

RUSSIA. Faulkner's heritage, if looked upon from the point of view of literary tradition, is obviously related to Russian classic literature of the nineteenth century, especially to Leo Tolstoy's and Fyodor Dostoevsky's creative work. Faulkner's library, composed of his favorite books, contains Tolstoy, Turgenev, Dostoevsky, and Chekhov. Faulkner's romantic treatment of the Southern gentry, ousted by Northern parvenu and doomed to death as a Class, can be traced to Turgenev's swan song to Russian gentry of the middle of the nineteenth century, also doomed by history, which constitutes the essence of his novels. Soviet critics consider that Faulkner inherited from Tolstoy the belief that morally healthy people are, first of all, common people who are close to nature and have to toil from morning till night. The next important feature of this inheritance is Faulkner's ability to embody an idea into an artistic image, into a full-blooded literary character.

Faulkner himself confessed more than once the influence produced upon his work by Dostoevsky's books, mentioning *The Brothers Karamazov* among the books he reread every year. Faulkner appreciated most of all Dostoevsky's ability to portray subconscious contradictory human feelings. The striving to analyze the depth of the human psyche, to explain its complexity and its paradoxes, leads critics to see in Faulkner Dostoevsky's student. Like Dostoevsky, he was interested in studying the crisis of a personality who found himself amidst crisis in society.

Faulkner is always interested in a family as the foundation of society, as the main cell of which society consists. Like Dostoevsky, he shows a family in the process of disintegration and decay and, again like Dostoevsky, saw his task not only in the portrayal of this decay but also in the discovery of its causes. In spite of the fact that the families described by Faulkner and Dostoevsky were quite different in socio-historic and national aspects, a very important trait unites them—the breach of family traditions and relations. Both writers also put to the test families belonging to various social strata.

The psyche of Faulkner's heroes is endowed with the same extreme tension, the same intensity of interior life, that marks the inner life of Dostoevsky's characters. Professor Vladimir Kostyakov considers that Faulkner inherited from Dostoevsky the principle of the characters' relative independence—that is, when the author's consciousness does not dominate the consciousness of the characters he has created but treats them as independent, equal consciousnesses, as complicated and integral as his own. Linda Snopes is an example of such an independent consciousness, of an idea embodied into a full-blooded artistic image. Faulkner does not share her ideological concept but lets her exist and develop on the pages of his novel, demonstrating all the tendencies of her

personality. Thus, he is true to his principle of considering various ways in his search for truth and, like Dostoevsky, letting every variant exist on equal rights in his books.

Of all the great literary masters of the nineteenth century, Dostoevsky was the first who recreated the inner world of his heroes with the help of a very minute record of all shades of their feelings and thoughts changing each other in close succession. He was one of the first to introduce interior monologue, or the stream of consciousness, and amply used and developed it in his art. In the use of these techniques, it may be argued, Faulkner is Dostoevsky's follower rather than Joyce's. Faulkner's treatment of these devices is, like Dostoevsky's, directed at the cognition of the world and, especially, the inner world of man.

Scenes in Faulkner's books show Dostoevsky's influence upon Faulkner. Flem's meeting Satan in hell in *The Hamlet* may be traced to a corresponding scene in *The Brothers Karamazov* when Ivan speaks to the Devil. Similarly, the exchange between the Old General and the corporal in *A Fable* echoes the Grand Inquisitor scene in *The Brothers Karamazov*.

It is noteworthy that neither writer preferred any ideology, any rigid system of political views; both were alien to orthodox thinking and given to a dialectical approach to life. Both understood life as complexity, and this understanding is reflected in their depiction of the contradictions of life and the absence of a complete or inflexible system of belief. Both admitted many variants of truth but came to the realization of the coexistence of these variants in different artistic ways. Dostoevsky in his search for truth makes the personages of his novels clash; Faulkner changes the interpretation of the same scenes, characters, and the plot, showing them through the perception of various personages of the novel. The role of the storyteller is excessively important in Faulkner's novels; the change of one means a new approach, a new perspective upon reality.

Some Russian critics consider that Faulkner, at least partially, accepted that part of the Southern myth that believed there was one integral community existing in the prewar South in which both black and white lived as members of one family. In their opinion, Faulkner in this respect is close to Dostoevsky, who maintained the idea of a spiritual proximity between Russian aristocracy and the common people, the belief that held him back from choosing revolution as the solution of social and moral problems.

Looking into Faulkner's work in search of parallels with writers contemporary to him in Russian literature, some critics compare his Southern saga to Sholohov's *Quiet Flows the Don*. Pyotr Palievsky bases his assumption upon Faulkner's definition of the Indian word *Yoknapatawpha* as "quiet flows water along the flat plain." The epic

idea of the slow passage of life is common to both writers, and the word "quiet" acquires in both cases an opposite meaning. Both the American South and Sholohov's Don are treated as parts of a whole, patriarchal and at the same time reactionary in character, yet being subjected to basic changes. The idea of a "motherland" is also present in the books of both writers. Faulkner's unvanquished heroes who are always ready to fight a losing battle are close as types to Sholohov's Melehov and Acksinya, and both writers treat their heroes with both sympathy and soberness.

Studying Faulkner's novels, Russian scholars concentrate their attention on two main aspects of Faulkner's work: first, his position as the most important representative of the Southern school that came into existence in the 1920s and reacted to the changes caused in the South by the Civil War; and second, his creative method. These critics study Faulkner's treatment of such elements as the former grandeur of the South, refined and noble Southern gentlemen, their proud Southern belle, and idyllic patriarchal relations existing between black slaves and their white owners. They emphasize Faulkner's critical examination of the Southern myth, especially his treatment of slavery. Russian scholars maintain that Faulkner sees the source of Southern misery in the institution of slavery, which distorted the fates of slaves, corrupted the souls of slave owners, and created the burden of historical fault that even nowadays mars the lives of people in the South. Faulkner sees blacks and whites bound together by the irony of history, involved in an inextricable web of shame, guilt, and evil, corrupting both. However, Russian scholars are of the opinion that Faulkner's approach to the racial problem is not primarily social but aesthetic, moral, and philosophical.

Dwelling upon Faulkner's creative method, Russian scholars stress Faulkner's realism, or, rather, his painful way to it, overcoming his modernistic tendencies. This concern about the artist's creative method was born of the ideological situation in the Soviet Union, when modernism was looked upon as a manifestation of bourgeois culture and, hence, prohibited. The desire to secure publication for the best foreign men of letters made Soviet scholars pronounce them realists or emphasize realistic tendencies in their books. Thus, Faulkner's work was looked upon as a slow progress toward realism, evident not only in his creative work taken as a whole but in separate books as well. Analyzing Faulkner's books, Russian scholars studied the evolution of Faulkner's method from the modernism of such novels as *The Sound and the Fury*, *As I Lay Dying*, and *Sanctuary* to the realism of what were considered his best works: *Light in August*, *Intruder in the Dust*, and *The Mansion*, and they stressed realistic tendencies, obvious in the change of his

method from *The Hamlet* to *The Mansion*, or even in the progression in *The Sound and the Fury* from the stream of consciousness of an idiot to the author's realistic narration. Soviet scholars view the *Snopes* trilogy as Faulkner's attempt at a social analysis of his contemporary society. Faulkner treats the character of Snopes as a new social phenomenon. The heroes of these books are presented on the concrete social and historical background, and the delineation of characters becomes more socially determined, as in the case of the development of Mink Snopes from the first to the third book of the trilogy. Female characters in the trilogy also undergo vivid transformation. Thus, the interpretation of Eula's character changes from the embodiment of sexual attraction in *The Hamlet* to more human and elevated presentation of her personality in *The Town*, Linda's character is presented as the only force capable of putting an end to Snopes and the bourgeois avarice that he personifies. Faulkner's style in *The Mansion* becomes more lucid, his manner of writing more traditional).

Russian scholars explain Faulkner's tragic vision by his pessimistic view on the development of the South: his rejection of the new vulgarized and industrialized bourgeois society. The violence, irrationality, and aberration found in his fiction are interpreted as a symbol of Southern decline. Tatyana Komarovskaya presents *Absalom, Absalom!* as a predecessor of the philosophical historical novel that flourished after World War II and secured fame for this literary genre.

Russian scholars emphasize Faulkner's humanism and optimism, vivid in his wild heroes who do not take defeat, who refuse to be conquered—in the fact that humanism and those who practice it, like Dilsey in *The Sound and the Fury*, survive in every one of his novels, giving hope of survival to others. They maintain that Faulkner's place in modern literature is determined by the philosophical depth, psychological subtlety, and great aesthetic merits of his fiction.

FURTHER READING

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Tatyana E.
Komarovskaya