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Reading Faulkner South of the South: The Latin American Boom’s Roots and Legacy

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Reading Faulkner South of the South: The Latin American Boom’s Roots and Legacy

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Chapter 1: The power dynamics of influence

“The good artist believes that nobody is good enough to give him advice. He has supreme vanity. No matter how much he admires the old writer, he wants to beat him.”

-William Faulkner, 1956

On a cold 1982 December afternoon in Stockholm, Gabriel García Márquez concluded his Nobel Prize speech by quoting William Faulkner, “On a day like today, my master William Faulkner said ‘I decline to accept the end of man.’” García Márquez’s reference to Faulkner signals the existence of a relationship between two literary giants who had no face-to-face contact and belong to different places, languages, and cultures. The reference also reveals Márquez’s own perspective on his relationship with Faulkner; he labels Faulkner as his master. Mario Vargas Llosa and Carlos Fuentes, both contemporaries of García Márquez, have referred to Faulkner in a similar way, often calling him their “teacher” and their “master.”

These authors’ testimonies indicate their perception of Faulkner as a teacher. Labeling the relationship as a teacher-student relationship suggests a hierarchy of power, where the teacher holds authority over the student. But the testimony of Latin American authors goes beyond this simple categorization of Faulkner as the superior writer. In a 1981 newspaper article titled “Faulkner en Laberinto,” Peruvian writer Mario Vargas Llosa writes, “The world of Faulkner wasn’t his, in effect. It was ours,” and ends his essay by affirming that Faulkner “Wrote in English, but was one of ours.” Mexican writer Carlos Fuentes similarly stated in an

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3 In Spanish, the word for “master” and “teacher” is the same: “maestro.” As shown in footnote 1, García Márquez uses the word “maestro” in his Nobel Prize speech and in several other references to Faulkner. Translators tend to translate this into “master” instead of “teacher,” but it is important to keep in mind that Latin American writers might have thought of Faulkner to be their teacher, not their master.
5 “Escribía en ingles, pero era uno de los nuestros” My translation.
essay that “Faulkner is one of ours; he belongs to our cultural heritage.” These authors, all prominent figures of the Latin American Boom, both look up to Faulkner and consider him a part of that movement. This attitude complicates the previously simple power dynamic, because appropriating Faulkner as one of their own is in many ways a demonstration of power. Faulkner ceases to be an authoritarian master from a far-away place, and becomes someone who could have lived and written among them.

If we step back from the testimonies of the writers themselves and look at studies about their relationship with Faulkner, we find similar tensions. Scholars James Irby, Mark Frisch and Harley D. Oberhelman have all referred to Faulkner’s interaction with Latin America as an influence exerted on the region’s writers. Describing a relationship between writers as an influence is similar to describing a teacher-pupil relationship in that it attributes more power to one side of the equation than the other. The influencer is painted as the authoritarian outsider, the influenced is an aspiring and unoriginal writer.

This study resists defining the relationship between Faulkner and the Latin American authors of the Boom as a relationship of influence, because doing so would suggest disparities of power. This would in turn confine the analysis to a one-dimensional and static process, which would overlook details of translation, reception, culture and place. Before pushing the notion of influence off the table, however, I want to take a closer look at what specifically influence studies encompass and identify why they are inadequate for the present study.

Harold Bloom’s The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry argues that modern poets are overcome by the fear that everything has already been said. The modern poet is a latecomer

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7 See Harley D. Oberhelman’s The Presence of Faulkner in the Writings of García Márquez, James E. Irby’s thesis La influencia de William Faulkner en cuatro narradores hispanoamericanos, and Mark F Frisch’s William Faulkner: su influencia en la literatura hispanoamericana: Mallea, Rojas, Yáñez y García Márquez
to the literary scene, and as a result struggles to write an original masterpiece that will earn him recognition. Bloom connects this anxiety to Freud’s “family romance,” in which a son fears that his father has already slept with his mother and demonstrated his manhood. A writer, like the son, needs to overcome these anxieties in order to establish his authority. While Bloom’s study is male and Anglo-centric, it can help us think about the relationship between male writers who are all considered literary giants. Bloom himself describes the influence that Faulkner had on Fuentes in the prologue to his book *Carlos Fuentes’ The Death of Artemio Cruz*. Bloom writes,

I regret observing that the book is excessively derivative: Faulkner’s *As I Lay Dying* and *Absalom, Absalom!* are relied on throughout...It is not as though Faulkner, Carpentier, and Welles are transmuted into something rich and strange that is Fuentes’ own. The echoes are disturbing because they betray an anxiety of influence that Fuentes lacks the strength to surmount.  

Bloom proceeds to argue that Fuentes’ protagonist in *The Death of Artemio Cruz* is not the creation of Fuentes himself, but of Octavio Paz’s analysis of masculinity in his famous essay *The Labyrinth of Solitude*. In Bloom’s definition of influence, predecessors like Faulkner and Joyce were a source of anxiety for the generation of the Boom in the 1950s, when they began to write. Fuentes, he argues, was not strong enough to overcome this anxiety, and much of his work is therefore unoriginal. His work is derived from existing creations and is therefore weak.

Bloom’s model of influence creates an established order of literary prestige that is static and constant. In her book *In Search of the Latin American Faulkner*, Tanya Fayen compares Bloom’s model of influence to a lineage of kings, where one great leader is replaced by another king who ascends to the throne. This conception of influence is problematic because it rests on the notion of a constant hierarchy. Fayen writes, “From Bloom’s point of view, there is an

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established order. Within that order there is a struggle for dominance but it is one that does not affect the status quo.”

A theoretical model that does not acknowledge changes in dominant systems of literature is unfit for the present study. Faulkner’s work brought about deep changes to Southern literature. Unlike many of his contemporaries who left the South for New York, Faulkner lived and wrote in Mississippi for most of his life. In using modernist techniques to write about the South, he introduced new forms of storytelling and portraying characters that changed the status quo of American and Southern literature. Similarly, the Latin American authors who encountered Faulkner in the twentieth century were searching for an identity as writers and as Latin Americans. In their search for new ways of expressing their concerns and their reality, they looked away from Spain and towards American writers like Faulkner. Faulkner was present in this process of change that began with Borges in the thirties and gained international prestige with the generation of the sixties, or the Boom: García Márquez, Cortázar, Fuentes, and Vargas Llosa. This shift was in many ways an overhaul of the established hierarchy, a shift that cannot be analyzed using Bloom’s influence model.

I will use, instead, Even-Zohar’s polysystem theory as a framework for this study. Even-Zohar published his first paper on polysystem theory in 1969. He defines a polysystem as “a multiple system, a system of various systems which intersect with each other and partly overlap, using concurrently different options, yet functioning as one structured whole, whose members are interdependent.” Thinking of language as a system rather than a group of disparate elements, Zohar argues, gives us more flexibility to analyze literature. That is, polysystem theory does not limit itself to looking at a relationship between authors A and B where one learns from

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the other, it is interested in considering all of the elements at play in such interactions: readers, critics, educational institutions, bookshops, publishers, etc. These elements form a system with a center-periphery model. The model proposes a dynamic relationship in which there is a center or dominant literary form, which is more compelling to readers, critics, and publishers. Together with the dominant literary form there exist peripheral literary forms. The dominant system can occupy the center of the model for a long or short time and can be replaced by a periphery system that brings in a different literary form.

Polysystem theory is a useful tool for this study because it allows us to think about two systems, that of the American South, and that of Latin America, and to take into account all of the factors at play in their interaction with each other. Faulkner was initially a writer of the periphery, unattractive to critics, publishers and readers. In his 1945 article in *The Saturday Review of Literature*, Malcolm Cowley points out that out of the 17 books that Faulkner had written up to that date, 16 were out of print. It was only with the Nobel Prize that Faulkner’s writing attracted a wider readership and critical acclaim, becoming a dominant form of literature.

The authors of the Boom did not go from being in the periphery to creating a dominant system of literature in their own lifespan, but rather were part a century-long process in which Latin American authors as a whole searched for a literary identity. The authors of the Boom were the cusp of this search and solidified a dominant literary system in Latin America.

Faulkner’s role in this process of moving from the periphery to the center occurred because of several factors: French translators who were impressed by early works of Faulkner, Latin American critics who read French translations of Faulkner, the Argentinean literary magazine *Sur* that published critiques and translations of Faulkner, the intellectual circles with which each writer interacted, etc. Polysystem theory will let us think about all of these factors as
parts of a dynamic system that created a relationship between Faulkner and the writers of the
Boom, and how these factors made García Márquez, Vargas Llosa and Fuentes a literary canon.

Polysystem theory can also provide insight into why Faulkner intrigued several
generations of Latin American writers and why they were eager to learn from him. Even-Zohar
argues that a polysystem can choose to reject or accept non-normative literary practices from
another literary system. Faulkner’s long sentences and extensive use of subordinate clauses, for
instance, was a foreign literary technique for Latin America in the early twentieth century. The
decision to reject or accept “foreign” literary practices depends on the relative wealth or poverty
of the literary systems in question. At the turn of the twentieth century, some Latin American
writers felt dissatisfied with the literary traditions in Latin America. Latin American countries
had achieved independence in the nineteenth century but were still struggling to find a literary
identity.

*El periquillo sarniento* (*The Itching Parrot*, 1816) is generally considered the first Latin
American novel. Written by Mexican José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi, it was based on the
Spanish model for the picaresque novel and portrayed Mexican society during the country’s
transition to independence. Literary movements and techniques continued to be imported from
Spain throughout the eighteenth century. For instance, costumbrismo, a literary movement that
focuses on local traditions and language use, emerged in Spain in the 17th century with writers
like Juan de Zavaleta. In Latin America, it remained a popular literary style in the region until
the twentieth century. Latin American writers in the early twentieth century like Jorge Luis
Borges and José Donoso felt that these writing styles were too stiff and detached from the Latin
American people. A language and a canon that is dominated by Spanish literary traditions and
strict language rules, Donoso argues, could not properly describe Latin America’s specific
reality. In his book *Historia personal del Boom*, Donoso describes the Latin American literary system in the early twentieth century as an orphaned system that was actively reading literature imported from North America and Europe in search of an identity. The Latin American polysystem during the first decades of the twentieth century, therefore, was open to outside influence and it was in this state that it stumbled across Faulkner’s work.

This study looks closely at how this relationship between Faulkner and Latin America began and evolved. It builds on the work of Tanya T. Fayen on her book *In Search of the Latin American Faulkner*. Fayen uses polysystem theory to understand the interaction between Faulkner and Latin American writers from the beginning of the twentieth century until the end of the 1950s. Fayen looks closely at Spanish translations of Faulkner and notes how these translations changed as Faulkner’s fame grew throughout the twentieth century. Because these translations were Latin American writers’ principal window to Faulkner, analyzing them allows Fayen to understand what elements of Faulkner were getting across to aspiring writers and what elements of his writing were lost in the translations.

In the early years of Faulkner, Spanish translations of Faulkner by Latin American translators unapologetically changed his sentence structure and placed the subject, the verb, and the object in his sentences closer together to make his work easier to read. In his 1944 translation of Faulkner’s short story collection *These Thirteen*, Jose Blaya Lozano changed the title of the collection to *Victoria y otros relatos*, a drastically different title than the English one. Lozano also changed Faulkner’s table of contents considerably — he deleted one of the stories, changed the order of the stories, and omitted Faulkner’s organizers “Part I” “Part II” and “Part III.”\(^{11}\) In 1949, when the first Spanish translation of *Absalom, Absalom!* was being prepared for

publication, the publishers realized that there was a strong likelihood that Faulkner would receive the Nobel Prize and introduced an apologetic introduction that explained why the translator had chosen to modify Faulkner’s language to make it more comprehensible. This was the first of many apologetic notes that writers would feel compelled to write after Faulkner won the Nobel prize. Eventually, translators stopped changing the order of his sentences and his tables of contents, and made a greater effort to remain loyal to Faulkner’s punctuation. Fayen points to this moment as a shift in the Latin American polysystem. This shift indicates that attitudes towards Faulkner of writers, translators, and critics changed and his work became a dominant system from which the dissatisfied Latin American system was eager to borrow.

In contrast, Fayen points out that apologetic notes and changes in translation practices did not occur in Spain after Faulkner’s Nobel Prize award in 1950. Retranslations of Faulkner’s works in the eighties imposed local language norms and rearranged Faulkner’s sentence structure heavily. Fayen sees this as evidence that the Spanish polysystem was a closed one while Latin America was open to change.

After the late 1950s, political turmoil and struggling economies in Latin America decreased the funding available to sponsor translations of North American writers and Spain took over the task of translating Faulkner. Fayen’s research stops at the point when the Latin American Boom begins. The Boom, as its name suggests, brought about an array of literary works that received international acclaim. The movement not only established itself as a dominant literary system in Latin America but also became an exporter of literary forms and ideas to other literary systems.

This study seeks to understand Faulkner’s role in the Latin American literary Boom—from the translation and distribution of his work to the appropriation and Latin Americanization
of his literary techniques. It traces the Boom authors during their formative years and their initial encounters with Faulkner. There is a particular emphasis on the early works, namely García Márquez’s first short stories and first novel, Leaf Storm, as well as Vargas Llosa’s first novel The Time of the Hero. It was while writing their first works that Vargas Llosa and García Márquez most consciously attempted to learn from Faulkner, particularly from As I Lay Dying, Absalom, Absalom! and The Sound and the Fury.

There is much debate surrounding the question of which authors should be considered part of the Latin American Boom. I chose to focus mostly on Gabriel García Márquez not only because I am a great admirer of his work, but also because of the extensive documentation available on his initial encounters with Faulkner’s work and his crucial position on the Latin American polysystem. I will also address the work of Vargas Llosa and Fuentes because they wrote and spoke about Faulkner and there is substantial evidence to prove that Faulkner was present in their formative years, as opposed to writers like Julio Cortázar, who did not share the aforementioned writers’ enthusiasm for Faulkner. Conveniently, Vargas Llosa, García Márquez, and Fuentes are amongst the most prominent authors of the Boom and there is no debate as to whether they should be excluded from the movement. By referring to them as “the authors of the Boom,” I do not mean to claim that only the three of them represent the movement.

I will first set out to trace Faulkner’s work across its journey from the South to French translators to Latin America and into the hands of the Boom writers. I will pay particular attention to the role of the Argentinean literary magazine Sur and its founder Victoria Ocampo as an important distributor of translated work in Latin America. I will analyze the work of Faulkner and the authors of the Boom, paying particular attention to sentence structure, setting, and narrative techniques. Chapter 2 follows the introduction of Faulkner into Latin America through
the work of the editors of *Sur*. Chapter 3 briefly touches on the importance of Mexican writer Juan Rulfo as a predecessor to the Boom and one of the first Latin American writers to appropriate Faulkner. Chapter 4 presents the challenges that Faulkner’s sentence structure posed to his translators and the aspects of Faulkner’s sentences that were lost in the translation process. With these translations in mind, Chapter 5 traces the development of García Márquez’s early short stories as he read Faulkner in Spanish. Chapter 6 steps away from sentence structure and towards narrative techniques in *Leaf Storm* and *The Time of the Hero*. Chapter 7 considers the role of politics in the relationship between Faulkner and the Boom. The last chapter concludes with an overview of Faulkner’s legacy amongst the descendants of the Boom.

The objective of this investigative work is to understand how the writers of the Boom—particularly García Márquez—came across Faulkner, which specific translations of Faulkner they read, and what techniques they adapted in order to enrich their writing. More importantly, this study hopes that understanding the intersections between Faulkner and the Boom will shed light into the origins and legacy of the Boom and Faulkner.
Chapter 2: Victoria Ocampo curates Latin America’s bookshelves

“You’ve done brave and happy things, and of high quality...You’ve changed the direction of reading in some three countries, and with that, you’ve seasoned our still colonial culture with ineffable ingredients.”

-Gabriela Mistral, letter to Victoria Ocampo

Changes in the Latin American polysystem during the twentieth century were driven in great part by Victoria Ocampo. International critics are well-acquainted with names like Jorge Luis Borges, Pablo Neruda, Julio Cortázar, and Octavio Paz, but Victoria Ocampo remains to many an unfamiliar name. Her monumental importance to twentieth century Latin American literature rests in the work she did to publish Latin American authors and translate foreign literature. All of the aforementioned writers, as well as Adolfo Bioy Casares, Alfonso Reyes and Gabriela Mistral were published by Victoria Ocampo at some point in their careers. Ocampo also translated and distributed foreign literature in Latin America, such as Drieu la Rochelle, André Malraux, and William Faulkner.

Ocampo was born in 1890 in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Her family began travelling to Europe when she was a young girl, so that she learned to speak Spanish and French simultaneously. She continued to travel to Europe throughout her life and studied at the Sorbonne, establishing strong relationships with French writers and translators. Her strong ties to French writers would be of particular importance when she began publishing Sur in 1931. From 1931 until her death in 1979, Ocampo’s Sur translated, edited, and published works by T.S. Eliot, Thomas Mann, Albert Camus, Jean-Paul Sartre, Virginia Woolf and many others, becoming the most important importer of foreign literature into Latin America.

12 Gabriela Mistral and Victoria Ocampo, This America of Ours: The Letters of Gabriela Mistral and Victoria Ocampo, ed. Elizabeth Horan (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003), 153. Mistral was the first Latin American author to be awarded a Nobel Prize in literature and an artist who was deeply interested in the cultural direction of the region. Her long-standing admiration for Ocampo’s work signals the powerful impact that Ocampo and Sur had on Latin American literature.
Sur’s publishing branch, Editorial Sur, printed Faulkner in Spanish for the first time in Latin America in 1939. Ocampo asked Borges to translate the short story “Dry September,” and would continue to publish Faulkner in translation throughout the twentieth century. Ocampo’s interest in Faulkner was sparked by French critics, who by the end of the 1930s were writing profusely about Faulkner. France’s interest in Faulkner began in 1931, with the translations of Maurice-Edgar Coindreau.

In 1930, a student at Princeton approached his French Professor, Maurice-Edgar Coindreau, to tell him about a novel by an obscure writer from Mississippi. Coindreau later writes about this discovery in The Time of William Faulkner: “As I Lay Dying had just been published. I had not read fifty pages of this admirable book before my mind was made up. The French nation had to become acquainted with an artist of such pronounced originality.”13 One year later, Coindreau published an article about Faulkner in Nouvelle Revue Française and was working on the French translation of As I Lay Dying for Éditions Gallimard. The French were quick to read and praise Faulkner, and by 1945 Malcolm Cowley quotes a conversation with Jean Paul Sartre in which the philosopher affirms that “For the young people in France, Faulkner is a god.”14

Coindreau was not satisfied with introducing Faulkner to France; he also made an effort to introduce Faulkner to Latin America. In 1937, Coindreau published an article in Sur, titled “Panorama of Current Young North American Literature.” In it, Coindreau clarifies that Faulkner is not what many American critics accuse him of being, “Faulkner does not practice horror for horror’s sake, he is not pornographic, he is not gratuitously morbid, he is not sadistic,

and he is not even obscure.”¹⁵ Coindreau is clearly writing from his experience as a professor in an American institution, but as Fayen notes, critics in Latin America were never perturbed by Faulkner’s writing as Americans were, or at least, Latin American critics never accused Faulkner of being morbid, sadistic, or obscure. In fact, as a result of Sur’s mostly positive coverage of Faulkner, Latin American intellectuals quickly developed a fascination with Faulkner. Sur published a total of four articles about North American literature in the 1930s, all of which mentioned Faulkner. Critiques continued to appear with increasing frequency in the following decades, up until the eighties, when Sur stopped publishing.

When the writers who would later be the Latin American Boom in the 1960s were in their formative years, Sur was well-known and was distributing translated work to various countries in Latin America. García Márquez wrote about his time as a journalist in Barranquilla: “We had a friend who owned a bookstore and ordered books for us. Every time that a box full of books arrived from Buenos Aires, we celebrated with a party.”¹⁶

In May of 1938, García Márquez started working at El Universal in Cartagena, where his colleagues and mentor introduced him to Faulkner’s work. When he moved to Barranquilla in 1950 to work for another newspaper, El Heraldo, he became part of what is known today as the Barranquilla Group. The group met every week to discuss philosophers, politics, and most of all, writers. García Márquez writes that as a newcomer to the group, he felt nervous when the most respected member, Ramon Vinyes, asked him what he read. “By then I had already read everything that I could find on the lost generation,” he writes, “In Spanish, giving special attention to Faulkner, whom I had traced with the sharp stealth of a shaving razor, due to my

strange fear that in the long run he would be nothing more than a clever man of rhetoric.”

To which Ramon Vinyes replied excitedly, “If Faulkner were in Barranquilla, he would be sitting in this table.” In his autobiography, Marquez mentions that the Barranquilla Group asked the owner of the bookstore Mundo to order books from Buenos Aires. They asked “especially for the novelties from Buenos Aires, whose editors had begun to translate, print, and mass distribute literary novelties from around the world after the Second World War. Because of their work we could read books that would have otherwise not arrived in Barranquilla...works by Jorge Luis Borges, Julio Cortázar, Felisberto Hernandez, and North American and British writers skillfully translated by Victoria Ocampo.”

*Surr* became progressively less influential in the Latin American polysystem as the Boom accelerated. The magazine criticized and dissociated itself from the Cuban Revolution, a decision that distanced it from the Boom writers, who were staunch supporters of Castro’s regime. When García Márquez published *A Hundred Years of Solitude* in 1967, *Surr* published only a short review that paled in comparison to the praise that other journals were writing.

Despite the distancing that occurred between Ocampo and the Boom in the sixties, her early curation and mass distribution of Faulkner’s work throughout Latin American countries had a strong impact on the formation of the Boom writers. In the next chapters, I want to delve into the writing of Faulkner and the writing of García Márquez, Vargas Llosa, and Fuentes. I will delve into the writing of Faulkner that the Latin American writers refer to in interviews, essays and memoirs, paying particular attention to the early works of the Boom, which were written when they began to read Faulkner.

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17 Ibid.
18 Ibid., 138.
19 Ibid., 134.
Chapter 3: The ghosts and legacy of Juan Rulfo

“Comala, something similar to a Mexican Yoknapatavpha, is a village, or the skeleton of a village, made up of rumors, stagnant images of the past, phrases that enjoyed a precarious memorability, and, above all, names, paralyzed names and their echos.”

- Mario Benedetti, 1955

Mexican author Juan Rulfo published Pedro Páramo in 1955, a novel that narrates the story of Juan Preciado’s search for his father in the ghost town of Comala. Although Juan Rulfo’s work precedes the Boom, Pedro Páramo became and continues to be a landmark in Latin American literature and it is important to pause and consider the novel’s relationship to Faulkner and to the Boom.

James E. Irby defended his master’s thesis, “La influencia de Faulkner en Cuatro Narradores Hispanoamericanos” (Faulkner’s influence on four Hispanic American writers) one year after Pedro Páramo was published. Irby was the first to point out the existence of a relationship between Faulkner’s work and that of Latin American writers, especially the four writers that his study focuses on: Lino Novás Calvo, José Revueltas, Juan Carlos Onetti and Juan Rulfo.

Although it is unclear whether Rulfo read Irby’s thesis, he must have heard about it, given the attention it attracted and given that, in the words of writer Antonio Alatorre “the literary republic in Mexico was small in 1956.” Irby’s thesis led to more commentary on Faulkner’s influence on Rulfo, and in 1985 Rulfo published a newspaper article in which he

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declared: “Others found my pages to be very faulknerian, but back then I had not yet read Faulkner.”

Evidence suggests that Rulfo’s statement is inaccurate. In 1954, one year before Pedro Páramo was published, Mexican writer Elena Poniatowska published an interview with Juan Rulfo in which he names Faulkner as one of the writers that he enjoyed reading. Shortly after Rulfo’s 1985 article, literary critic Emmanuel Carballo wrote that “in 1953 Rulfo and I exchanged books...he gave me a sweaty and stained copy of Las palmeras salvajes.”

Later generations of Mexican and Latin American writers similarly disregarded Rulfo’s claims that Faulkner had not influenced his writing. Contemporary Mexican writer Pedro Ángel Palou, for instance, explains that Faulkner had an influence on his generation “via interposita persona...I don’t mean to say that we didn’t read Faulkner, but that in a way his influence had already been ‘translated’ and assimilated by authors from Rulfo to Onetti passing through García Márquez or Fuentes.”

Why then, if he did seem to have read Faulkner before writing Pedro Páramo, and if his literary heirs claim to have inherited Faulkner from him, did Rulfo explicitly negate Faulkner's influence on his work? In order to answer this question, it is necessary to revisit Irby’s thesis in more detail, keeping in mind the influence theories discussed in the previous chapter.

In the section of his thesis dedicated to Juan Rulfo, Irby writes “Rulfo betrays his debt to Faulkner...one can sketch in the testimonies of a gallery of characters something like the

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24 This quote was obtained from personal correspondence with Pedro Angel Palou on February 2016, and translated from Spanish by myself.
‘collective conscience’ of a region, a miniature version of the vast and hallucinatory panorama of ¡Absalón, Absalón!’25 This is one of many statements in which Irby projects Rulfo as an unoriginal writer who has talent but has not quite reached William Faulkner’s level of literary mastery. This type of statement stems from a problem in Irby’s thesis that Tanya Fayen and multiple other scholars have pointed out: Irby’s thesis is devoid of any consideration of the nature of influence. Irby dives directly into the textual and thematic similarities between each of the four Latin American authors in Faulkner, drawing intriguing comparisons but often slipping into the dangerous ground of undermining the merits of Onetti, Novás Calvo, Revueltas and Rulfo.

It comes as no surprise, therefore, that Rulfo was displeased by a comparison drawn between him and Faulkner that was described with phrases such as “Rulfo demonstrates not only in his stories that are deprived of positive values, but also in his incapacity to evolve and overcome his limitations that he himself is affected in some way by the tenebrous forces that oppress his characters.”26 In several points of his discussion of Rulfo, Irby doubles as scholar and as a critic, pointing out deficiencies in Rulfo’s writing. Rulfo was a young writer then, devoid of the eminent standing that his name holds today, so that pointing out deficiencies in his work was not such a daunting task. Pedro Páramo had been published only a year before Irby defended his thesis, and initially received negative reviews. As Irby was writing his thesis about Rulfo’s work, therefore, he was immersed in the literary world of Mexico City that was retaliating against Rulfo’s work.


26 “Rulfo muestra no sólo en sus historias desprovistas de valores positivos sino también en su incapacidad hasta ahora para evolucionar y superar sus limitaciones, que él mismo está afectado en cierto modo por las fuerzas tenebrosas que oprimen a sus personajes.” Ibid. My translation.
In describing Rulfo’s work as a “miniature” of Faulkner’s work, Irby aligns himself with Bloom’s anxiety of influence theory. He paints the American writer as a literary giant on a pedestal and Rulfo as an artist who is striving for similar literary achievements but failing to overcome his limitations. Rulfo, in the eyes of Irby, has constructed a unique world of ghost towns, corrupt politicians, and characters deprived of any future, but his stories and novel lack unity of form, cohesion, and Faulkner’s cosmovision.

To Irby, Rulfo’s decision to dissolve Pedro Páramo’s main and most coherent character into a ghost at the middle of his narrative produces a disorienting disequilibrium between the first and second parts of the novel. Pedro Páramo lacks Absalom, Absalom!’s Quentin Compson, who pieces the story together with Shreve in his Harvard dorm room. Irby also criticizes a sense of confusion in Rulfo’s short stories. In “El hombre” and “En la madrugada,” for instance, Irby points out that the use of multiple narrators fragments the story and leaves the sequence of events without a clear trajectory.

Although Irby does credit Rulfo for some admirable and original elements in his work, on the whole his verdict is that Rulfo’s work falls short of Faulkner’s creations. For instance, Irby points out that a characteristic that distinguishes Rulfo’s work is the recurrent use of fantastic elements and surreal-like renderings of silence and heat in rural Mexico. Irby points out a second key feature that sets Rulfo and Faulkner apart: their language. Rulfo uses his character’s colloquial language to portray the reality of rural Mexico, and adopts an extremely simple voice. He departs from Faulkner’s long and complex sentences and writes in short simple sentences. The resulting voice in Rulfo’s language is extremely powerful, so that a reader familiar with Mexico can almost hear the voices of Rulfo’s character aloud, because she has heard these voices many times before. But Irby circles back towards the end of his section on Rulfo to cast the
Mexican writer as one who needs to work harder: “Rulfo has promised and achieved much already in his first books; but if he does not gravitate towards a more integrated version of life, it is possible that his future works will be mere repetitions, with slight variants, of what is already said in “El llano en llamas” (The Burning Plain, 1953) and Pedro Páramo.”

Pedro Páramo was Rulfo’s only novel and last work of literature. But Irby’s forecast of a repetitive series of literary works came true in a different way. In a 2010 interview, Pedro Angel Palou stated that Juan Rulfo’s influence is a challenge for many Mexican writers today—because it is easy to end up writing iterations of his work. Rulfo, Palou explains, is an “influence with which one has to be careful. It is one of those strong influences...In Zapata, curiously, Rulfo is one of my great influences, and yet, the one I am most cautious about. My Zapata is scarcely rulfian. It’s impossible for Rulfo not to be there”

27 In recent correspondence, I asked Palou to elaborate on the idea of being cautious with a literary influence. He referred to Bloom’s influence theory, stating that an author “re-catalogs what is important and what is discarded. When I spoke about being cautious I was referring to imitation. Everything rural in Mexico is not rulfian, Daniel Sada found a solution to his [Rulfo’s] influence through eight syllable prosody, but the own Jesús Gardea did not and he succumbed. The same thing happened in Colombia with G.M. and in Argentina with Borges.”

Irby was right in pointing out that Pedro Páramo and “El llano en llamas” were powerful works that had the potential to haunt a writer. But it was not Rulfo himself who bore the brunt of

27 “…es una influencia que hay que cuidar. Son de esas influencias tan duras…. En Zapata, es curioso, Rulfo es una de mis grandes influencias y, sin embargo, la que más cuido. Es muy poco rulfiano mi Zapata. Es imposible que Rulfo no esté.” My translation.
28 “…Recataloga lo que importa y lo que se desecha. Cuando yo hablaba del cuidado me refería a la imitación. Todo lo rural en México no es rulfiano, Daniel Sada supo solucionar su influencia mediante la prosodia del octosílabo, pero el propio Jesús Gardea no pudo y sucumbió. Lo mismo pasó en Colombia con G.M. y en Argentina con Borges.” My translation.
his work’s ghosts, but future generations of writers who continue to struggle to incorporate him into their work without ‘succumbing’ to him.

It is precisely because Rulfo’s work has haunted many writers that he is important to consider as a part of the Faulkner-Latin America puzzle. While Rulfo’s denial of Faulkner’s presence in his work is initially confusing, it is an understandable response to Irby’s unflattering description of him as an failed child of Faulkner. If we consider Rulfo and Faulkner using Even-Zohar’s theory of influence, Faulknerian elements in Rulfo’s can be traced without undermining the Mexican writer’s evident accomplishments.

This study will proceed under the assumption that Rulfo did read Faulkner and was one of the first writers to “translate” Faulkner into a Latin American Faulkner. The Latin American Faulkner can be traced, as Palou points out, from Rulfo to the Boom to the Post-Boom, to the Generation of the Crack. The Post-Boom and the Generation of the Crack (of which Palou is a part) will be revisited in more detail in the conclusion.
Chapter 4: Faulkner’s sentences travel to Latin America

“Let the writer take up surgery or bricklaying if he is interested in technique. There is no mechanical way to get the writing done, no shortcut.”
- William Faulkner, 1956

A few months after *Absalom, Absalom!* was published in 1936, critic Max Miller published the following critique in the *San Diego Union*:

In *Absalom, Absalom!* William Faulkner is still determined to be “different” at all costs, and this time the cost is a most elaborate inarticulateness...he adds to the confusion by making his sentences pages long, each sentences often interspersed with phrases in italics and with other phrases in parenthesis. And so if the secret of great writing is to write in a cross-word puzzle code that only the writer can decipher then Faulkner this time certainly should have the boys and girls buffalloed into the epitome of admiration.

Faulkner’s critics condemned his work for a variety of reasons, but it was the southern writer’s sentence structure that particularly exasperated his reviewers. Miller points out some of the characteristics of Faulkner's sentences that provoked such reactions: long sentences, the use of italics, and the use of parentheses. Other writing techniques of Faulkner that tried the patience of his critics include his use of the negative of words (such as “not-husband” or “not-people”), his deliberate creation of ambiguity in subjects’ gender and number, his incomplete sentences and thoughts, his minimal use of punctuation, his tendency to place large amounts of information between subject and verb, and his incorporation of dialogue into narrative paragraphs.

Some of Faulkner’s critics crossed him off as a bad writer while others questioned why on earth, if he was capable of “better” writing, he chose to write the way he did. Granville Hicks stated in his 1949 review of *Intruder in the Dust* “The question anyone has to ask is why Faulkner, who can write a prose as crisp as Ernest Hemingway’s whenever he wants, has chosen

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thus to impose upon the reader’s patience.”

Hicks recognizes, unlike many of his colleagues, that Faulkner had specific motivations behind his choices of sentence structure. He concludes his article by affirming that the effort Faulkner demands of his readers “pays off” and that Faulkner’s intentions have to “be given the benefit of the doubt.” Scholars have since then produced extensive analysis of Faulkner’s sentence structure.

Faulkner withholds information from his readers in his sentences in a way that asks his readers to hold on to the subject throughout the sentence and often re-read sentences. For instance, the separation of a sentence’s subject and verb retains the full meaning of a sentence from the reader for as long as Faulkner decides to make his sentence. The third sentence of “Dry September” reads

> Attacked, insulted, frightened: none of them, gathered in the barber shop on that Saturday evening where the ceiling fan stirred, without freshening it, the vitiated air, sending back upon them, in recurrent surges of stale pomade and lotion, their own stale breath and odors, knew exactly what had happened.

Faulkner extends the statement “none of them knew exactly what had happened” to a nine-phrase sentence that lets the reader know in great detail what his characters are feeling, what day it is, where they are, what the air in the room feels like, what it smells like, and, ultimately, his characters’ sense of confusion regarding an ambiguous event. This is one of the most elaborate sentences of “Dry September” and, together with the two that precede it, it deliberately creates confusion in the story’s first paragraph.

The carefully crafted sentence structure parallels the structure of the entire short story by withholding information. The reader does not obtain information to piece the sentence together until the end of the sentence, “knew exactly what had happened.” Even when the reader gets to

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the end of the sentence, she is left to reorganize information in her head, and make assumptions—who does “them” refer to? Why do they feel “Attacked, insulted, frightened?”

Similarly, Faulkner’s first short story narrates the confusing turn of events after a rumor circulates through Jefferson about a vague encounter between a white woman and a black man. The reader repeatedly encounters questions such as “You reckon he really done it to her?” and "Is that her?...Did they?” that voice the same questions that the reader is asking herself. The environment and tone of confusion that reign in the town of Jefferson spill over onto Faulkner’s sentences, which mirror the story’s containment of information.

As the reader processes the introductory paragraph of “Dry September,” she obtains limited information but begins to make assumptions. The story opens with the sentence “Through the bloody September twilight, aftermath of sixty-two rainless days, it had gone like a fire in dry grass: the rumor, the story, whatever it was.” Like the aforementioned sentence, this opening sentence withholds information from the reader and progressively reveals hints. The sentence’s subject is postponed by two clauses that inform the reader what month it is, what time of the day it is, and what the weather has been like on the past sixty-two days. The subject is vaguely hinted at in the third clause: “it.” When the subject is finally revealed in the fourth and last clause it is still left unclear—is it a rumor or a story? The phrase “whatever it was” closes the sentence, dismissing the reader’s questions and asking her to make assumptions. This again mirrors the entire short story’s lack of disclosure of information. Even after the story comes to a close, the reader does not understand what happened, if anything, between Miss Minnie and Will Mayes. The reader does not know what the group of men that participate in the opening scene of the story do to Will Mayes. The reader builds suspicions and assumes that the men killed Will Mayes.
The short story’s inconclusiveness makes Will Mayes’s murder more tragic. Silence is often more tragic than explicitness. In this case, the short story’s ambiguousness communicates to the reader Jefferson and the South’s silence after the murderer of a potentially innocent black man. The undisclosed violence haunts the reader’s mind in a more effective creation of pathos than a more explicit account of violence.

This creation of tragedy and pathos applies at the sentence-level as well. Postponing the sentence’s subject or withholding information altogether from a sentence imitates the experience of hearing a rumor. The reader gets pieces of information in a disorganized sequence and makes assumptions about the setting and the characters described. The reader consequently becomes an accomplice in the story and participates in the rumor.


Since this chapter seeks to understand whether Faulkner’s unique sentence structure is present in the sentences of the Boom literature, it is essential to consider at this point what sentence structure each writer encountered in translations of Faulkner. Tanya Fayen dedicates a large part of her book *In Search of a Latin American Faulkner* to the analysis of the translations of Faulkner published in Latin America during the twentieth century. Fayen uses her translation

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33 Lino Novás Calvo’s translation of *Sanctuary* was published in Spain in 1934. This was the first translation of Faulkner into Spanish.
34 “Las Palmeras Salvajes” was part of a collection for which Borges also translated Virginia Woolf’s *Orlando*
analysis to support the claim that Faulkner played an important role in Latin America’s movement from the periphery of the polysystem to its own center. As evidence, she uses translations of Faulkner’s work into Spanish and Portuguese in Spanish-speaking Latin America, Spain, Portugal and Brazil. Authors in each of these four systems modified Faulkner’s sentence structure, punctuation, incomplete sentences, speech, punctuation of thought, paragraph structure, etc. to fit the norms of their own systems. But the tendencies of translators to impose the rules of their literary systems on translations of Faulkner’s work changed over time as Faulkner’s fame increased. In 1949, when publishers in Buenos Aires were preparing the first translation of *Absalom, Absalom!* , they learned that there was a strong likelihood that Faulkner would receive the Nobel Prize. The translator, Beatriz Florencia Nelson, added a paragraph before the first chapter that explains that although she had tried to follow the original text, she has modified some things: “…to avoid making the reading more convoluted, I have modified a lot of the oddities of punctuation. Amongst other things, I will highlight the extensive parenthesis that cover various paragraphs or pages and end in the most unthinkable ways.”

In terms of form and language structure, translations published in the forties changed Faulkner’s sentences by introducing more punctuation, or modified the order so that the subject, the verb, and the object were close to each other. Eventually, writers stopped changing the order of his sentences and introducing extra information. Tanya Fayen labels this as a paradigm shift — the logic of the culture and writing had changed and the norms of Faulkner could be translated without major modification. Interestingly, apologetic notes and transformation of translation practices did not occur in Spain or Portugal. Re-translations of Faulkner’s works in

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the eighties imposed local language norms and rearranged Faulkner’s sentence structure heavily. Fayen sees this as evidence that the Spanish polysystem was a closed one while Latin America was open to change.

The Latin American writers on whom this thesis focuses began reading Faulkner during the late forties and early fifties, when Faulkner’s image was transforming into the image of a canonical writer. With this shift in perception came a shift in translation practices. But the work of Faulkner that Gabriel García Márquez and Mario Vargas Llosa report reading at the time was work that had been published in the forties, and had made its way from Buenos Aires to Cartagena, Barranquilla, and Lima.

The first time that Gabriel García Márquez mentions Faulkner in his memoir *Vivir Para Contarla* is while recalling a conversation about Faulkner with the Barranquilla Group in 1950. He states that “by that time I had already read everything that I could find on the lost generation, in Spanish, paying particular attention to Faulkner.”36 Although scholars like Jacques Gilard have argued that García Márquez read Faulkner for the first time in Barranquilla in 1950 with the Barranquilla Group, careful reading of the newspaper columns that he published before moving to Barranquilla suggests otherwise.

García Márquez left Bogotá in April 1948 and looked for work in Cartagena37, where he started working with *El Universal* one month later. His co-workers and mentor at the newspaper were enthusiastic readers of Faulkner and introduced García Márquez to Faulkner’s work.38 A year later, on July 28 1949, he publishes an article about his friend Ramiro de la Espirella’s departure for Bogotá in which he writes: “We—personally—will miss de la Espirella for a few

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37 In April of 1948 violent riots commonly known as “El Bogotazo” ensued after the assassination of a presidential candidate. García Márquez’s living quarters were destroyed and he decided to leave the city with his brother.
months, to speak badly of André Maurois, to discuss Faulkner and to agree on Virginia Woolf.”

He continued to write about Faulkner in his newspaper articles both in Cartagena and in Barranquilla; between June 1948 and December of 1952 he mentioned Faulkner in sixteen of his columns. In 1950 during the historical trip with his mother to his native Aracataca, he was reading *Light in August* for the second time. The Spanish translation, *Luz de agosto*, was published by *Sur* in 1942. Since *Sur*’s translation of *Luz de agosto* was the only existing Spanish translation in 1942, García Márquez must have read this edition.

The translator of *Luz de agosto*, Pedro Lecuona, often rearranges the order in which the information is delivered to the reader. One can note this in the very first page of the translation. In the English version, *Light in August*, the novel’s opening paragraph concludes with Lena’s thought process: “*I am now further from Doane’s Mill that I have been since I was twelve years old.***” Faulkner does not include a period after the end of this thought and continues to talk about Doane Mill in the second paragraph:

> She had never even been to Doane’s Mill until after her father and mother died, though six or eight times a year she went to town on Saturday, in the wagon, in a mailorder dress and her bare feet flat in the wagon bed and her shoes wrapped on a piece of paper beside her on the seat.**

The idea that this second paragraph conveys is that although Lena went to town several times a year, she did not go to Doane’s Mill until after her parents died. Faulkner presents this information in the inverse order, however, so that the reader needs to reorganize

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40 Counted in *Obra Periodística I, Textos Costeños* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana)


42 Ibid
information in her head. The confusion that Faulkner’s choice of ordering information could cause is further emphasized by the details about her dress, her feet, and her shoes.

Pedro Lecuona identifies these details and translates Faulkner into Spanish in the following way:

Seis u ocho sábados al año—descalzos los pies en el fondo del carro, envueltos en un pedazo de papel y, al lado, en el asiento los zapatos—iba al pueblo en el carro con su vestido nuevo comprado por correo, pero nunca había ido al aserradero de Doane hasta que murieron su padre y su madre.\(^{43}\)

Lecuona’s sentence inverts the order of Faulkner’s sentence so that the reader first understands that she had gone to town often, and it is not until the end of the long sentence that the reader learns that Lena only went to town after her parents died. Lecuona breaks up the clause “six or eight times a year she went to town on Saturday” into a clause that begins with “Six or eight saturdays a year,” is interrupted with another clause in between dashes that postpones the verb until after the dash: “—she went to town with her new dress.” Although postponing the verb is a feature of many Faulkner’s sentences, Lecuona does not move the verb with the objective of withholding information, but with the objective of making the sentence easier for the reader to follow. His effort to make the sentence easier to follow is also evident in changes such as condensing the phrase “six or eight times a year she went to town on Saturday” into “Six or eight saturdays a year,” and by adding a period after Lena’s thoughts in the first paragraph.

The translator also misunderstands part of the sentence: in Faulkner’s sentence, the shoes are wrapped on a piece of paper. In Lecuona’s translation, it is Lena’s feet that are wrapped in a piece of paper, “descalzos los pies en el fondo del carro, envueltos en un pedazo de papel.”

\(^{43}\) Six or eight Saturdays a year—her bare feet in the wagon bed, wrapped in a piece of paper and, beside her, her shoes in the seat—she went to town in the wagon with her new dress bought in the mail, but he had never been to Doane’s Mill until her parents died. From William Faulkner, *Luz de a gusto*, trans. Pedro Lecuona (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Sur, 1942), 7. My translation.
Lecuona’s sentence shows that he himself was confused by some of Faulkner’s sentences and tried to re-organize them for his readers.

Lecuona inserts the adjective “nuevo” (new) to describe Lena’s dress: “su vestido nuevo comprado por correo,”⁴⁴ which Faulkner describes as “a mailorder dress.” Assuming that Lecuona added this adjective consciously, his decision reflects that he felt a certain authority over the text that he was translating. This authority is made clear from the first page of his translation, and he continues to rearrange Faulkner’s sentences throughout the book.

Pedro Lecuona belongs to the generation of Faulknerian translators who were publishing his work in Latin America when he was not known internationally and often criticized in his own country. Translation norms, as Tanya Fayen explains, shifted in Latin America after Faulkner’s 1950 Nobel Prize, when García Márquez was re-reading Luz de agosto. Lecuona is aware that his readers are not familiar with Faulkner, or with culture in the American South. He includes footnotes in his translation that explain terms like Yankee, “En los Estados Unidos, se llama yanquis a los naturales de Nueva Inglaterra, or por extensión, de los Estados del Norte.”⁴⁵ Lecuona also offers the full name of the acronym K. K. K but for some reason chose not to define the term as he defines the term Yankee.

Mientras yo agonizo (As I Lay Dying) was also published in Latin America in 1942. Unlike Luz de agosto, it was not published by Ocampo’s Sur, but by another Buenos Aires publishing house. Santiago Rueda. These were the first two novels of Faulkner to be published in Latin America, and together with “The Wild Palms” and “Dry September,” were the works that first introduced Faulkner to Latin American readers.

⁴⁴ There is no exact translation in Spanish for “mailorder,” so that Lecuona translates it as “Her new dress bought in the mail”
While the translator of *As I Lay Dying*, Max Dickmann, successfully creates a distinct personality for each narrator in accordance to the original text, his work demonstrates the challenges of translating colloquial dialogue. Dickmann’s translation prioritizes formality and grammatical correctness in dialogues over preserving the colloquial quality of dialogues. The Bundren children refer to their parents as “pa” and “ma” throughout the novel, which Dickmann translates as “padre” and “madre,” even though the shortened terms “pa” and “ma” are also commonly used in Spanish. Dickmann sometimes precedes “pa” and “ma” with possessive pronouns and articles that Faulkner does not use in his writing, such as “nuestro padre” (our father) and “la madre” (the mother). An example of this is “la madre no está enferma,” which translates as “the mother is not sick,” but Jewel originally phrases as “Ma ain’t that sick.” Faulkner’s more informal Southern phrases are also drastically changed in the 1942 translation. In the same Darl section where Jewel insists that Addie is not very sick, Anse says: “I mislike indecision as much as ere a man,” and later: “Don’t ere a man mislike it more.” Dickmann translates Anse’s words as “No hay nadie como yo para aborrecer la indecisión” (There is no one like me to abhor indecision) and “No, esto no me gusta” (No, I don’t like this). Perhaps Dickmann’s translation choices are based on the status of the Latin American polysystem during the 1940s. Although it was a polysystem in search of an identity, it was often reluctant to renounce the grammatical rules of its language.

Oral traditions are based on writers’ personal experiences and cannot be imported from another culture. Faulkner’s Southern dialogues could exemplify the replication of oral traditions on paper but could not teach Vargas Llosa or García Márquez how to replicate the language of

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49 Ibid., 348–349.
Colombians and Peruvians. In *The Time of the Hero*, Vargas Llosa uses phrases such as “zafá de aqui” (get out of here)\(^5^0\) and words such “soplón,” as well as a multitude of colloquial Peruvian insults. García Márquez similarly constructs a distinctly Latin American language in *Leaf Storm* through the use of phrases such as “Había entrado como Pedro en su casa” (He came in like Pedro in his house) and words like “vaina” (thing).

Given that much of Faulkner’s sentence structure was lost in the aforementioned translations and that the Boom closely read a multitude of other writers, the sentences of Vargas Llosa and García Márquez differ from Faulkner’s sentences in many ways. Most importantly, neither writer adopts Faulkner’s use of subordinate clauses. They do use, of course, subordinate clauses, but not to the extent that Faulkner does and not with the purpose of postponing information. Their early short stories and novels, which they wrote with Faulkner’s work in mind, are made up of relatively short sentences. Chapter 5 will discuss García Márquez’s work and its relationship to Faulkner more in depth.

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Chapter 5: García Márquez’s early short stories

“In the first stories I wrote I had a general idea of the mood, but I would let myself be taken by chance. The best advice I was given early on was that it was all right to work that way when I was young because I had a torrent of inspiration.”

-Gabriel García Márquez, 1981

García Márquez’s early works can inform our understanding of the author’s relationship to Faulkner. The Colombian author published his first short story “La tercera resignación” (“The Third Resignation”) in 1947, and read Faulkner for the first time in 1948. In 1950 García Márquez travelled with his mother to his native Aracataca, and the trip was of great importance to his career because it gave him the idea of using Aracataca as the setting for his work. He happened to be reading Faulkner on the train there and had Faulkner’s Yoknapatawpha on his mind as he realized that he wanted to write about Aracataca. When he did sit down to write short stories about Macondo, traces of Faulknerian techniques like the use of multiple narrators and long sentences were present in his work. This chapter will analyze the shifts that occurred in the short stories of Gabriel García Márquez from 1947 to 1955, when he published his first novel, Leaf Storm.

It is important to recognize that other developments happened in the life of the Colombian author during the months in which he started reading Faulkner, and it would be a mistake to attribute causality to Faulkner as the sole force behind the shifts in the work of García Márquez after 1948. For instance, García Márquez also began reading Kafka in 1947, when a friend of his gave him a copy of The Metamorphosis. In an interview with The Paris Review, García Márquez recalls:

The first line almost knocked me off the bed. I was so surprised. The first line reads, “As Gregor Samsa awoke that morning from uneasy dreams, he found himself transformed in his bed into a gigantic insect. . . .” When I read the line I thought to

myself that I didn’t know anyone was allowed to write things like that. If I had known, I would have started writing a long time ago. So I immediately started writing short stories.\footnote{Peter H. Stone, “Gabriel García Márquez, The Art of Fiction No. 69,” \textit{Paris Review}, Winter 1981.}

Elements of Kafka’s \textit{Metamorphosis} are especially evident in García Márquez’s first short story, “La tercera resignación,” and remain present to a lesser degree throughout his early short stories. In particular, the Colombian author’s early emphasis on grotesque imagery and his meticulous descriptions of character’s physical sensations can be traced back to Kafka. The short stories that were later compiled in the collection “Ojos de perro azul” (Eyes of a Blue Dog) are full of descriptions of bodies undergoing unusual transformations. These descriptions involve vivid grotesque imagery such as a dead boy’s buried corpse with its mouth full of dirt and a dead man lying face down with a horseshoe embedded in his forehead. The short stories also dedicate many sentences to describing smells and noises associated with the characters’ bodies and the changes that they are undergoing. The result is that some of these early short stories read like horror-fantasy stories in which García Márquez is still searching for a voice.

Faulknerian elements in García Márquez’s writing do not have a clearly noticeable initial presence like Kafkaesque elements in “La tercera resignación.” Kafka’s impact on García Márquez seems to have been somewhat of a shock that energized him into writing his first story and then slowly dwindled as García Márquez shaped his voice and identity. His experience with Faulkner was different in that he began reading Faulkner while he was already writing constantly, and Faulknerian elements show up here and there in some of his short stories.

Faulkner played an important role in this process because he was the only modernist author in whom García Márquez could find an example of modernism used to describe a chaotic, rural, defeated place. García Márquez admired many modernist writers including Joyce and
Woolf, but Faulkner was of particular importance in that he provided a bridge between Joyce and Woolf’s modernism and García Márquez’s Colombia. García Márquez himself explains that when he realized that he wanted to write about his native town Aracataca, “only a technique like Faulkner’s could have enabled me to write down what I was seeing. The atmosphere, the decadence, the heat in the village were roughly the same as what I had felt in Faulkner.” He goes on to explain Faulkner's literary influence as a coincidence: “Critics have spoken of the literary influence of Faulkner, but I see it as a coincidence: I had simply found material that had to be dealt with in the same way that Faulkner had treated similar material.” García Márquez’s disapproval of the scrutiny that has been paid to Faulkner’s influence on his work underlines the need to avoid traditional notions of influence relationships when thinking about both authors. García Márquez has acknowledged that he did read Faulkner and learn from his work, but his development as a writer was in many ways independent from Faulkner. His relationship with Faulkner, he seems to suggest in this interview, involves parallelism rather than dependence.

In the same interview with *The Paris Review*, the author states that his first stories were “totally intellectual short stories because I was writing them on the basis of my literary experience and had not yet found the link between literature and life.” In the short stories that this chapter is dedicated to, García Márquez was making a conscious effort to learn how to be a writer and to find his identity. He was, in a way, a more guarded writer, one who focused externally on topics like death and dreams and their connection to our physical bodies. His description of his first short stories as a literary experience can be understood in opposition to narration as a personal experience. In interviews García Márquez often repeated that his work is filled with his grandmother’s stories and that aspiring writers should find inspiration in the stories that they have lived, witnessed, or heard. This personal experience is what would shape
*One Hundred Years of Solitude* and his work after *Leaf Storm*, but the myriad of details that shaped the setting and families of these later works surface in his early short stories and in *Leaf Storm*. This is the period in García Márquez’s life in which he was beginning to read Faulkner and discovered that the way Faulkner wrote was the only way in which Macondo could be described. This is not to say that he copied and applied Faulkner’s writing techniques in exact detail, but rather that Faulkner gave García Márquez an idea of how to move from writing as a literary experience towards writing as a personal experience. In his Nobel Prize speech, Faulkner emphasizes that young writers should re-learn how to write “the problems of the human heart in conflict with itself which alone can make good writing because only that is worth writing about, worth the agony and the sweat.” It is unsurprising that in Faulkner, who had dedicated his life to his rural Yoknapatawpha, García Márquez found a way to write about the human heart.

García Márquez’s meticulous reading of Faulkner changed two elements in his early work: his sentence structure and the setting for his work. García Márquez’s sentences progressively become less conventional in that they step away from straightforward description of setting and physical changes and towards more poetic language. He begins to incorporate into his sentences seemingly unimportant details about the character’s personality or an occurrence on town. His sentences in “Amargura para tres sonámbulos,” (Bitterness for Three Sleepwalkers, 1949) “Nabo, el negro que hizo esperar a los ángeles,” (Nabo, the Black Man Who Made the Angels Wait, 1951) and “Alguien desordena estas rosas” (Someone Has Been Disarranging These Roses, 1952) include a noticeably higher amount of similes and metaphors than “La tercera resignación” or “La otra costilla de la muerte” (The Other Rib of Death, 1948).

53 Published on November 13, 1949, three and a half months after he mentions Faulkner in his column in *El Universal*.
54 Published on June 25, 1948, six weeks after he joins *El Universal*. By this point it is likely that García Márquez has begun reading Faulkner because his close friend Rojas Herazo and his mentor Clemente Zavala were both avid
This poetic language is specifically Faulknerian in that it is incorporated into longer, run-on sentences that dedicate more space to poetic descriptions of unusual events.

The development of García Márquez’s sentences is tied to the development of the setting that he uses in his writing. García Márquez’s first three short stories, “La tercera resignación,” “La otra costilla de la muerte” and “Eva está dentro de su gato,” include references to family members like a mother or a brother but do not have a strong description of family or place. In “Nabo, el negro que hizo esperar a los ángeles,” the reader finds for the first time a town’s central plaza, a confusingly dysfunctional family, and a focus on race and music in Colombia.

There are, to be sure, some aspects of García Márquez’s sentences that differ from Faulkner’s sentence structure even after several years of reading Faulkner. Most importantly, García Márquez does not adopt Faulkner’s extensive use of subordinate clauses that interrupt the traditional subject-verb-object order. The following sentence about Sutpen in Faulkner’s *Absalom, Absalom!*, for instance, is structured as follows:

The took him back to town, with the ladies and children and house niggers watching from behind the curtains and behind the shrubbery in the yards and the corners of the houses, the kitchens where doubtless food was already beginning to scorch, and so back to the square where the rest of the able-bodied men left their offices and stores to follow, so that when he reached the courthouse, Sutpen had a larger following than if he actually had been the runaway slave.\(^{55}\)

Faulkner’s sentence builds up just as Sutpen’s following builds up in this scene. The sentence describes a group of townspeople taking Sutpen to the courthouse, but Faulkner does not clarify this until the end of the sentence. The chronology of taking Sutpen to town, back to the square, and into the courthouse is made complex by the use of subordinate clauses. After the simple

clause “they took him back to town,” a subordinate clause describes people watching from their houses, and a subordinate clause to the subordinate clause gives the reader details about the food of the witnesses. The sentence “back to the square” is complicated by the description of more people following Sutpen’s following. Absalom, Absalom! Is full of sentences that Faulkner makes more complex by using subordinate clauses. As in the sentence above, he uses hypotaxis to lead the reader through sentences with multiple clauses.

“La tercera resignación” is written in the third person from the perspective of a narrator who appears to be dead but whose body continues to grow. Raymond Leslie Williams writes in A Companion to Gabriel García Márquez that “The peculiarity of this ‘living death’ shows García Márquez’s early attempt to write something along the lines of what he had read in Kafka.”56 “La tercera resignación” does not focus on a specific place or family. The reader does not learn the first name or family name of the main character. The apparently deceased protagonist mentions his mother, his relatives, and his neighbors, but the reader does not get any of the details about place and family history that fill García Márquez’s later works. Instead, the narrator focuses on the protagonist’s physical senses and the theme of death. The first four paragraphs of the story meticulously describe a noise that the protagonist hears in his head and tries to shake away.

The descriptions of the protagonist’s body and his environment include the first inklings of García Márquez’s signature magic realism. He describes unusual symptoms, such as the boy’s body growing in stature inside of his coffin for years, as a quotidian occurrence that does not strike characters as particularly rare. The doctor simply tells his mother to order an adult coffin so that the child will fit in the coffin as his body continues to grow. All of this is narrated in great

detail; his mother places three pillows at his feet so that the adult coffin would not be too big for him as he grew:

He soon began to grow inside the box, so that each year they could take out a little bit of wool from the outermost pillow to make a margin for his growth. He had spent half his life in this way. Eighteen years. (He was now twenty-five.) And he had reached his definitive, normal, height. The carpenter and the doctor had made the wrong calculations and made the coffin half a meter longer than needed. They supposed that he would have the stature of his father, who was a semi-barbarous giant.

García Márquez describes the implications of the protagonist’s strange condition with a generous supply of quotidian details, such as the necessity to take small amounts of wool out of the pillows in his coffin, the calculation mistakes made when building the box, and his father’s height. This level of detail persists in his later work.

García Márquez’s first uses of magical realism only differ from his later use of magical realism in his sentence structure. García Márquez’s sentences in “La tercera resignación” are mostly short and straightforward. Sentences such as “He had spent half his life in this way,” made up of a single short clause, are very common. The longest sentence in this passage, “He soon began to grow inside the box, so that each year they could take out a little bit of wool from the outermost pillow to make a margin for his growth” also has a straightforward structure: it is made up of two independent clauses joined by a conjunction, both of which follow a traditional subject, verb, object structure.

Sentences in “La tercera resignación” that are made up of several clauses are accompanied by short sentences: “He tried to shake his head. He shook it. The noise then

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57 “Pronto empezó a crecer dentro de la caja, de tal manera que cada año podían sacarle un poco de lana a la almohada extrema para darle margen al crecimiento. Había pasado así media vida. Dieciocho años. (Ahora tenía veinticinco.) Y había llegado a su estatura definitiva, normal. El carpintero y el médico se equivocaron en el cálculo e hicieron el ataúd medio metro más grande. Supusieron que él tendría la estatura de su padre, que era un gigante semibárbaro.” Gabriel García Márquez, Ojos de perro azul, 8. ed (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 1979), 14. My translation.
appeared with greater force inside his skull, which had hardened, grown larger, felt itself more strongly attracted by gravity.” 58 The third sentence is made up of four clauses, but the main idea, “the noise appeared inside his skull” is contained in the first clause. The following three clauses are enriching the first but not making it harder for the reader to understand the main idea of the sentence. The end result of this combination of short and long sentences is a straightforward language that describes the protagonist’s state objectively. Even instances of magical realism are described in this language:

But that was not how it was. The only thing that he had inherited from him was a thick beard. A thick, blue beard, which his mother was in the habit of arranging so as to give him a more decent appearance in his coffin. The beard bothered him terribly on hot days. 59

The inclusion of the unreal and the quotidian of magical realism in short sentences highlight the quotidian aspect of the strange events. The reader begins to accustom herself to the idea of a coffin lying in the table for eighteen years, to the protagonist’s growth and his blue beard.

By contrast, García Márquez’s sentences in his later work tend to be longer, so that the strangeness of the event is magnified. In One Hundred Years of Solitude, García Márquez describes a similar scenario in which Úrsula’s body begins to shrink previous to her death:

Little by little she began to shrink, fossilize, mummify in life, until the point when in her last months she was a prune lost inside her nightdress, and her arm always raised ended up looking like the leg of a marimonda. She remained motionless for several days, and Santa Sofía de la Piedad had to shake her to convince herself that she was alive, and she sat Ursula on her lap to feed her with small spoonfuls of sugar. 60

58 Ibid., 4.
García Márquez compares Úrsula Iguarán’s changing body to a prune and gives a vivid image of a prune in a nightgown and of Santa Sofía de la Piedad holding her in her lap like a baby. This way of portraying Ursula’s small body is strikingly different from his portrayal of the protagonist in “The Third Resignation,” where language is objective and almost scientific. The author maintains his habit of offering particular details to the reader, such as the spoonfuls of sugar, Ursula’s raised arm, or the pillows on the coffin. In *A Hundred Years of Solitude*, these details are incorporated into long sentences instead of being isolated in short sentences, so that they help highlight the chaotic state of Macondo and its characters.

García Márquez’s 1948 short story “Eva está dentro de su gato” is similarly focused on strange behaviors of the body, but the short story’s language begins to use poetic language to incorporate quotidian details and metaphors into his now longer sentences. In the first paragraph, the protagonist thinks about discarding her beauty in sentences such as the following one: “Or abandon it [her beauty] in the wardrobe of a second-class restaurant like an old useless coat.”

This sentence stands out from the sentences in his previous stories not only because of the simile in it but because the simile is vividly enriched with details. By knowing that the wardrobe is in a restaurant, and specifically a second-class restaurant the reader can better picture the protagonist’s attitude towards her beauty. Two sentences later, the narrator describes the protagonist’s insomnia: “At night, when she impaled her eyelids on the needles of insomnia, she wished to be an ordinary woman, devoid of attractiveness.” García Márquez continues to focus on descriptions of the body, but shifts towards more metaphorical descriptions and comparisons. “Eva está dentro de su gato” also shows García Márquez’s interest in inheritance and describes

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in great detail the inheritance of family beauty: “She still remembered the disquieting face of the
great grandmother who from her old linen asked for a minute of rest, a second of peace from
those insects that over there, in the canals of her blood, continued to martyrize her and beautify
her unmercifully.”

It is also in this short story that García Márquez uses for the first time the word estirpe
(lineage), which is a very particular word in that it is not as commonly used as “linaje” (lineage).
The denotation of estirpe involves notions of race and roots of origin as opposed to family
descendancy in the case of lineage. The word became a trademark of Gabriel García Márquez
and particularly of One Hundred Years of Solitude, whose famous last sentence ends with the
phrase “...porque las estirpes condenadas a cien años de soledad no tenían una segunda
oportunidad sobre la tierra.” The use of this particular word shows that García Márquez was
carefully choosing the vocabulary with which he conveyed ideas of family, inheritance, and
history; he had begun his collection of words that he used often and today carry a connotation of
the Colombian author.

“Amargura para tres sonámbulos” (“Bitterness for Three Sleepwalkers,” 1949) similarly
reveals García Márquez’s early interest in the progressive decay of human life. The most
distinguishing characteristic of this 1949 short story is the vagueness of its language. The story
begins with the sentence “Now we had her there, abandoned in a corner of the house.” The
reader understands neither the source nor the object of the action; she does not know who “we”
is referring to or who “her” is referring to. Much like Faulkner does in “Dry September,” García

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63 “Todavía recordaba el rostro inquietante de la bisabuela que desde su lienzo envejecido pedía un minuto de
descanso, un segundo de paz a esos insectos que allá, en los canales de su sangre, seguían martirizándola y
embeleciéndola despiadadamente.” Ibid. My translation.
64 “...because races condemned to one hundred years of solitude did not have a second opportunity on earth.” This is
Gregory Rabassa’s 1970 translation of One Hundred Years of Solitude. Note that Rabassa uses the word race as a
translation for estirpe.
Márquez ends his story without fully revealing the details that he intentionally describes vaguely. The speaker opens the story by creating ambiguity through the use of “there” in the phrase “we had her there” and the use of “Someone” in the constant repetition of the phrase “Someone had told us.”

Like “Dry September,” the short story pushes the reader to analyze the text closely and actively make inferences. For instance, in “Amargura para tres sonámbulos,” the reader needs to assume that the “we” who narrates the story refers to the three sleepwalkers that the title alludes to. The identity or origin of the protagonist who slowly begins to lose the will to function is left ambiguous. This has given rise to many interpretations, such as Regina James’ argument that the protagonist is the mother of the narrators and an early sketch of Úrúsula Iguarán from One Hundred Years of Solitude and her progressive death.

Another of Faulkner’s short stories that García Márquez might have had in mind while writing “Amargura para tres sonámbulos” is “A Rose for Emily.” In fact, it is highly likely that García Márquez had recently read “A Rose for Emily,” as a translated version of the story was published in the Cartagena press that same year. The most striking parallels between the two short stories are narrative and thematic; both stories narrate the obscure life of a woman from an external collective perspective. Both female protagonists are described as unattractive characters with a mysterious past, and both perish throughout the story in some way. Miss Emily dies at the end of the story, while the protagonist in “Amargura para tres sonámbulos” ceases to smile and walk, entering a trance of living death.

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66 Ibid.
“Nabo el negro que hizo esperar a los ángeles” presents yet another approach to a protagonist’s death. It is Faulknerian in its interest in race and place, as well as in its use of non-linear time. By the time that this story was published in 1951, García Márquez was living in Barranquilla and had read at least *Light of August, The Hamlet, The Sound and the Fury, As I Lay Dying,* and “The Wild Palms.”

“Nabo el negro que hizo esperar a los ángeles” uses Faulknerian techniques such as shifts in narrative perspectives and ambiguity surrounding important events. It is also García Márquez’s first short story to address race and class differences and has a taste of Faulkner’s crudeness in descriptions of violence. The short story narrates a black man’s transition from being a servant to a family on earth to serving in a choir of angels in heaven. He dies while combing a horse’s tail and lingers between earth and heaven for several years. The narration of the story shifts between a third person narration from Nabo’s point of view and a first person plural narration from the point of view of someone in the family for whom he worked.

These shifts create ambiguity as much as shifts in narrative perspective create ambiguity in Faulkner. In *The Sound and The Fury,* for instance, the reader gathers information about the Compsons’ story from each narrator to thread together a storyline. Even when the reader collects information from Jason, Benjy, Quentin, and the final omniscient narrator, many details in the story remain ambiguous. Caddy marks the lives of the three brothers and Quentin and Benjy constantly think about her, but details about her life remain ambiguous throughout the novel. Faulkner deliberately builds ambiguity around her character by making her the only sibling who does not take part in the book’s narration. The ambiguity around both central themes and small

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69 In 1950 during a visit to his parents’ house in Sucre, he gets a box of books from his Barranquilla friends which contained 23 books, among them *The Hamlet, The Sound and the Fury, As I Lay Dying,* and “The Wild Palms.”
details in the novel engages the reader in the complexity of the Compsons’ story, so that the reader co-habits a chaotic space in the story.

In “Nabo el negro que hizo esperar a los ángeles” the reader does not fully understand that the man who tells Nabo to come sing in the choir is an angel. The reader gathers details to slowly understand that Nabo is wavering between life and death. The girl whom Nabo takes care of remains an ambiguous figure throughout the short story; it is unclear whether she is the daughter of Nabo’s employees. Like Benjy, she has a mental disability that the reader does not fully understand and is the source of some confusion in the narrative.

Although family does not play a very strong role in the short story, it is evident that García Márquez has begun to think about setting his work in his native country. Before the accident, Nabo goes to the plaza every Saturday to watch a black man play the saxophone in a band. This activity highlights the existence of a central plaza where people gather on weekends, a defining characteristic of the layout of colonial Colombian towns.

García Márquez also highlights Nabo’s love of singing and listening to the black man play the saxophone. García Márquez published several articles about Colombian folkloric music in El Universal during his years in Cartagena which demonstrate his knowledge of the black origins of costeño music. The story’s narrator merges race and music by making the only two black characters in his story musicians. For both men, music is a source of happiness but is also a form of servitude. The angels take both men by force from life and to heaven’s choir. When the angel form of the saxophone player visits Nabo in his delirium, he tells Nabo that the angels meant for the horse to kick and kill him, “We wanted it that way so that you could come sing in the choir” (141). The reader knows that the story does not take place during the colonial years or

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70 Music from the Colombian Caribbean. García Márquez’s mentor at El Universal, Clement Zabala, was an expert on Colombian folklore. Read “La música popular: drama, comprensión y defensa” in Jorge Usta’s García Márquez en Cartagena: Sus inicios literarios
before the abolition of slavery because the record player that Nabo uses was invented in the US on around 1925. The story reflects the persisting racial differences in modern-day Colombia and can be seen as a prolongation of class differences and black servitude in Colombia.
Chapter 6: Narrating Yoknapatawpha, Macondo, and Leoncio Prado

“There he began to write an immense novel that was called La Casa, in rolls of newspaper from El Universal. From that novel all of the rest were drawn.”
-Ramiro de la Espirella, on García Márquez’s first novel

In an article written for the Spanish newspaper ABC, Mario Vargas Llosa writes that in “that turbulence and complexity of the world ‘invented’ by Faulkner, Latin American readers found our own reality transfigured, and we learned that, as in Bayard Sartoris or in Jenny du Prés, the backwardness and the periphery also contain beauty and virtues that so-called civilization kills.”71 During a trip to the Peruvian district of Laberinto, Vargas Llosa took with him Faulkner’s Banderas sobre el polvo (Flags in the Dust). In Laberinto, he experienced the strange sensation that Laberinto was in fact, Yoknapatawpha: “Its impossible not to think of Faulkner. This is the heart of the Amazon and it is very far from Mississippi, of course…But the citizens of Yoknapatawpha County and the ones from this hamlet of the Department of God’s Mother…have a lot in common.”72 García Márquez had a similar experience when he travelled in train through Colombia’s countryside while reading Luz de agosto (Light in August). Although this study does not agree with the argument that the Boom’s relationship to Faulkner is based mostly on the similarities between their places of origin, it does want to address the importance of place in the work of each author.

Gabriel García Márquez and Mario Vargas Llosa were particularly interested in the narrative techniques that Faulkner used to create Yoknapatawpha and its characters—the use of various points of view, the rejection of linear time, and the use of language to give each character

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71 “…en esa turbulencia y complejidad del mundo ‘inventado’ por Faulkner, los lectores latinoamericanos descubrimos, transfigurada, nuestra propia realidad, y aprendimos que, como en Bayard Sartoris o en Jenny du Prés, el atraso y la periferia contienen, tambien, bellezas y virtudes que la llamada civilizacion mata” My translation. Mario Vargas Llosa, “Faulkner En Laberinto,” Diario ABC, n.d.
72 Ibid.
a particular voice. This chapter explores how Faulkner, García Márquez, and Vargas Llosa each crafted settings and family units for their work through narrative techniques; particularly the use of multiple narrators and non-linear time. García Márquez and Vargas Llosa refer to Absalom, Absalom!, As I Lay Dying and The Sound and the Fury most often when they write about or discuss their early work in relationship to Faulkner. These two novels, together with García Márquez’s Leaf Storm (La hojarasca, 1955) and Vargas Llosa’s The Time of the Hero (La ciudad y los perros, 1981), will be the main focus of this chapter.

As mentioned in the last chapter, García Márquez acknowledged the presence of Faulknerian techniques in his work. These Faulknerian techniques are most notable in García Márquez’s early short stories and first novel, Leaf Storm. Leaf Storm reveals the first hints of the traits that would eventually become his quintessential characteristics, such as magical realism and mythical characters. A reader familiar with his later (and more famous) work will excitedly note the single mention of the name Aureliano Buendía and the prologue’s acknowledgement of the banana plantations. The Buendías, the banana plantations, the war heroes, the train, and the town of Macondo itself would become García Márquez’s trademark creations. Leaf Storm is their debut, and although many of them only peek out shyly once or twice in the novel, the reader can tell that these creations had begun to haunt the Colombian author.

That García Márquez’s least characteristic novel is the one in which Faulknerian techniques stand out the most is in line with Even-Zohar’s claim that an emerging polysystem informs itself with foreign repertoire in order to then form its own center. That is to say, García Márquez appropriated Faulkner’s techniques in order to start the engine of his creation and set down his ideas in paper, ideas that would grow to transform Latin American literature.
While García Márquez’s later and most famous works have a strong focus on the institution of family, family plays a secondary role in Leaf Storm’s structure. The reader doesn’t learn the family name of Leaf Storm’s most important family, who narrates the story. The family serves mostly as a window into the history of Macondo, offering their memories of the town. In his first novel, García Márquez wanted most of all to immortalize his setting, Macondo.

García Márquez’s narrative choices make it possible for Leaf Storm to tell the reader the entire history of Macondo while sitting in a deceased man’s room. This history was in many ways the driving force behind García Márquez’s decision to sit down and write his first novel. He grew up listening to the war stories of his grandfather and had them in mind when thinking about his first novel: “It was supposed to be a drama about the War of a Thousand Days in the Colombian Caribbean.”73 The War of a Thousand days was a war fought between the liberal and conservative parties of Colombia at the turn of the twentieth century. García Márquez’s grandfather was a respected Colonel who fought with the liberal party and filled the author’s childhood with stories about the war, his disdain for the United Fruit Company, and the Banana Massacre. He had all of this in mind when he conceived a novel about the war, and his narrative choices in Leaf Storm can be better understood if one considers that the author wanted first and foremost to set the Colombian Caribbean down on paper.

García Márquez states that he rejected calling the fictional town in which much of his work is set Aracataca or Barranquilla because “it lacked the mythical whisper that I sought for the novel.”74 The author’s intention to write a novel with a mythical whisper becomes immediately evident to the reader upon opening the book. The epithet is an excerpt from Antigone that describes Creon’s orders not to bury or mourn Polyneices. This allusion to Greek

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73 Marquez, Vivir para contarla, 1 edition (Nueva York: Vintage Espanol, 2003), 65.
74 Ibid, 442.
mythology hints at some of the themes present in the novel: death, burial and duty. With this allusion to Greek mythology in mind, the reader then proceeds to read the prologue, which introduces her to the story of a town called Macondo. García Márquez’s decision to write such a prologue shows his desire to highlight the setting as an important element of his work. He wants his reader to know the history and the flavor of Macondo.

The first sentence of the prologue immediately situates the reader in the midst of a chaotic scene: “—Suddenly, as if a whirlwind had set down roots in the center of the town, the banana company arrived, pursued by the leaf storm.”75 García Márquez introduces the reader to Macondo with a dash, creating the sensation that the reader is being thrown into a tornado that has been turning for a long time. Macondo’s story is shaped by the leaf storm, and is therefore tumultuous. In the first paragraph of the prologue the reader will read words that invoke movement like “whirlwind,” “whirling,” and “swirling” and imagery of trash: “dregs,” “rubble,” “chaff,” and “rubbish.” This vocabulary is aided by the author’s construction of long, rhythmic sentences that imitate the leaf storm’s continuous movement. All but two sentences in the prologue are composed of several clauses and some paragraphs consist of a single long sentence. These sentences reflect Macondo’s timelessness and turbulent existence. In this way, the reader learns about a settlement that was born out of a war and a leaf storm in the ambiguous time period described as “in the midst of that blizzard” and when the train whistled for the first time. This is Macondo, the mythical setting of Leaf Storm and the majority of García Márquez’s subsequent work.

When Gabriel García Marquez sat down to work on his first novel, he decided to narrate it from the point of view of a seven-year-old boy. Soon afterwards he changed his mind, dissatisfied with the limitations that a young narrator imposed. Indecisive and restless, he began

75 Gabriel García Márquez, La Hojarasca, 3a. ed, Biblioteca García Márquez (Barcelona: Mondadori, 2000), 9.
rereading *Ulysses* and *The Sound and The Fury*. It was while reading these novels with the mindset of a writer, he remembers in his autobiography, that he first “thought about diversifying the monologue with voices of the entire town, like a Greek chorus, just like in *As I Lay Dying*.” García Marquez did not discard the idea of a young boy as a narrator; there is such a narrator in *Leaf Storm*. But his voice is interlaced with the voices of his mother, Isabel, and his maternal grandfather, the Colonel.

Given that García Márquez had *As I Lay Dying*’s fifteen characters and a Greek chorus in mind, his decision to use only three narrative voices in *Leaf Storm* is intriguing. The Colonel only has one daughter, who in turn, only has one son. This small family stands in stark contrast to the Buendía family in *A Hundred Years of Solitude*, with its twenty-two Aurelianos and multiple Jose Arcadios. Unlike the Buendía family tree, the family tree of the *Leaf Storm* is easy to picture, so that the reader can clearly trace grandfather, daughter, and grandson throughout Macondo’s history. The fourth member of the family, the Colonel’s wife and Isabel’s step-mother, stays home. Her presence in the deceased’s room, the stage for the story, would have interrupted the simple three-person bloodline that narrates the story.

*Leaf Storm*’s orderly cast of main characters is one of the novel’s elements that stands out from his later work. In a way, the limited number of main characters betrays García Márquez’s rawness as a writer. While writing *Leaf Storm*, he had not yet developed the long list of characters that would inhabit his later work and force his readers to make lists to keep track of them. But García Márquez’s choice of characters in *Leaf Storm* cannot be attributed solely to the fact that his later characters were still germinating in the early 1950s. The author’s choices shape the novel into a story with a generational focus. The simple list of narrators highlights the

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generational aspect of the narration—each narrator belongs to one generation and together, their three stories span the story of Macondo. Had García Márquez cluttered Leaf Storm with the Buendías, the reader would have had a jumble of characters in mind in which it would be hard to tell which characters belong to what generations. The three-person line of direct descendancy, however, outlines three generations carefully.

Each member of the family tells a part of Macondo’s story from her or his own perspective. While the boy’s narration will provide the reader with insight into Macondo’s young generation, Isabel and the Colonel provide the reader with their respective memories of the deceased doctor’s life. Through their voices, the reader can thread the family history together with the history of Macondo and the role that the doctor had in these stories. The Colonel’s memory allows the reader to understand when the family arrived at Macondo and how the town began to be built. The Colonel narrates the arrival of the doctor at his house and the conversation they had in his study, and explains his decision to be loyal to the doctor from the beginning and now to fulfill his promise to give him a proper burial. Isabel’s memories of the doctor’s arrival are more blurry than her father’s, but she recalls the conversations she had about him with Meme, the doctor’s lover, as well as the arrival of her now absent husband and their relationship. With snippets of memories from father and daughter, the reader threads together their story and the complexity of the act that they are about to perform. Each source of information gives the reader a different perspective from which to understand Macondo.

While the three generations of narrators offer the reader a straightforward perspective on the history of Macondo, their combined narration complicates the novel by rejecting the linearity of time. If one removes the narrators’ memories and the deviations from the development of events in the present time, the storyline consists mainly of a group of people gathered in a room
preparing a coffin for burial. The inclusion of three perspectives complicates the simplicity of the plot, so that the story does not move forward but in a multidimensional way. The narration creates the impression that the reader is experiencing the events inside the doctor’s room in slow motion. The boy narrates, “I look at Mama again hoping that she’ll tell me why my grandfather is tossing things into the coffin. But my mother is unmoved in her black dress.”77 A few pages later, the reader encounters the exact same moment in the words of Isabel, “He looked at me several times and I know that he finds me strange, somebody he doesn’t know, with this stiff dress and this old hat that I’ve put on so that I won’t be identified even by my own forebodings.”78 The reader listens to the same train whistle several times and sees the Colonel find the doctor’s shoe twice: “Papa’s cold-blooded about all this. Even to the point of telling them to open the coffin so they could put in the shoe that was left on the bed,”79 and again: “I examine the room and I see that a shoe was forgotten on the bed. I signal my men again with the shoe in my hand and they lift up the lid at the precise moment when the train whistles.”80

The non-linearity of time in Leaf Storm solidifies the sensation of Macondo’s timelessness that García Márquez begins to build in the prologue. The slow progression of events allows for the story line to deviate into characters’ memories, so that the reader understands more about the setting. Instead of confining the novel’s setting to a mourning room, each character is a window into the town surrounding the room.

The doctor’s burial is similarly transformed into a concern of the entire town. Unlike the Bundrens’ intra-family burial, Leaf Storm’s burial becomes a public controversy. The doctor has a long relationship with the main family but he is not a family member or a cherished friend. It is

78 Ibid, 9.
79 Ibid., 10.
80 Ibid., 17.
an outsider, therefore, that asks the Colonel to bury him when he dies. The town of Macondo is fiercely opposed to the burial of this outsider because he betrayed the town. The Colonel feels the burden to bury the doctor and brings his daughter with him, who in turn brings her son with her. While they sit in the room, they think about the townspeople who hold the conviction that the doctor should be left to rot in the room. Through their thoughts and memories, the reader learns the doctor’s story together and the town’s story.

In *As I Lay Dying*, Addie Bundren’s burial, while not entirely contained within the family, is a more private event. Faulkner’s 1930 novel provides the reader a more introspective reflection into a family than *Leaf Storm* does, and offers less of *Leaf Storm’s* focus on place. Addie Bundren expresses her wish to be buried in Jefferson, and after her death her husband and children begin the trip to Jefferson. Yoknapatawpha’s society looks on disapprovingly as the family pulls Addie’s foul-smelling body across Yoknapatawpha. This social disapproval is present in the novel, but somewhat ambiguously. The reader knows that society judges the Bundrens on their quest to bury Addie, but the disapproving eyes remain in the background of the storyline. The name Yoknapatawpha does not appear in the novel, nor are the characters’ thoughts as focused on the town’s history as the thoughts of the characters in *Leaf Storm*.

Faulkner’s collective narration has a similar effect on the portrayal of time in his writing, particularly on *As I Lay Dying*, which García Marquez himself states was on his mind while writing *Leaf Storm*. Faulkner’s novel challenges the idea of linear time, similarly presenting the same event from vastly different perspectives. Darl sees Cash’s work in building his mother’s coffin positively, because she will have a good coffin to rest in, but to Jewel, the same act is insensitive: “It’s because he stays out there, right under the window, hammering and sawing on that goddamn box. Where she’s got to see him. Where every breath she draws is full of his
knocking and sawing where she can see him saying See.”

Through repetition and the narration of tragic events from different perspectives, Faulkner creates a sense of immobility. Unlike the slow progression of events in *Leaf Storm*, the lack of mobility in *As I Lay Dying* creates space for the characters’ musings and inner concerns. Through these inner dialogues, the reader has more contact with and insight into the Bundrens’ and private lives, with a lesser focus on Yoknapatawpha as the setting.

Still, despite the weak focus on place of *As I Lay Dying* in particular, Faulkner’s work did have a very strong focus on Yoknapatawpha. Faulkner’s commitment to Yoknapatawpha is without doubt a factor that drew García Márquez to him.

Crafting Yoknapatawpha extended beyond the pages of Faulkner’s novels. He drew several maps of the fictional county, including one that he made for the publication of *Absalom, Absalom!*, and a second one ten years later for Malcolm Cowley’s *Portable Faulkner*. In 1945, Faulkner wrote an appendix for *The Sound and The Fury* that outlines the biographies of the Compsons and their family history from 1699 to 1945. By crafting a detailed and vivid image of the South that is not limited by reality, Faulkner achieved a representation of the South that encompassed more than Oxford during a certain period in time. When thinking about authors that have famously created maps and biographies for their characters, J. R.R. Tolkien and Robert Louis Stevenson both come to mind. Maps made *Absalom, Absalom!*, *The Hobbit*, and *Treasure Island* both more real and more fictional. The reader can picture, understand, and appreciate the setting as a more palpable place. Simultaneously, the map reminds the reader that the setting is strictly fictional and the author’s map is the only possible map of such a setting. Most importantly, a map highlights the importance of the setting in a work of literature. With a map,

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the author signals to the reader that she as the creator of the place cares highly about its role in the novel, and that the reader should give it its due importance as well.

Faulkner’s commitment to the South and his dedication to portraying Mississippi satisfactorily was alluring to both García Márquez and Vargas Llosa. Beatriz Florencia Nelson’s 1950 translation of Absalom, Absalom! has a map of Yoknapatawpha attached at the end of the book, with Faulkner’s notes translated into Spanish (See Appendix). The inclusion of this map signaled Faulkner’s investment in Yoknapatawpha to Latin American readers, and the translator’s decision to retain and translate the map further reinforces the importance of the town. To the writers of the Boom, Yoknapatawpha proposed a way of using modernist techniques to describe a place that wasn’t Dublin or London, but a rural and defeated place.

García Márquez did not create maps or biographies for his characters in any of his works. He would have considered the notion of creating a fictional map for Macondo ridiculous, because Macondo was not a fictional place to him. He often pointed out that while foreigners, particularly Europeans, labeled him as a writer of magic and fantasy, he was a writer of reality: “One need only open the newspapers to know that among us extraordinary things occur every day. I know plain folk who have read One Hundred Years of Solitude with great pleasure and very carefully, but without being surprised, because in the end I’m not telling them anything that is all that different from the lives they live.”82 The absence of Macondo maps does not signify that García Márquez was less preoccupied about his setting than other writers, but rather that he was strongly opposed to the notion that Macondo was a magical fiction.

The main motivation behind Mario Vargas Llosa’s first novel was neither a family nor a town. The Time of the Hero is a novel about a military academy and the bonds that exist between

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82 Gabriel García Márquez, El olor de la guayaba: conversaciones con Plinio Apuleyo Mendoza (Mexico: Editorial Diana, 1993), 48. Translation by Emilio Sauri in his paper “Faulkner and His Brothers”
the cadets in the academy. Unlike García Marquez, Vargas Llosa did not collect names, places and stories in his head for a long time. When he was fourteen years old, his father sent him to a military academy in Lima to “make him a man” and “wipe out” his son’s desire to be a writer. As soon as he arrived at the Leoncio Prado Military Academy, he knew that he wanted to write a novel about his experience as a cadet there. He was not able to begin writing *The Time of the Hero* until six years later, with the Atlantic separating him from Lima while he was living in Spain. By then, Vargas Llosa had already read and praised Faulkner. He had discovered Faulkner at the end of his university years and often states that Faulkner was the first author that he read with pen and paper in hand. In his book *A Writer’s Reality*, Vargas Llosa explains that there are three authors who had an impact on the choices he made while writing *The Time of the Hero*:

Sartre, Malraux, and Faulkner. He writes:

> By reading Faulkner I learned that form could be a character in a novel the most important character—that is, the organization of the perspective of the narration, the use of different narrators, the withholding of some information from the reader to create ambiguity...I suppose this is visible in my first novel. The organization of the story reflects some kind of fascination with these formal possibilities of the narrative form, the discovery of which I owe to Faulkner. ⁸³

Like García Marquez, Vargas Llosa had Faulkner in mind while deciding factors such as who narrates the story and how. *The Time of The Hero* is narrated from the perspective of a group of cadets in the Leoncio Prado Military Academy. Unlike the Bundrens, the Compsons, or the Snopes, the narrators of *The Time of the Hero* are not tied together by family bonds, but by circumstance and their shared experiences within the walls of Leoncio Prado.

Vargas Llosa’s use of multiple narrative perspectives gives the reader insight into the cadets and their relationship with each other resembles Faulkner’s use of multiple narrators in

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Absalom, Absalom! and As I Lay Dying to invite the reader into the inner lives of the Bundrens and the Compsons. His depiction of non-linear time and use of tailored language for each cadet also resembles Faulkner’s characterization through distinct language use for each narrator. These narrative techniques portray the complicated bonds that the cadets have with each other, allowing the reader to know each cadet’s façade and his inner turmoils.

The Time of The Hero is not a story about how a town came to be, about a war or about defeat. It is the story of a group of cadets and their respective childhood stories, and as such the novel invests its energy in each individual character and in the perspective of Lima and Leoncio Prado that each offers. In A Writer’s Reality, Vargas Llosa explains that some characters are presented from an external point of view, while others are presented from an internal point of view, and still others are presented from both. Teresa, for instance, is always presented from an external point of view: from the eyes of three different cadets. El Jaguar is presented from both an external and an internal point of view, so that he is publicly “macho” and privately acutely observant and thoughtful. As a result, Vargas Llosa explains, “this one-sided character will become a more ambiguous and complex human being.”

Vargas Llosa writes that he learned about the use of different narrators in a novel from Faulkner, who also forged complex characters through narrative techniques. Absalom, Absalom!’s protagonist, for instance, is presented to the reader through the rancorous eyes of Miss Rosa Coldfield, through the eyes of Quentin, his father, and his grandfather, and through the conjectures of Shreve. The effect of Faulkner’s narrative techniques in Absalom, Absalom! is different from the effect of Vargas Llosa’s narrative techniques, however, in that Sutpen’s character becomes blurred and ambiguous while the cadets develop into vivid and accessible characters.

84 Ibid., 52.
Another aspect of Faulkner’s narrative choices that is also evident in Vargas Llosa’s first novel is Faulkner’s use of language to give a distinct voice to his characters. In *The Sound and The Fury*, Quentin and Benjy’s disorganized and sometimes incoherent language communicates their respective struggles. The lack of narrative chronology and the use of stream of consciousness in Benjy’s narration reflect his anguish at losing Caddie and his mental disability. Quentin’s narration is likewise non-chronological and similarly anguished, but more eloquent and complex.

In *The Time of the Hero*, the narration shifts voices to different characters at different points in their lives. The sections which el Jaguar narrates as a young boy are immediately recognizable by his meticulous observation of Teresa (even though the reader will not understand that the child is el Jaguar until the end of the novel). The childhood narrations of el Jaguar present him to the reader from an internal point of view. El Jaguar is the only character who narrates from a first person point of view often and continuously, allowing the character to become extremely familiar with him. His meticulous descriptions give the reader detailed insight into both Teresa and himself,

> It was the only thing that made her angry. Her temples began to throb—slowly, like a heart—under her black hair, and she pursed her lips.....she also had a plaid dress that covered her shoulders and was fastened at the neck with a ribbon. It was sleeveless, and she wore a reddish-brown jacket over it. She only buttoned the top button, and when she walked the ends of the jacket flapped in the breeze, and how nice she looked.  

The reader does not have access to such detailed description from any other narrator. The reader becomes acquainted with the adolescent el Jaguar from the narrations of other cadets, who portray him as an extremely tough and powerful cadet. His character becomes darker and more blurred.

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after the death of El esclavo, when the reader begins to suspect that el Jaguar is responsible for the death. This combination of a dark adolescent character and an extremely sensitive young boy make the Jaguar a rich character by the end of the story, when the reader learns his fate and understands that the boy and the adolescent are the same character.

Other characters are described less extensively but are nevertheless similarly crafted by language. Vargas Llosa uses Boa’s character and his monologues to, in his own words, “show how the behavior of these boys could be seen as representing a distortion of this military philosophy.”86 The author also aimed to portray the opposition between the cadets and the officers by narrating the story from the point of view of the cadets. The combined perspectives of Alberto, Ricardo, and the third person portrayal of Cava, el Jaguar, etc., “was a critical attempt to show how the philosophy of this military world could destroy or orient the personality of the boys in such a distorted way; how the idea of courage, for instance, perceived by a boy of thirteen or fourteen, could become a very brutal way of approaching human relationships and feelings.”87

Vargas Llosa’s first novel, like Faulkner and García Marquez’s work, rejects the linearity of time and gives way to a narration that is not only written from different perspectives, but from different points in time. The walls of the Leoncio Prado Military Academy are what unifies the cadets and their stories, but as the reader learns about the incidents that take place within these walls, she also learns about the childhood experiences that molded each cadet’s personality to what it is in the present. The book begins in the academy, when the Circle is stealing the chemistry exam. This third person narration is quickly interrupted by Ricardo Arana’s childhood story. The novel continues in a similar manner, the narration of the events in the academy is constantly interrupted by snippets of Ricardo, Alberto, and el Jaguar’s childhood. Although most

87 Ibid.
of the sections are narrated in the past, some of Alberto’s sections are described in the present tense. This interlacing of time and the inconsistency of tenses makes time a complex element in the book and the depiction of time in turn contributes to the vividness of each character. By jumping constantly from the story of the academy to the individual past of each cadet, the novel reminds the reader that each cadet has a life outside of the academy’s walls, and that there are people outside of the walls that he constantly thinks about. Like the Compsons, the Sutpens, and the Bundrens, the cadets fledge into individually intricate characters that have complex relationships with each other.

The most important female characters in both The Sound and the Fury and in The Time of the Hero are portrayed from multiple male perspectives, but never in their own voice. Caddie and Teresa become distant and confusing characters, even somewhat unreal. This commonality between the two novels does not necessarily point at a process of inheritance from Faulkner to Vargas Llosa regarding the depiction of female characters. There is not a striking pattern of female characters shared by Faulkner and the Boom. This example does, however, follow a wide trend of male writers across many literary polysystems who struggle to portray women as palpable, believable characters. The Boom is by no means an exception; Rayuela’s Maga, One Hundred Years of Solitude’s Remedios la Bella, and Aura’s Aura are all mystical characters. After the Boom ended in the eighties, female Latin American writers like Rosario Ferré, Clarice Lispector, Luisa Valenzuela and Laura Restrepo shifted the Latin American polysystem’s narrative techniques to portray and give a voice to female characters in Latin American literature. While this thesis cannot do the topic justice, the Boom’s portrayal of female characters and the

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88 Arguably, both male and female characters of Gabriel García Márquez are mystical like Remedios la Bella in the sense that many of them have unusual characteristics. Male character Mauricio Balbilocátar, for instance, walks around with a swarm of yellow butterflies following him.
shift that contemporary women writers have created in the portrayal of female characters is a fertile area for further research.

Faulkner’s writing fed the needs of Vargas Llosa and García Márquez’s early ambitions, whether it was Vargas Llosa’s interest in portraying a community of cadets or García Márquez’s urgency to create Macondo. It would be wrong to credit the Boom entirely with importing new narrative techniques into Latin America — Rulfo, for instance, narrates with chorus of dead characters in *Pedro Páramo*. But the international fame that the work of the Boom acquired did contribute to the establishment of Faulknerian narrative techniques as an accepted part of the Latin American system that subsequent generations would inherit.
Chapter 7: The role of Faulkner in the Boom’s anti-imperialist agenda

“...in the Latin American literature of the Boom years, modernism was by no means antithetical to Marxism; rather the writers’ style and content alike were imbued with the revolutionary politics and projects that were sweeping across the region”.

- Deborah Cohn

The Boom’s close relationship with politics is one of the features that most markedly separates its authors from William Faulkner. Although Faulkner’s work shows a clear preoccupation with the politics of race and political relations between the South and the North, he has a reputation for being a nonpolitical writer. On the occasions when he did interact with the US government, he did so reluctantly. For instance, after Faulkner expressed reluctance in travelling to Stockholm to receive his Nobel Prize, the State Department had to intervene and convince Faulkner to deliver his speech in order to avoid a national embarrassment.

The State Department would continue to persuade Faulkner to represent US interests abroad as a goodwill ambassador. In 1954, the State Department persuaded Faulkner to travel to Latin America through “appeals to his patriotism.” Anti-US sentiments were growing in Latin America in the midst of US-backed coups and left-leaning restlessness was spreading on the eve of the Cuban Revolution. The United States’ anti-communist propaganda involved Faulkner’s trips to Venezuela, Peru, and Brazil, during which he developed a genuine interest in promoting Latin American literature. He did not have contact with any of the authors of the Boom during his trip, but neither did these authors shun Faulkner for his decision to cooperate with the U.S. government.

Faulkner represented American interests in Latin America during an era in which the United States’ foreign policy towards the region was at its most imperialistic. And yet, authors

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89 Deborah N. Cohn, The Latin American Literary Boom and U.S. Nationalism During the Cold War (Vanderbilt University Press, 2012), 35.
90 Other writers who the US sent as cultural ambassadors to Latin America include Elizabeth Bishop, Robert Frost, Robert Lowell, and Katherine Anne Porter
like Gabriel García Márquez felt that the best way to denounce the imperialist banana plantation culture in Colombia was in the way that Faulkner himself wrote about the American South.

Unlike Faulkner, Gabriel García Márquez, Mario Vargas Llosa, and Carlos Fuentes are extremely political writers. Gabriel García Márquez was a left-leaning, socialist, anti-imperialist writer who openly supported the Cuban Revolution and was a friend of Fidel Castro. Carlos Fuentes is often described as a moderate liberal and was strongly critical of US foreign policy, particularly the Vietnam War and Reagan’s opposition to the Nicaraguan Sandinistas. He was initially a supporter of the Castro regime, but retracted his support after the Cuban government’s imprisonment of Cuban poet Heberto Padilla. Like Carlos Fuentes, Vargas Llosa was initially a supporter of the Cuban Revolution but soon became disillusioned by it and distanced himself from the movement after the imprisonment of Heberto Padilla. Vargas Llosa, Fuentes and García Márquez’s open criticism of the United States and support for leftist uprisings throughout Latin America led the US government to deny the authors entry into the United States. In 1952, the United States Congress passed the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952, with the objective of limiting immigration to the United States in the early stages of the Cold War. Amongst those denied entry visas into the United States as a result of this act were Gabriel García Márquez, Carlos Fuentes, Mario Vargas Llosa, and Julio Cortázar—the four most prominent figures of the Latin American Boom.

The writers of the Latin American Boom began reading Faulkner before his interactions with the State Department and instantly admired the literary value of his writing techniques. Even after Faulkner’s political involvement as a cultural ambassador, his reputation as an unpolitical writer remained unchanged. Although Faulkner’s trips to Latin America were strictly

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91 President Truman vetoed this act because he considered it to be too discriminatory, but Congress overrode his veto.
political, he maintained his distance from politics by focusing more on invigorating literary
publishing in Latin America and promising to work for more translations of Latin American
literature into English. Furthermore, the relative absence of globalization and mass media in the
1950s meant that Faulkner’s public figure was not widely scrutinized in Latin America. The
writers of the Latin American Boom seem to have had no interest in or available information
about Faulkner as a public figure.

Max Dickmann’s prologue to Mientras yo agonizo (As I Lay Dying) in 1942 is a good
example of the kind of information García Márquez, Vargas Llosa and Carlos Fuentes were
receiving about Faulkner as a person. Dickmann describes the South, offers the family history of
Faulkner, and his early years as a writer. He describes Faulkner in the following way:

This quiet man, a good father and a good husband, is a solitary spirit whose
reputation as eccentric and antisocial has built around him a strange aura, because
Faulkner is a strength of nature that does not need other contacts or influences to
develop his tragic and powerful work, the work of a writer who looks inwards,
because in his blood boils the drama that he lets loose in his books, a drama of souls
and consciences...

Max Dickmann also informs his reader that Faulkner “delights in the childish graces of his
daughter Jill,” and enjoyed reading to her every morning, emphasizing Faulkner’s family values
to a culture in which family is cherished above everything. Dickmann’s choice to omit
Faulkner’s drinking and family problems would not be as conspicuous had he not emphasized
Faulkner’s admirable family values. The translator’s prologue offers detailed and flattering

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92Este hombre tranquilo, buen padre y buen marido, es un espíritu solitario, cuya reputación de excéntrico y
antisocial le ha creado una extraña aureola, porque Faulkner es una fuerza de la naturaleza que no necesita de otros
contactos ni influencias para desarrollar su obra potente y trágica, obra de escritor que mira hacia adentro, porque en
su misma sangre bulle todo el drama que vuelca en sus libros, drama de almas y de conciencias… My translation.
praise to someone who was then an unknown writer in Latin America, and today stands as an example of the Boom authors’ limited knowledge of Faulkner beyond his writing.  

Dickmann’s prologue to the Bundren story also highlights the importance of the politics of family as a theme that was essential to both Faulkner and the Latin Americans. University of Massachusetts professor Emilio Sauri offers an intriguing theory about Faulkner’s relationship to the Boom. A fascination with family, Sauri argues, is what drew the Latin American authors to Faulkner despite their political differences. In his paper “Faulkner and his Brothers,” Sauri points out that Faulkner and the Cuban revolution were both key factors in shaping the Latin American Boom. But Faulkner and the Cuban Revolution preached opposing values. While the Cuban Revolution rejected attachment to one’s family as detrimental to the revolution, Faulkner placed the family unit front and center in every social struggle of the American South. While Faulkner’s resistance to Jim Crow rested on “an insistence on a form of intimacy characteristic of the family (to which both blacks and whites belong) as the exemplar of social relations,” the Cuban Revolution understood brotherhood as a rejection and substitution of family that would pave the road to equality.

Sauri points to the Latin Americans’ particular preferences for the sagas of the Compsons, Sutpens, and Sartorises over the Snopes trilogy or any other work of Faulkner because in The Sound and The Fury, Absalom, Absalom!, and The Unvanquished “the history of the region is presented as the drama of the family.” Faulkner’s rendering of racial relationships as family relationships appeal to the writers of the Boom to such an extent that Faulkner becomes

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93 Vargas Llosa and García Márquez eventually learned of Faulkner’s alcoholism, but this knowledge only seemed to increase their admiration of the Southern writer. Vargas Llosa said in an interview, “Now my admiration for Faulkner is even greater: if you drink so much, how can you create such a vast and complex world? How is it possible for a mind totally impregnated by alcohol to handle such detail and create such coherence?” (In Raymond Leslie Williams, Mario Vargas Llosa Interviewed on the Mississippi: Pilgrimage to Oxford) García Márquez, who lived on a brothel in Barranquilla for almost a year, was thrilled to read the Paris Review interview in which Faulkner states that the best place for a writer to work in is a brothel and never expressed disapproval of Faulkner’s drinking. See Gerald Martin, Gabriel García Márquez: A Life, 1st U.S. ed (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2009), 130.
a more influential force in the Boom than the Cuban Revolution. García Márquez, Vargas Llosa, and Carlos Fuentes can’t renounce their commitment to family as a technique that can forge an identity for the Latin American continent, Sauri argues.

I had the opportunity to visit Professor Sauri in his University of Massachusetts office in Boston. I began our conversation by questioning his base assumption that family played a central role in the Boom novel (What about works like *Leafstorm*?). Sauri recognized that in García Márquez’s early works he was less committed to the theme of family. It was as his work evolved, Sauri proposes, that the author came to understand family as a technology for producing a Latin American identity. Family would eventually become as important an element as magic realism in Latin American literature in the sense that it forged a Latin American identity through literature.

A recurring theme during our conversation and in Sauri’s article was literature’s political and social impact in Latin America in the second half of the twentieth century. By claiming a literary kinship to Faulkner, the writers of the Boom were preaching the important role of family in culture and therefore standing in opposition to the Cuban Revolution. Their books were then widely read in Latin America and affirmed the already entrenched idealization of family. The Boom, according to Sauri, carved a Latin American identity out of the institution of family. This allowed the region to stand more staunchly in opposition to imperialism as a race that was markedly different from the Americans. This identity that made Latin America stronger in the face of identity did not rest on whether one thought that Latin America’s future lay in socialism or capitalism, but on family. Sauri writes in the conclusion of his paper:

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94 Mario Vargas Llosa and Carlos Fuentes’ break with the Cuban Revolution took place after the imprisonment of Heberto Padilla in 1971. This was after Fuentes published *La muerte de artemio cruz* (1962), and García Márquez published *Cien años de soledad*, the works that Sauri addresses in his article. This means that the writers’ preference for Faulkner over the Cuban Revolution according to Sauri took place while they were supporters of the Cuban Revolution and that their decision (whether a conscious or unconscious one) cannot be attributed to their disillusionment with the revolution.
From this perspective, the “boom” novel turns the difference insisted on by the revolution—between socialism and capitalism—into the difference between cultures, rewriting the political aims of the revolution in strictly identitarian terms. This, then, is what it means to say that the writers of the “boom” chose Faulkner and his brothers over Che, and this is also what it would mean to begin to understand the “boom” itself as part of the literary prehistory of neoliberalism.

The Latin American writers of the 1960s paved the way for neoliberalism by creating a cultural landscape in which the Cuban Revolution was not relevant to the formation of a Latin American identity.

Sauri’s work points to a clear political connection between an unpolitical Faulkner and a left leaning Latin American Boom. The ties of these authors are based not on their political beliefs but in their literary interests on the kinship in family. Family was an essential part of both of their cultures and of the chaos that they sought to portray.

But Sauri’s analysis of the unintentional cultural impact of the Latin American novel in the 1960s rests on the assumption that Faulkner’s writing inspired the Boom to put the family at the heart of these novels. In the case of Carlos Fuentes’s *The Death of Artemio Cruz*, this argument can hold because Carlos Fuentes was reading Faulkner closely at the time that he wrote his novel. The second example that Sauri provides in his paper is *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, which is a problematic example to use because Faulknerian characteristics are difficult to trace in García Márquez’s masterpiece. The Colombian writer’s most Faulknerian work is *Leaf Storm*, and family is not at the heart *Leaf Storm*. As I argue in the previous chapter, the element at the heart of the author’s novella is place. More specifically, *Leaf Storm* was born out of an urge to write about the Colombian Caribbean and the Thousand Days’ war.

García Márquez said of the works that follow *Leaf Storm*: “My influence had been Faulkner; now it was Hemingway.” By the time that he wrote *One Hundred Years of Solitude* the tone that he used in his writing was based not on an author but on his grandmother: “I discovered
the right tone...It was based on the way that my grandmother used to tell her stories. She told things that sounded supernatural and fantastic, but she told them with complete naturalness.” By the time that he writes the masterpiece that does center on family, Faulknerian elements are more difficult to trace in his writing.
Faulkner in Latin America after the Boom

A substantial amount of research on the topic of Faulkner’s influence in Latin American literature focuses on the Latin American Boom. The Boom is a particularly interesting area of research given that the generation of the Boom was the first to read Faulkner’s earliest translations and appropriate his work to enrich their work. Tracing Faulkner’s presence in Latin America in the movements that paralleled and followed the Boom is difficult because many of the movements that followed the Boom, like the Post-Boom and McOndo, defined themselves in opposition to the Boom. By defining themselves in relation to the Boom and modernism, these movements are in a way shaped by the Boom. However, their rejection of decadence, of complex sentences and modernist techniques means that Faulkner is difficult to trace in some of their writing.

The Post-Boom, for instance, rejected the Boom’s use of modernist techniques and the tone of pessimism in their work. Post-boom writer Isabel Allende states in an interview: “We are people with more hope...this is a very important point that has marked our movement.” The Chilean movement McOndo began with the publication of a short-story anthology in 1996, *McOndo*, that combined the names of McDonald’s and Macondo and portrays a world of mass communication, consumerism, and technology. The movement opposes magic realism as a writing style that promotes stereotypes of Latin America as an exotic, tropical region. Macondo also sought to portray urban living, mass communication media and high levels of heterogeneity across Latin American cities.

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95 “Somos gente más esperanzada..Este es un punto bien importante de lo que ha marcado nuestra ola.” Cited in Shaw, *The Post-Boom*, p.10
Stating that the Post-Boom bears no trace of Faulkner is a dangerous generalization—countless writers in Latin America do not fit the mould of a movement or break away in some way or another from the movement that critics assign them to. Contemporary Latin American literature is more complex than it was in the 1960s in that its geographical boundaries are not clearly defined. The influx of Latin American and Caribbean immigrants into the United States in the second half of the twentieth century has meant that a lot of US-based writers trace their literary roots back to the writers of the Boom. Some of them trace their roots back to Faulkner, like Texan writer Rolando Hinojosa. Hinojosa’s fictional Belken County has traces of Faulkner’s Yoknapatawpha,96 and is deeply rooted in Texan and Mexican culture.

Rosario Ferré is a Puerto Rican writer who began publishing her work in 1976, when the Boom was coming to an end. Her work is one of the clearest examples of Faulkner’s continued presence in Latin America because of its rootedness in the past, its focus on family history and her portrayal of a region plagued by the remnants of class differences. Sweet Diamond Dust is Ferré’s own translation of Maldito Amor (1986), which tells the story of the De La Valle family and their demise as their sugar mill falters. The story, like The Sound and The Fury, is told from the perspective of various relatives and servants. The book’s first section concludes with: “Far from being a paradise, Guamaní has become a hell, a monstrous whirlpool from which the terrifying funnel of Snow White Sugar Mills spews out sugar night and day toward the north” (Rosario Ferré 7). Don Julio’s vivid stubbornness is reminiscent of Thomas Sutpen, as Ferré’s portrayal of plantations and the Puerto Rican Plantocracy evokes Yoknapatawpha. And yet the De la Valle and their servants are so distinctly Puerto Rican that the reader can almost hear them in their Puerto Rican accents as they speak, skipping their s’s and pronouncing their r’s as l’s.

96 Rolando Hinojosa is of Mexican descent has read and written about Carlos Fuentes. He has declared that he has avoided reading García Márquez’s work and will only read One Hundred Years of Solitude after he stops writing.
Mexican writer Pedro Angel Palou offers a different scenario of how Faulkner’s legacy has been transmitted in Latin American literature. He is one of the founders of the Generation of the Crack, a movement that made its first public statement only a few months after McOndo was published in 1996 and sought to re-value some of the characteristics of the Boom novel. In an email correspondence from Palou, he asserted that Faulkner was present in his writing and the writing of the Crack,

“Via interposita persona, via the boom. Not directly. I do not mean to say that we did not read Faulkner, but that in a way his influence had already been “translated” and assimilated by our authors from Rulfo to Onetti and passing through GM or Fuentes (and Carpentier, who is never mentioned near the author of “A Rose for Emily”)...In this sense it is more about the faulknerian “ambition” than it is about the prose (as occurred with the Boom).”

Palou suggests that for some writers, the Boom translated Faulkner into a Latin American Faulkner that was then inherited to younger generations of writers. He also proposes the idea that Latin American writers can also be affected not by Faulkner’s sentences and punctuation but by the model of the novel that Faulkner created. Faulkner’s novels were motivated by the ambitious goal of portraying “the human heart at conflict with itself.” Novels like Absalom, Absalom! and As I Lay Dying are ambitious in their power to mythically portray conflicts of inheritance, rancour, race, greed and duty as universal conflicts. García Márquez was drawn to Faulkner’s ability to fulfill this ambition of universality by writing about a place that was considered backward, a rural and defeated place. This is perhaps what Pedro Angel Palou refers to when he talks about inheriting a Faulknerian ambition from the Latin American Boom of the 1960s; the

97 Via interposita persona, vía el boom. No de manera directa. No quiero decir que no leyéramos a Faulkner, solo que de alguna manera su influencia ya había sido “traducida” y asimilada por nuestros autores de Rulfo a Onetti pasando por GM o Fuentes (y Carpentier, que nunca se menciona cerca del autor de Una rosa para Emily)... En ese sentido es más la “ambición” faulkneriana que la prosa (como si pasó en el Boom).

ambition of creating a work of literature about your place of origin that is so powerful it can speak universal truths about the human heart.

Jorge Luis Borges, Juan Rulfo, Alejo Carpentier, Miguel Angel Ásturias, and many other Latin American writers were in search of a way to portray the continent’s reality without following foreign-born literary movements like criollismo. This thesis does not want to argue that García Márquez was the first to create a distinctly Latin American literary movement, but that the Boom crowned Latin American literature’s attempt to do so throughout the twentieth century. The Boom paved the road for future writers to be able to look back at writers from their own region as stepping stones. Some, like Rosario Ferré, continued to appropriate foreign writers like Faulkner, while others inherited Latin Americanized versions of foreign writers. All of them, like the Boom, wanted to propose what in their view was a method to portray Latin America’s most current reality. In his Nobel Prize speech, García Márquez said: “It is only natural that they [foreigners] insist on measuring us with the yardstick that they use for themselves, forgetting that the ravages of life are not the same for all...The interpretation of our reality through patterns not our own serves only to make us ever more unknown, ever less free, ever more solitary.”

García Márquez praised Faulkner for finding his own language with which to put the chaos that was familiar to him into words. He would also praise the generations of young writers who criticized his work as exotic and proposed their own fresh way of painting the reality of their countries.

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99 Es comprensible que insistan en medirnos con la misma vara con que se miden a sí mismos, sin recordar que los estragos de la vida no son iguales para todos, y que la búsqueda de la identidad propia es tan ardua y sangrienta para nosotros como lo fue para ellos. La interpretación de nuestra realidad con esquemas ajenos sólo contribuye a hacernos cada vez más desconocidos, cada vez menos libres, cada vez más solitarios.
Beatriz Florencia Nelson translated Faulkner’s Yoknapatawpha map for her 1950 translation of *Absalom, Absalom!* and included it after the last chapter of the novel. See pages 55-56 in chapter 6 for further analysis of Faulkner’s creation of maps.

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