

Preface

This book came about as the first part of a three-volume study of William Faulkner's oeuvre. When I had become aware of the need to give its sequels—the book on myth and stereotype in depiction of Faulkner's women characters and the study on Southern men stereotypes in Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha fiction—a kind of introduction, a preface that would round up my “trilogy” and at the same time emphasize Faulkner's local, global, and universal importance in the Western literary canon. When, in 2005, I embarked on the project, I was naively certain that I could produce this introductory volume before finishing my PhD thesis intended to provide the basis for the second part of my Faulkner trilogy. I forged ahead, only to discover that I had to confront a host of problems: What exactly should a volume-long preface on Faulkner encompass? Which aspects of his oeuvre should it cover? What is the purpose of my study? Will there be enough time to finish the book before the publication of other two parts?

As I explored these issues, I noticed with some alarm that my enterprise had significantly expanded. I got my PhD degree and there was a thesis waiting to be rewritten; in the meantime, I seized an opportunity of being a Fulbright grantee and conducted research on Southern men stereotypes at the UNC at Chapel Hill, which provided the material for one more book on Faulkner. The more I researched, the more convinced I became that I had to start with a study that would draw attention to the local, global, and universal context of Faulkner's work—the study that would serve as a guide to the issues I was going to discuss in the upcoming books. And the more I thought about it, the more I became aware of what I should do and in what ways I should express myself. This book is the expression of these thoughts and ideas. Coming from a non-US Americanist perspective, my contribution to the scholarly production about William Faulkner discusses his best-known novels; insists on regionalism, internationalism, and universalism as the context of his fiction; and argues for feminist, post-colonial, and psychoanalytical approaches to it.

Following the grain of the prevailing critical theory but including quite a few fresh observations, the book opens with the interrogation of Southern Gothic as a specific narrative form of the South. It, too, shows why Faulkner's fiction is

considered to be one of the best examples of this genre by focusing on the themes and motifs typical for Southern Gothic—its setting, the burden of history, race, gender and class issues, and a hurt woman character who discovers a serious secret. The second chapter aims at demonstrating how Faulkner deals with the idea of the South's troubled past capturing some of the race and gender issues the South was struggling with and possible solutions to them. In being conceptualized in this way, the chapter suggests that inherent in each of Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha narratives are both temporal and spatial implications of the place their author inhabits.

Departing from the South, the book further explores Faulkner's place among his contemporaries. Given the fact that a lot has been written about Faulkner's English, French, German, or Russian contemporaries, the most natural thing, at least for me, was to look for a Croatian writer who lived and wrote at the same time as Faulkner. I found him in a Croatian Modernist writer Miroslav Krleža who, like Faulkner, showed a great interest in the theme/motif of family. Faulkner's and Krleža's family, or genealogical, writings are founded on a series of similar conventions including, for example, stereotypical characters, the cyclical sense of time, the motifs of generations, decadence, formality, etc.

The journey through Faulkner's narrative space continues with the chapter on universality of his fiction present in the "evergreen" topics in his oeuvre. Some of them—the concepts of guilt, redemption, or sensuality/sexuality—point out that Faulkner's fiction can be seen as a series of universal life situations and archetypal confrontations as well. The book closes with the critical summary proposing that Faulkner's fiction—as the integral part of local, international, and global literary productions—is inseparable from our personal identity and as such legitimizes and authorizes the interpretation of self and other, culture and nature, superiority and inferiority, masculine and feminine, white and black, power and subordination, and center and periphery. The voyage from chapters one to five is thus a journey through Faulkner's world that allows for some answers to the nature of his oeuvre as conceived by both Faulkner himself and the author of the book.

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