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When a Mother Lays Dying or The Creative Power of Words: A Pragmatic Analysis of Addie's Section in William Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying*

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Pragmatics, as a branch of linguistics, bases itself on *Speech Act Theory* as developed by J. L. Austin and his student J. R. Searle and further by linguists like Stephen C. Levinson, having as its starting point the fact that when we utter a sentence we are performing an act of some kind: *declaring*, *demanding*, *requesting*, *asking*, *commanding*, *answering*, *proposing*, *promising*, *refusing*, *threatening, believing, creating*, etc. These so-called performative verbs can be present, but even without them the speech act is well-formed.[1] The speech act, then, is an action performed through a linguistic utterance with an explicit or implicit performative verb. Based on this approach of language, a pragmatic analysis of a literary text concerns the question of what act it performs—as a whole or in its different parts—that it, what it *does* rather than what it means, therefore involving, first of all, the verbs it contains. If we want to discuss the question of what Addie's section in Faulkner's novel *As I Lay Dying* does—as I propose here—we might start with the title because it is obviously linked to Addie's voice, even if she may not be the only one who performs this act. Much has been said about this title, from its incompleteness as a sub-clause of simultaneity that lacks a main clause[2] to the ambiguity of its verb-phrase *lay dying*, with which I will begin this discussion.

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[1] Both the sentence "I *command* you to lie down," with its explicit performative verb *to command*, and the sentence "Lie down!" with its implicit one, are correctly formulated speech acts, just as both "I *propose* I will help you" and "I will help you" and both "I *warn* you to be quiet" and "Be quiet!" The difference between them, each time, is one of register.

[2] The title refers back to the 11th book of Homer's *Odyssey*, where Agamemnon says the words: "As I lay dying, the woman with the dog's eyes would not close my eyes as I descended into Hades." Interestingly, this sentence contains a sub-clause of simultaneity both at its beginning and its end.

In fact, we have to remember that the English language possesses two verbs that can express the act presented in the title of Faulkner's novel. Firstly, there is the verb *to lie*, with its past tense *lay* and past participle *lain*, which is an intransitive verb—not taking an object—"I *lie* on the couch" / "I *lay* on the couch" / "I have *lain* on the couch all day." Secondly, there is, of course, the verb *to lay*, with its past tense *laid* and its past participle *laid*, which is a transitive verb, thus demanding the presence of an object: "I *lay* the baby on the couch" / "I *laid* the baby on the couch" / "I have *laid* the baby on the couch." In the Southern dialect that characterizes the novel *As I Lay Dying*, however, the verb *to lay (layed, layed)* can also be found. It is the third person singular of this verb which I chose for my title—a common variation of the standard English, its present tense (*lay*) being identical to the past tense of the standard transitive form (*lay*). We readily find examples of it in the texts of the Bundren father, Anse, for instance: "You *lay* down and rest" / "*Lay* still and rest" / "'She's *a-laying* down,' I said" ("Anse," 23; my emphasis). In each of these utterances, we find the Southern variation of a transitive verb while standard English would have been: "You *lie* down and rest." / "*Lie* still and rest." / "She's *lying* down." Even when Anse does use the standard form "You *lay you* down and rest you" ("Anse," 23; my emphasis), the archaic quality of the verb phase *lay you down* keeps the characteristics of the Southern dialect.[3]

In the case of Addie Bundren, her having been a schoolteacher, we might expect to find the standard English verb forms, and, indeed, examples from her text include: "I would think that even while I *lay* there with him in the dark" ("Addie," 99; my emphasis) and "With Jewel I *lay* by the lamp" ("Addie," 102; my emphasis), simple past tenses of the standard English verb *to lie*. But one can also find "then I would *lay* with Anse again" ("Addie," 101; my emphasis), a non-standard, infinitive of the verb *to lay,* where standard English would be "I *would lie* with Anse." It would seem, here, that when dealing with her relationship with her husband, Addie's text performs the act of recreating her change from schoolteacher to dirt farmer's wife, a change in class that Louis Palmer

[3] Scholars argue that the Southern dialect has kept certain remnants of the Elizabethan English of the first colonists, such as this particular verb (*to lay*), the progressive form without the g (*layin*'), the vowel shift from i to e, and the verb *to aks* or to *ax* from the middle English verb *axian,* which is seen as a specifically "Black" form and has therefore long been stigmatized (see Montgomery).

sees as a form of "social miscegenation" (Palmer 131, quoted in Buisson 25)[4] with an oblique reference to the racial miscegenation that plays such an important role in Southern literature in general and in Faulkner's work in particular.

For the purpose of this article, we will quickly move from the title to the "heart" of the novel, the one chapter that is narrated by Addie (98-102). Placed between Cora (96-97) and Whitfield (103-104)—between her self-righteousness and his cowardice—we find her honesty, which concerns first of all the violence that her verb forms express:

> I would go down the hill […] and hate them.
> I would hate my father for having ever planted me.
> I would look forward to the times when they faulted, so I could whip them.
> I would think with each blow of the switch: Now you are aware of me!
> ("Addie," 98).

Through their habitual aspect and parallelism, these speech acts superpose the verbs *to hate*, *to look* and *to think*, to create not only the violent character of Addie's text but also the link between her public self, through the indeterminate pronoun "them," supposedly referring to her school children—but without a clear reference, possibly including all children—and her private self, through the reference to her father. The anger that the text evokes, through the verb *to whip* and the noun phrase *blow of the switch*—even if it is displaced onto children—clearly exposes itself as self-hatred when she adds: "When the switch fell I could feel it upon my flesh; when it welted and ridged it was my blood that ran" ("Addie," 98).

Yet the continuation of the speech act "Now you are aware of me! Now I am something in your secret and selfish life, who have marked your blood with my own for ever and ever" ("Addie," 98) is ultimately directed at the father, who had—with a form of nihilism resembling that of Mr Compson in *The Sound and the Fury*—defined the purpose of life to his daughter in an extremely negative way: "I could just *remember how* my father used to say that the reason for living was to get ready to stay dead for a long time" ("Addie," 98; my emphasis). This speech act

[4] Louis Palmer thus explains the special position of Jewel as follows: "If you see white trash as a race apart, Jewel is the only child of unmixed blood" (Palmer 131, qtd. in Buisson 25).

of remembering emphasizes once more its habitualness as well as the aliveness of the experience for Addie, this last aspect through the attributive clause *remember how*, which foregrounds the continuing pertinence of the procedural peculiarities of the experience.[5] It is the lingering void Addie's father thus created and which Addie's memory kept alive that seems to have made her decide to take Anse as her husband: "And so I took Anse" ("Addie," 99). Each word in this short declarative speech act is, in fact, remarkable: the linker *and* is ungrammatical or at least unusual at the beginning of a sentence, let alone at the beginning of a paragraph; the logical connector *so* creates the inevitability of the action, and the subject-verb combination *I took* echoes a traditional wedding ceremony, with its vows: "Do you take this man to be your lawfully wedded husband?" / "I do."[6]

Addie must have mistrusted such words as one finds in wedding vows, the way she does all words, which to her are "just a shape to fill a lack" ("Addie," 99), and yet those in her monologue—most of all the verbs—have tremendous power. Here are the ones with which she attributes actions to her husband which occur right after the sentence about how she "took" him:

> he *was driving* […]
> he *was beginning* […]
> his head *turning* slow […]

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[5] The *how-clause* (I remember *how my father used to say*) can be distinguished from other attributive clauses: the *that-clause* (I remember *that my father used to say*); the *to-infinitive clause* (I remember *my father to say*) and the *small-clause* (I remember *my father saying*). The difference is in the evidence that is used for the truth judgment expressed in the embedded sub-clause, or matrix clause (in italics here): the *that-clause* bases this judgment on independently existing evidence, outside of the specific speech situation, while the *how-clause* focuses on procedural evidence, the *to-infinitive clause* uses evidence available in the specific speech situation, and the *small-clause, finally,* does not seek any truth judgement, or epistemic evaluation, whatsoever. This last form is, therefore, often used by writers to present the powers of the imagination, of magic or religious fervor, but also cases of psychological stress and mental deficiency or disease (see Bockting).

[6] As Françoise Buisson reminds us, Addie's "And so I took Anse" also echoes of what Faulkner himself had said about the novel's theme: "I took this family and subjected them to the two greatest catastrophes which man can suffer—flood and fire, that's all" (*Faulkner in the University* 87, qtd. in Buisson 55).

> Anse *standing* there […] *turning* his hat […]
> *driving* his eyes at me […]
> *holding* his eyes to mine […].
> *watching* my face
> ("Addie," 98-99; my emphasis).

We may fruitfully compare these speech acts to the ones that Addie attributes to herself:

> And so I *took* Anse.
> I *saw* him pass the school house […].
> I *learned* that he was driving […].
> I *noticed* then how he was beginning to hump […].
> I *went* to the door and *stood* there […].
> I *looked* up […] and *saw* […]
> ("Addie," 98-99; my emphasis).

The difference, obviously, is between the simple past tenses of Addie's verbs, which communicate decisiveness and determination, and the progressive forms of Anse's, which create an atmosphere of indecision and incompleteness, a lack of energy and initiative, increased by the adjective *slow* used as an adverb in the same passage—"the wagon creaking *slow*, his head turning *slow*" ("Addie," 98; my emphasis)—so that the slowness seems to characterize the object as well as its movement. The similes attributed to Anse, here, only add to this impression, his posture "like a tall bird hunched in the cold weather" ("Addie," 98) and his eyes driven "like two hounds in a strange yard" ("Addie," 98). To return to the list of verbs that Addie attributes to herself, there is one that deviates slightly from the rest: "I *saw him pass* the school house" ("Addie," 98; my emphasis). This sentence contains an attributive *small-clause*, which—in contrast to the *that-clause* or the *how-clause* that Addie tends to use—resists any epistemic evaluation,[7] and therefore creates a certain dreamlike atmosphere that might retrospectively explain the ever-so-slight sense of astonishment in Addie's mind that the sentence "And so I took Anse" seems to reveal, as if she were asking herself how she could ever have done so, how she ever ended up *lying* (or *laying*) backwards in a box on this slow, creaking

[7] That is why the form cannot be used with an epistemic verb such as *know* and *conclude.* Indeed, "I *knew* him pass the school house" and "I *concluded* him pass the school house" are clearly ungrammatical sentences.

wagon surrounded by this slow man and these children. Because of this, perhaps, the speech act of concluding is soon repeated—"So I took Anse" ("Addie," 99), which answers Addie's need for decisiveness and superiority with respect to her husband. In fact, the relationship between the marriage partners is only to become more unequal, first when the verb *to take* is replaced by *to suckle*—"I would think that if he were to wake and cry, I would suckle him, too" ("Addie," 99)—with which Addie takes away Anse's manhood, and then by the verb *to kill*—"I believed that I would kill Anse" ("Addie," 99) with which she takes away his life, to finally arrive at the accomplishment of the speech act: "He did not know he was dead, then" ("Addie," 100) and "And then he died. He did not know he was dead" ("Addie," 100).

Just as Addie's section, pragmatically speaking, creates her husband's life and death, it also creates the very existence of her children—four sons and one daughter. A quick list of the verbs with which she does so gives us the following:

> Cash: I knew […] ("Addie," 99)
> Darl: I found […] I would not believe ("Addie," 99)
> Jewel: I found […] I waked to remember to discover ("Addie," 101)
> Dewey Dell: I gave […] to negate ("Addie," 102)
> Vardaman: I gave […] to replace ("Addie," 102)

These speech acts are extremely powerful, so much so that all of the children can be seen to try to live up to the way their mother conceived of them. Meanwhile, from the verbs on this list—*to know*, *to find*, *to give away*—her need for control shows itself, while equally obvious is the diminishing of her command over her situation, as if she had been sinking away into death for most of her life as a mother.

"I knew that I had Cash" ("Addie," 99)

Cash—Addie's first-born—is overwhelmingly associated with the cognitive verb *to know*, repeated five times in just one paragraph, which creates his existence in an intellectual way. *To know* is a mental verb with inherent speaker consent, an epistemic verb with positive truth judgment. That is to say, Addie is still certain now, in her monologue, that what she held to be the truth then, when she was expecting Cash, is

correct.[8] In other words, the text creates, through its repeated "I know," a cognitive investment on the part of Addie that extends from her pregnancy with Cash into the present. Indeed, through Cash, Addie had "learned that words are no good; that words dont ever fit even what they are trying to say at" and she has known for the rest of her life, then, "that motherhood was invented by someone who had to have a word for it because the ones that had the children didn't care whether there was a word for it or not" ("Addie," 99).[9] Addie's text subsequently elaborates—still with the use of the verb *to know*—the notion of the word being empty of all meaning, "just a shape to fill a lack" ("Addie," 99), terminating on that which would set Cash apart from all others: "Cash did not need to say it to me nor I to him" ("Addie," 99).

In accordance with this conceptualization of his existence, Cash—on his side of the equation—does not "need to say it" to her either. He is a man of action, and, indeed, before one reaches the first of the sections that are narrated by him, the observations of others have already presented him through deeds—sawing, knocking, hammering, trimming, working on his mother's coffin—and have already emphasized his physical appearance, especially his arms with their evidence of his hard work—"his sweating arms powdered lightly with sawdust" ("Darl," 29)[10]—and his meticulousness: "Cash bevels the edge of it with the tedious and minute care of a jeweler" ("Darl," 45).[11] As a matter of fact,

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[8] For proof of this inclusion of speaker consent in the verb *to know*, we can make this consent explicit: "I knew and I was right" is clearly redundant, while "I knew but I was wrong" is obviously paradoxical.

[9] Notice that Addie's text, here, shows the post-positioning of the preposition *at*, which is characteristic of the Southern dialect, and that the negation of the verb *to do* is presented through Faulkner's characteristic deviation *dont*, which one can consider as a case of eye dialect. In contrast to the present tense auxiliary *dont*, the past tense auxiliary *didn't* in the second quote is standard English. As with the verbs *to lie* and *to lay*, the text can be seen to waver between standard English and the Southern dialect, a further imbalance that is essential to the novel's thematics. Cash's text, which insists on balance all the time, only shows the standard present tense of the verb *to lie* in his list: "In a bed where people *lie* down all the time, the joints and seams are made sideways, because the stress is sideways" ("Cash," 48; my emphasis).

[10] Cash's arms show how he was created, from the moment his mother received him, as the opposite of his "dangle-armed" father ("Darl," 30; "Armstid," 111).

[11] It is clear from the adjective *tedious* that Cash's work is not always appreciated. Indeed, in the passage "a good carpenter, Cash is. […] A good

from Darl's text, Cash's working on the coffin almost seems to have the power of bringing Addie back to life: "The sound of the saw is steady, competent, unhurried, stirring the dying light so that at each stroke her face seems to wake a little into an expression of listening and of waiting, as though she was counting the strokes" ("Darl," 29-30).

As his own sections show, Cash, in keeping with Addie's verb for him, knows how to do things. Indeed, in just about every one of the 13 entries on the list of his first section ("Cash," 48), one can hear the silent cognitive verb-phrase *I know*:

> 1. [I know] There is more surface for the nails to grip.
> 2. [I know] There is twice the gripping-surface to each seam.
> 3. [I know] The water will have to seep into it on a slant.
> etc.

In a very short second section ("Cash," 56), Cash's know-how is further concentrated on the issue of balance, and it illustrates clearly how he incarnates, in his own way, Addie's *adagium* that words are never any good. Indeed, through the use of dashes and ellipsis Cash's text communicates their ineffectiveness, their utter uselessness, his repeated inability to complete his speech act:

> It wont balance. If you want it to tote and ride on a balance, we will have—[12]

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carpenter. Addie Burden could not want a better one, a better box to lie in. It will give her confidence and comfort" ("Darl," 3-4), Darl's admiration for Cash's work has a distinctly ironic tone, while Jewel's text makes explicit the annoyance that Cash's way of showing his dedication to their mother creates: "It's because he stays out there, right under the window, hammering and sawing on that goddamn box. Where she's got to see him. Where every breath she draws is full of his knocking and sawing where she can see him saying See. See what a good one I am making for you" ("Jewel," 10). The more genuine admiration of neighbors, not hindered by the jealousy that determines Darl's and Jewel's texts, forms a sort of corrective here; as Vernon Tull presents it: "I have seen him spend a hour trimming out a wedge like it was glass he was working, when he could have reached around and picked up a dozen sticks and drove them into the joint and made it do" ("Tull," 51).

[12] Even though Cash uses the standard English form of the verb *to lie* in his first section, other aspects of the Southern dialect can be found in the verb *to tote* and in Faulkner's particular usage of eye dialect in the verb form *wont* (instead of *will not*).

> I'm telling you it wont tote and it wont ride on a balance unless—
> It wont balance. If they want it to tote and ride on a balance, they will have ("Cash," 56).[13]

The second of these sentences has an explicit performative verb-phrase—*I am telling you*—that can be perceived silently in the first sentence as well, the hyphens, in each case, signaling the interruption of Cash's speech act each time, while the third sentence seems no longer addressed to anyone, having lost even the energy of the hyphen, which is replaced by the void of an ellipsis at the end. Cash is eventually betrayed, as he is incapable of making himself heard; he even disappears from the verbal scene altogether when the pronoun *we* is replaced by *they*. Since the creation of the coffin and its perfect balance—tragically disturbed because "them durn women" ("Tull," 52, 53) who had put her "head to foot so it wouldn't crush her dress" ("Tull," 51)—was such an important issue for Cash,[14] this disappearance from his own speech acts can be seen as a form of death that he shares with Addie. His third section repeats the unfinished speech act, now in the past tense, again excluding Cash himself and again with the void at the end: "It wasn't on a balance. I told them that if they wanted it to tote and ride on a balance, they would have to" ("Cash," 95).

This linking up with Addie's belief that words are useless in front of the actual deeds that they vainly represent—symbolizing the very specific bond that she created with her first-born—manifests itself further when, after the accident at the crossing of the river, Cash silently goes "outen sight, still holding the coffin braced" ("Tull," 88). Afterwards, lying on the bank of the river—unconscious—he even comes to resemble his mother physically the way she "lay dying," his face as if "sunken a little, sagging from the bony ridges of eye sockets," his body "pole-thin" ("Darl," 90), and when the family finally continues the journey, he comes even closer to her, being tied to the coffin "on top of Addie" ("Darl," 105). From then on, all Cash can do for his mother is to avoid delaying

[13] This last sentence remains incomplete and without final stop, the blank, here, seeming to suggest that this sentence has no more performative power.

[14] The texts of other family members confirm Cash's concerns over the lack of balance of the coffin. Darl's text, for instance, keeps presenting Cash's speech acts: "It aint balanced right for no long ride" ("Darl," 62) / "It aint on a balance" ("Darl," 84). Notice the Southern dialect negation of the verb *to be*, *aint*, as well as the double negation.

the journey even more, through the endlessly repeated speech act with the implicit performative verb of *promising* or *convincing* that he is not too much in pain:

> It kind of grinds together a little on a bump. It dont bother none.
> ("Vardaman," 113)
> I can last it. […] We'll lose time stopping.
> I could last it […] It aint but one more day. It dont bother to speak of.
> It aint but one more day. […] It dont bother me none.
> I could have lasted. It dont bother me none.
> ("Darl," 120-121)

Cash finally even comes to blame himself for his increasing discomfort: "It was the sun shining on it all day, I reckon. I ought to thought and kept it covered. […] I ought to minded it" ("Darl," 123). It is Darl, meanwhile, who further evokes the link between their mother and Cash just before they foolishly pour cement on his leg to stabilize it: "He is bleeding to death is Cash" ("Darl," 120).

"Then I found that I had Darl. […] I would not believe it" ("Addie," 99)

While Cash's existence is determined by the cognitive verb *to know*, his younger brother Darl is associated from the beginning with the verb *to find* and the rejection of the verb *to believe.* Of these two mental verbs, the first includes—like Cash's verb *to know*—a positive truth judgment on the part of the speaker, while the second refrains from any such judgment.[15] We see from the choice of verbs, then, that Darl's existence is denied, or refused, as soon as it is discovered, and, in contrast to that which concerns Cash, Addie's text creates no investment in the present, whether intellectual or emotional; indeed, the choice of verb leaves it completely unclear whether she now, in her monologue, thinks that she was right then or wrong then, when she expected him.[16] In

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[15] One can, again, verify this by making explicit the epistemic value of the two verbs. "I found that I had Darl and I was right" is again redundant and "I found that I had Darl but I was wrong" is again paradoxical, showing that speaker consent is inherent in the verb *to find*, while "I would not believe it but I was wrong" and "I would not believe it and I was right" are both possible, showing that no speaker consent is included in the verb *to believe.*

[16] The neighbor woman Cora Tull believes that it is secretly Darl who is his

contrast to Cash, whose existence was conceived as the answer to a problem, Darl's is the source of a disappointment. The word, which was of no importance with regard to Cash, has now become powerful, treacherous, a screen through which she feels she is violently betrayed by her husband: "It was as though he had tricked me, hidden within a word like within a paper screen and struck me in the back through it" ("Addie," 99-100). And whereas at Cash's birth the father-figure is symbolically castrated he is now—through the speech act of taking revenge "he would never know I was taking revenge" ("Addie," 100)—symbolically annulled and killed: "he did not know that he was dead then" ("Addie," 100). Nevertheless, Darl recognizes Anse as "pa" while he habitually calls his mother "Addie Bundren."[17] In fact, it is the use of his mother's full name that gives Darl's admiration of Cash's carpentry its ironic tone: "Addie Burden could not want a better one, a better box to lie in" ("Darl," 4).

Behind this irony, of course, lurks the tremendous void created by the traumatic separation from the mother, Addie's refusal of Darl's existence.[18] Indeed, Addie's outright refusal of her second child's

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mother's "darling," an association that the reader may also make from Darl's name, but Faulkner himself emphasized that it was simply the Southern way of pronouncing the first name Darrell (*Faulkner in the University* 115).

[17] André Bleikasten compares Faulkner's manuscript to his typescript and remarks that at the end of the first section, the manuscript has Darl use the word "Maw" to refer to his mother, while in the typescript this has been changed to "Addie Bundren." He adds the following explanation: "the manuscript left no doubt as to the nature of the box and defined from the starts the family relationship between Darl and Addie; the words used in the final version are more ambiguous, and we have to read on for the uncertainties to be resolved" (Bleikasten 13). In endnote 6 of his chapter 2, Bleikasten adds what I myself find the most essential point: "'Addie Burden' instead of 'Maw' indicates from the outset Darl's estrangement from his mother" (Bleikasten 150). I find it a pity, meanwhile, that James Franco, in his film version, does not keep this important aspect of Darl's language and has him say to Jewel: "our mother is dead" rather than "Addie Burden is dead."

[18] As the psychoanalyst Frances Tustin explains: "for some individuals, for a variety of reasons, different in each case, the disillusionment of 'coming down to earth'" from "the sublime state of blissful unity with the 'mother'" has been "such a hard and injurious experience that it has provoked impeding encapsulating reactions. It has been the pebble which provoked the landslide" (25).

existence—her specific speech act for him, *to refuse to believe*—shows itself in his text most explicitly through his complaint: "I cannot love my mother because I have no mother ("Darl," 55)."[19] But this feeling of motherlessness is also conveyed much more subtly at times, for instance when he helps to carry Addie's coffin to the waiting carriage, "balancing it *as though* it were something infinitely precious" ("Darl," 57; my emphasis). Addie's negation of Darl during her pregnancy is then further aggravated by the violent performative verb with which she terminates the breastfeeding of her two oldest sons: "I *refused* my breast to Cash and Darl after their time was up" ("Addie," 101; my emphasis).[20] The process

[19] Of course this compares to Quentin Compson, in *The Sound and the Fury*: "*If I could say Mother. Mother*" (95; italics in the text); "*if I'd just had a mother so I could say Mother Mother*" (172; italics in the text). Darl is, in fact, only one of the many motherless characters that Faulkner created. Certain critics have linked the overwhelming theme of the motherless child to Faulkner's own experience. The psychoanalyst Jay Martin, for instance, tries to establish a correspondence between Addie's attitude towards her children and that of Faulkner's mother, Maud, toward hers. As he puts it: "the image that emerges is of Maud as a reliable but not warm mother." She "apparently fulfilled her obligations, but there seems little of the mutuality in feeding and playing necessary to nourish the infant's psyche at its source" (189). Whether or not this is so, Faulkner's attachment to his mother does reveal certain neurotic qualities. As his biographer Frederick Karl puts it, "the situation […] went beyond Freud's dictum that the son with his mother's love can go all the way. Maud gave love, but she expected deference and obedience in return. She tried to be the central woman in all her sons' lives" (380). According to James Watson, editor of Faulkner's early letters, Faulkner's mother insisted that when away from home, her sons would write her every week (Faulkner, *Thinking of Home* 22), but when Faulkner was absent from Oxford, he wrote home on average every five days, the earliest existing letter dating from 1912. In this letter, he addresses his mother as "Dear Miss Lady" and he conveys a curious form of attachment: "I havent [*sic*] seen any one that looks like you 'cause Lady, you're too pretty" (Faulkner, *Thinking of Home* 40). Six years later, Faulkner writes to his mother from New Haven: "I couldn't live here at all but for your letters. I love you darling" (Faulkner, *Thinking of Home* 12).

[20] This scene, where his fictional mother in a brutal way "refused her breast" to her infant sons, may again provide a link with Faulkner himself, who—in his letters to his mother from the RAF training camp in Toronto, Canada—showed himself extremely demanding, constantly asking her to send money, soft clothing and food, about which he was, moreover, anxiously possessive, as if he could at any moment be deprived of nourishment: "My tent is full of people

of weaning, as the psychoanalyst Melanie Klein has argued, causes an infant to feel "that he has lost the first love object—the mother's breast—both as an external and as an introjected object, thus amounting to a state of mourning" in such a way that "whenever in later life mourning is experienced, these early processes are revived" (44).[21] No wonder, then, that Darl's final disintegration coincides with the death of his mother.

Darl's need to love a mother can only show itself in an indirect way, split into two opposite forces, a positive, tender part projected onto his older brother—"He [Cash] lays[22] his hands flat on Addie, rocking her a little" ("Darl," 85)—and a negative, passive-aggressive part displaced onto his younger one:[23]

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now, and as I do not care for people, I'm waiting until they go to open my box. […] I refuse to give your cakes to every Tom and Dick in the camp here. This crowd hangs about like a crowd of vultures" (Faulkner, *Thinking of Home* 97). The vultures, of course, also transport us back to *As I Lay Dying*.

[21] Sigmund Freud also recognized the importance of the mother's breast as a love-object; as he put it: "there are good reasons why a child sucking at the mother's breast has become to prototype of every relation of love" (Anna Freud 357).

[22] It is not surprising that Darl, the most intellectual of the brothers—who apparently spent some time abroad, in France—uses the standard English forms. An example is found in the poetic sentence "How often *have I lain* beneath rain on a strange roof, thinking of home" ("Darl," 47; my emphasis), this being the standard English past participle of the intransitive verb *to lie.* Other examples include the infinitive in sentences like "Addie Bundren could not want a better one, a better box *to lie* in" ("Darl," 4) and the simple present tenses of the same verb in "Cash *lies* on his back on the earth […] He *lies* pole-thin in his wet clothes" ("Darl," 90; my emphasis), while his answer to Vardaman's question "So she can *lay* down her life" presents a standard simple present tense of the transitive verb *to lay* ("Vardaman," 124).

[23] This splitting of affect is explained in Klein's "Object-Theory," which complements the teachings of Freud to focus on elementary feelings of love and hate towards the mother's breast. The first "ego-task" of the newborn, according to Klein, is to find a resolution for this ambivalence, to bring together "the good breast" and "the bad breast," and see them belonging to the same person. The disturbance of this process, according to Klein, leads to a tendency to see situations and people, as well as the self, as either totally bad or totally good, and thus, as is shown here, the need to project one's own good and bad characteristics or feelings onto separate others, leaving the self with the kind of emptiness that is also characteristic of Darl (see 79).

> Jewel, […]. Do you know she is going to die, Jewel? ("Darl," 24)
> Jewel, […] do you know that Addie Burden is going to die? Addie Burden is going to die? ("Darl," 24)
> *Jewel*, […] *she is dead, Jewel. Addie Burden is dead.* ("Darl," 31; italics in the text)
> It is not your horse that's dead, Jewel. […] But it's not your horse that's dead
> ("Darl," 55).

Dividing himself into a good and a bad part, and then trying as much as possible to project each of these parts away from the self, onto another person, the individual is left with nothing but emptiness or nothingness, as Darl evokes time and again:

> I dont know what I am. I dont know if I am or not.
> ("Darl," 46)
> How do our lives ravel out into the no-wind, no-sound, the weary gestures wearily recapitulant: echoes of old compulsions with no-hand on no-strings: in sunset we fall into furious attitudes, dead gestures of dolls.
> ("Darl," 120)

Linked with this emptiness is a great aversion of insincerity, which can be found here through the adjectives *weary* and *dead,* and the adverb *wearily*—"weary" gestures that "wearily" recapitulate and gestures that are "dead"[24]—with which Darl, again, acts out his mother's mistrust of words and the nihilism she inherited from her father. The abundance of different forms of negation—"dont," "ravel out," "no-wind," "no-sound," "no-strings"—is another salient aspect of this way of being in the world. Darl's incapacity to mourn his mother makes it constantly necessary for him to project such thoughts of emptiness onto others: "Jewel knows he

[24] Darl is reminiscent of many twentieth-century literary characters, such as J. D. Salinger's Franny Glass in *Franny and Zoey* and Seymour Glass in "A Perfect Day for Bananafish," not to mention Holden Caulfield in *Catcher in the Rye*. But we can go further back to Shakespeare's Hamlet, in his complaint on "customary suits of solemn black," "windy suspiration of forc'd breath," and "all forms, moods, shapes of grief" that are mere "actions that a man might play" (*Hamlet*, Act I scene II, 77-86).

is, because he does not know that he does not know whether he is or not" ("Darl," 46).[25]

On account of these characteristics, Darl, like Quentin Compson, has been called a schizophrenic by critics.[26] Rather than pertaining to a psychiatric diagnosis of a literary character, however, these characteristics should be taken as thematic elements. Faulkner's observation that Darl "was mad from the first" (*Faulkner in the University* 110) meanwhile does not help us much more than his observation that Benjy Compson, in *The Sound and the Fury,* was "an idiot" (*Lion in the Garden* 146). But if we understand Addie's text correctly, we know that Darl has been severely disturbed from an early age. The observations of others reveal, in fact, that before Addie's dying, Darl had already been observed as "different from those others" and "queer" ("Cora," 14), and Anse reports how people have been talking about his antisocial behavior. Indeed, of the Bundren neighbors, Armstid comments on his voice, which sounds "just like reading it outen the paper. Like he never give a durn himself one way or the other" ("Armstid," 110) and Tull describes his eyes: "like he had got into the inside of you, someway. Like somehow you was looking at yourself and your doings outen his eyes" ("Tull," 72). Yet it is certain that the failed process of mourning that has kept Darl perversely tied to his mother quickly deteriorates his mental situation, certainly aggravated by all the mud of the journey to the cemetery and the smell of a decomposing corpse, with vultures circling overhead. Indeed, all this cannot help but bring back a memory of the trenches in France during World War I, and of which testifies what is certainly the most poetic passage of his text,

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[25] Bleikasten, discussing these and many other examples of negation in Darl's sections, agrees that "all these negatives refer us back to the theme of absence, of lack, of nothingness" and that they "attempt to express the inexpressible." "It should be noted," he explains, "that they are not simply the reverse of an affirmation: the negation preserves within the substance of the word the idea of what it is denying and paradoxically it sometimes even reinforces the meaning it might be supposed to deny. Thus *unalone* ["Dewey Dell," 36] epitomizes admirably what pregnancy is making Dewey Dell go through: a solitude both violated and redoubled" (28).

[26] According to Bleikasten, "all the classic symptoms of schizophrenia are soon discernible: withdrawal from reality, loss of vital contact with others, disembodiment and splitting of self, obsession with identity, sense of isolation and deadness, armageddonism (the sense that 'the end of the world is nigh)'" (90).

very different from his usual posturing, avoiding, and intellectualizing: "How often have I lain beneath rain on a strange roof thinking of home" ("Darl," 47). So, to the severe childhood trauma that haunts Darl, a post-traumatic stress syndrome has definitely added itself.

Exhausted by the constant need to defend himself from these memories as well as their accompanying sense perceptions—visual, tactile and kinaesthetic, but especially the most primitive type, olfactory—a break-through of Darl's dangerous emotions eventually occurs in the form of his crazy laughter: "we hadn't no more 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" ("Anse," 61).[27] And later, at the cemetery: "He begun to laugh again […]. He sat on the ground and us watching him, laughing and laughing. It was bad. It was bad so" ("Cash," 137). Frédérique Spill has called this laughter "the ultimate avatar of the form *lay*" (Spill 280; my translation), and, indeed, just as Cash was tied to his mother on top of her coffin—and thus *lays* with her—so Darl, who first has her at his feet on the wagon, is finally *laying* on the ground with her. In the form of his laughter and his psychological splitting—addressing himself in the third person: "Is that why you are laughing, Darl? […] Is that why you are laughing, Darl? ("Darl," 146)—his depersonalization amounts to a descent into madness that resembles Addie *laying* down her life.[28]

"Then I found that I had Jewel. When I waked to remember to discover it, he was two months gone" ("Addie," 101)

While Addie's attitude towards her first son was one of *knowing* and towards her second one of *finding* and *refusing to believe*, the third brother, Jewel, is associated with the mental verbs *to find, to remember* and *to discover*, all three including an epistemic evaluation that is positive.[29] The text thus creates a triple sense of investment in the

[27] We see, here, in the progressive verb form *setting,* an example of the vowel shift from *i* to *e* of the Southern dialect.

[28] This can be compared to the small letter of the first person pronoun—i—in Quentin Compson's text in *The Sound and the Fury*: "and i i wasnt lying i wasnt lying" (177). The comparison makes sense because Faulkner explains this stylistic choice as follows: "Because Quentin is a dying man, he is already out of life" (*Faulkner in the University* 18).

[29] "I found it and I was right" is redundant while "I found it but I was wrong" is paradoxical. In the same way "I discovered it and I was right" is redundant

present, as it was the case for Cash, except for the fact that this time the investment is more emotional than rational. This emotional closeness, of course, also speaks from the name Addie gave her third-born—Jewel[30]—and, contrary to the brutal weaning that is the experience of the older brothers, there is the peaceful, dream-like quality of Addie's physical contact with Jewel: "Then there was only the milk, warm and calm, and I lying calm in the slow silence" ("Addie," 102). Darl, sensitive to the specialness that surrounds Jewel—she always "petted him more" ("Darl," 11)—presents an image that is almost madonna-like: "Ma would sit in the lamp-light, holding him on a pillow on her lap. We would wake and find her so. There would be no sound from them" ("Darl," 83).[31] As in the case of his brothers, Jewel lives up to his mother's verbs for him—*to find* and *to wake*, *to remember*, *to discover*—conserving the dreamlike quality of his reception by her in his only section,[32] especially through the repeated conditionals *if* and *would*:

> *If* you *would*n't keep on sawing and nailing at it […].
> *if* you'd just let her alone.

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while "I discovered it but I was wrong" is paradoxical, and again, "I remembered it and I was right" is redundant while "I remembered it but I was wrong" is probably (somewhat) paradoxical; indeed, in this case one would more likely say: "I thought I remembered it but I was wrong." This means that a positive truth value is inherent in the verbs *to find*, *to remember* and *to discover.*

[30] The link with the name Pearl, given to the child born out of an adulterous relationship with a reverend in Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, is obvious and has often been made (see, for instance, Bleikasten 18-19).

[31] The memory must have been painful for Darl, who certainly missed this intimacy. But, although the image is indeed "peaceful" as Darl calls it, one may wonder whether sitting in the lamplight is the best position to allow a baby to sleep peacefully. I cannot help being reminded of an image of Faulkner's own mother rocking her baby to sleep on a hard-back kitchen chair. Indeed, Martin quotes Faulkner's brother John saying that: "for the first year of his life 'Bill […] had the colic every night. Mother said the only way she could ease him enough to stop crying was to rock him in a straight chair, the kind you have in the kitchen.'" The straight chair used as if it were a rocking chair, obviously, made a lot of noise, so much so that "the neighbors said the Faulkners were the queerest people they ever knew; they spent all night in the kitchen chopping kindling on the floor." Martin sees in this somewhat uncomfortable arrangement "a suggestion of ambivalence about mothering" on the part of Faulkner's mother (188f.).

[32] Jewel, like Cash, seems to live out Addie's *adagium* that "words are no good."

> *If* it had just been me [...] *if* it had just been me [...] it *would* not be happening [...].
> It *would* just be me and her on a high hill [...].
> ("Jewell," 10; my emphasis)

Jewel's characteristic speech acts, as reported by others, boil down to an endeavor to undo Addie's situation—"Ma aint that sick"—and he is therefore incapable, according to Darl, of pronouncing the word *coffin*; indeed, he speaks "harshly, savagely, but he does not say the word. Like a little boy in the dark to flail his courage and suddenly aghast into silence by his own noise" ("Darl," 12). The repeated metaphor "Jewel's mother is a horse" and the brilliant description that Darl gives of their being together adds to the dream-like, magical atmosphere that surrounds Jewel and his mother ("Darl," 8-9).

But most important is the speech act of prediction that Addie supposedly pronounced: "He is my cross and he will be my salvation. He will save me from the water and from the fire" ("Cora," 97). We are not sure, of course, that these are really Addie's words, as the neighbor woman who reports them, Cora Tull, is far from a reliable narrator and she is prone to quoting sentences from the Bible, such as the passage from Isaiah 43:2 that this speech act seems to be based on:

> When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.
> (King James Bible)

Nevertheless, this is what actually happens: Jewel does save her from the flooded river and he does save her from the fire that Darl sets to the barn in which the coffin with her body was placed. In both cases, it is actually not her that Jewel is saving but her dead body, and Jewel is not the only one. Indeed, Vardaman, the child who is apparently still too young to understand the concept of death, bores holes in the coffin for his mother to breathe through and even to get out through—"*She's in the box; how could she have got out? She got out through the holes I bored, into the water*" ("Vardaman," 114; italics in the text)—and Darl also tries to save Addie after she has already died, this through his act of setting the barn to fire, so as to spare her the insult of putrification. These actions show, then, that in the title of the novel—*As I lay Dying*—the verb form *lay* deserves to be considered a present tense, and thus warrant, I believe,

the Southern dialect form I chose for my title: "When a Mother *Lays* Dying."

Through his actions, in any case, Jewel becomes the embodiment of a balance between opposites, associating himself with water and with fire, with the colors white as well as red, and with the symbolics of purity as well as sin; he incorporates, in fact, everything that makes us human. In this way, Jewel's essence complements Cash's; indeed, Cash's eye for the concrete balance between opposites—his attention to seams that need to be "on the bevel" and his concern for the right position of his mother's body in the coffin, so that it will "tote" correctly—is supplemented by Jewel's symbolic balance, a middle position that bridges the gap between the opposite concepts of purity and sin. Indeed, born out of sin, yet out of real passion—out of honesty, purity and innocence rather than hate and vengeance and murder—his very being reflects the moment in Addie's section that evokes her dreamlike *waking to remember to discover*.[33]

"I gave Anse Dewey Dell to negate Jewel. Then I gave him Vardaman to replace the child I had robbed him of" ("Addie," 102)

It takes Addie just these two sentences, at the end of her section, to free herself of her youngest children, the performative verb *to give* functioning semantically, here, not as an act of benevolence but as one of dismissal, the phrasal verb *to away* or *to dispense with*. Bleikasten has called Dewey Dell and Vardaman "mere exchange values in Addie's moral accountancy" (93) and, indeed, both of Addie's youngest children are objectified, commodified, and instrumentalized as a penance—in the case of Dewey Dell to pay off the sin of adultery and in Vardaman's the crime of theft. To take Bleikasten's ideas further, it might also be said that these two children serve Addie's moral as well as legal accountancy. Their existence thus functioning as a solution to a problem, Dewey Dell and Vardaman can be linked to Cash, but in a perverse way. In Dewey Dell's and Vardaman's paragraph of Addie's section, there are—in contrast to those associated with their brothers—no mental verbs, either cognitive or emotional. Thus Addie's text evokes no intellectual or emotional investment in the younger children at all, either in the past or in the present. As a matter of fact, Vardaman's verbs *to give, to replace* and *to rob,* are even further away from any expression of emotion than those of Dewey Dell, *to give* and *to negate,* the second of which has at

[33] This is especially obvious in Franco's film, where we see Jewel carrying the coffin out of the burning barn, like Jesus carrying the cross.

least a certain measure of internalization, albeit negative. In addition, while Addie's text acknowledges the existence of each of her elder sons before their births—indeed, what she *knows* in the case of Cash, what she *finds* yet *will not believe* in the case of Darl and what she *wakes to remember to discover* in the case of Jewel, is her pregnancy with them rather than their actual birth—her pregnancies with Dewey Dell and Vardaman are not acknowledged at all.

This is especially hurtful for Dewey Dell, as she is herself pregnant at the time her mother *lays dying*. This is why Dewey Dell's complaint "too soon too soon to soon […] too soon too soon too soon" ("Dewey Dell," 69) is so painful; she herself seems to never have been carried by any mother at all. Yet, in her description of her condition—"I feel my body, my bones and flesh beginning to part and open upon the alone, and the process of coming unalone is terrible" ("Dewey Dell," 36)—the final word, *terrible,* continues to carry the weight of their shared experience—a "palimpsest" of motherlessness and pregnancy that Addie and Dewey Dell share—as in the following passage: "*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*" ("Dewey Dell," 69).[34] In Vardaman's case, there is the constant repetition

[34] Dewey Dell's language shows both the Southern dialect and the standard forms, depending on the authenticity of the language. As far as the verb of our initial interest—*to lay*—is concerned, we see in Dewey Dell's text forms like "You go on back and *lay* down," with its Southern form of the simple present in one place and "*the hard girdle in which lie the outraged entrails of events*" ("Dewey Dell," 69; emphasis in the text), with the standard English simple present in the other. The last example must be considered a case of "heigtened voice," which was defined by Sister Kirsten Morrison as "a voice that is rooted in the mind of the character, a voice that issues from that mind yet is not bound by the limits of intelligence and sensibility which that mind has by nature, a voice heightened to perception and articulation of which the mind itself is incapable" (150). François Pitavy, in discussing Faulkner's novel *Light in August*, speaks of "amplification" or "augmentation" of voice (173). Benjy Compson's voice, in *The Sound and the Fury*, is perhaps the best example of heightened voice, but Vardaman's childlike innocence provides flashes of it as well. If we use, once more, an example that contains the verb *to lie* / *to lay*, we find: "It was not her because it *was laying* right yonder in the dirt" ("Vardaman," 39; my emphasis) but also "We *lie* on the pallet, with our legs in the moon" ("Vardaman," 124; my emphasis), on the one hand a Southern present progressive form and on the other hand a standard English simple present where

of the sentence "My mother is a fish,"[35] which, as critics have argued, can be seen as a hidden reference to the womb, the fish in the water as an image of the unborn child. But more explicitly the fish symbolizes the mother, who is so slippery that Vardaman cannot hold on to her and which therefore initiates great anger in him, so that he pokes out its eyes, swears at it, stamps on it and chops it up. The image of the fish—symbolizing at once the fleeing mother and the unborn child that is dependent on her—provides a clear link between Vardaman and Dewey Dell, whose life as unborn child is obliterated in Addie's text, yet whose life as a mother turns out to be inescapable.

It is clear that Dewey Dell gets no attention from Addie at all, even if she does show her dedication to her mother.[36] Indeed, Jewel mentions that he "can see the fan and Dewey Dell's arm" ("Jewel," 10),

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Faulkner somewhat "heightens" Vardaman's voice. Faulkner goes further at times, for instance in: "It is as though the dark were resolving him out of his integrity, into an unrelated scattering of components" ("Vardaman," 33). For Sister Morrison, this "heightening" even includes Addie: "that innermost centre of her which exists free of body, that speaks expressing the beliefs and motives which constituted her person yet which she could never have clearly articulated or consciously perceived" (150).

[35] This fish allows Vardaman to use a defense mechanism that Freud discusses as that of undoing, in that it allows Vardaman to work a reversal of Addie's dying.

[36] The psychoanalyst Karen Horney believes that the unfavorable conditions for the development of the child "all boil down to the fact that the people in the environment are too wrapped up in their own neuroses to be able to love the child," who as a result develops "a profound insecurity and vague apprehensiveness." To conquer this anxiety, different coping strategies or neurotic solutions are learned, which tend to be reinforced through experience: the compliant defense of the self-effacing personality, the aggressive defense of the arrogant-vindictive personality and the retreating defense of the detached personality (Horney 221). Dewey Dell can, in fact, be seen as belonging to the first type with its set of values based on meekness, humility and generosity and a distaste for ambition and egotism, even if the latter are secretly admired because they represent strength. Also, the different defense mechanisms always conceal their opposite tendencies, which remain present on a deeper level. One can see this in Dewey Dell when she suddenly jumps on Darl at the time of his arrest. Cash reports the surprise of this out-of-character action: "But the curiousest thing was Dewey Dell"—it is interesting, meanwhile, how to Cash she is a "thing," which also links with Addie's verbs for her, *gave to negate*—"she jumped on him like a wild cat" ("Cash," 137).

Cora mentions—with her characteristic unpleasantness—that “you can see that girl’s washing and ironing in the pillow-slip, if ironed it ever was” (“Cora,” 6), and Doctor Peabody reports that “the girl is standing by the bed, fanning her” (“Peabody,” 26), but none of them acknowledges her as a person. It seems as if Addie’s verb *to negate* had left Dewey Dell so fragmented and empty that other people did not see her as a complete individual. Darl’s vision of Dewey Dell stands out here because, even if he fragments her and even undresses her at other moments (“Dewey Dell,” 69), he does not do so here: “‘Ma,’ Dewey Dell says; ‘ma!’” Adding sound and movement to Dewey Dell’s intentions, he envisions how she “begins to keen,” then “flings herself across Addie Bundren’s knees” before “sprawling suddenly across” her mother’s dead body (“Darl,” 28).[37] By thus covering Addie’ body with her own, Dewey Dell, takes the imprint of her mother, and this may imply, to a certain extent, that she takes over her mother’s role. She, in any case, can be seen to take care of Vardaman, Cash and Jewel—if not of Darl—and, not managing to get the abortion she is seeking, but instead allowing herself to be taken advantage of, she must continue as “a wet seed wild in the hot blind earth” (“Dewey Dell,” 38). Meanwhile Vardaman does get Addie’s attention in her dying moment; in any case, according to Darl, she, “without so much as glancing at pa,” looks at Vardaman, who “from behind pa’s leg,” “peers” at her, “his mouth full open and all color draining from his face into his mouth, as though he has by some means fleshed his own teeth in himself, sucking” (“Darl,” 29). With the disappearing teeth and the act of sucking, Darl’s vision, here, evokes the unborn child that Addie’s text obliterates, just as does Vardaman’s own repetition of the phrase “cooked and et,”[38] which in Freudian Theory may signal a regression toward the oral phase of the new-born infant at these moments of great distress.

Conclusion

Françoise Buisson refers to Addie’s monologue, which has been at the center of this discussion, in graphological terms as being “far from a hyphen, a sort of exclamation point” (116; my translation).[39] Instead of

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[37] This may be another instance where Darl is forced to project his own feelings on somebody else as a form of psychological self-protection.

[38] The verb form *et* represents Faulkner’s Southern eye-dialect version of the past participle of the standard English verb *to eat*.

[39] “Loin d’un trait d’union… une sorte de point d’exclamation.”

evoking the intimate connections that exist between a mother and her children, it cries out loudly, first against her own existence and then against the situation in which she conceived each of her children, and even against their very existence. As my pragmatic analysis of certain aspects of her monologue has attempted to show, the painful situation of Addie's dying causes for each of her children a regression to this earlier period. Cash's sections evoke her certainty of his existence, his deeds fulfilling her expectations for him; Darl's many sections—a veritable flood of words—try, through Freudian defense mechanisms such as repression, projection and intellectualizing, to deny his emotional involvement with her, just as his mother had denied hers with him; Jewel's one section endeavors to preserve Addie's exclusive, and dreamlike possession of him, through a virtually wordless—almost mythical—dedication to her that the other characters can hardly come to terms with, and Dewey Dell and Vardaman's sections helplessly submit to the violence that her discarding of them represents, she, through the oxymoron of denial and violation of self, and he, not yet capable of the sophisticated defense mechanisms of his brother Darl, through a constant process of Freudian denial and undoing.

This discussion of speech acts in *As I Lay Dying* may seem rather Freudian in its emphasis on the essentialist nature of early experience and thus on the somewhat deterministic nature of the novel, but it also brings to the surface—just like the family does surface from the raging waters of the Yoknapatawpha river—the ways in which the children all move beyond their mother' influence. As far as Cash is concerned, compared to the "long ways" versus the "up-and-down" ("Anse," 22) and the "straight up" versus the "along the earth" ("Addie," 100).[40] He is able to find a certain equilibrium, by introducing the power of the diagonal ("on the bevel,") and he finally even manages to express this sense of balance emotionally when he reflects on the fate of his brother Darl, in what is one of the most profound sentences in the novel: "Sometimes I think it aint none of us pure crazy and aint none of us pure sane until the balance of us talks him that-a-way" ("Cash," 134).[41] Darl himself, meanwhile,

[40] Even the title of the novel can be seen to enter into this, by opposing the longways position of the body in the verb-phrase *I lay* to the upward movement of the soul in the progressive *dying*.

[41] In any case, this sentence must have been close to Faulkner's heart, as a high school dropout and later called "Count No 'Count" because he seemed not to be able to accomplish anything.

manages to escape the *would not believe* of his mother through his tremendous attention to everything around him and his vision, almost creating an omniscient narrator for the novel, while Jewel overcomes his self-centeredness though the sacrifice of losing his horse, and the skin on his back, aligning himself at least to some extent with his family, thus escaping the sense of exclusiveness that his mother's text imposed on him. Dewey Dell and Vardaman, meanwhile, are too seriously harmed by Addies's giving away of them, and being in a liminal position—between adolescent and adult in the case of Dewey Dell and between child and adolescent in the case of Vardaman—, their fate remains in a limbo.

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