Tension Between Darl and Jewel

by Elizabeth Hayes

Addie Bundren, the enigmatic wife and mother in Faulkner's brilliantly innovative *As I Lay Dying*, lies dying long after her death. So powerful is her influence that her family sets out on and continues the burial journey to Jefferson despite encountering seemingly insurmountable obstacles. Not only is this journey physically difficult, but it is emotionally painful for the Bundrens as well.

For Darl and Jewel, the emotional journey far outweighs the physical in significance. To Jewel, Addie's death means the loss of the one person in the world he truly loves. Grief and despair he manifests as violent action, and fulfilling his mother's dying wish to be buried in Jefferson is his only way of mourning. Though other family members also were to go to Jefferson at this time for various reasons, Jewel is the driving force behind the journey. Darl, on the other hand, becomes the journey's saboteur, in part because his detachment allows him to recognize the journey's ludicrous and painful qualities, and in part because his role as saboteur places him in direct opposition to Jewel.

*As I Lay Dying* is fraught with tension, as one would expect in a novel whose chief action is a cooperative group effort performed under extremely adverse conditions by people who don't understand or like one another very much. The Bundrens, individually and collectively, are under tremendous strain from the moment the novel opens until the end of the journey ten days later. The
tension in Darl and Jewel's relationship, however, is one of special significance. This relationship, crucial to the structure of the text, embodies the unresolvable ambiguities at the heart of the journey.

In his discussion of narrative voice, Stephen Ross delineates what he terms the textual voice of *As I Lay Dying*: such features as italic type, variations in, or absence of, expected speaker identification, and unusual punctuation, spacing, or paragraphing "articulate a visual difference that signifies" ("Voice" 306–307). These and other features are signs that shape not only narrative voice but also narrative structure. Faulkner deliberately deviates from the conventions of standard English prose in order to create new codes to highlight the tension between Darl and Jewel. In fact, these textual features point with striking clarity to the relationship between Darl and Jewel as the narrative and structural hub of the text.

Darl is the single most important character in *As I Lay Dying*. Not only is he a major protagonist, but his nineteen monologues, nearly twice the number given any other single narrator, account for roughly one third of the text. Sensitive, articulate, and detached, Darl is the chief source of information about almost all personalities and relationships in the novel. What interests Darl most, perforce, interest the reader, for so the text is constructed. And very early on we discover that the person who most interests Darl is his brother Jewel.

Structural evidence from the text subtly but strongly attests to this fact. Darl's consistent identification of Jewel as "he," the unusual paragraphing and italics calling attention to Jewel, the focusing on Jewel at the beginning and ending of sections, and even the names Darl gives his mother and father indicate Darl's preoccupation with Jewel. Also significant is the leading role that Jewel plays in Darl's sections of the text: Jewel appears in every one of Darl's monologues. In four of the nineteen, Jewel is the central character, while fourteen of the remaining fifteen focus on Jewel at some point in the monologue. In particular, they focus on the bond between Addie and Jewel, a concern largely responsible for the tension in the relationship between the two brothers.

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1 Obviously, I disagree with Alice Shoemaker, Ora Williams, M. E. Bradford, Michael Millgate, and others who view Addie as the central character in the novel.

2 Betty Aaldredge's assessment of *As I Lay Dying* as a "novel in which character presentation is the dominant structural element" (3) confirms my view of Darl's importance.

3 Lyall Powers finds that Darl is preoccupied with "Jewel's paternity" (58). While Darl is interested in his brother's paternity, this issue is merely part of the larger subject that occupies Darl's thoughts: Jewel's bond with Addie.
I

It is no accident that the first word of *As I Lay Dying* is “Jewel”. From the opening of the novel’s first monologue, Darl centers his interest on this brother. Although their mother is dying, Darl does not even mention that fact until the close of the monologue, and then only obliquely (“Addie Bundren could not want a better... box to lie in”4). It is Jewel whom Darl describes (“hat... a full head above my own” [31]) and whose actions Darl compares to his own (Jewel steps through the cotton house windows “with the rigid gravity of a cigar store Indian” [31] while Darl walks around the cotton house on the path). The first half of the opening monologue, then, sets up the narrative mode, continued throughout the text, of a detached, observant Darl directing attention toward, and measuring himself against, his brother Jewel.

Faulkner makes full use of the rhetorical emphasis conveyed by openings of chapters or sections (or novels), for eleven of Darl’s sections, including the novel’s first monologue, open with a focus on Jewel. Typical of these monologues is the fifth, which begins with, “We watch him come around the corner and mount the steps. He does not look at us. ‘You ready?’ he says” (16).

Since the monologue recounts what is apparently the last part of an ongoing discussion about hauling lumber, the narrative could begin anywhere, yet Faulkner has chosen to emphasize Jewel’s entrance, and indication that for Darl, the scene begins when Jewel appears. Other monologues, such as #25 and #32, open with a description of Jewel that forms an associative bridge to the main action of the section. For example, the opening sentence of the long section recounting how Jewel earned his horse begins “He [Jewel] sits the horse, glaring at Vernon...” (121). Jewel’s anger at Tull for not risking his mule in the river as Jewel is risking his horse provides the link for the nine-page flashback detailing why Jewel’s horse is so precious to him. Jewel thus serves as an important frame of reference for Darl’s narrative—indeed, as we shall see for Darl’s sense of identity.

Like the openings of the monologues, endings also showcase information by placing it in a position of emphasis. Of Darl’s dozen and a half monologues, twelve feature Jewel in the final paragraph. Two of these endings even present a radical shift of focus from the body of the monologue to Jewel at the end. In the monologue detailing the pouring of cement onto Cash’s broken leg, the natural ending would be Cash’s “Ay, I’m obliged” (198) after the cement has been poured. Yet Darl closes by appending to the narrative a brief factual

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description of Jewel's sudden return to the journey after an absence of some time. Although Jewel does not take part in the cement scene at all, his return to the journey, by virtue of its positioning and emphasis at the end of the monologue, appears as equal in importance to the events of the scene onto which it is appended.

Similarly, the true focus of the third monologue shifts at the end to the meeting Darl imagines between Jewel and his horse. Darl is not even present to observe Jewel and the horse, yet the vivid kinesthesia and the emotional electricity of the imagined scene make the ending of the monologue much more powerful and revealing than are the "actual" or "real" events described in the first half: Darl's memory of lying at night with his shirt tail up, Anse's splayed feet, the taste of water from the cedar bucket.

Not only do some of Darl's sections begin and some end by focusing on Jewel, but seven both begin and end that way. Although Darl gives important information about other people and events in these monologues, the emphasis subtly falls on Jewel. Monologue #10, for example, although primarily concerned with Darl's wordless "conversation" with Dewey Dell about her pregnancy, opens with a physical description of Jewel, a statement that Jewel does not once look back toward the house as he and Darl leave to haul wood, and finally, Darl's question "Jewel, I say . . . 'Do you know she is going to die, Jewel?'" (38), words with which the monologue later ends as well. The structure of the monologue thus gives great weight to Jewel's reactions (in this case, to his denial of his other's impending death). Certainly, to Darl, Jewel's feelings are much more important than his own, which are not even stated.3

Darl also maintains focus on Jewel by sometimes setting off his brother's actions from those of other people. In one monologue sentences depicting Jewel's actions are given emphasis beyond their due by being placed as separate paragraphs ("He goes on toward the barn, entering the slot, wooden-backed" [97]; "Then he enters the barn. He has no looked back" [98]). In another monologue Darl concentrates on Jewel's relationship to his horse by placing every mention of Jewel or the horse in italics: "On the horse he rode up to Armstid's and came back on the horse" (172).6

3 This is typical of Darl's monologues. Darl intuits and sensitively records the responses of others, particularly his own family and especially Jewel, to the events of the novel, but he almost never records his own responses or feelings, as Emerick and others have pointed out.

6 Here, where Darl is working out the parallels between Jewel's feelings for his horse and for his mother, the use of italics effectively underlines Darl's concentration on the bond between Addie and Jewel, as reflected in the relationship between Jewel and the horse. This concentration is later
To underline Darl’s preoccupation with Jewel, Faulkner sometimes invents special signs by subverting textual conventions. Most notable is Darl’s repeated omission of the antecedent for pronouns referring to Jewel. Again and again, Darl refers to Jewel only as “he” or “him,” even when there is no way for the reader to know to whom the pronoun refers. No other character is so identified in the novel, except Peabody when Dewey Dell thinks, “He could do so much for me if he just would” (56, 57, 61). Moreover, this pattern of identification is unusual for Darl, who is careful everywhere else to specify antecedents. Plainly, this unusual code reveals the constancy with which Jewel occupies Darl’s thoughts, for Darl never sees any need at all to clarify pronoun references to Jewel.

As examples, monologue #22 begins, “He stoops among us,” continuing, “in his face . . .”, “his flesh . . .”, “He heaves . . .” (91); #26 begins, “He comes up the lane fast” (101); and #49 begins, “Against the dark doorway, he seems to materialize out of darkness” (208; my italics). Monologue #45, the cement-pouring scene, illustrates this device particularly well. Darl carefully labels each speaker and actor until the penultimate paragraph, which begins, “Then we all turn on the wagon and watch him. He is coming up the road behind us . . .” (198; my italics). Not only has Jewel taken no part in the rest of the scene, but he has not even been present on the journey for as many as two or three days. His return is not expected. Armistid, for one, believes that after Anse has in effect stolen Jewel’s horse and traded it for new mules, Jewel will—justifiably—head for Texas and never return. Yet when Jewel does suddenly, surprisingly, reappear, Darl does not even identify him by name, but instead identifies Jewel as if he has been constantly present—as indeed, in Darl’s thoughts, he evidently has. Darl has apparently never doubted Jewel’s return for a moment.

Sometimes Darl’s omitting “Jewel” as the pronoun antecedent creates confusion, as in the following passage: “But after Armistid gave pa a drink, he felt better, and when we went into to see about Cash he hadn’t come in with us. When I looked back he was leading the horse into the barn he was already talking about getting another team” (174; Faulkner’s italics). Here, where the pronoun “he” refers to two different people, one would expect Darl to identify Jewel by name, but only the italic type differentiates the pronouns referring to Anse from those referring to Jewel. Such a passage provides a forceful illustration of how continually Jewel occupies Darl’s thoughts.

echoed by Wardman, who also speaks of Jewel and the horse using italic print when trying to sort out the difference between his own “fish-mother” and Jewel’s “horse-mother.”
Italics in *As I Lay Dying* serve several functions, and for this reason signify differently in different places in the text. Ironically, about the only sign Faulkner omits is the conventional use of italic print to indicate emphasis of individual words. Of the thirty-seven italicized passages in the novel, eighteen have Darl as their subject and thirteen Jewel, a small indication of the importance of these two characters to the shape of the novel. Not surprisingly, most of the italicized passages concerning Jewel occur in Darl’s sections, where they invariably shift the focus of the monologue to Jewel and underline the tension between the two brothers.

The prime example occurs in monologue #12, where Darl interrupts his vivid present-tense narration of Addie’s death with a paragraph in italics beginning “Jewel, I say” (48). This paragraph is also in the present tense, and it describes, just as vividly, another scene: driving rain, a broken wagon wheel, muddy water swirling around Jewel’s ankles. The italic paragraph ends with “Jewel, I say” with no punctuation to provide closure, or even ellipsis. If the text of the novel provided no other clues, it would be easy to think that some other altered state of consciousness intruding upon the “actual” events of a deathbed scene related by someone present.

After further narration of the death scene and a second italic passage containing Darl’s imaginative recreation of Dewey Dell’s thoughts, the narrative returns once more to italics at the end of the monologue to describe Jewel’s efforts to fix the broken wagon wheel. The last lines pick up and repeat the ending of the first italicized passage: “Jewel, I say” (51). Here, Darl finishes the thought but again provides no closure: “Jewel, I say, she is dead, Jewel. Addie Bundren is dead” [no punctuation].

The “Jewel, I say” italicized passages are relatively brief, taking up only two paragraphs of a six-page monologue, yet they radically alter the meaning of the death scene. They shift the focus of the narration to Jewel, who is not at Addie’s deathbed but who should be. Indeed, the structure of the monologue effectively draws Jewel into the deathbed scene by interspersing descriptions of Jewel’s actions in the rain with narration of Addie’s simultaneously occurring death, a scene in which Jewel plays almost as large a role in absentia as he would have played had he been present. With no punctuation separating

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7 As in Benjy’s section in *The Sacred and the Profane*, italics in *As I Lay Dying* often indicate “a shift in time, place, and consciousness” (Patten 23), for example, Tull’s account of Addie’s funeral, where the men’s desultory conversation prior to the service is separated from the rest of the monologue by italic print (85); Dewey Dell’s unspoken thoughts recorded in italics (114–16) as the Bundrens begin their journey.
the italicized passages from the deathbed passages, Jewel seems to move freely between the two scenes, functioning in both.  

The structure of the monologue acknowledges Darl's understanding that Jewel is the person for whom the deathbed events have the most significance. The first italic passage interrupts a narrative section that begins with Addie urgently asking Anse with her eyes to produce Jewel for a final farewell, a section that ends with Anse's mild oath "Durn them boys" (48)—Darl and Jewel—for being off hauling lumber. Immediately, Darl interjects "Jewel, I say" in italics and describes Jewel and that moment, standing in the rain by the broken, lumber-filled wagon. Clearly, Jewel is an integral part of both the broken-wagon scene and the deathbed scene.

The only words Darl actually speaks in the entire six-page monologue are directed solely to Jewel and connect Jewel irrevocably to Addie's death: "Jewel . . . Jewel . . . Jewel, she is dead, Jewel. Addie Bundren is dead." What is important to Darl is Jewel's response to the death of Addie. Darl has deliberately separated Jewel from Addie at her death, isolating himself with Jewel and imposing himself as narrative intermediary between Jewel and Addie. He has in this way placed himself squarely in opposition to both Jewel's and Addie's wishes, an action guaranteed to exacerbate the tension between the brothers. The question that must be addressed is why would Darl do so?

II

As I Lay Dying is a novel fueled by ambiguities. Will the burial journey be completed or will it not? Will the journey heal or destroy the Bundren family? the individual Bundrens? Is the journey heroic or ridiculous? comic or grotesque? Which actions are sane, and which insane? The many oppositions upon which the text is constructed are brilliantly embodies in the personalities, behavior, and responses of Darl and Jewel. The tension generated by these

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8 Darl, on the other hand, is strangely absent from both scenes. Though the keen observer and narrator of the deathbed scene, he is physically far removed from the action. (Faulkner obviously intends Darl's imaginative rendering of the scene to be narratively reliable, for Darl is the sole recorder of the scene in the novel, and the few details we receive from other characters all corroborate Darl's version.) Moreover, Darl is not missed or asked for in the death scene; no one remarks on his absence. He isn't mentioned at all, except by Anse to explain Jewel's absence: "Why, Addie . . . him [Jewel] and Darl went to make one more load" (46). Although physically present in the italicized broken-wheel scene, Darl's mind and emotions are clearly at Addie's deathbed. He takes no part in the broken-wheel scene, merely narrating Jewel's efforts to fix the wagon. He does not even formally fix his own presence at the scene, except to report that he is the one saying "Jewel . . . Jewel . . . Addie Bundren is dead" (48–49).
oppositions, nearly shown as the tension in the relationship between Darl and Jewel, gives rise to the novel’s narrative energy and shape.

By sabotaging the journey to Jefferson, Darl undermines the effort and sacrifice of Jewel, who is passionately committed to fulfilling his mother’s dying wish, whatever the cost to himself or the family. While Darl wishes a quick and sensible end to what many perceive as a ludicrous, too-costly journey, he also wishes simply to oppose Jewel, and, by extension, Addie, on this vital matter, just as he does when he takes Jewel to haul lumber when Addie is dying.

The textual evidence shows that Faulkner has carefully crafted the tension between Darl and Jewel. Plainly, Darl’s conspicuous preoccupation—or, as some critics would have it, obsession—with Jewel, outlined in bold relief by the textual effects discussed above, generates much of the tension between the brothers. From what does this preoccupation or obsession arise?

The answer lies in Darl’s fascinating “empty yourself for sleep” passage in monologue #17. The body of that section narrates the finishing of Addie’s coffin the night of her death, a scene involving Darl not at all, for he and Jewel are away hauling wood. Instead of ending with the completion of the coffin, the logical close of the narrative, Darl extends the monologue to include his own mental wrestling with the question, “What is the nature of existence?” Robert Hemenway argues persuasively that this passage “defines an existential dilemma basic to Faulkner’s fictional world” (133). It is more important to note that in *As I Lay Dying* this central dilemma is expressed by Darl, and it is expressed in terms of Jewel, Addie, and himself.

After imagining in detail the events of the night of Addie’s death, Darl does not ponder, as one might expect, the meaning of Addie’s life, or his own, or human life in general, but rather, he struggles with the question of whether he himself exists at all: “I dont know who I am. I dont know if I am or not. Jewel knows that he is, because he does not know that he does not know whether he is or not” (76). Jewel never questions who or what he is; moreover, he doesn’t even know that a question exists. The wagon exists, Darl argues, because the rain and wind “shape” it (i.e., delineate its physical shape), thereby permitting consciousness of its existence (“only the wind and rain shape it only to Jewel and me, that are not asleep” [76]). Similarly, Jewel exists because he is conscious of his own existence, if only because he never thinks to question it; he knows he exists. If Jewel exists, then according to Darl’s logic, “Addie Bundren must be” (76), either because Jewel is conscious of her or because she gave Jewel life.

But Darl does not extend his theory to the conclusion that if Addie exists
and is also his mother, then he, too, must exist. Instead, he concludes that “then I must be, or I could not be emptying myself for sleep” (76). Darl makes a connection between Jewel’s and Addie’s existences, but not between his own and Addie’s. In light of Addie’s rejection of Darl, which Darl has always sensed but which only receives corroboration on Addie’s monologue, the emotional connection between Darl and his mother has in fact been severed by Addie, while the bond between Jewel and Addie is the strongest in the novel.

Jewel does know he exists, but Darl is not certain that he does; Jewel has a mother, but Darl feels that he does not; Jewel and Addie verify one another’s existences, but nothing verifies Darl’s. For Darl, struggling to come to terms with himself, to resolve his existential dilemma, the bond between Jewel and Addie becomes the central signifier. If he can discover the nature of this bond and its effect upon Jewel’s unquestioning sureness, perhaps he will see how he can achieve existential certainty. If nothing else, at least he will know why Addie, the touchstone of the Bundren family, loves Jewel but has rejected him.

The “emptying for sleep” passage, in which Darl draws a connection between existence and consciousness, offers a better explanation of Darl constant probing of Jewel than simple envy or jealousy. Dorothy Tuck suggests that “Darl forces an awareness of himself on others in an attempt to assert the reality of his self” (137), a theory supporting Darl’s—and Addie’s—implicit belief that a person exists if others are conscious of him or her. If Jewel, so unquestioningly certain he exists, is made conscious of Darl, then Darl must also exist, at least at that moment. Therefore, in order to make Jewel aware of him, Darl verbally prods his brother, trying to elicit a response. While Darl’s actions are not meant to be kind, neither is their purpose to taunt Jewel, as many critics aver. The probing is, rather, part of Darl’s ultimately futile effort to establish “order and meaning in his world” (Kinney 167).

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9 Power is no doubt incorrect when he states that Darl is “sure of his own identity” (63). Darl may be “active and effective, . . . realistic, capable of meaningful movement,” as Powers also states, but every line of the “emptying for sleep” monologue, a passage vital to an understanding of Darl’s behavior in *As I Lay Dying*, argues against Darl’s certainty of his own identity. See also Calvin Bedient’s “Pride and Nakedness: *As I Lay Dying*” for a discussion of this point.

10 While jealousy of Jewel as a successful rival for Addie’s love must be one motive for Darl’s behavior, it is not the only one or even the chief motive. If it were, it would appear in Darl’s relationship with Jewel, for Cash is also a successful rival for Addie’s love, a fact of which Darl is aware. Yet Darl never exhibits jealousy toward Cash, either in action or words.

11 This belief, clearly the foundation of Addie’s behavior throughout her life, is stated indirectly but nonetheless succinctly in her monologue.

12 One must remember Darl’s detached non-involvement in much of what occurs in *As I Lay
Though Kinney's assertion that Jewel is "the one [Darl] loves most" (168) surely cannot be valid, neither can W. J. Handy's that Darl shows an "obsessive hatred" (187) of Jewel. LaReene Despain comes somewhat closer to the mark in arguing that half of Darl's preoccupation with Jewel is "resentment and hatred because of Addie's special love for [Jewel]" while the other half is a "sensitive understanding of Jewel's violent love/hate for his horse and his mother" (55).13

In truth, Darl's preoccupation with Jewel has at its core neither resentment nor affection, but rather the belief that an understanding of the bond between Addie and Jewel will provide the code for solving the existential riddles with which Darl struggles throughout the novel. Darl is determined to impose himself between the two. This is why he takes Jewel off to haul wood when Addie is dying: both Addie and Jewel will be forced to recognize Darl's existence and power at the moment of her death, because Darl will have denied them the final moment together that they both crave. He does so neither from affection nor hatred—Calvin Bedient succinctly observes that "Darl's consciousness is, for the most part, as neutral as photographic film" (212)—but as an existential cry in the wilderness, a groping toward a sense of identity, even if that identity is "not-Jewel." Vardman tries to maintain a hold on reality by repeating what he believes to be truths ("Darl is my brother" [95]; "My mother is a fish" [79]); Darl draws responses from Jewel, using Jewel as his existential sounding board.

One unusual textual feature underlines both the distancing Darl feels from his mother who has rejected him and the closeness he sees between Jewel and Addie. Throughout the text, Darl calls his mother "Addie Bundren" or "Addie." Not once does Darl call her anything else when describing the relationship between Addie and himself. In only three places in the text does he call her anything else when describing the relationship between Addie and himself. In only three places in the text does

Dying. Many narrators remark on Darl's "queer" way of looking at people, or his way of speaking, as Armstid expresses it, "as if he were reading...or yet the paper. Like he never give a damn himself one way or the other" (181). Cash cautions that "It was like he [Darl] was outside of it, too, same as you, and getting mad at it would be kind of like getting mad at a mud-puddle that splashed you when you stepped in it" (226–27). Darl's repeated "Jewel, she is dead Jewel" in the death scene monologue, for example, is surely spoken in this blank, almost painfully objective, detached tone.

13 No one understands Jewel as well as Darl does. In some places Darl tries to protect or help Jewel: at the river fording, for example, or during the barely averted knife fight between Jewel and a passerby on the road. Indeed, as Handy notes, Darl "becomes the author of Jewel's experience" (86) by reporting and interpreting Jewel's actions in the novel, since Jewel himself is nearly inarticulate. When Cleanth Brooks states that "even Darl" doesn't question Jewel's love for Addie, Brooks is responding to what he calls Darl's "bitter and even cruel taunting" of Jewel. Brooks evidently feels that Darl's probing evidences his lack of understanding of Jewel, an opinion that misreads the text.
Darl name his mother what all the other Bundren children call her: “ma.” Significantly, in these passages, he is describing actions that characterize the loving relationship between Jewel and Addie.

The first of these references occurs when Darl recalls his mother’s distinctive behavior toward Jewel as a child: “ma always whipped him and petted him more” (17). Second, during the river-crossing scene, Darl and Cash share an apparently silent memory of Jewel as a sickly infant. Darl’s thought is phrased thus: “Ma would sit... holding [Jewel] on a pillow on her lap” (137). Finally and most importantly, in the long central monologue describing the reactions—particularly Addie’s—to Jewel’s mysterious behavior the summer he secretly earned his horse, Darl refers to Addie as “ma” throughout the whole nine-page section (e.g., “It was ma that got Dewey Dell to do [Jewel’s] milking” [123]; “Jewel, ma said, ‘Jewel...’” [128]). Only once during the monologue does Darl refer to his mother as “Addie Bundren”: “And that may have been when I first found it out [Jewel’s illegitimacy], that Addie Bundren should be hiding anything she did” (123). Addie as a “public figure” or as mother is always “Addie Bundren” or “Addie” to Darl, never “ma.”

The revisions of the holograph and typescript manuscripts of *As I Lay Dying* provide evidence that Faulkner deliberately creates this distance between Addie and Darl. Catherine Patten astutely suggests that Faulkner changed “Maw” to “Addie Bundren” in the first monologue in the holograph manuscript (and “coffin” to “box”) to create suspense by delaying information (9), but suspense is not the sole reason for the change. As is evident from the rest of the holograph manuscript, Faulkner began the novel by having Darl call Addie “ma” or “maw.” By about page twenty, however, Faulkner changed his mind. He went back and crossed out two of Darl’s three references to “ma” (“Maw could not want a better one” [3] and “Ma’s knees” [39]), revising them to “Addie Bundren,” leaving only the “ma always whipped him and petted him more” reference. He continued, in the remainder of the holograph text, to have Darl call his mother “Addie Bundren” except in the three passages discussed above.

One might note by contrast that Darl’s early references in the holograph manuscript to his father as “Anse” were changed by Faulkner to the familial “pa.” The one place that Darl calls Anse “father” in the holograph manuscript was also revised to “pa” (“I move so I can see his face and father’s pa’s” [14]). The textual evidence provided by names, then, indicates that Faulkner has, through revising, deliberately underlined Darl’s feeling of distance from his mother by contrasting it with Jewel’s closeness and erasing Darl’s distance from his father.
When Lyall Powers states that Darl is "sure of his own identity" (963), that his "sense of self-identity" is the "clearest in the family" (964), and that "he need not depend on others to help define his own being" (64), Powers is describing a Darl I have never found in As I Lay Dying. The Darl I know has no idea who he is. He finds it difficult to act, to perform simple goal-directed tasks, as he shows when the wagon wheel breaks while he and Jewel are hauling wood, during the climactic river crossing, during the diving for Cash's tools, and during the rescue of Gillespie's animals from the burning barn.

This Darl agonizes over his mother's rejection: always throughout his probing of and opposition to Jewel run the implied questions, "Why does she love Jewel? Why not me?" He tries to prove through convoluted logic that he actually exists, so unsure is he even of his physical reality—and he so poignantly calls this tortured musing "thinking of home" ("how often have I lain beneath rain on a strange roof, thinking of home" [76])—an indication of the effect on Darl of Addie's erasing him as her child. Darl must constantly probe Jewel's angry certainty, must oppose Jewel on every issue, because to enter Jewel's consciousness, to make Jewel aware of him, is to have his own existence verified. The tension between Darl and Jewel is therefore absolutely necessary to Darl.

It is also necessary to the narrative structure of the novel. The tension between Darl and Jewel embodies and brings to life the ambiguities at the heart of this most brilliantly ambiguous novel. Faulkner's invention or creative use of textual codes to delineate this tension is impressive. Stephen Ross is quite correct in calling As I Lay Dying "one of Faulkner's most imaginative and structurally innovative novels" (Shaper 45).

Works Cited


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