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SLOVAK REPUBLIC

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE of SCIENTIFIC PAPER
AFASES 2011
Brasov, 26-28 May 2011

PARALLEL VOICES IN TWO AMERICAN NOVELS

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Abstract: *If we think of man as being the sum of his memories, than, the image of a place can be regarded as a resolution of flashbacks seen from different perspectives. Until modernism, reality could be clearly defined and literary works were mostly an imaginary trip through love, time and consciousness. Modernism reevaluated these themes and the importance of characters. Reality is now like a drop of water that splits when reaching the ground. As Bleikasten observed, the American South seemed to be, for many writers, both "transparent and opaque".(Philip Weinstein, 1995:6) The two books that I intend to analyze in terms of character development and inner life, are Faulkner's "The Sound and the Fury" and William Styron's "Lie Down in Darkness". They are relevant when talking about family life, racism, individual characters, mixed feelings and complex lives.*

Keywords: *modernism, parallel voices, consciousness, individual characters, feelings*

"The language in which I might be able not only to write, but to think is neither Latin, nor English, neither Italian, nor Spanish, but a language none of whose words is known to me, a language in which inanimate things speak to me and wherein I may one day have to justify myself before an unknown judge." (Hugo von Hofmannsthal, The letter of Lord Chandos).

Modernism gives authors the chance to reveal every hidden part of the human mind in such a way that we can actively involve in its understanding while associating and revealing the best perspective as a whole.

Caddy and Peyton's life can be considered a search for freedom and self-identity. They both live their lives "like nigger women too".(William Faulkner, 1954:113) These sexual independence, this woman awakening gives them chance to escape from the destructive struggle of their family to survive. Caddy's experiences as a "nurturant mother" for Quentin and Benjy, as a lover, mother, a

wife and then exiled with no baby and husband, traumatised her being and transformed her life into o continuous attempt to redefine her self as a woman. (Cheryl Lester, 1995:139) Peyton is desperately looking for a proper moment to escape from her parents' clashing voices and find equilibrium. She thought of alcohol, the sexual experiences, marriage and, finally, suicide as opportunities to harmonise her tormented being. But none of these helped her find unity and self-identity.

Caddy, the only powerful character whose strength is given by rebellion, is never given an interior monologue of her own as Payton has the chance to express herself. She is there do to her brother's interest in her, but she's more like a ghost: running, vanishing, retreating, standing in doorways, forever elusive, forever untouchable. She is the center of the novel, an "absent presence" (<http://www.bookrags.com>), a woman who can control the minds of each male character: for

Benjy “smelled like trees” or “like leaves”, she is the symbol of life, of regeneration, of vitality and change (William Faulkner, 1954:5), the image of a mother and of a sister; for Quentin she represents the loss of “some concept of Compson honor and of a myth of Southern woman hood”(Albert J. Guerard, 1976:109), she is obsessively desired by him and blamed by her brother Jason because “once a bitch, always a bitch”.(William Faulkner, 1954:223)

Payton is trapped between her father’s need for love and incestuous feelings, and her mother’s struggle to prove that she, “a suffering woman”, “had brought together the broken family”.(William Styron,1951:261) She can not find the peace in their family anymore. She wishes to be different, to have her own life, dreams and thoughts, but the burden of a dark heresy brings her close to madness. Her dying naked has no other meaning but the return to innocence, to a state of purity from which she can begin a new life, having a new identity. Not able to love, to have children, to be a good wife or an active lover, she wasted her life in vane with no hope of harmony or stability.

Symbols of decay, the two women, as the key characters in both novels, gather all the other protagonists around them. As the story is built on their development, they destroy each attempt to bring order because they cannot hold together those multiple voices that undermine their authority. As the world created by them collapsed, they are caught under the conflicting selves of the others. They shout, cry, decay and struggle, but their inner life seems to be so deeply hidden that nothing can be seen on their faces. They live to endure, just like a stone is polished by winds and rivers but it never complains until the end of time.

Having no clear-cut in the lives of those around them, they cannot define themselves

but in relation to each person that comes in contact with Caddy and Payton. For every step in their development, there is a price to be paid. Unfortunately their search brings neither satisfaction, nor fulfillment. Although Caddy has the power to fight for her life and to assume responsibility for her decisions, she cannot be considered a winner since she was the center of family discussions and of mental breakdown. Failing in every attempt to define themselves, both Payton and Caddy can be labeled as lost identities.

Both Faulkner and Styron’s works “reflect or represent certain realities” but their method is inductive, an indirect way to see beyond past realities and, at the same time, they criticize the same realities they represent “calling reader’s attention back from what they see to how they see it”; this meaning going back to “the nature of reality” and to “common sense” and, by doing so, participating to the realities they represent.(Richard C. Moreland, 1995:17)

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