

Dr. Anca Peiu,

Associate Professor,

Elective Fall 2021:

A Gallery of Faulknerian Protagonists

Course Description

This elective starts from the assumption that in the case of William Faulkner (1897 – 1962) readers are confronted with one of the most convincing illustrations of hybridization: his Yoknapatawpha metaphorical diegesis is highly dramatized. All across the fluid map drawn by its “sole owner and proprietor” himself there is a continuous flow of recurrent characters, haunting his novels, his novellas and his short stories, with their kaleidoscopic renderings. They never observe chronology: sometimes they may even be resurrected from the dead to play the narrator, as in the case of Quentin Compson, from *The Sound and the Fury* (1929) to *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936). Some other times they cluster in galleries, such as that of the awkward insane brothers, from Benjy Compson to Darl Bundren in *As I Lay Dying* (1930). Seldom do Faulknerian characters just reveal themselves once, like Addie Bundren. Often do they form galleries of archetypes. Anyway, since there is no narrative hierarchy, no narrative center and no narrative limit (that cannot be transgressed), I think we may just as well call many such characters protagonists without mistake. Each one of these represents a nucleus of subjectivity, around which the entire baroque story focuses, until the story defies its own telling altogether. Or rather, until the only valid kind of telling is rather poetic than narrative; or rather dramatic than narrative.

Requirements

1. Reading these five novels thoroughly is mandatory. You cannot be accepted to our elective without this.
2. Write a final essay on the theme chosen during our first classes. The essay should provide the 10 questions' plan as proof of your originality. The questions' level determines your grade. No hard feelings.
3. For the maximum grade, one has to defend one's work in class. Your work must be genuine. No room for plagiarism! Write upon close reading of the literary text.
4. Active participation in class debates also adds up to your final grade. This proves you have read our entire primary bibliography.

Themes and Approaches

Weeks 1 – 2: Recurrent Faulknerian (Genteel) Protagonists: Quentin Compson of *The Sound and the Fury* (1929) and *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936); Gavin Stevens of *Light in August* (1932) and *Intruder in the Dust* (1948);

Weeks 3 – 4: Our Awkward/Insane Brother: Benjy Compson; Darl Bundren;

Weeks 5 – 6: The Unimaginative/Cynical Profit-Maker: Jason Compson; Anse Bundren;

Weeks 7 – 8: Outsiders and Misfits: Joanna Burden, Joe Christmas of *Light in August*;

Weeks 9 – 10: Good Survivors: Lena Grove of *Light in August*; Dewy Dell of *As I*

Lay Dying;

Weeks 11 – 12: (Terrible) Mothers and Motherhood: Caroline Compson – the absent/genteel mother; Dilsey's motherhood; Addie Bundren – rebellious echoes of Hester Prynne;

Weeks 13 – 14: Faulknerian Father Figures: Mr. Compson – a genteel failure; Anse Bundren – a poor white trash comic monster.

Reading List

A. Five Novels by William Faulkner:

1. Faulkner, William, *The Sound and the Fury*, A Norton Critical Edition, 2nd Edition, Ed. by David Minter, W. W. Norton & Co., New York and London, 1994 (1987. 1929)
2. Faulkner, William, *As I Lay Dying*, A Norton Critical Edition, Ed. by Michael Gorra, W. W. Norton & Co., New York and London, 2010 (1930)
3. Faulkner William, *Light in August*, Vintage International, Random House, New York, 1990 (1932)
4. Faulkner William, *Absalom, Absalom!*, Modern Library, Random House, New York, 1993 (1936)
5. Faulkner, William, *Intruder in the Dust*, Vintage Classics, Random House, New York, 1996 (1948)

B. Selective Critical Sources:

Bloom, Harold, Ed., *William Faulkner, Modern Critical Views Series*, Chelsea House Publishers, New York, 1986

Blotner, Joseph, *Faulkner: A Biography*, One-Volume Edition, Vintage Books, Random House, New York, 1991 (1974)

Mihăieș, Mircea, *Ce rămâne: William Faulkner și misterele ținutului Yoknapatawpha*, Editura Polirom, Iași, 2012

Moreland, Richard, Ed., *A Companion to William Faulkner*, Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2007

Peiu, Anca, *Faulkneriana: Back to (and Beyond) Yoknapatawpha*, C. H. Beck, 2019

Weinstein, Philip M., Ed., *The Cambridge Companion to William Faulkner*, Cambridge University Press, 1995