb feels because of his brother Fish s accident and the reasons to why Oriel Lamb is living in a tent in the backyard. This narrative gives the reader an advantage when trying to fully understand the characters, which also makes it more appealing.

Along with the omniscient narrative, the organisation of the chapters also gives the reader insight into what the characters are like. The chapters are somewhat anecdotal as they portray important events spanning over twenty years that Fish is remembering all in a moments time. These chapters bring up particular situations that the characters have been through to uncover certain aspects of their past which could be useful in analysing the way the character s thoughts have changed over the years. It does not go into lengthy detail with all the chapters, it just chooses bits and pieces that are relevant in the search for meaning in the text. This is evident in the way that the story keeps mentioning the feud between Rose and Dolly. The reader learns the reasons for Rose s anger and why she in turn developed anorexia and how they eventually reconciled.

The narrative also works to make the reader focus on the significance of the house. The house plays an important role as it is in fact what brought the Lambs and Pickles together. The unusual circumstances of the two families sharing a house is made even more odd by the behaviour of the house itself. The house is given human characteristics which leads the reader into the assumption that the house is a very significant part of the novel. The addition of the shadows in the library gives emphasis to the house again, increasing its lure. The narrative enhances the setting s role in the novel, making it somewhat a character in itself.

The narrative structure is what helps Cloudstreet to be such an unusual novel. Fish s narrative and the fact that he is remembering it all and can describe every minute detail is the key ingredient to the novels success in incorporating the setting, context and characterisation as features in the text.