

**Walking on Common Ground:  
The Shared Cultural Background  
in William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*  
and Gabriel García Márquez's *Crónica de una Muerte  
Anunciada***

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The Mediterranean, Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico  
form a homogeneous, though interrupted, sea.  
A.J. Liebling, *The Earl of Louisiana*.<sup>1</sup>

The countries nourished by the Mediterranean Sea and once unified under the Roman Empire, find it often difficult—and in the case of some European countries, even disturbing—to acknowledge the existence of a common Mediterranean culture cutting across the insurmountable barriers imposed by two religions as opposed as Catholicism and Islam. A similar, mutual misunderstanding of cultural bonds can be found around the shores of the Caribbean Sea. The historical opportunity to make of this sea an American, modern counterpart of the European Mediterranean as the seat and cradle of a unified American world has been partially thwarted by the diverging political development of the North and the South of the continent and by the linguistic differences, though the existence of economical, historical and cultural ties between the South of the United States and Latin America now seems more prominent than ever under the growing pressure of Hispanic culture on the U.S.A. The troubled economics of the end of the 20th century and the migration of southern people towards the promising northern lands—whether the United States or Europe—have once more unwillingly thrown together peoples who seem condemned to a renewal of a lost cultural understanding.

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1 In John Kennedy Toole, *A Confederacy of Dunces*. (New York: Grove Press Inc., 1982), p.11.

Obviously, a shared geographical environment is insufficient to account for the notion of a unitary Caribbean culture. The cultural homogeneity corresponds to a similar mode of economic exploitation carried on in the South of the United States, the islands of the West Indies and the mainland on the southern shores of the Caribbean Sea. The economy of plantation, based on black African slavery, giving rise to an agrarian way of life in imitation of that of the aristocratic European landowners, is common to all these territories and has left an important imprint, of which a not less integral portion is the stream of imported black African culture running below the surface of cultures traditionally English or Spanish. Raimond Luraghi, once impressed by the sight of a mural in the Hotel Colon of Mexico City, depicting the Caribbean as a second Mediterranean, remarks how:

All appeared characterised by very similar patterns of agrarian economies and cultures: The Old South, with its stately mansions, its cotton and rice fields, its towering steam boats moving like floating palaces down the Mississippi, its colourful quarters in Mobile and New Orleans; Mexico and Central America, with their haciendas, big houses, folkloristic dances, colourful cities; the sunburnt Caribbean islands, with their quasi-African folklore, lovely colonial cities, and large plantations producing sugar and coffee. This was, it seems, the world to which the Old South really belonged; and it is still to be discovered how much of this consciousness lay deep at the bottom of the so-called Southern dream of a Caribbean empire.<sup>2</sup>

The 19th century conflict between Northern rising, democratic capitalism and industrialism and Southern decaying, oligarchic agrarian economy was neither confined to the borders of the United States, nor to the turn of the century. The Civil War resulting in the destruction of the economic system of the South and of Southern political ideals, and in the humiliation brought about by the euphemistic Reconstruction of the South, had its complement in the thorough exploitation of the natural resources of Latin American countries by North-American monopolistic companies, still active at the end of the 20th century. Indeed, the extent to which this economic colonization of economically and politically unstable Latin American nations has resulted in a corrupt form of political protectorate and empireless imperialism is only now being fully grasped.

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<sup>2</sup> Raimond Luraghi, *The Rise and Fall of the Plantation South* (New York: New Viewpoints, 1978), p.74.

Political unification with the Northern States effectively diverted the political life of the Southern States of the U.S.A. towards a democratic system of government—for it must be noted that the South was at heart an oligarchy, not a democracy—whereas in Latin America the rampant increase of tyranny has encroached political corruption in the heart of governments. Significantly, although political standards have diverged, economics have proven more resistant to Northern business manners and the South of the U.S.A. is still today trapped in an economic recession not very different from the chronic malaise of its Caribbean neighbours.

The ambivalent position of the United States as a country within the sphere of Anglo-saxon culture and as the famous melting-pot open to all kinds of influences from European immigrants and ethnic minorities has blurred the notion of a unified American voice speaking for the whole of the country in the 20th century. Once the need for reassertion against the prevalence of British tradition in cultural matters, and specifically in Literature, was overcome in the 19th century with the development of a well-defined American model of literature, the 20th century has witnessed the rise of distinctive, minority voices within the United States, including the African American and native American literatures. One of these distinct literary voices belongs to the South, as the heir of the Old South defeated in the Civil War.

While in Latin America the writers sought a new mode of expression which could vent essential South American fixations and attributes without the constrictions of the European Spanish culture—a search which gave rise to the 1960s boom in literature that radically altered the balance between European and American Spanish literature, in favour of the latter—in the Southern states of the U.S.A. a similar movement for the reassertion of the defeated South, though not fully devoid of acute self-criticism, created a wholly new, original literature which endowed the South with a recognisable voice, such as the North as a whole did not have, from the 1920s onwards. Because the Latin American countries and the North-american states around the Caribbean Sea shared a similar economic background, common cultural influences such as Spanish and African—the former, brought by colonization; the latter, originated in slavery, though differently assimilated depending on the degree in which miscegenation was accepted, always greater in Latin America—and the point of view of the dominated against the dominating north, the voices of the Latin American writers

of the 1960s boom and the utterances of the Southern American writers of the period between the 1920s and the 1960s trace striking parallels, in spite of linguistic differences and a lack of clear mutual influences.

In Literature, this common outlook on life seems best exemplified by the recurrence of grotesque features, which could well be the essential attribute of both Southern American and Latin American fiction, though whether the grotesque is a secondary characteristic or the mainstay of a truly American literary movement generated from the 1930s onwards is a point open to discussion. The grotesque, considered as the meaningful mockery of lost dignity or of the incongruous effect of misplaced dignity in a culture in which the sense of tragedy has been displaced by the sense of the tragi-comic and the sense of fate for the sense of perversity, is an excellent vehicle of expression for those who consider life as survival and do not want to break down under the pressure of adverse conditions. The grotesque is, so to speak, the way of expression that alleviates the intolerable burden endured by the oppressed who are past all hope; this is why forms of the grotesque are recurrent in periods of decaying standards where identity is threatened in absolute terms and it is necessary to cling to a more flexible view of the world, which ensures survival on a day-to-day basis. The 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries, the end of the Renaissance period and of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the 20<sup>th</sup> century particularly since 1914 are some of the periods in which the grotesque has flourished; they could well respond to Lee Byron Jennings's definition: "The grotesque thrives in an atmosphere of disorder and is inhibited in any period characterised by a pronounced sense of dignity, an emphasis on the harmony and order of life, an affinity for the typical and the normal, and a prosaically approach to the arts".<sup>3</sup>

The Southern American writers of the 20th century have reconsidered the identity of the South under the all-pervading influence of the Northern way of life to find that the romantic, legendary representation of the Old South defeated in the Civil War has dated and must be substituted by the deformed image of a South in disintegration under the pressure of Northern capitalism. Latin American contemporary writers seem to have reached the conclusion that the appalling, long-

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<sup>3</sup> Lee Byron Jennings, *The Ludicrous Demon: Aspects of the Grotesque in German Post-Romantic Prose*. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1963), p. 27.

lived forms of tyranny that superseded the revolutionary conquerors of independence from Spain have acted for too long on South American sensibilities to bolster a sustained tragic sense of life in the middle of everyday horror. In both cases, reality itself has been perceived as grotesque—or, the other way round, the grotesque has been perceived as the only reality—so that no Southern American or Latin American writer claims to be anything else but a realist. Indeed, these writers often consider the Northern American or European reading of their works—which makes the grotesque a very prominent feature—nothing but a culturally biased misunderstanding for which the American writer bears no responsibility.

One of the most captivating instances of literary affinity between a Southern American novelist and a Latin American one can be appreciated in the careers of William Faulkner (1897-1962) and Gabriel García Márquez (1928-2014), who have in common not only being winners of well-deserved Nobel prizes but also being myth-makers who have transformed their native regions into imaginary countries standing for a wider conception of the Caribbean, Central American world of universal scope.

Although García Márquez has acknowledged the masterly influence of Faulkner on his work and critics have often traced the connections between Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha and Márquez's Macondo, it is my aim to compare the response of both writers regarding a concrete aspect of their common cultural heritage, taking cultural in its anthropological sense. The books respectively regarded as masterpieces by their own creators—Faulkner's *The Sound And The Fury* (1929) and García Márquez's *Crónica De Una Muerte Anunciada* (1981)—deal with the same topic: the loss of a woman's honour, its troubled revenge or attempt at revenge by the woman's brothers and the fatal consequences brought about by her action. Of course, superficial plot similarities are insufficient to apprehend a significative resemblance between the two writers, but their interest in the same central motif and the subordination of their vision of their corner of America to the description of the troubled moral response arisen by the loss of honour indicates the existence of a common background supporting their works which is essentially Caribbean but is also deeply rooted in the Mediterranean world.

García Márquez was born in the year when Faulkner was at work writing *The Sound And The Fury* (1928), which means that between them there is not only a

different language but also a generational gap. It follows that Faulkner's influence on García Márquez could well account for the affinities found in their respective works. This is an influence which troubled indeed the Colombian writer, as it can be seen in his answer to Plinio Apuleyo Mendoza when the latter asked him whether he agreed that avoiding Faulkner's influence was in a sense committing parricide: "Quizás. Por eso he dicho que mi problema no fue imitar a Faulkner, sino destruirlo. Me tenía jodido"<sup>4</sup>. However, García Márquez's reputation as the leading story-teller of the Spanish-speaking world would be unfairly tarnished if he were portrayed merely as Faulkner's Southern Caribbean heir. Instead of "influence", the term "correspondence" describes much better this complex entanglement of mirroring figures and events in their respective books; part of their correspondences originates in their performance of the same function as story-tellers indelibly attached to the life of a community in the Homeric or bardic sense—a traditional, almost tribal function, modernized with the emergence of the novel as a self-sufficient literary genre.

Faulkner and García Márquez belong to the same class of writers, a group endowed with a "hypertextual imagination", by which—borrowing terminology from computer analysts, who speak of "hypertexts" as those software programmes designed to organize texts through cross-references—I refer to the ability to construct narratives expanding in a number of books, but composing a unique, individual representation of their regional though imaginary universe. The recasting of a geographical area into a mythical land that forms a universal metaphor for human life also appears in the work of an outstanding English writer who could indeed be termed the third member of the group: Thomas Hardy. Hardy's Wessex, Márquez's Macondo and Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha are mapped according to the same pattern by three writers who are narrowly characterised as regional novelists but who actually share the vision of their native land as the cornerstone of the universe. Interestingly, Hardy also found the topic of a woman's loss of honour and its failed revenge appealing as a literary subject: *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891) tells the tragedy of a fallen woman trapped between the perversity and priggishness of men, between blind chance and ill-fated destiny. As an unwilling centre of men's passions and moral pressures around

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4 In Plinio Apuleyo Mendoza, *Gabriel García Márquez: El Olor de la Guayaba*. (Barcelona: Bruguera, 1982), p. 67.

her, Tess seems a fit companion for Caddy Compson in *The Sound And The Fury* or Ángela Vicario in *Crónica De Una Muerte Anunciada*.

Critics, as noted, have often noted the clear-cut literary influence of Faulkner's novels on García Márquez's fiction. Yet, as Márquez himself—somehow flippantly—remarks, this notion can be misleading and incomplete:

- Sin embargo, los críticos han visto siempre en tu obra la sombra de Faulkner.
- Cierto. Y tanto insistieron en la influencia de Faulkner, que durante un tiempo llegaron a convencerme. Eso no me molesta, porque Faulkner es uno de los grandes novelistas de todos los tiempos. Pero creo que los críticos establecen las influencias de una manera que no llevo a comprender.<sup>5</sup>

As novelists, Faulkner and García Márquez are shaped by very similar inward and outward pressures: outwardly, by a comparable social, historical and cultural background—further enhanced by Márquez's avid though cautious reading of Faulkner's works; inwardly, by the conviction that their particular regions can furnish their stories with enough human material to comprehend the entire human universe.

The territories of Mississippi and Colombia, taken by Faulkner and García Márquez as the basis for their imaginary lands, share similar geographical features—such as being organised around the courses of a main river, the Mississippi or the Magdalena—and a similar economical situation, with a decayed plantation economy, a black African minority and a mythical Civil War in which the heroes of the novels fought on the losers' side. García Márquez himself puts geography in the foreground when justifying the correspondences between him and Faulkner:

En el caso de Faulkner las analogías son más geográficas que literarias. Las descubrí mucho después de haber escrito mis primeras novelas, viajando por el sur de los Estados Unidos. Los pueblos ardientes y llenos de polvo, las gentes sin esperanza que encontré en aquel viaje se parecían mucho a los que yo evocaba en mis cuentos. Quizá no se trataba de una semejanza casual, porque Aracataca, el pueblo donde yo viví de niño, fue construido en buena parte por una compañía norteamericana, la United Fruit.<sup>6</sup>

Naturally, American geography, as an inseparable aspect from American culture, has formed Faulkner and Márquez literary cycles. Both authors are rooted in their native lands and in the traditional, popular culture native to their home towns; nonetheless,

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5 In Mendoza, p. 66.

6 In Mendoza, p. 66-67.

as Americans, they have also assimilated, since their childhood, other foreign cultures, among them black African culture. Malcolm Cowley roots the imaginative atmosphere of Faulkner's novels in the writer's childhood:

This pattern (...) was based on what he saw in Oxford or remembered from his childhood; on scraps of family tradition (...); on kitchen dialogues between the black cook and her amiable husband; on Saturday-afternoon gossip in Courthouse Square; on stories told by men in overalls squatting on their heels while they passed around a fruit-jar full of white corn liquor; on all the sources familiar to a small-town Mississippi boy (...)<sup>7</sup>

García Márquez identifies himself with a Caribbean culture enriched by native and foreign sources: "En el Caribe, al que yo pertenezco, se mezcló la imaginación desbordada de los esclavos negros africanos con la de los nativos precolombinos y luego con la fantasía de los andaluces y el culto de los gallegos por lo sobrenatural."<sup>8</sup>

The Mediterranean Sea, so close to the Caribbean in its role as agglutinator of nations, has left a double cultural heritage in the worlds of Faulkner and Márquez: classical culture—Greek Literature in particular with its central idea of tragedy as fight against fate—and the Mediterranean moral code, centred on the idea of honour. Raimond Luraghi notices that "southern thought was more and more turning toward Greece, instead of Rome, as an ideal example. Southerners were pleased with the Greek system of small-scale states and with Greek local autonomies"<sup>9</sup>, which highlights the Greek world as a model for a Southern political system. However, the civilizing influence of classical culture was in deep contrast with the prevalence of slavery and with a backward code of honour, based on that of feudal aristocracy, which had been reinforced by French and Spanish—that is to say, Mediterranean—colonial influences.

Northern capitalism required a moral code opposed to the Southern idea of honour, because honour was based on ideals of inherited hierarchy, power over people (women or slaves), and opposed Christian, democratic or egalitarian principles. North-american puritanism and its harsh notion of sin fought a successful Civil War against Southern-american classical humanism and its notion of honour; this war definitely severed the South from the oligarchies of the South-american nations, which

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7 Malcolm Cowley (ed.), *The Portable Faulkner*. (New York: The Viking Press, 1964), p. 1.

8 In Mendoza, p. 73-74.

9 Luraghi, p. 65.



derived from the same essential Mediterranean, agrarian way of life established by the Spanish colonization.

The idea of honour has shaped most of the best Spanish Literature; it is not far-fetched to suggest that Spanish culture has played a determinant role in Southern and in Latin America, but the idea of honour, which is obsessive in *The Sound and the Fury* and *Crónica de una muerte anunciada* is not literary but cultural: it is the missing anthropological link between the Caribbean and the Mediterranean cultures. Faulkner and García Márquez retell the ancient drama of honour and enrich it by combining the particular flavour of the American South or Colombia with a Mediterranean dramatic tradition and a 20<sup>th</sup> point of view which is highly idiosyncratic.

The manicheistic, ruthless rule of fate so integral to the passionate view of life of the Mediterraneans had its best expression in Greek tragedy. The same sense of fate is predominant in Faulkner's works as much as in Márquez's; *The Sound and the Fury* and *Crónica de una muerte anunciada* are modern versions of the classical tragedy in which the hero wants to deny fate but is forced to face it owing to a crisis caused by the fated loss of honour. A very similar renewal of the Mediterranean tragedy reappeared in Spain in the plays of the Andalusian playwright and poet Federico García Lorca—written in the 1930s and contemporary to Faulkner's best books. Lorca abundantly used the popular culture of his native region in Southern Spain, Andalucía, as Faulkner or Márquez did, and gave it a modern, personal interpretation. It is interesting to note that Andalucía is as well-known by its rigid code of honour as by its popular, humorous story-telling abounding in the use of exaggeration and the grotesque—complementary aspects of which Lorca was well aware and that also appear together in the Old South and in the Caribbean territories.

Faulkner and García Márquez held comparable opinions about the function, motivations and responsibilities of the writer. Both of them claimed that a single mental picture was enough to haunt them and compel them to write under a sort of daemonic spell; Faulkner comments that "With me, a story usually begins with a single idea or memory or mental picture"<sup>10</sup> and Márquez mirrors his master remarking that

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10 "William Faulkner, The Art of Fiction", interviewed by Jean Stein (*Paris Review Interviews*, no. 12, 1958). In Malcolm Cowley (ed). *Writers at work: The Paris Review Interviews*.

the starting point of any of his books is “Una imagen visual. En otros escritores, creo, un libro nace de una idea, de un concepto. Yo siempre parto de una imagen.”<sup>11</sup>. Moreover, they had little appreciation for the effort of critics in evaluating their work or for fame, which they equated to loss of privacy. To Faulkner’s “no photographs, no documents”, Márquez, speaking about fame, adds that “Me estorba, lo peor que le puede ocurrir a un hombre que no tiene vocación para el éxito literario, en un continente que no estaba preparado para tener escritores de éxito, es que sus libros se vendan como salchichas.”<sup>12</sup>

When reading the summary of the official inquest on Santiago Nasar’s death, the narrator of *Crónica de una Muerte Anunciada* is left pondering about an observation the anonymous judge wrote: “Dadme un prejuicio y moveré el mundo”<sup>13</sup>. The prejudice that moves the world in this novel and in Faulkner’s *The Sound and the Fury* is the same one, namely, that women should remain virgins until they marry. Both novels deal with young women who have had sexual intercourse in violation of implied moral rules and with the fatal attempts of their families, especially the brothers, to restore the lost moral order altered by the women’s loss of virginity.

The anthropologist Julian Pitt-Rivers believes that the defense of sexual honour by members of the family was first exemplified in the Bible—a Mediterranean text, which, incidentally, has been claimed as a major influence by both Faulkner and García Márquez—with the story of Dina, Jacob’s daughter, who was raped by Jamor, a prince of Sechem. Dina’s brothers react to Jamor’s proposal of marriage with the extermination of all the males in Sechem:

Esa es la primera aparición de la idea de honor sexual y corresponde no sólo a la hipótesis de dominio militar por parte de los israelitas, sino también a su primer intento de abandonar la forma de vida nómada (...). Una vez que son dueños de la tierra, ya no necesitan usar a sus mujeres para sus relaciones exteriores.<sup>14</sup>

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(Middlessex: Penguin, 1977), p. 133. See <http://www.theparisreview.org/interviews/4954/the-art-of-fiction-no-12-william-faulkner>.

11 In Mendoza, p.35.

12 In Mendoza, p. 34.

13 Gabriel García Márquez, *Crónica De Una Muerte Anunciada*. (Barcelona: Bruguera, 1981), p. 160.

14 Julian Pitt-Rivers, *Antropología del Honor o Política de los Sexos: la Influencia del Honor y el Sexo en los Pueblos Mediterráneos*. Trans. Carlos Manzano (Barcelona: Editorial Crítica, 1979), p.241.

This means that the Bible is the first text in which the view of women as marketable goods whose value depends on virginity (since virginity guarantees that no bastard heir is going to inherit the property of the husband) is stated. The secondary ideas expressed in the Bible are that endogamy is preferred when the community is strong enough to hold its own land and that the intrusion of a stranger in the sexual life of a member of the community can end in tragedy, two basic principles that have applied in most of the daily and literary life of the Mediterranean peoples. The same ideas have found literary expression in Faulkner's and Márquez's texts: tragedy occurs because the Compsons and the Vicarios are forced by lack of economic solvency to marry their daughters off to wealthy men, strangers to the community, and because the brides are literally sold at a higher price than they should fetch, since Caddy is pregnant and Ángela is not a virgin. Caddy is exchanged for financial help to get her brothers started, so that Jason naturally hates her when her marriage fails, and to cover up her dishonourable pregnancy; Ángela's sale is even more transparent:

Era Ángela quien no quería casarse con él. "Me parecía demasiado hombre para mí", me dijo. Además, Bayardo San Román no había intentado siquiera seducirla a ella, sino que hechizó a toda la familia con sus encantos. Ángela Vicario no olvidó nunca el horror de la noche en que sus padres y sus hermanas mayores con sus maridos le impusieron la obligación de casarse con un hombre que apenas había visto. Los gemelos se mantuvieron al margen. "Nos pareció que eran vainas de mujeres", me dijo Pablo Vicario. El argumento decisivo de los padres fue que una familia dignificada por la modestia no tenía derecho a despreciar aquel premio del destino. Ángela Vicario se atrevió apenas a insinuar el inconveniente de la falta de amor, pero su madre lo demolió con una sola frase:  
- También el amor se aprende. (56-57)

Judging by modern standards, Quentin's ordeal or Nasar's death look like fossilised remnants of an extremely old-fashioned morality: they are no longer meaningful as instances of moral dilemmas. The Vicario twins, who kill Nasar on the only evidence of their sister Ángela's accusation, behave according to primitive and brutal standards, which are no longer accepted by contemporary Western societies, though they once supported the absurd ritual of duels. However, Quentin's suicide appears under a different light and it is actually a poignant example of the difficulties that a man whose morality is grounded on obsolete notions has to face when coping

with modern individualism and amorality. Myra Jehlen compares Quentin Compson to Bayard Sartoris to underline the same difficulty:

When Bayard Sartoris was for the most part only another version of the legendary cavalier, Quentin Compson is a modern character trying to make moral sense out of the doom which has overcome his family. If he attaches undue symbolic value to his sister's virginity, it is less for the sake of cavalier values than out of a need to point out a point of moral reference amid the increasing anomie of his surroundings.<sup>15</sup>

Although the remark may be superficial, it is interesting to note that García Márquez's version of the cavalier who cannot accept a wife that is not a virgin bears the very uncommon name of 'Bayardo' San Román.

While Myra Jehlen compared Quentin Compson to Bayard Sartoris, a very close parallel can be observed between Quentin and the hero of another of Faulkner's novels, *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936): Henry Sutpen. Faulkner makes Quentin reappear in this novel—in which he is disturbingly alive in December 1910, though in *The Sound and the Fury*, he is said to have committed suicide in June 1910—to give him the role of surrogate narrator as the assembler of the scattered fragments of the Sutpens' life. Henry Sutpen, the murderer of his sister's fiancé, who also happened to be their own half-brother, kills Charles Bon not because Bon is bound to commit incest if he marries Judith Sutpen, but because Bon turns out to be partly black. Unlike Quentin, he never hesitates about what is to be done to defend the doubtful family's honour, even though he knows for certain that Bon's death is going to be his private hell in life. Interestingly, Quentin's only glimpse of Henry occurs when the former is asked to liberate the latter from his hiding place, though there is never any real contact between them.

This parallel pattern of brother, sister and family honour repeated in two generations of different families but belonging to the same community—Jefferson, Mississippi—puts honour in a temporal perspective. *Absalom, Absalom!* clarifies the reasons behind Quentin's suicide in *The Sound and the Fury*, if only because it points out at the wide gap between the legendary past of the honourably lost Civil War and

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15 Myra Jehlen, *Class and Character in Faulkner's South*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), quoted in David Minter (ed.), *A Norton Critical Edition: William Faulkner* (New York: Norton, 1987), pp. 287- 8.

the troubled modern surrender of the South to the capitalistic, individualistic North: between Henry's stern principles and Quentin's agonizing failure to grasp his crumbling world. Henry and Quentin share the fated obligation of fulfilling their role as avengers of a sister's honour, which involves the defense of family honour as a whole, but there is a significant difference in the ideas of honour held by Henry Sutpen and Quentin Compson, which is conditioned by the evolution of the times. Henry is ready to accept incest, which is a universal taboo, despite the fact that Judith and Charles never even touch, but he will never accept a coloured person in the family; the question of honour is racial and sexual but has nothing to do with female sexuality: it is extremely painful but controllable if Charles Bon dies. Quentin does not face a racial question, for his is no longer the time of the Civil War; his problem is how to control the too free sexuality of his sister, who is demanding to be released from the obligation to imitate the sexual repression of her mother. Since the aggressor is multiple because Caddy has a number of lovers and the only solution would be killing her, Quentin finds in incest—though imaginary—the only solution to keep Caddy under his control. When he fails to kill his own Charles Bon, Dalton Ames, Quentin realizes that only his own death will free him from his obligation to protect his sister's and his family's honour.

Faulkner has often spoken about the origin of *The Sound and the Fury*—a text he once defined as “the tragedy of two lost women: Caddy and her daughter”<sup>16</sup>—stressing the symbolic content of the story and the continuity of the narrative in the lives of Caddy and her daughter Quentin:

It began with a mental picture. I didn't realize at the time that it was symbolical. The picture was of the muddy seat of a little girl's drawers in a pear tree, where she could see where her grandmother's funeral was taking place and report what was happening to her brothers on the ground below. (...) And then I realized the symbolism of the soiled pants, and that image was replaced by one of the fatherless and motherless girl climbing down the rainpipe to escape from the only home she had, where she had never been offered love or affection or understanding.<sup>17</sup>

But if Faulkner found the motivation for his story within himself and his individual vision of the decayed moral values of the Old South, García Márquez drew

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16 In Cowley, *Paris*, p. 130

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his material for *Crónica De Una Muerte Anunciada* from a real life drama that took place in 1951. While Faulkner renovated the old honour plot by sympathising with Caddy's dynamic, silenced figure—who does not resemble at all the more conventional Judith Sutpen—and with Quentin's anguished Southern self-consciousness, Márquez, who published his novel in 1981, was interested by another aspect of the situation:

Sin embargo, la verdad de fondo es que el tema no me arrastró de veras sino cuando descubrí, después de pensarlo muchos años, lo que me pareció el elemento esencial: que los dos homicidas no querían cometer el crimen y habían hecho todo lo posible para que alguien se lo impidiera, y no lo consiguieron. Es eso, en última instancia, lo único realmente nuevo que tiene este drama, por lo demás bastante corriente en América Latina.<sup>18</sup>

Márquez is not wrong in his assumption that the ordeal of the Vicario twins is new, but what his point of view actually reflects is how static Colombian society looks in *Crónica de una muerte anunciada* compared to the palpable evolution of the times seen in the contrast between Quentin and Henry in *Absalom, Absalom!*. While Faulkner announces the end of the Old South in 1929 with *The Sound and the Fury*, García Márquez's characters are in 1951 still living in the same old world, the old Caribbean world to which the Southern states once belonged.

The structural complexities of both narratives derive from the same central idea of time as a fluid encircling past and present and as the media that allows the authors free circulation within the story. Both authors have imposed on themselves tasks of reconstruction and, in spite of Márquez's remark that "El tema tiene la estructura precisa de una novela policíaca"<sup>19</sup> and in spite of the reader's temptation to play detective among the scraps of information furnished by Faulkner's twisted writing, the passage of time and not just the causes of death—Quentin's suicide or Nasar's murder—is what is being reconstructed. Of course, the interest in the condition of time and in the control the author can exert on the narrative structure derives directly from the influence of Modernist writers such as Proust, Joyce and Woolf and is a feature shared by most 20<sup>th</sup> century fiction writers. In Quentin's section, "June Second 1910", which can be read as a chronicle of a death foretold, time becomes an obsession; Quentin speculates on the passage of time and breaks his grandfather's

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18 In Mendoza, p.37.

19 In Mendoza, p.89.

watch to get symbolically rid of his allowance of time on earth though he cannot help hearing the bells in Cambridge nor feebly trying to have the watch mended. Nasar's last hour on Earth is haunted by the same feeling of running against time; precise moments and minute stretches of time are accounted for, whereas the rest of the narration expands less accurately along twenty-seven years.

The use of time is deceptive in both novels and it is, curiously, deceptive in the same way. The mass of information in Faulkner's novel or the thorough research job done by the narrator in *Crónica* are not the relevant issue, for both novels could have been told in a rigorous chronological order without the plot being significantly changed—Faulkner and Márquez were experimenting with the same aspect, the control of time, by building a time loop which makes the narrative virtually endless. By constantly shifting backwards to different moments of the past and by making “April Seventh 1928” –and not “April Sixth 1928” or “June Second 1910”–the first section, the reader is forced to re-read this section after the third section and all of them after Quentin's section, so that the quarrying for information can only be completed after several readings. Faulkner bases this manipulation of chronological time on his personal rejection of the actual passage of time, considering how time is appreciated by memory:

The fact that I have moved my characters around in time successfully, at least in my own estimation, proves to me my own theory that time is a fluid condition, which has no existence excepts in the momentary avatars of individual people. There is no thing as was—only is.<sup>20</sup>

The same time loop, the same conditioning of the present by the past, is found in *Crónica*. The book finishes with Nasar's death, but this death points towards the events that followed it, told in sections three and four, so that to decipher the deceptively plain narrative the book demands a very careful reading and a good memory to keep track of the amazing number of minor details and characters for such a short tale. Faulkner and García Márquez investigate, then, in these novels how the past exists in the memory often more vividly than the present.

Although *The Sound and the Fury* and *Crónica de una muerte anunciada* can be read as criticism of matriarchal values, Faulkner and Márquez distinguish very well the

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20 In Cowley, *Paris*, p. 141.

matriarchal essence of family life from men's violent intrusion—the Vicario twin's crime or Quentin's suicide—in a feminine world of values. Thus, García Márquez explains that "*Crónica De Una Muerte Anunciada*, para no citar sino uno de mis libros, es sin duda una radiografía y al mismo tiempo una condena de la esencia machista de nuestra sociedad. Que es, desde luego, una sociedad matriarcal"<sup>21</sup> and Faulkner, defending himself from the alleged accusation of siding with the men in his novels, remarks:

And the opinion that women cause the trouble is not my own (...) because they are much more sensible than men, they have to be. They have held families together and it's because of families that a race is continued, and I would be sorry to think that my work had given anyone the impression that I hold women in morally a lower position than men, which I do not .<sup>22</sup>

What a Colombian, low-class, old-fashioned girl like Ángela Vicario has in common with a North-american, upper-class, active girl like Caddy Compson is the place assigned to them as young, marriageable daughters within an essentially patriarchal family, belonging to a small-town community. Both are expected to remain virgins until they marry, both are married off to men they don't love (among others, for economical reasons), both are rejected by their husbands because they have broken the tacit rules governing sexuality and are forced to become independent after their marriages fail. The greatest difference between them is that Ángela's honour is revenged with Nasar's death, so that she can return as a renewed virgin to her husband Bayardo—even if it takes him 25 years to accept her again—whereas Caddy's honour is never recovered, since Quentin fails and Jason won't accept his assigned role as brother; thus, she ends up as a high-class prostitute to become the epitome of the fallen woman.

The family acts as the guardian of the moral values of the children, while the community acts as the moral guardian of the families. Within the family, the mother is in charge of morality—this is why Caroline Compson and Pura Vicario feel so embittered against their daughters when the results of their failure are made evident. The struggle between mother and daughter is silent but constant. Mrs Compson kills her daughter by forbidding that her name be mentioned ever again, not even to her own daughter

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21 In Mendoza, p. 159.

22 In Minter, p. 237.



Quentin, and Mr Compson can do nothing to prevent this. As part of her duties, Mrs Compson finds Caddy a husband, Herbert, to conceal that she has failed to control her daughter's sexuality, but she understands her failure as fate, as divine punishment, not as personal unfitness to fulfil her social, moral role as mother:

(...) what have I done to have been given children like these Benjamin was punishment enough and now for her to have no more regard for me her own mother I've suffered for her dreamed and planned and sacrificed I went down into the valley yet never since she opened her eyes has she given me one unselfish thought at times I look at her I wonder if she can be my child<sup>23</sup>

Pura Vicario beats up her daughter Ángela when she's returned by Bayardo after the wedding night's fiasco, takes no steps to defend or understand her and tries to imprison her in a dreary, empty life: "Había hecho todo lo posible para que Ángela Vicario se muriera en vida, pero la misma hija le malogró los propósitos, porque nunca hizo ningún misterio de su desventura."(143)

The loss of honour of the daughter affects not only the mother's honour, which is partially lost since the mother has not rightly educated the daughter to be a proper wife and mother, but also the honour of the father and husband. Mr Compson is reported by Quentin to have said that "it was men invented virginity not women" (67) but when the crisis breaks out and Caddy is rejected by her husband he reacts by drinking himself to death, a form of slower suicide than Quentin's, but very similar, since he finds himself unable to cope with his role as head of the family. Poncio Vicario, Ángela's father, cuts, likewise, a very poor figure besides his wife Pura, who is the actual head of the family and the parent who orders the twins to revenge Ángela's lost honour. He is blind—literally and metaphorically—and submissive, and plays no role at all, except as a pitiful guest at his own daughter's wedding. He is said to have died a few years after the drama, far from his original community and crushed by the weight of shame.

As García Márquez himself pointed out, the essential aspect of *Crónica de una muerte anunciada* is the Vicario brothers' reluctance to commit the crime that has to restore their family's honour:

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23 William Faulkner, *The Sound And The Fury*. (London: Pan Books Ltd, 1989), p. 88.

Sin embargo la realidad parecía ser que los hermanos Vicario no hicieron nada de lo que convenía para matar a Santiago Nasar de inmediato y sin espectáculo público, sino que hicieron mucho más de lo que era imaginable para que alguien les impidiera matarlo y no lo consiguieron. (81)

They repeatedly announce they are about to kill Nasar to everybody who will pay them attention, so that by the time they finally meet him, the whole town has had a chance to warn him. The community, the force of public opinion, is what pushes them to kill against their wishes and against all evidence that Santiago has ever touched Ángela. The loss of Ángela's honour spreads like oil to engulf her parents, her brothers, Bayardo and Santiago and the whole community. It is an essential part of the classical drama of honour that the tragedy is presented in terms of a public affair and that public reputation is regarded above private understanding. The Vicario brothers are never blamed for their crime and the community is appalled by it only when it is made clear that the grounds for suspicion against Nasar were very shaky. Three years of preventive prison are considered enough and the Vicarios are acquitted, because the law of the country is based on the defence of honour: "El abogado sustentó la tesis del homicidio en legítima defensa del honor, que fue admitida por el tribunal de conciencia, y los gemelos declararon al final del juicio que hubieran vuelto a hacerlo mil veces por los mismos motivos" (79). Nonetheless, the truth is that the crime involves the whole community because it changes the course of life of everybody who took a direct or indirect part in it: "ninguno de nosotros podía seguir viviendo sin saber con exactitud cuál era el sitio y la misión que le había asignado la fatalidad"(154). The story reads, somehow, as a sort of tribal, ritual sacrifice that should renew the life of the community but fails because neither the victim, nor the performers of the blood sacrifice are adequate.

In Caddy's case, Benjy does not play any role—except tormenting his sister on her wedding day when he intuits she is going away—because he is psychically unfit. Jason absolutely rejects Caddy or any obligation about her, but assumes the very unsuccessful role of repressor of his niece Quentin's sexuality. Since she was born without honour, of unknown father, Quentin's personal honour is non-existent, though her behaviour can still affect the family's position within the community. Jason feebly tries to capture her back home after her elopement, but, once she has left Jefferson, robbing Jason of the money Caddy sent for her support, Jason definitely resigns his

post as head of the household; when the last Compson male stops bothering for the sake of the family's honour, the family disintegrates.

To Quentin Compson, honour means suffering. He suffers so deeply because he cannot control Caddy's sexuality—while he is still a virgin—that he daydreams of incest as the ultimate means of controlling her. He rather risks hell than losing the bond of family honour that links him to Caddy, but he won't risk hell without her, either:

Because if it were just to hell; if that were all of it. Finished. If things just finished themselves. Nobody else there but her and me. If we could just have done something so dreadful that they would have fled hell except us. I have committed incest I said Father it was not Dalton Ames And when he put Dalton Ames. Dalton Ames. Dalton Ames. When he put the pistol in my hand I didn't. That's why I didn't. (68)

Quentin's episode, the tragic counterpart of Jason's more comical predicament, is disrupted by a humorous episode which reads as a parody of Quentin's tribulations, and brings to the foreground the contrast between the exaggerated, passionate and not too altruistic notion of Mediterranean honour and Quentin's, which is profoundly romantic. A little girl, probably Italian, follows Quentin in his wanderings and he tries to take her back home until he finally desists and runs away from her; later, the girl's brother accuses Quentin of trying to steal the little girl, Quentin is arrested and forced to pay Julio, the Italian brother, six dollars for the affair. The parody of his own personal situation is suddenly grasped by Quentin and he can't stop laughing, though this bitter laughter later becomes misdirected violence (against Gerald Bland) and is insufficient to make Quentin stay alive.

*The Sound and the Fury* and *Crónica de una muerte anunciada* ultimately read as homage paid by Faulkner and Márquez to Caddy Compson and Ángela Vicario. Both women are portrayed as angels of destruction, for Caddy's behaviour ruins the decaying Compson family and Ángela's mysteriously false accusation precipitates Santiago Nasar's death and the exile of the Vicario family. However, their power of destruction is seen with fascination, as part of the feminine mystery men cannot thoroughly understand. Men die for these women or lead unhappy lives because of them, but they do not know anything about Caddy or Ángela, for they are secretive in their innermost selves.

Caddy is not given a section in *The Sound and the Fury*, but her shadowy presence hovers all over the book; Faulkner idealises in her the fallen woman and makes her the thorn in the life of her family. She uses her sexuality to deny that she is nothing but a daughter and a sister, but her wrong use of sexuality disqualifies her to become a mother, a wife, or an independent working woman. Faulkner saw she was “Doomed and knew it; accepted the doom without either seeking or fleeing it”<sup>24</sup> and he rightly saw he was fated to be the fallen daughter of a falling family, but he allowed Caddy to be loved in excess by Quentin and Mr Compson and to rebel through sex against her lot in life, even if her only true act of rebellion was to ignore, by accident or on purpose, the identity of her daughter’s father.

“De Ángela Vicario, en cambio, tuve siempre noticias de ráfagas que me inspiraron una imagen idealizada”, the narrator says in *Crónica* and indeed this is Márquez’s own love for his character. Although poorer in spirit and less attractive than Caddy, Ángela shows much more courage and self-determination. Both girls are asked to deceive their husbands, Caddy because she is pregnant and Ángela because she is not a virgin, but Ángela won’t deceive Bayardo and when the chance to silence her secret comes up and is willfully missed by her, she causes tragedy. Whereas in *The Sound and the Fury* there remains the secret of Quentin’s unnameable father, in *Crónica de una muerte anunciada* the mystery is why Ángela named Santiago Nasar as her lover. Márquez makes of Ángela’s disclosure of her most personal secret the darkest spot in the dazzling clarity of the narrative. For both Faulkner and García Márquez the old drama of honour is an oppressive plot that dominates their literary territories; just as Caddy and Ángela seek an escape from it through a rebellious violation of honour codes, Faulkner and Márquez enrich the old Mediterranean plot by making the heroines much more arresting than their helpless male counterparts, thus questioning the absolute values of patriarchal society.

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24 Faulkner, “Compson Chronology” in Cowley, *Portable*, p. 744.

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