

**William Faulkner. As I Lay Dying (1930)**

Title:

Based on Homer's description of Agamemnon when Odysseus visits him in Hades.

Genres employed:

**Epic**—the journey; fighting against the elements; initiation journey(?)

**Comedy**—Social order affirmed (?)

**Tall tale**—narrative that depicts the wild adventures of extravagantly exaggerated folk heroes. An exaggerated, unreliable story. The tall tale is essentially an oral form of entertainment: "the frustrated funeral."

Narrative:

Stream of consciousness:

Soliloquy

Direct interior monologue

Violation of reliable and unreliable narration (omniscience?)

Language: "Realistic"?

Sources: North Eastern Mississippi farmers' vernacular.

Biblical

Experimentation:

Language drawing attention to itself.

Opacity of words; condensed.

Misapplication of grammatical categories.

Lack of punctuation—annulment of the syntactic relations.

Repetition as characterization.

**Negatives**—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.

Double negatives—pleonastic, redundant character of spoken language.

Setting:

A world returning to primeval chaos.

Storm, water regression to formlessness. Fire. Electric atmosphere.

Concrete things dematerialized.

Suspension, in-between, liminality, confused barriers, dynamic immobility  
forward movement? Time and timelessness.

Characters:

THE BUNDRENS

Anse—Inertia, endurance.

Addie—Physicality, anti-Calvinistic philosophy.

Cash—Practicality, *homo faber*, logical (?)

Darl—anti-hero; fascinated with flux of time.

Jewel—fierce energy, pure violence.

Dewey Dell—sexuality, world trapped in flesh.  
Vardaman—prelogical, bewildered.

#### THE TULLS

Vernon—compassionate.

Cora—self righteous.

Eula and Kate—their daughters

#### OTHERS

Peobody—the doctor, practical, critical.

Different Farmers.

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