

The American South includes sixteen states which have always been the American realm of myths, inspiring and stimulating imagination. Among the typical associations it generates, one can enumerate the oppressive heat, cotton plantations, violence, racial segregation, poverty and conservatism. The South has spawned a number of eminent artists, musicians and writers. Also, in popular culture, through the Southern noir movies, like *Deliverance* (1972), the South has always been portrayed as the realm of paradoxes and extremities.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the South delivered a group of writers, sometimes referred to as "Southern Gothic" authors, who exerted a considerable impact on American literature: William Faulkner, Flannery O'Connor, Harper Lee, Tennessee Williams and Carson McCullers. The rewards and honours they received, like Pulitzer Prizes, Presidential Medal of Freedom, or - in case of Faulkner - Nobel Prize for Literature, confirm their vital place in American literary canon. The study of their output is the research goal of the project. Critics have long pondered on the source for the unique character of the texts by these authors, as well as other Southern writers. This project seeks to address this very question.

The research hypothesis of the project concerns the way these writers organize their texts. It draws on Hayden White's theory of figurative narration, as well as the linguistic theory of tropes. The interpretative perspective assumed in the project views most of the elements as based on the topos of excess and the trope of hyperbole. At the same time, each of the studied authors appropriates the hyperbolic figuration in a different manner - drawing a distinction between is the individual character of their troping narration constitutes another research goal of the project.

In her short stories, Flannery O'Connor hyperbolizes the grotesque circumstances of her characters' lives which eventually lead to their religious epiphany and the shocking realization of their shortcomings. The second studied author, Harper Lee in her two novels portrays the excessive consequences of racial segregation which leads to miscarriages of justice, but also presents the implacable nature of Southern racial prejudice. William Faulkner hyperbolizes the past, especially by presenting the way the Civil War was looked back on, and stresses how the past informs the present moment, creating irreconcilable tensions, which in turn lead to violence. In his plays, Tennessee Williams features characters who escape the reality into obsessions and who are ultimately consumed by them. His hyperbole leads to the defragmentation of the Southern identity. Finally, Carson McCullers in writings creates a hyperbolised space, usually that of a café, around which the lives of her characters revolve and which reveals their grotesqueness.