CHAPTER - V

AS I LAY DYING: ‘tour de force’

As I Lay Dying is Faulkner’s most accomplished work. It has been acclaimed as one of his greatest novels as well as a self-proclaimed ‘tour de force.’ Even an eminent critic Wesley Morris supports Faulkner’s views, “that the novel is truly ‘tour de force’ for the reason that the novel aestheticizes, narratizes oedipal law, and myth thus becoming a model form of storytelling, for representation of social action” (Morris 150).

That is a simple ‘tour de force.’ I took this family and subjected them to the two greatest catastrophes which man can suffer flood and fire, that’s all. Well, I judge my books by how much work and agony went into ‘em. Something like ‘As I lay Dying’ was easy, real easy. ‘tour de force.’ It took me just about six weeks I could write a book like that with both hands tied behind my back. It just came all of a piece with no work on my part. Just came like that. I just thought of all the natural catastrophes that could happen to a family and let them all happen (Faulkner, Qtd in Joseph Reed 84).

Faulkner felt proud to express that he took only six weeks time to write this novel without any correction while he was working in the night shift at a power plant. Faulkner reveals in his own words, “I set out deliberately to write a ‘tour de force.’ Before I ever put a pen to paper and set down the first word I knew what the last word would be and almost where the last period would fall”( Faulkner, Qtd in Joseph Reed 85). It depicts a Bundren family’s quest to carry out a husband’s promise to his dying wife, and exploring the nature of grieving of community and family.
This chapter deals with the progression of interior monologues reflected by the Bundrens and non- Bundrens around the nine days’ journey to Jefferson, to bury Mrs. Addie, the central character and the nucleus of the novel. It reflects the design of the novel and the personality of each of the Bundrens and non Bundrens and their inner thought processes. This novel regards that subconscious thought is more important than conscious action or speech. How far Faulkner's form for the novel with a series of competing voices and perspectives, presented as a multiple voice narrative, work for, or against the novel's title, is discussed in this chapter.

The framework of the novel accentuates the important relationship between perception and the world, insight and humanity. Like the previous novel *The Sound and the Fury*, it is a psychological study of several perspectives upon a truth which is not dying but the circumstances of being born and of living. This is the shortest of his novels, which makes an impact quite out of proportion to it’s length. The plot of the novel is very simple but the technique of presentation is not simple. Nothing is told by the author, instead, the novel is broken into fifty nine segments, each assigned to a character in the novel. We are not told to whom the character is addressing his comments. Sometimes, in fact, he simply seems to be talking to himself.

Naturally, Faulkner is careful to have each person speak as a character, but, since few people who figure in the novel are literate, Faulkner often endows them with a vocabulary that they do not possess in reality. This is a literary convention that the reader has to accept, and that acceptance, once made, pays handsome dividends. We are thus enabled to penetrate much more into the complexities of their minds than we could otherwise, for we must remember that Faulkner has denied himself the privileges of an omniscient author in this novel.
“As I Lay Dying superficially resembles The Sound and the Fury in the use of experiment in interior monologue, narrative technique, family story, and in setting the members of a family against each other” (Hoffman 1967:60). Each of the fifty nine sections in this novel represent the inner thoughts of the character who narrates the section. This particular technique ‘Stream of Consciousness’ that Faulkner used, reflects the twentieth century development, research and interest in the psychology of free association and inner thoughts of man.

As I Lay Dying, serves as the title for one of Faulkner’s most intriguing and innovative novels. He creates in this novel, a world where objective truth does not exist, and reality is wholly dependent upon individual perception. He abandons the traditional device of an objective and omniscient narrator in favor of the fragmented subjective accounts of fifteen different protagonists. The novel invokes a first-person speaker, presumably the voice of the dead mother, Addie Bundren. Yet she only speaks once in the novel, and she is dead, not dying, throughout most of the novel. The title is apt and suggestive.

As I Lay Dying builds upon the ideas of other high modernist writers, such as James Joyce and Virginia Woolf. He sketches out the Bundrens comic, yet tragic journey, through a series of successive interior monologues. The thoughts of each character are presented, uncensored and unashamedly, through the confessional and Stream of Consciousness technique that so distinctly characterizes this text.

This novel significantly modifies a technique that Faulkner used in The Sound and the Fury. In that book three of the four sections are ascribed to a character who tells the story from his point of view and the fourth section is told by third person
omniscient narrator. However, the increase in the number of narrators is found in *As I Lay Dying*.

Faulkner indicates the time of the narration in his earlier novel *The Sound and the Fury* by placing a date at the beginning of each section and tells the story in the past tense which is the usual mode of storytelling in English. In the past tense narration the point in time when the narrator tells the story and the point in time when the action narrated takes place do not coincide. Although Faulkner often uses past tense narration in this novel, he departs daringly from the traditional procedure by mixing his narrative modes.

The novel begins, in fact, with present tense narration which continues for a significant portion of the novel. Here, in *As I Lay Dying*, Faulkner limits himself by using present tense narration, where the point in time, when the narrator tells the story, and the point in time when the action takes place, coincide. Moreover, the point at which the reader experiences the action also coincides with both the action itself and the narrator’s telling of it.

The novelist makes the narrators to participate in the actions they describe and the reader is made to enter the world of pure subjectivity. External chronological reality is revealed only through it’s impact on the consciousness of the speaker. If only one narrator exists, a story becomes a study of his mind; if many such narrators exist, the whole question of perception assumes paramount importance.

A short nine days’ journey from the Yoknapatwapha County to Jefferson with Addie’s dead body for funeral narrated by fifteen characters from their own perspectives and different points of view becomes meaningful. Faulkner employs a present tense, multiple-narrator, Stream of Consciousness technique that is often in
danger of running away from him, since there is no time gap between the event and the character's recording of it.

In this way, Faulkner is able to go beyond the time constraints that this technique poses, allowing him to break the chronology and have characters narrate events that were not presently occurring, as well as events that they did not witness. Yet, “the continuity of external reality is unbroken, no matter through whose mind it is presented. That is to say, that while the narration may move backward throughout time, the sense of a stable, and continuous time line remains intact” (Goodman 234).

Faulkner reached the peak of his thematic and technical development and continued to portray the South’s racial dilemma in “its sterility and its obsessive violence. Classical material continued to appear during this period of time, beginning with As I Lay Dying which continued in the Stream of Consciousness vein” (Serafin 1). Faulkner shares his views on the way of experimentation of new techniques which led him to the door steps of success:

Sometimes technique charges in and takes command of the dream before the writer himself can get his hands on it….This happened with As I Lay Dying … I simply imagined a group of people and subjected them to the simple universal catastrophes, which are flood and fire, with a simple natural motive to give direction to their progress (Faulkner, Qtd in Eric Mottram).

In an interview to Paris Review, Faulkner spoke of his favorite novel As I Lay Dying in a way which shows clearly the significance of the experimental form that gave him an exposure to the world of fiction. The technique used here is interior monologue narrated by fifteen characters, centered on one long section by Addie
Bundren, the mother whose dead body, her family is taking, at her request for burial in Jefferson which is Faulkner’s ‘natural motive.’ It can be read as an interaction with the Cubist mode. Panthea Reid Broughton has suggested that the entire novel was formed according to geometric and Cubist principles: "Repeating geometric designs-lines and circles, verticals and horizontals-Faulkner actually facets, like a Cubist painting, the design of this book" (Broughton 93).

The novel teaches narratives of diverse experience of fifteen characters which, when taken together, produce a single cohesive body. “Centering on the effect of Addie Bundren’s death and burial on members of her family, this novel has a powerful unity not always found in Faulkner’s longer works. Although his method of shifting between the multiple points of view of the different family members binds Faulkner’s characters into a homogeneous unit through their common suffering, individual personalities with their special emotions and abnormalities nevertheless emerge” (Moss, Joyce & Wilson 403).

Although it achieved a little commercial success at the time of its publication, it has become one of Faulkner's most popular novels. Commentators and readers have appreciated the novel's vivid characters, obscure tone, and complex narrative techniques excluding its controversial subject, and confusing style. It is Faulkner's self-proclaimed masterpiece. Originally it was published in 1930 and it deals with the exploration of the many narrative voices found in a Southern family and community. The following lines examine the novel's use of multiple voices in it’s narrative:

often told his stories using multiple narratives, each with their own interests and biases, who allow us to piece together the 'true' circumstances of the story, not as clues in a mystery, but as different
melodies in a piece of music that form a crescendo. The conclusion presents a key to understanding the broad panorama surrounding the central event in a way that traditional linear narratives simply are unable to accomplish (Reed 86).

The narrator’s voice helps to shape the way that readers encounter the story. The voice reveals the narrative point-of-view, the background of the speaker and the relationship of the narrator to other characters in the story. An omniscient narrator, for example, often gives the impression of authorial investment and oversight, but maintains distance from the characters. A character speaking from his own point-of-view, however, creates a sense of a limited but intimate perspective. Faulkner’s ability to shift narrative voice in As I Lay Dying, results in a rich tapestry of often competing perspectives, where information is distributed out in small bits, left to the reader to piece together, in an understanding of the larger family portrait of the Bundrens.

With Stream of Consciousness technique as his weapon, the author used to look into the inner working of the minds of the characters, since a normal person's mind can shift his focus from one event to the other, but Stream of Consciousness tries to control it.

Harold Bloom, an American writer, literary critic, and the Sterling Professor of the Humanities at Yale University writes, “As I Lay Dying may be the most original novel ever written by an American. It is Faulkner’s strongest protest against the artificial literary conventions, against the force of the familial past, which troops itself in fiction as the repetitive form of narrative imitating prior narrative” (Harold.1986). He continued to say that, “The book is sustained nightmare, in so far as it is Darl’s book, which is to say Faulkner’s book or the book of his daemon” (ibid.). This novel
offers both, linguist nightmare that Harold Bloom mentions, and the most original novel he believes that America has produced. The task of decoding greatness, unraveling the tools an author uses to demonstrate his craft, is a challenge for any researcher. One can see clearly that with the creation of Darl (the second son of Addie) and so many of his other characters, Faulkner gave us a profoundly interesting story worthy of study.

*As I Lay Dying* exceptionally presents a landscape of consciousness, and also presents a fictional world. The events in the novel and the world which envelop the characters are given to the reader by means of the disparate and indirect reports of the characters. As, Arthur F. Kinney, contemporary literary critic of America says, “The fact that the ‘object’ of the journey, Addie’s burial, is merely alluded to, not described, supports the idea that *As I Lay Dying* is really about perception and mental states as much as it is about events” (Kinney 139).

As consciousness is abstract, Faulkner, like Henry James (who is an American-born writer, regarded as one of the key figures of nineteenth century literary realism) is occupied with the mind, character’s motivations and preoccupations. The meaning or meanings of Faulkner’s narratives are never absolute. The characters may have, for example, motivations or urges which they themselves are not aware of. In a sense, the characters are discovering themselves in their narratives for the first time, as they say things, perceive things, and think things for the first time.

*As I Lay Dying* is a novel of subjectivity. It is easy to attract and get into the Bundren point of view, so Faulkner steps back occasionally to remind us of how strange their journey is with the characters of these non-Bundren narrators. Rachel
Samson, the consultant at Northwestern University describes their journey, “It’s an outrage... an outrage,” (As I Lay Dying 111) as does Lula Armstid one of the non Bundrens, using the exact words (ibid. 179). Faulkner, then, with the novel’s heteroglossic (a diversity of voices, styles of discourse, or points of view in a literary work and especially a novel) structure, is able to use the journey as a means of illustrating the sheer variety of the human experience as the Bundrens pass through the whole strata of human society, even though they are travelling within a very limited patch of the wider world.

*As I Lay Dying* is multi voice resembled novel. The simple and literary journey with a dead body from Yoknapatawpha to Jefferson is an individual journey from birth to death in the entire novel. This journey could be the journey of the entire humanity. There are different layers of voice when we follow the journey. The symbolic resemblance of journey together with the holistic structuralism gives the fictional effect with complete plot formation of the story to the readers in the novel.

It is pointed out that *As I Lay Dying* is in fact “…an ironic inversion of the quest romance,”(Vickery 42) drawing parallels between traditional quest romances and inner moorings, illustrates how Faulkner inverts and perverts settings, characters and the conventional structure for his novel. Olga Vickery echoes this by denying that the Bundren’s journey is “… an inspiring gesture of humanity or a heroic act of traditional morality and is rather ...a travesty of the ritual of interment” (Vickery 43).

Faulkner also ignores all boundaries that sane people have placed upon the English language to keep it readable. He forges his own set of rules for syntax that allow for a very uneven yet elegant Stream of Consciousness in the character’s
narration. Lastly, Faulkner makes incredible leaps away from the established textual formatting to again make his own way of doing things.

This short Stream of Consciousness novel consists of bits and pieces of the thoughts and perceptions of the characters who narrate all the details of the plot. It also presents characters and their feelings which are conveyed through the presentation of the characters’ mental acts and thoughts. It deals with the dark, comic story of a Mississippi family's long and arduous journey to bury Addie, the family matriarch. It was Addie’s request to her family members to be buried in her family's burial ground in Jefferson. Anse Bundren, the husband of Addie and his five children ignore the advice of friends and neighbors and go on a forty-mile, nine-day trek in the wake of a destructive storm. The simple story of the journey is presented by a variety of narrators: family members, friends, acquaintances, and objective onlookers. Each narrator provides a different perspective on individuals and events.

The novel reflects the life of the head of Bundren family, Addie, who affects the destiny of her children and is dying at the family home in Faulkner's fictional Yoknapatawpha County, Mississippi. It chronicles the struggle of the clan of poor whites, Addie's husband, Anse and their extended family to travel to Jefferson, the county seat, to bury Addie, at her request, in the town she came from. Their unfortunate nine-day and nine night journey includes a flooded river, drowned mules, a broken leg, impatient buzzards circling the body, and a fire in a barn where they take refuge. It is Faulkner's bleakly comic novel.

The novel’s linear structure is based upon the movement of the funeral procession. The story of nine days journey is narrated by the characters themselves.
The technique of narration allows the reader to know the inner thoughts of all the characters. The reader is able to see each event from multiple perspectives. For instance, when the coffin is lost in the river; the reader can hear several narrators which allow him/her to see the same event from different vantage points. ‘Darl,’ the second one, who is most given to introspection and thought, explains the loss of the coffin; Vardaman the youngest son, refers to his mother as a fish swimming in the river; Cash the eldest son and carpenter who made the coffin was on balance; Anse Bundren, her husband, says that this is one more burden they must endure before he can get his teeth.

“Faulkner’s manner of telling the story thus as Irving Howe (an American literary and social critic and a prominent figure of the Democratic Socialists of America) intimates, is of key importance to its meaning” (Howe 46). The second eldest son, Darl Bundren, the major narrator initially appears to be the truest voice of the novel, with his frequent accounts of events, some of which border on omniscience. Anse, the husband of Addie Bundren and the terminally lazy father, Cash, the stoic eldest son are two other important characters. Although often dismissed or overlooked by critics, the youngest son, Vardaman also becomes a key voice as the novel progresses. One of the key roles of the journey is instigating the development, or the figurative journeys of each of these characters.

Fundamentally, “the novel is a legend; and the procession of ragged, depraved hill men, carrying Addie Bundren’s body through water and through fire to the cemetery in Jefferson, while people flee from the smell and buzzards circle overhead, this progress is not unlike that of the medieval soul towards redemption. The multiple narration of each event helps the understanding of the plot of the novel. The different
levels of consciousness are rendered by Faulkner through variations in style ranging from the dialect of actual speech to the intricate imagery and poetic rhythms of the unconscious” (Vickery 233). The structure of progression is centrifugal. Centrifugally each section establishes the relationship between Addie and the narrator. Each section contributes to the sequence of the section and incidents which constitute the plot. The separation of word and deed which Addie has recounted, is dramatized in the journey to Jefferson. Anse Bundren undertakes a moral pilgrimage but only at the verbal level.

Frederick J Hoffman interprets the elegiac bent of the story thus:

In contrast to her (Addie’s) death, her funeral is a public affair, participated in and indeed, supervised by the neighbors as well as the family, on this level she is simply the corpse which must be disposed of in accordance with a long established ritual of interest, while the neighbors prepare themselves to comfort the bereaved, the Bundrens are expected to assume the traditional role of mourners a role which carries with its unspoken rules of propriety and decorum (Hoffman 234).

Unlike *The Sound and the Fury* in which the Stream of Consciousness technique hinders development of a clear narrative line, *As I Lay Dying* builds the clearest, most coherent plot in all of Faulkner’s writing. Despite the fact that the entire novel is told in fifty-nine monologues divided among the fifteen characters or narrators, the thread of the journey is always the dominant structure.

Even though *As I Lay Dying* is a story revolving around the death of a mother, Addie Bundren, the true content of the story develops from information given to the audience through a multitude of narrators. The relationship between each family
member and their association with Addie's death differs from person to person. Through her husband, Anse, we are introduced to his philosophy that man should keep stationary. Anse explains, “The lord put roads for travelling; why he laid them down flat on the Earth. When he aims for something to be always a-moving, he makes it long ways, like a road or a horse or a wagon, but when he aims for something to stay put, He makes it up and down ways, like a tree or a man” (As I Lay Dying 34). In comparing a tree to a man, Anse feels that even though alive, man was not created to move about. This idea exhibits a lack of suspense in Anse, which may or may not have been Addie's desire to have an affair which leads to the birth of her child, Jewel. Interestingly, Anse contradicts his own beliefs to fulfill his wife’s desires.

As I Lay Dying is a story about a coffin. The coffin encloses the wish of a person. This wish becomes a journey in which the family members must fight to reach the forsaken place. Before she died, Addie Bundren, the mother and wife asked to be buried in a cemetery where the rest of her family was also buried. The writer conveys the traditional values that people have not only in American towns but around the world. It also represents the seriousness that people show in order to carry out a promise. Likewise, Bachman Melvin writes...in another sense, “As I Lay Dying is a fable about Addie’s quest for salvation” (Backman 66). The crossing of the river was attended by signs of disaster with the boarded log that stood... “like Christ,” (ibid. 41) as if Cora Tull were right, after all, in her insistence that the carting of Addie’s corpse to Jefferson was a flouting of God’s will... If Addie’s prophecy is correct, the journey that may have begun as a flouting of God’s will has been transfigured into the journey to salvation. The proof lies “in the testing of the chosen son” (As I Lay Dying 62-3).
This novel presents its plot narrated by fifteen narrators or characters with different points of view. These fifteen narrators narrate fifty-nine sections. Among the fifteen narrators, seven are Bundren family members and remaining eight are non Bundrens. Out of fifty-nine sections, forty-three sections are narrated by Bundren family members and remaining sixteen are narrated by Bundrens’ neighbors or non Bundrens. Among the fifteen narrators, Darl Bundren is the major character who narrates nineteen sections of the novel. The following figure shows the name of the narrators and their number of narrations narrated by them.

Bundrens

Darl Bundren 19 sections
Jewel 1
Anse 3
Cash 5
Dewey Dell 4
Addie 1
Vardaman 10

Non Bundrens

Vernon Tull 6
Armstid 1
Whitefield 1
Cora 3
Moseley 1
Peabody 2
Samson 1
McGowan 1

Fig- 7

Darl Bundren who is the central character, occupies the largest textual space in *As I Lay Dying* narrating major portion of interior monologues that comprise this ‘*tour de force.*’ He becomes the essential spokesman for the entire novel. He is the second son of the deceased Addie Bundren and her husband Anse. Darl's action here
sets up a perfect model for the sort of destructive behavior without regard for others which Darl exhibits at the burning of the barn. Darl possessed superhuman powers of perceiving the future things beyond sensory perception, as revealed in his knowledge of Dewey Dell's pregnancy, his mother's death, and of Jewel's real father.

Throughout Darl's narration about Jewel, it is clear that he feels Jewel is superior to him. People think Darl is strange and Jewel has love and affection for Addie, the one thing which Darl seems to desire most. His jealousy could only have been further provoked by his knowledge of Jewel's illegitimacy. Faulkner uses present tense narration which assumes prime importance to explore the developing perceptions of his characters. When the novel opens, Darl is speaking in the present tense:

Jewel and I come up from the field, following the path in single file. Although I am fifteen feet ahead of him, anyone watching us from the cotton house can see jewel's frayed and broken straw hat a full head above my own (As I Lay Dying 3).

Here, the point in time of Darl’s perception and narration (narrative present) and the point in time of the events narrated (chronological present) coincide. In the first section, Faulkner carefully establishes the reality of the external chronological present by having different speakers record the same events. Darl, Jewel and Cora all record Cash’s sawing, Tull’s waiting, and Dewey Dell’s fanning. Nevertheless the first five sections of the novel, all in the narrative present, differ significantly in the levels of consciousness they reveal.

In the beginning of the first section, Darl directs the viewer’s eyes slowly to the scenery he is describing. It is a slow cinematographic motion from Jewel’s broken
straw hat to the path, the cotton house, the wagon, and the spring, and finally to the sound of Cash’s saw. Darl visualizes the rhythm of Cash’s sawing by mimicking the sound with words: Chuck. Chuck. Chuck (As I Lay Dying 5). Darl in the first section describes Jewel and himself in minute, almost scrupulously exact detail. The intensity of his gaze as it records Jewel’s movements tells much about Darl:

Jewel, fifteen feet behind me, looking straight ahead, steps in a single stride through the window. Still staring ahead, his pale eyes like wood set into his wooden face, he crosses the floor in four strides with the rigid gravity of a cigar store Indian dressed in patched overall and endued with life from hips down, and steps in a single stride through the opposite window and into the path again just as I come around the corner. In single file and five feet apart and jewel now in front, we go on up the path toward the foot of the bluff (As I Lay Dying 4).

Darl, the second son, unwanted by Addie, is hungry for recognition from his mother. His hunger explains his character, his jealousy of Jewel, and his remarkable perceptiveness, since he has little identity of his own that would hinder his ability to understand others. Darl's monologues ache with a need for recognition, as he thinks, "I don’t know what I am. I don’t know if I am or not" (As I Lay Dying 76). In spite of Darl's behavior, his brothers Cash and Vardaman miss him when Darl is taken by force to the mental asylum in Jackson. As Vardaman ponders Darl's absence with longing, he cries, “Darl. Darl is my brother Darl Darl” (ibid. 241).

According to Shu-mei Shih, Professor in Asian Languages and Cultures and Asian American Studies at Columbia University, Darl is a part and an important part of the dynamics of the whole Cubist characteristic personality. [Cubist is an art
movement confined to the annals of art history, music, literature and architecture
started in the twentieth century by Pablo Picasso and George Braque that
revolutionized European painting and sculpture] In Cubist art theory objects are
broken up, analyzed and re-assembled in an abstracted form instead of depicting
objects from single viewpoint, the artist depicts the subject from a multiple
viewpoints to represent the subject in a greater context. Often the surfaces intersect at
seemingly random angles removing coherent sense of depth. The background, object,
and places interpenetrate one another to create the shallow, ambiguous spaces, which
are of Cubism’s distinct characteristics. This theory can even more easily be identified
in terms of this novel as a whole, for, it is not only Darl who emphasizes two
dimensional surfaces, so does Dewey Dell. “It is not Darl’s technique alone; it is also
Faulkner’s technique of flattening” (Shu-mei Shih 37). Besides, Darl’s sections are
also particularly pictorial and poetic in nature. Joseph Blotner, the author of ‘The
Modern American Political Novel’ (1900-1960) and biographer of William Faulkner,
remarks that “Darl was striving for a wide range of effects in these interior
monologues” (Blotner 252).

Edmond Volpe, an American scholar also addresses the function of these
monologues: “There is no author’s voice in the novel. No single character can be
designated as a spokesman for the author, and no single character can be considered
as providing an objective record of events. Because each character is so
individualized, his monologues reveal only his personal view of an event,” (Volpe
129) however, “Darl’s significance is evident by the sheer volume of monologues
assigned to him” (Cox 3).
Darl Bundren is the most complicated character in the novel. It is his actions which reflect a mind that is thoughtful with its ins and outs and every detail of life. The style is more complicated and the presentation is essentially through poetic imagery. He is the character from whom we receive views of other characters that penetrate into the very heart of that character. And these views are often expressed with an acute eye for detail. Thus, Darl’s sections are complicated and most difficult to penetrate because Darl is the most complex character and his thought process is most involved. He tells of Addie’s death in a beautiful heightened poetic language and ends by making the simple announcement: “Jewel, Addie Bundren is dead’ (As I Lay Dying 51). It is through Darl that the reader learns of the loading of the coffin, of the recovery of the tools from the water and of the burning of the barn of the farmers. It is Darl who prevents Jewel from becoming involved in a fight with one of the Jefferson townsmen. He is portrayed as the sane and sensible individual pitted against a world of backwood, confused, violent, and shiftless Bundrens.

Darl is the full or partial narrator of all the major events in the novel (the building of the coffin, Addie’s death, Jewel’s getting his horse, the river crossing, and the barn burning). It is he who provides an often poetic, often philosophical, texturized narration. His is the most accurate portrayal of events and his objective findings are often supplemented by more experiential narrations. He follows many of his statements with detailed descriptions that we do not generally get from other character narrators. We can consider some passages from the section in which he narrates Cash’s finishing Addie’s coffin, where for at least two pages, each paragraph begins with an objective, plain statement and is followed by a detailed portrayal. This is an indication of Darl’s style: for example, a first statement reads “The air smells like sulphur” (As I Lay Dying 72). The next paragraph opens with “It begins to rain”
(As I Lay Dying 72). In the same paragraph, we learn that “The first harsh, sparse, swift drops rush through the leaves and cross the ground in a long sigh, as though of relief from intolerable suspense” (ibid.). This style can be found throughout the novel in Darl’s narratives, and can be understood as unique to him because he is more perceptive than the other characters. Faulkner affirms this trait of Darl’s character attributing it to his madness:

Who can say how much of the good poetry in the world has come out of madness, and who can say just how much of super-perceptivity a mad person might not have? It’s nice to think … that may be the madman does see more than the sane man. That the world is more moving to him. That he is more perceptive (Gwynn Frederick and Blotner JosephL 113).

And it is important to the narration of this story that, in addition to this highly perceptive quality, Darl also has a ‘super-perceptive’ ability to not only enter the nonverbal ‘thought’ world of his family members but also to narrate an event which is beyond perception. For example, he is able to give a detailed description of Addie’s death while he is outside the house cutting wood. Darl’s sections are, we find, consistently verified by the other characters.

The first narration of Darl is ‘river crossing scene’ with Cash and Jewel and is responsible for the carrying of Addie’s coffin across the river. Vardaman, Tull, Dewey Dell, and Anse are spectators who watch the scene from the opposite bank. Darl’s narration is important in that he is a participant in the action. His account begins with two paragraphs of detailed visual and auditory description of the water:
Before us the thick dark current runs. It takes up to us in a murmur become ceaseless and myriad, the yellow surface dimpled monstrously into facing swirls...” (As I Lay Dying 134). Next he provides a spatial description of the situation: “Cash and I sit in the wagon; Jewel sits the horse at the off rear wheel... (ibid.135). But Darl rarely relays factual information without a more descriptive clarification:

Cash’s face is also gravely composed; he and I look at one another with long probing looks, looks that plunge unimpeded through one another’s eyes and into the ultimate secret place crouch flagrant and unabashed in all the old terror and the old foreboding, alert and secret and without shame” (ibid. 135).

Only Darl is capable of this sort of introspective narration, which not only provides a remarkably beautiful and introspective verbal account of an event, but also allows the reader to enter the more implicit, unspoken relationship between the brothers. This is followed by an apparently accurate record of dialogue between the three as they decide the best way to get the wagon and coffin across the river. For over two pages, this dialogue is rarely interrupted by Darl’s descriptive commentary. After that the three come to an agreement “let’s do that, Cash, I say. I reckon we’ll have to” (As I Lay Dying 139).

Since Darl is extremely jealous of Addie's affection for Jewel, the reader cannot trust Darl's judgment of his brother. Since Vardaman first believes that Doctor Peabody has murdered Addie, the reader must question Vardaman's view of the doctor. Without an omniscient narrator, the reader's perception of the characters are composed of what others think about them and of what these characters say, think,
and do themselves. Rather than provide a clear and complete view of any character, Faulkner provides caricatured scraps of identity of reading characters' hands and eyes, making comparisons to animals, sometimes setting up mythic or biblical comparisons. For example, Jewel's eyes are wooden; Addie's eyes listen and touch; Anse's eyes are burned out cinders; while Darl's eyes drink up what they observe.

Darl Bundren is the focal narrator. As a consequence of the large contributions, our feelings toward Addie are largely guided by what Darl tells us. Darl, on the other hand, presents a negative image of his mother. They have a very problematic relationship since Addie practically denies Darl's existence. She refused to acknowledge him from the moment he was born: “Then I found that I had Darl. At first I would not believe it” (As I Lay Dying 164). Because of the fact that he was not loved by Addie, Darl also rejected her as his mother, “I cannot love my mother because I have no mother,” (As I Lay Dying 89) while the other children talk about Addie as ‘mother,’ he only refers to and addresses her with her first name ‘Addie’ or even ‘Addie Bundren.’ The tensions between these two characters can be found throughout the novel, in Darl’s chapters as well as the one that is told by Addie.

Edmond Volpe, the twentieth century literary critic opined that “It is difficult to put Darl Bundren exclusively in one group because of his strange mental condition. He seems to be a mixture of the two groups and embodies the characteristics of two prototypical protagonists. In the course of the novel, we learn that he is very intelligent and eloquent, and that he can show warm feelings and concern toward his siblings. He is genuinely worried about Cash’s health when he breaks his leg and suffers a lot, and he cares for Vardaman as a responsible elder brother should. It is
only these two characters who feel sorry for Darl when he is taken away to a mental asylum in Jackson” (Volpe 16).

Darl was foolish from the beginning. He got progressively madder because he didn’t have the capacity, not so much of sanity but of inertness to resist all the catastrophes that happened to the family. Jewel resisted because he was sane and he was the toughest. The others resisted through probably simple inertia, but Darl couldn’t resist it and so he went completely off the hook. But he was mad all the time. To make sense out of reality and one’s place in it, he is unsuccessful.

Cash and Darl are brothers who develop most in As I Lay Dying. For Cash this is a positive development, while Darl slides into madness. At the beginning of the novel, Cash is always referred to in terms of his craftsmanship. He is not a man of words, but of action. This changes when he breaks his leg in the flood, and from then on his voice becomes much more prominent. He shows then that he is intelligent and eloquent as well as handy with his tools. Darl, on the other hand, enters a downward spiral. He is often considered “queer” and “the one that aint bright” (As I Lay Dying 145), and this is because he always seems to know things that other people do not, and because of his habit of laughing:

. . . but we hadn’t no more than passed Tull’s lane when Darl begun to laugh. Setting back there on the plank seat with Cash, with his dead ma laying in her coffin at his feet, laughing. How many times I [Anse] told him it’s doing such things as that that makes folks talk about him, I dont know. . . . and I turned and looked back at him and him setting there, laughing. ‘I dont expect you to have no respect for me,’ I says. ‘But with your own ma not cold in her coffin yet.’ . . . And Darl setting
on the plank seat right above her where she was laying, laughing (As I Lay Dying 100).

This was the first sign of Darl losing his mind and it only escalates after he has set the barn, with Addie’s corpse, on fire. The family decides that it is best for him to be sent to a mental institution in Jackson where he will get the good care that he needs. Darl is disappointed in Cash because the latter has not told him anything, but he keeps on laughing his crazy laughter:

*It was bad so. It was bad. A fellow can’t get away from a shoddy job. He can’t do it. I [Cash] tried to tell him, but he just said, ‘I thought you’d a told me. It’s not that I,’ he said, then he begun to laugh. The other fellow pulled Jewel off of him and he sat there on the ground, laughing. I tried to tell him. If I could have just moved, even set up. But I tried to tell him and he quit laughing, looking up at me. . . . ‘Better,’ he said. He began to laugh again. ‘Better,’ he said. He couldn’t hardly say it for laughing. He sat on the ground and us watching him, laughing and laughing (As I Lay Dying 227-28).*

In the final section, that Darl narrates, he refers to himself in the third person, which shows that he has completely lost touch with reality. And again, he keeps on laughing, even though he is already on the train on his way to Jackson: *“Darl has gone to Jackson. They put him on the train, laughing, down the long car laughing, the heads turning like the heads of owls when he passed. ‘What are you laughing at?’ I [Darl] said (As I Lay Dying 241).*
Addie is the major figure of the novel not only because of her interior monologue which actually occupies the central part of the text, but also because of her consciousness actually spread throughout the book. Alice Shoemaker has a wonderful analysis of the perspectives in the novel with Addie as the center:

Two antithetical perspectives are represented in this novel, that of Bundrens and non Bundrens toward the journey to Jefferson. These perspectives can be conceived of architectonically as the rims of concentric wheels moving in opposite directions through time and space. The Bundren perspective is the inner wheel with the somewhat varying viewpoints of the individual family members represented as points on the wheel directed toward the hub of the wheel, Addie Bundren, the primary motivation for the journey. An outer rim, which of non Bundrens constitutes a different perspective toward the Jefferson trip (Shoemaker 30).

Addie Bundren is the wife of the poor hill farmer, Anse Bundren, and mother to his five children. Despite the fact that Addie has only one monologue, she is the most powerful character in the novel. She is a masculine woman who takes both her husband and her lover; they respond to her needs and desires, not vice versa. Unlike her neighbor Cora, who hopes to earn heaven, Addie believes more in sin than in goodness. Instead of being a source of unconditional maternal love, Addie is a source of conditional love. Addie sees her sons Cash and Jewel as her children, not Anse's. Her passion for her illegitimate son Jewel far exceeds whatever feeling Addie had for his father, Reverend Whitfield. She refuses to acknowledge the existence of her son Darl, and she sees Vardaman and Dewey Dell as replaced children for Anse after she
herself usurps Cash and Jewel's emotional bonding with their father. More interested in action than words, Addie supplies whatever backbone her children possess.

Addie Bundren is one of the greatest tragic heroines in American literature. Most of the critics have associated her story with that of Hester Prynne in Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter*. But there are other famous heroines with whom she can be equally compared: Gustavo Flaubert’s *Emma Bovary*. Here, Emma is the novel's protagonist. She has a highly romanticized view of the world and craves for beauty, wealth, passion, and high society. Leo Tolstoy’s *Anna Karenina* is a major novel where Anna Karenina is the heroine, or D. H. Lawrence’s Lady Chatterley who is the protagonist of the novel *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*. All these women are strong characters who feel trapped in unfortunate personal and social circumstances and long for some means of escape. Faulkner presents Addie Bundren as a fiercely independent, strong willed woman who is driven to bitterness and despair by the discrepancy between the reality of her situation and the expectancy of her dreams. In reality she is an idealist who longs for but never finds fulfillment of her hopes and aspirations. Her’s is the agony like all romantics who feel betrayed by life.

Addie had always seen herself as being completely alone in the world. She sensed that her own father did not love her. Thus when he died, she had no kin left. When Anse came along, she was glad to escape from the loneliness of teaching. She dismisses her courtship with the rough words: “So I took Anse” (*As I Lay Dying* 163). Faulkner mentions that no love or emotional understanding, just an acceptance and may be not even an acceptance, but a conditioning for death. Hence for Addie, whole life time had to be some type of preparation for death. She had felt so much during her life that her great desire was to make other people aware of her presence. And she felt
that only through violence could she achieve her aim. She also felt that words are useless, and she soon comes to realize that Anse, and later preacher Whitefield, are just words.

But she had failed to make her presence felt by other people. She finally came to the realization that during her life she had also been only words: after death, she was determined that it should be otherwise. Consequently, feeling that she would attain reality, only when she imposed herself upon the consciousness of others. She made them promise to carry her to Jefferson, forty miles away to bury her. She extracted the promise for the same reason that she would whip her students when she was a teacher: “I would think with each blow of the switch; now you are aware of me! Now I am something in your secret and selfish lives, which have marked your blood with my own forever and ever” (As I Lay Dying 162).

Addie says in her chapter: “...when Darl was born I asked Anse to promise to take me back to Jefferson when I died” (ibid. 164-5). This wish, of course, provides the reason for the Bundren’s journey. However, for all but Darl and Jewel, there are other motives for travelling to Jefferson; Addie’s death merely provides an excuse for the journey. Immediately after Addie dies, the toothless Anse stands, smoothing out the sheets covering her body, and mutters to him, “God’s will be done... now I can get them teeth” (ibid. 51).

Addie’s death and funeral are interpreted in terms of the family’s varied levels and modes of consciousness. Faulkner introduces his eight echoes in order to respond to the funeral procession. Mosely and McGowan, the non Bundrens reveal two contrasting attitudes to Dewey Dell’s pregnancy. Mosely responds to her request for pills with self virtuous moral indignation, while McGowan takes advantage and
creates a comic scene. Both of them are never concerned with Dewey Dell as a person, but they respond only to the fact that she is pregnant and unmarried. Thus in *As I Lay Dying*, the interplay of seriousness which reaches toward tragedy and of humor is part of the success of the novel.

The significant thing about Addie’s monologue, more than half-way through the novel, is that she reveals her wish to be buried in Jefferson which is in fact revenge against Anse, “revenge that he would never know I was taking” (*As I Lay Dying* 164). Perhaps she can predict the hardships the family will have to endure on the journey, or maybe she just knows that their incompetence is bound to get them into trouble. This revelation gives an ironic twist to all that has come and is yet to come; all the misfortunes have been for nothing. However, Faulkner throws another layer of irony with Anse ultimately profiting from his journey (gaining a bride and a set of false teeth), denying Addie of her revenge. Despite this, Anse makes it clear early that he doesn’t need to travel, “When [God] aims for something to be always a-moving, He makes it long ways, like a road or a horse or a wagon, but when he aims for something to stay put, He makes it up-and-down ways, like a tree or a man” (ibid. 35).

An analysis of *As I Lay Dying* reveals the importance of goals, mishaps, and characters as they look upon the death of Addie. During the initial stage after Addie's death three main goals are exposed: burying her, getting new teeth for Anse, and getting an abortion for Dewey Dell. According to George Wolfe, an African-American playwright and director, “Addie's section is narrated in tense, cryptic, and expository prose because Addie is a person who has tried to solve some of the basic problems of life and has failed” (Kerr 5).
Addie is a young teacher, a lonely, educated woman in a Mississippi country community, profoundly frustrated, all the more for the lack of a direct cause or a direct object to shower her love upon. The opening monologue in her chapter sets the tone:

*In the afternoon when school was out and the last one had left with his little dirty snuffling nose, instead of going home I would go down the hill to the spring where I could be quiet and hate them. At night, as she recalls, ‘Sometimes I thought that I could not bear it, lying in bed . . . with the wild geese going north and their honking coming faint and high and wild out of the wild darkness, and during the day,’ it would seem as though I couldn’t wait for the last one to go so I could go down to the spring. She interprets her hate in terms of the ‘secret and selfish’ thoughts and lives of the children, each with his own ‘strange’ blood. Thus she whips them till the skin welts and bleeds, till she has marked their blood with her own in a cruel empathic catharsis* (*As I Lay Dying* 161-162).

Addie Bundren is the most dominant figure in this novel, even though she is very ill at the beginning of the story and even dead during the rest of it. We can learn the aspects of her character through her only monologue and the comments of her family and neighbours. The fact that at the moment she was going to die her voice was described as being ‘harsh’ and ‘strong’ which gives us a hint about what kind of a person she was when she was still healthy. Because of that and the contributions of the other characters, we can conclude that Addie during her life was a proud and hard-working woman, but she also felt lonely and found it hard to experience feelings of
love. From her monologue, we also learn that her life has not always been easy, and this only got worse after the birth of her children. It was then that she found out that words are no good because they can never express what we really want to say. Her life was an accumulation of disappointments, so her death turned out to be liberation.

Anse is Addie’s husband and father to Cash, Darl, Dewey Dell, and Vardaman. He narrates three sections. It is Cash and Jewel who almost drown in the river trying to get the wagon and coffin across, not Anse. It is Jewel who risks his life saving the coffin from the burning barn, not Anse. What makes us dislike Anse even more is that he tries to justify his laziness by God. In the first section he narrates, he argues that God never intended man to move much. If he had, he would have built him differently.

Faulkner employs the device of interior monologue to telescope time in one of his sections. Here, Faulkner moves the chronological present and the point of narration to the evening of the fourth day. As Anse thinks about the land he saw on the way to Samson’s “Eight miles of the sweat of his body washed up outen the Lord’s earth, where the Lord himself told him to put it.” (As I Lay Dying 104) he recalls: “we drove all the rest of the day and got to Samson’s at dust-dark then that bridge was gone, too” (ibid. 105). Anse’s final thought “But now I can get them teeth. That will be a comfort. It will,” (ibid.) supports the placing of his monologue in the chronological present of the evening of the fourth day. “Clearly he has not yet faced the fifth day’s trauma of the river crossing and he still expresses optimism about the journey” (Cox 18).

In fact, Anse uses God or the supernatural to justify just about everything he doesn’t want to deal with. Addie was dying and Anse was too insensitive not to send
for the doctor; yet he claims he’s suffering unjust bad luck. Cash’s leg is in such bad shape for the same reason, but Anse would rather pour cement over it than spend the money to have it properly fixed. Time and time again he resorts to lamenting his own bad luck instead of admitting his own bad choices. Worst of all, however, is Anse’s selfishness. He repeatedly puts his children’s dreams or needs on hold for himself. Jewel’s horse, Cash’s graph phone, even Dewey Dell’s abortion are all sacrificed on the behalf of Anse. Of course, according to Anse, the ends justify the means: they have to get Addie to Jefferson to honor her last wishes.

Throughout the novel, we suspect that Anse has ulterior motives for traveling to Jefferson, starting the moment that Addie dies, “At last! Now I can get my new teeth!” (As I Lay Dying 105). This is arguably the reason that he travels to Jefferson at all. Far from respecting Addie and her wishes, the journey largely disrespects her body as it decays above ground for all to witness (and smell). Anse’s haste in finding a new wife literally over the grave of his first wife only adds to this dishonor.

Anse Bundren, who owns a small Mississippi farm, is an expert in appropriating the money and work of others. Anse is comically ineffectual: in his hands he holds the very saw, Vernon and Cash look for, he wrinkles a blanket he tries to smooth, and he smothers a lantern he tries to protect from rain. But ultimately, he is vicious in his selfishness. His awkwardness so affects the people that they take work away from him. The reader can easily see that his sloth has worn out Addie during their thirty years of marriage. Comfortable in appropriating what belongs to others, Anse does not mind taking Cash's money, Jewel's horse, or the money Dewey Dell gets from Lafe (her lover) for her abortion. Although he is tricked by Addie into promising to bury her in her birthplace, Jefferson, which is miles away from their
farm, Anse uses this family emergency to justify taking Dewey Dell's money. However, the trip to Jefferson clearly has additional purposes as far as Anse is concerned: ‘new false teeth and a new wife.’ While he recognizes the need to address family crises, he believes that only others are required to give, Anse gives nothing.

Jewel’s section is the only section in the entire novel narrated by him. This is significant because he is one of the important figures of the novel. He is seen from every other perspective; that is from Darl’s view point, and from Cash’s view point. His section reveals his deep but inexpressible love for his mother. He is unable to express his love in any way except in symbols of violence. And it is often in symbols or images of violence that we observe Jewel. His violence is correlated with his birth since he was conceived in violence.

In this section the reader is introduced to one of the effective techniques used by Faulkner. This technique involves the juxtaposition of something that is extremely serious with something that is ordinarily comic. For example, Jewel is expressing or trying to express his deep emotional love for his mother and also his resentment of the fact that Cash is building the coffin right under her window, as though he was anxious for her to be in it.

The third Bundren son, Jewel, the illegitimate son of Addie and Reverend Whitfield, also believes in action; however, reflection on his action is not his style. While Jewel does not know that Whitfield, instead of Anse, is his father, he is still isolated from the rest of the Bundrens because of Addie’s love. In his single monologue, Jewel's isolation from the world becomes evident as he imagines himself with Addie on a high hill, rolling down and rocking everyone else.
I can see the fan and Dewey Dell’s arm. I said if you’d just let her alone. Sawing and knocking, and keeping the air always moving so fast on her face that when you’re tired you can’t breathe it, and that goddamn adze going One lick less (As I Lay Dying 15).

He loves Addie passionately, and he heroically exhausts himself to earn the money for the wild horse he loves just as passionately. Heroic enterprise is the stuff of Jewel’s being. Rescuing Addie’s corpse and coffin from the flooded river or from the burning barn are perfect actions for Jewel. If he waits and thinks, he entangles himself in the confusion of his own conflicting emotions.

Dewey Dell is Addie’s daughter and the only girl in the family. She is however not really treated as a girl by her parents and brothers; she has to do the same work as the men in her family and the vice versa: the boys also have to do things that normally could be seen as feminine activities. Vardaman, for example, believes that it is normal that Dewey Dell cleans the fish he has caught. Anse, however, obliges his youngest son to take care of himself. Boys and girl thus occupy equal positions in the Bundren household. As an insecure girl, “Dewey Dell feels as if she is invisible to the world. This feeling is confirmed by those around her, since she is often stereotyped and made anonymous” (Bockting 121). She is referred to as a tom-boy girl, that near-naked girl, or just the girl. “It is as though the other people who know her name refuse to pronounce it. By her brother Darl, she is also fragmented, seen in the light of parts of her body: he talks for instance about her arm, face, eyes and leg. The relationship between them thus seems to be determined by her sexuality” (ibid. 114).The feelings Dewey Dell had towards Addie, “were however more positive than
was the case for Darl. After Addie’s death, she seeks comfort in erotic experiences” (Bockting 124).

According to Irving Howe, “Dewey Dell is a deranged child, one who is only concerned with her own ease. She only wants to get to Jefferson to purchase abortion pills with the money she got from Lafe, her lover and the father of her unborn child” (Howe 9). At that moment Dewey Dell does not seem to be interested in Addie anymore, even though she was very disturbed when her mother died. When she finally arrives in Jefferson, she goes to the drug store owned by Moseley, but he refuses to help her. MacGowan, on the other hand, is very eager to help Dewey Dell. He wants to take advantage of this girl and makes fun of her because she is a poor and a naive country girl.

Dewey Dell’s pregnancy, unknown to all but Darl, isolates her from the rest of her family, and at the moment when she earnestly needs to talk to her mother, Addie dies. All Dewey Dell can think about is getting an abortion or a drug to abort the fetus so that she can maintain her own identity and not take on a new one as a mother. Lacking love almost as much as Darl, Dewey Dell is abandoned by her lover, Lafe. Instead of being a body less eye, like Darl, she is an eyeless body, a girl trapped and characterized by flesh. Experience seems to race by her, and she cannot find her place within it.

Darl alone knows that Dewey Dell is pregnant by Lafe. She seeks to end her pregnancy with the help of Lafe's ten dollars and a pharmacist she plans to visit on the burial journey. Throughout Addie's illness, her death, and the journey to Jefferson, Dewey Dell contemplates the pregnancy, her fractured identity, perceiving herself “a wet seed wild in the hot blind earth” (As I Lay Dying 61).
Vardaman, the youngest of the Bundren children, must be very small, since several characters, such as Vernon and Cora Tull, comment on his size. Perhaps he is five or six years old, big enough not to handle an axe and catch a fish as large as himself, but small enough not to taste the experience of death. Refusing to accept his mother's death, Vardaman dreams up a wild analogy; since he catches and cleans the fish at the time of her death, he states, "My mother is a fish" (As I Lay Dying, 79). Even though he knows that a dead fish has no need for oxygen, Vardaman believes his mother will need to breathe; thus he bores holes in her coffin. When the fish analogy falters, Faulkner reinforces Vardaman's refusal to believe in Addie's death with the use of state-of-being verbs. Vardaman conjectures that an imposter has taken his mother's place, that the woman who has died “was not my mother.... I saw when it did not be her” (As I Lay Dying 63). When Darl is taken to the asylum, Vardaman’s refusal to accept Darl's absence poses a similar problem. Vardaman's primary concern is his place in the family, and the absence of Addie and Darl and the presence of the duck-shaped woman, Anse's new wife, undermine Vardaman's sense of the world.

N.Rooks, a scholar of African American literature, brings attention to the development of the oft-neglected Vardaman over the course of the novel in his essay ‘Vardaman’s Journey in As I Lay Dying.’ What is especially fascinating is Rook’s “juxtaposition of the inner journeys of Vardaman and Darl. As the novel progresses, the brothers become increasingly associated. Their monologues occur progressively closer to one another, and Darl’s poetic voice becomes increasingly like Vardaman’s Stream-of-consciousness. Vardaman’s final monologue centers almost entirely on Darl. With no source of stability, and nothing but indifference from his family, Vardaman concludes his journey with the seeds of a Darl-like madness implanted in
his mind. “Upon arrival in Jefferson, Darl notices that ‘[Vardaman] too has lost flesh; like ours, his face has an expression strained, dreamy and gaunt” (Rooks 145-57).

If Vardaman is worse off at the end of the Bundren journey, so are the rest of the families: Darl is in the insane asylum, Cash is likely permanently crippled, Dewey Dell hasn’t had her abortion and Jewel has lost his prized horse. Even dead Addie, her body desecrated beyond belief, hasn’t gotten her revenge against Anse. Anse, on the other hand, profits quite nicely from the journey, with a set of false teeth and a new bride. Some critics have read the end of the Bundren’s journey (and therefore the conclusion of the novel) as being heroic and affirming the family’s deserved pride. However, little judgment of the outcomes of the journey are perhaps truer to Faulkner’s vision, and an appropriate place to end this journey: “…the relationship of what is accomplished to the amount of effort and sacrifice involved must make the ending of As I Lay Dying one of the most jarring anticlimaxes in American literature” (As I Lay Dying 155).

However, some of Faulkner’s characters are painfully unable, to fluently comprehend the world around them, and he recreates this chaotic confusion for the reader by avoiding Standard English. The relative linguistic skills of each character are revealed through Faulkner’s representation of their psyche. Vardaman Bundren, a young boy around seven or eight years old, has a relatively loose grasp of even spoken English grammar. Therefore in writing about Vardaman, Faulkner uses simple sentences and rarely deviates from strict subject-verb sentences, for this is exactly how Vardaman’s mind would process language. Vardaman narrates: “If I jump off the porch I will be where the fish was, and it all cut up into not-fish now. I can hear the bed and her face …” (As I Lay Dying 52).
Faulkner allows Vardaman very little linguistic fluency. He is attempting to imagine the inner mind of a very young boy, and he artfully strips English down to recreate Vardaman’s language. Vardaman cares not for eloquence and artistry in language. Instead, Vardaman’s thoughts seem to narrate the events as they occur before him with no literary fluency, “I can hear the bed and her face and I can feel the floor shake when he walks on it that came and did it” (ibid. 52). Faulkner does not have him narrate the light or the impalpable air; one could not expect a young boy to possess such linguistic fluency. According to Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget (one of his landmark works is ‘Science of Education and The Psychology of the Child’); this language is typical of a boy at about Vardaman’s stage of psychological development. At this age, a child only notices actual events that affect him directly, and even then, he does not meditate on one incident for long. Vardaman’s thoughts are disconnected and do not follow any particular chain of thought. While Faulkner understands the literary choices he made in representing Vardaman’s thought without extra aid, we can use Piaget’s work in order to decipher Faulkner’s style.

Vardaman is the youngest child in the Bundren family and experiences negligence from both Anse and Addie. Addie gave Vardaman to Anse “to replace the child [she] had robbed him of,” (ibid. 168) but Anse does not pay much attention to his son. Vardaman gets some attention however from Tull, who in this way expresses his own desire to be the father of a son. Deep down, Vardaman is a very confused child that does not seem to understand what is going on around him. He is rather insecure and looks to those around him for affirmation of what is appropriate behavior. Vardaman is very attached to his family, and idolizes especially his brothers. That is why he often stresses the relationship between them:
Jewel is my brother. Cash is my brother. Cash has a broken leg. We fixed Cash’s leg so it doesn’t hurt. Cash is my brother. Jewel is my brother too, but he hasn’t got a broken leg (As I Lay Dying, 186).

When Darl is taken away to Jackson, Vardaman feels sorry for him and he keeps on repeating that Darl is his brother. He is his brother now and will continue to be his brother, even though he will have to stay in a mental institution for a while:

Darl went to Jackson. Lots of people didn’t go to Jackson. Darl is my brother. My brother is going to Jackson (ibid. 240) Darl he went to Jackson my brother Darl (ibid. 240) Darl is my brother. My brother Darl (ibid.).

His confusion and obsession becomes clear especially with the fish he catches. Even though Addie never loved him, Vardaman sees his mother as a very important person in his life, and this is shown by the fact that he immediately wants to bring his fish to her. She should be the first one to see what he is capable of. But when he is cleaning the fish, he learns that his mother is dead, and from that moment on he starts identifying Addie with the bleeding fish. In his mind, Addie and the fish become one. This identification goes so far that he believes that it is his mother that is “cooked and et.” (As I Lay Dying, 63) rather than the fish. The following passage makes clear how the fish evolves from being just a fish to being his mother:

And now it’s all chopped up. I chopped it up. It’s laying in the kitchen in the bleeding pan, waiting to be cooked and et. Then it wasn’t and she was, and it is and she wasn’t. And tomorrow it will be cooked and et and she will be him and pa and Cash and Dewey Dell and there
won’t be anything in the box and so she can breathe (As I Lay Dying 63).

What follows then is rather strange. Since he believes that his mother has been eaten by the entire family, he should be convinced that the coffin is empty now. Yet Vardaman gets confused and he starts panicking because Cash is going to nail the coffin, and he is afraid that Addie will not be able to breathe in there. He recalls the moment when he himself was stuck in the crib. He felt as if he could not breathe because the rat was breathing up all the air. Vardaman wants to spare his own mother this destiny and decides to make some holes in the lid so that she will get some fresh air. He is a little too enthusiastic, two holes reach Addie’s face, and her face is wounded. Vardaman is not aware of this since he again believes that his mother is a fish, and this feeling will continue throughout the rest of the novel. When the coffin falls into the water on their way to Jefferson, Vardaman knows that his mother will save herself because she can swim away very fast. He does however not want his mother to swim away from him and depends on Darl for catching her and bringing her back. At first, Darl seems unable to do this and Vardaman is very disappointed: “Where is ma, Darl? I said. “You never got her. You knew she is a fish but you let her get away. You never got her. Darl. Darl. Darl” (As I Lay Dying 144). Eventually the boys manage to retrieve the coffin from the water, but some moments later Vardaman persists that Addie has escaped through the holes he drilled for her. He cannot believe that his own mother would smell so badly, so he keeps on imagining her as a fish:

My mother is a fish. Darl says that when we come to the water again I [Vardaman] might see her and Dewey Dell said, she’s in the box; how could she have got out? She got out through the holes I bored, into the
water I said, and when we come to the water again I am going to see her. My mother is not in the box. My mother does not smell like that. My mother is a fish (As I Lay Dying 187).

So, Vardaman keeps on saying that his mother is not dead and that she lives on as a fish. This is what is least painful to him. It is only when Jewel returns without his horse that Vardaman learns to accept Addie’s death and knows that she will never come back. Since Darl once told him that Jewel’s mother is a horse, it is not possible that Jewel’s mother is alive, while his mother is dead. So it is only when Jewel does not have his horse anymore that Vardaman understands that they have lost their mother. The fish disappears completely from his mind now and he focuses again on what is real.

Addie and Anse Bundren's oldest son Cash, whose mind in early monologues is filled with carpenter’s calculations, expresses his love for Addie through action. The crafting of Addie's coffin is an act of love, an act that Addie understands and appreciates. Cash's stoicism in bearing the pain of a broken leg throughout the lengthy burial journey from the river to Jefferson is heroic, and yet comic in its understatements. A builder and a protector of property, Cash nonetheless understands why his brother Darl sets fire to the barn in which Addie's reeking coffin rests. He fails to judge Anse's antics or those of the rest of his family, but his sympathy for Darl creates readers sympathy for Cash.

Cash Bundren is not an eloquent man and this already becomes clear in his first section in which he explains why he is making his mother’s coffin on the bevel. Instead of using full sentences, he applies numbers followed by a couple of words. He does this because he is very obsessed with balance, which is repeated frequently
throughout the novel. By stating why the coffin has to be made on the bevel, he tries to avoid imbalance. His work on the coffin is the centre of his world then and the reader already becomes aware of that while reading the previous sections of his siblings. They all comment on the work he is doing and this commentary is not always very positive. Jewel is jealous because Cash is so keen on doing something for their mother and also a little irritated since he is making the coffin right in front of her window, confronting her with her imminent death. The only thing he wants is that his mother can die in some peace and quiet, without having to listen to the noises of the saw and the hammer all the time. And he is not the only one who thinks like this; Darl also cannot always hide his irritation.

I made it on the bevel.

1. There is more surface for the nails to grip.

2. There is twice the gripping-surface to each seam.

3. The water will have to seep into it on a slant. Water moves easiest up and down or straight across.

4. In a house people are upright two thirds of the time. So the seams and joints are made up and down. Because the stress is up and down.

5. In a bed where people lie down all the time, the joints and seams are made sideways, because the stress is sideways.


7. A body is not square like a crosstie.


9. The animal magnetism of a body makes the stress come slanting, so the seams and joints of a coffin are made on the bevel.
10. You can see by an old grave that the earth sinks down on the bevel.

11. While in natural hole it sinks by the center, the stress being up and down.

12. So I made it on the bevel.

13. It makes a neater job (As I Lay Dying 78).

In his above monologues, we learn that Cash is an intelligent and a very meticulous carpenter in making his mother’s coffin.

In general however, Cash’s craftsmanship is appreciated very much. This becomes clear when his family shows that they know how important his work and his tools are for him. When everything falls into the water while crossing the river, Jewel and Darl almost risk their lives trying to save Cash’s equipment. At this moment in the novel, Cash is lying with a broken leg on the bank of the river. From then on, he is unable to do his work as a carpenter and he has to focus more on his language.

A family does not exist if there is no society; likewise Bundrens’ family cannot be there if there is no society of non Bundrens. The multiple voices that narrate in the novel thus not only include the Bundren family, but also a number of observers. The observers who help the Bundren family are: Vernon Tull, Cora Tull, Armstid, Peabody, Moseley, MacGowan, Whitefield and Samsom. Vernon Tull, a helpful neighbor who helped Anse so long that he becomes indispensible: Cora, his wife spews forth self-righteous religious axioms; Peabody a town doctor; Samsom the neighbor, where the Bundrens spend the first night of the journey; Armstid a country farmer, who helps the Bundrens during the journey, Whitefield the preacher, who had affair with Addie and conducts Addie’s funeral; Mosely, the ethical druggist in a
small town who helps Dewey Dell in having abortion and MacGowan, an unethical druggist’s assistant who deceives Dewey Dell.

The Bundren family members have been judged by the above mentioned non Bundrens on the basis of appearance, behavior and origin, and this is especially the case for Anse Bundren. He is often described, “as a parody of a patriarch since he is lazy and tricks his children to get what he wants. The fact that he is from rural poor origin also plays an important role throughout the novel. He is presented as a parody of the myth of the self-made man who works hard to achieve the American Dream and moving from rags to riches” (Leyda 167). It is only through hard labour and determination that one can reach enjoyable life standards. However, since Anse refuses to work, his entire family cannot climb up higher on the social ladder.

Throughout the novel, we can follow the family’s negative mobility, socio-economically and geographically. “In portraying Anse and his family as ‘white trash,’ the other farmers can look at themselves as being from a higher class and thus more deserving” (ibid. 167). They believe that people who work hard and use their money in a wise way will earn success. Anse obviously lacks the capacities to become successful, so he will stay in the lower ranks. However, the ones who claim that “the Bundrens belong to the lowest rank of society are actually those who stand in positions close to the Bundrens, and they hope to see their progress in the Bundrens’ backwardness” (ibid. 168). It is, however, clan rather than class, which forms the basic social unit in Faulkner’s world. “Pride in family and reverence for ancestors are far more important than any involvement with class” (Howe 8). David Minter agrees with this. He believes that the Bundrens are “held fast by the close-knit circle of their family” (Minter 119). He gives three examples to illustrate this. First of all it is very
clear that Cash and Darl do not make any effort to establish a stable relationship beyond their family. Eula, Cora Tull’s daughter, is interested in Darl Bundren but instead we can see that Darl cherishes deep feelings for his sister Dewey Dell. Dewey Dell, in turn, lets Darl come in between her and Lafe when she discovers she is pregnant.

According to Schroeder, “Faulkner’s inclusion of a number of non-Bundren narrators... country folk and townspeople who witness the Bundren’s passing, serve as a sort of Greek chorus or, perhaps as a framing narrator by expounding on their shared social assumptions” (Schoeder, Patricia, Qtd in Brenton Priestley 2002).

Vernon Tull is completely an objective and reliable narrator. He has neither the religious fervor nor prejudice of his wife Cora, and records events as they appear to him. He comments that, “I done help him so much already that I can’t quit now” (As I Lay Dying 29). We receive an external verification of Darl’s concept that his father is helpless and needs someone to take care of him. In section thirty three, Tull is totally unable to determine why the Bundrens must cross that water. He doesn’t understand unless, as he says at the end of the section, “they would risk the fire and the earth and the water and all that just to eat a sack of bananas” (As I Lay Dying 133). Through the last three narrations of Tull the reader will enquire whereabouts of Anse. Vernon Tull is always present whenever there is emergency. He is a very kind hearted person. Cora, Vernon Tull’s wife is carefully and masterfully delineated.

Faulkner has provided an external objective narrator early in the novel to give more support to the Bundren family. Through Cora’s narration, Faulkner creates a magnificent picture of a backwood, self righteous and superficial woman. Cora mentions that Darl is the one that “folks say queer” (ibid. 23) but she has also noticed
that he is the one who can get things done without too much dissension. From Cora’s observation we come to know that there is a good relationship between Darl and Addie. At the same time Cora recognizes that Addie was partial to Jewel and she is filled with pride.

Cora Tull is the third and final female narrator in As I Lay Dying, who turns out to be the most unreliable one. She is obsessed with her religion and gives the reader wrong information about the relationships within the Bundren family. She claims, for example, that Addie cares for Darl than for Jewel. When we proceed in the story, we find out that this is not true at all. Because of her unshakeable faith in God, Cora is very much stereotyped, just like Dewey Dell. She is always seen in the light of her religion, and this makes her a flat character. Cora Tull is also a more feminine woman, contrary to Addie and Dewey Dell. She cares a lot for her husband Vernon and their daughters Eula and Kate because she believes that it was God who has given them to her. In the first section she narrates, she is situated in a domestic activity: baking a cake. Her faith, her motherly love, and the cooking thus give her more feminine qualities than to Addie and Dewey Dell.

Peabody is one of the most intelligent and reliable witnesses to the Bundren qualities. He is introduced so that the reader can have another external view of the Bundren family. He is called ‘Objective Commentator.’ He comments that Addie is a woman who has lived terribly alone. Her eyes tend to isolate a person. His section adds a note of objectivity by reminding the reader of the proper perspective and of the moral actions and reactions of the average person towards the end. Whitefield, Armstid, Mosely and McGowan are the objective narrators who help the Bundren family to attend the funeral procession of Addie.
The narrative technique of *As I Lay Dying* is by no means as stunning as that of *The Sound and the Fury*, but it has its own interest and certainly deserves better than Faulkner’s faintly critical dismissal of it. Though it is in some ways distinct from other Yoknapatawpha novels, it is certainly not inferior to the other novels. “It has no concern with the descendants of the pseudo aristocratic southern families of ante-bellum days like the Sartories and Compsons, but rather with simple poor whites. Further, it seems at first glance to have nothing to do with those dominant themes which I am suggesting animate and inform the whole Yoknapatawpha Saga; a second glance, however may correct that impression” (Powers 50-72).

Narrative Techniques which are used in this novel are: Personification, Symbolism, Existentialism, Soliloquies, Interior Monologues, Multiple View points, Allegory, Imagery, Flashback. William Faulkner uses the personification of a fish. This fish is compared to a human being. Jewel, one of characters considers in *As I Lay Dying* his mom as a fish. As we can see the fish which is representing not only an animal but also it is symbolizing the obstacles that will be present in order to reach a determined objective. In this case to arrive at the cemetery and to bury Addie Bundren, William Faulkner presents the coffin as the symbol to succeed. This is determined by the obstacle presented during the funeral. The coffin gets in to the water and it also gets burnt, but the family that accompanies Addie Bundren, put in all their efforts to realize her last wish.

During the short journey from the Yoknapatwapha County to Jefferson, the weak personality of the Bundren family members is analyzed; how the characters behave when they hear Addie’s last wish, during the journey and after reaching the funeral place. It is a reflection not only on the personality of the major and the minor
characters of the Bundrens but also the people of the twentieth century America in particular, and the people of the world in general.

Faulkner's narrative point of view, in *As I Lay Dying*, is a challenge to the readers. The readers’ entire sense of characterization and the plot comes from the fifteen characters/ narrators who relate fifty-nine interior monologues. According to Robert Humphrey, “these monologues are internal meditations of the action and they represent, psychic content and processes of character, partly or entirely unuttered, just as these processes exist at various levels of conscious control” (Humphrey 105-107). Without an omniscient third-person perspective or a clear authorial view, these perspectives may be flawed. Cora, Vernon Tull's wife, misreads Darl's and Jewel's affections for Addie; she thinks Jewel is indifferent to Addie and that Darl cares. As, Darl and Vardaman are responsible for twenty nine monologues, Darl's insanity and Vardaman's emotional distress over their mother’s death, force the reader to question their points of view.

Narration in *As I Lay Dying* is bewildering at best. And at worst it is a ragged collection of thoughts and paraphrased verbatim by sporadically chosen characters in the wrong order. But, none of the critics claim that this book is regular. Faulkner begins by telling the story from Darl’s point of view.

Faulkner’s style in this novel varies according to the character who is narrating the particular section. The subtle variations in the style are one of the notable achievements of this novel. We do not find a glaring and abrupt change from section to section; and we find the continuity of the same author behind each section. But there is enough variation to make each narrator distinctly different. Faulkner uses, in many of the sections, only the Stream of Consciousness technique to tell the reader
what one of the characters was thinking. “It is a technique whereby the author writes as though he is inside the mind of the characters. Since the ordinary person’s mind jumps from one event to another, this technique tries to capture this phenomenon. Thus, in many sections, notably in the Vardaman and Darl sections, everything is presented through an apparently unorganized succession of images” (James 1971:25).

In *The Sound and the Fury* on the other hand, only four narrators can be distinguished throughout the entire story. This kind of narration is better known as the Multiple Narration, and, according to Erich Auerbach, a philologist, comparative scholar and a literary critic, “this multiplicity of voices suggests that we seek to examine ‘an objective reality.’ To do this accurately, the character has to be approached from many sides as closely as human possibilities of perception and expression can succeed in doing” (Auerbach 87). Every chapter is headed with the name of the narrator. In *The Sound and the Fury*, all chapters are headed with dates and year and in that section we learn not only more about the past and the present events of other characters, but also about the narrator’s private thoughts and feelings. What is unique about the chapters in both the novels is that they all are monologues which are not addressed to anyone in particular. No one hears the monologues, they all pass each other.

Liquidity of Truths with the concept of subjective facts, is another forceful voice of the novel. Each of the novel's fifteen narrators has a perspective on reality that may or may not be accurate. Is Darl sane or insane? Is Vardaman's mother a fish? Is Addie's sin, as Cora says the sin of pride, and the log that struck the wagon the hand of God? Does Anse have some feeling, a lot of feeling, or no feeling toward Addie? Since Faulkner provides no narrator to help us shift through the various
characters’ perceptions, we are left to draw our own conclusions. Together with all
these voices the novel is rich in its fictional effect too. These all aspects are in
chronological development with the respective characters and situations. Addie and
Anse Bundren’s married life, their son Cash and Darl’s attachment to family, Addie's
passionate relationship with Whitfield, are all situations which raise numerous
questions in readers. Dewey Dell and Vardaman have organic development along
with the growth of the plot structure with the mission of taking the dead body from
Yoknapatawpha to Jefferson. This gives the holistic background to the fictional
quality of the novel.

Another important point is the use of repetition as a way of advancing the
narrative. The movement of language is punctuated by repetitions of similar sentences
and this creates a very good rhythmic effect. For example, Anse Bundren speaks to
Cash in Darl’s fifth section, and Cash is not listening to him. The description is
repeated six times with variations of wording:

Cash is not listening.

Cash does not answer.

Cash does not look at him.

He is not listening to pa at all.

Cash is not listening.

Cash is not listening (As I Lay Dying 49).

Each repetition echoes the previous repetition. The piling up of these
repetitions creates a rhythmic intensity as in a piece of music, or as in a Cubist
painting in which the repetition of the same color masses in fragmented spatial
arrangements creating a tension/cohesion among themselves and with other colors.
Another Cubist writer Gertrude Stein employs repetition and repetitive phrases as building blocks in both passages and whole chapters, particularly in ‘Making of Americans’ (1906-1908). Vardaman also uses this technique, though he may do so unconsciously. And interestingly, Vardaman’s use of repetition seems much more superb. After each, rather tranquil description of his own action and meditation, an ejaculation of some sort suddenly follows. He will suddenly shout: “That fat son of a bitch, He kilt her. He kilt her, You kilt my maw!” and so on (As I Lay Dying 53).

In this particular novel, a patchwork effect seems to have been designed consciously by the author. Faulkner’s manipulation of language actually reflects it:

(Vardaman) begins to move slowly backward from the bed, his eyes round, his pale face fading into the dusk like a piece of paper pasted on a falling wall, and so out of the door (ibid. 31).

In the tall moonlight [Jewel’s] eyes look like spots of white paper pasted on a high small football (ibid. 145).

Beside the above technique, the technique of the ‘frozen moment,’ or ‘arrested motion’ in Faulkner’s own words, is frequently used. At one time, Cash looks up at his mother’s face framed by the window and sees it as “a composite picture of all time since he was a child” (ibid. 47).

Faulkner's achievement, David Minter contends, was in combining daring experiments in form, with searching examinations of grave social, political, and moral problems. “His novels change and expand the role of the reader by means of proliferating narratives that lead to questions rather than answers and to approximation rather than resolution. As his characters remember, talk about, and
reconstruct their own sometimes conflicting histories, Faulkner extends to the reader the possibility of creatively revising and completing his narratives” (Minter 121). Minter shows how this process at times implicates the reader in the corruption and violence of the story. The reader is required to fill in, out of his or her own experience, the crucial gaps left in the narrative.

The flatness of the majority of the characters in Faulkner’s novel symbolizes their circumstances in life. The Bundrens live in poverty, and because of this they have a pessimistic, fatalistic view on life. Their thoughts are characterized by despair, which is, for example, very clear for Dewey Dell, who is terrified she will not reach Jefferson in time to abort the baby. Her despair at the passing of time becomes clear in the following utterance: “That’s what they mean by the womb of time: the agony and the despair of spreading bones, the hard girdle in which lie the outraged entrails of events” (As I Lay Dying 121). None of the Bundrens seems to have positive expectations for the future; they even do not seem to have any expectations at all. It seems as if they are aware of the fact that nothing essentially will change for them. They are poor farmers and will continue to be so for the rest of their life. There is no reason for them to believe otherwise.

One of the most interesting aspects of As I Lay Dying is that the reader is drawn into the consciousness of the characters as they narrate the events of the novel. The story is revealed through the thoughts of these characters. This attempts to argue that Faulkner's narrative technique emphasizes the accumulation of these accounts as the story, in other words, the account of the subject, thematically prevails over the object, and the event in the physical world. This idea, that the characters are expressing themselves for the first time in their narratives, also says a great deal about
the characters themselves, and realizing this opens a door to an entirely different view of their thoughts and motivations. All the characters, except Darl and Addie have limited abilities with words and cannot clearly articulate their emotions, the emotions of the other characters, or the events that transpire in the novel. This factor reminds us of the gap between language and the events it is used to describe.

Darl is haunted by words. While his family members are able to tirelessly persist in the journey to bury Addie Bundren by focusing on their respective goals, Darl struggles to define himself as an agent in the physical world, though he simultaneously writes about himself and the story of his journey in the physical world. In the end, Darl retreats into his role as a third-person narrator. He is unable to fathom his place as a body of consciousness, acting as an I in the world.

According to Harry M. Campbell, twentieth century literary critic, “the novel is that Addie’s story of her life is told, Spoon-River-Like from the grave” (Campbell 163). Each character in the novel is dominated by an obsession. Whitefield is resolved to confess his sin to Addie’s husband, Vardaman builds his mother’s coffin and shows the parts of it for her approval, Cash’s constant concern is carpentering, Dewey Dell’s desire is to secure something that will induce an abortion, Vardaman is preoccupied with the resemblance of a dead fish to his mother. Campbell criticized the length of the novel and suggested that “burning of the barn should be omitted, other sensational passages be toned down and a progressive development toward the crossing of the stream as the climax be used” (ibid. 165).

Faulkner’s main concern in this novel was to paint the poor white trash family dealing with death and their motives during the journey. The tragedy of character is deeper than the tragedy of death, for death is commonplace, whether among white
trash or cavaliers. The novel is full of surprises and little revelations that can drastically change the reader's opinion of a character. Kaufmann focuses on the way in which “the characters of Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying* are reliable or not as their questionable sanity is reflected in the arrangement and structure of the sections” (Kaufman 36-51). The arrangement of these sections reflect the individual psychology of characters by allowing characters such as Darl, who is described as crazy by his family, the majority of the narration which forces the reader to question his reliability as a sane, trustworthy narrator. Faulkner took command of the Bundren family, shaping it as a story and making it truly *a tour de force.*
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